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Editorial: Utopia on the edge?

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Editorial: Utopia on the edge?

“... [F]uture urban worlds as gritty and half-decayed places ridden by extreme time-space compression, population explosions, environmental exhaustion and terrifying advances in technology (virtual realms, cyborg beings, hyper-surveillance and the like)¹

This ‘gritty’ and disturbing characterisation of future urban worlds is one that Stephen Graham puts forward at one point in the most recent of his wide-ranging studies of urban and technological futures, this one on the vertical dimension of cities.² How else can we characterise ‘urban worlds’? Might we need to make use of speculative, utopian and fictional perspectives?

If some of the characterisations, or perhaps just some of the characteristics, are deeply and increasingly disturbing, how might we set about reforming or transforming that/those world/s? Are speculative, utopian and fictional visions largely irrelevant, dangerous or obsolete—or almost or just beyond our reach on or at the edge? What then?

We draw in this issue³ on descriptions and analyses, touching unevenly on these topics, on aspects of London, Europe, Jerusalem and Palestine, North America, Shanghai and the Gulf. We include a rural/ ‘developing’ area of Ecuador seen from a cosmic view of the planet as our ‘worlds’ begin to enter and sometimes resist, the ultimate in apocalyptic global futures, ‘black hole capitalism’.

We present this critical editorial survey through examining four sets of scenes using a mixed spatial and cultural/economic classification: first, ‘At the Centre?’; second, ‘Alpha, Aliph. Aleph: Scenes from the South-East’; and the third, ‘On the Edge?’; concluding with ‘Utopian Reciprocities: From the Edge to the Centre (and back)’.

At the Centre?

Within this set of scenes, the first move is to the already emerging/emerged realities of ‘vertical noir’ anticipated in urban science fiction and partly realised not only in the global North but also in the Gulf and Shanghai. Stephen Graham in his ‘Vertical noir: Histories of the future in urban science fiction’ stresses the impossibility of some clean and binary opposition between ‘factual’ and ‘fictional’ cities.

He attends in passing to what he sees as ‘cyberpunk’ scenario (as in our epigraph). Graham gives particular attention to the glitzy, rather than ‘gritty’, but ultimately perhaps as disturbing retro-futuristic urban megaprojects in the Gulf and ‘forests of towers’ recently constructed in Shanghai’s Pudong district, notably the perhaps appropriately named Oriental Pearl Tower (see the visual frontispiece above and on the cover of this issue), ‘the most important architectural icon in Shanghai’.

Characterising both the Gulf and Shanghai urban scenes/scenarios, Graham comments:

‘As in the Gulf, Shanghai’s great leap into the sky since the mid-1990s—the greatest concerted construction of vertical architecture in human history—has been shaped by historic ideas of the vertical future as well as a desire by elites that such efforts will, in turn, allow the city to emerge as the global icon of urban futurity in the 21st century.’

Elites are constructing not only ‘icons of urban futurity but also Graham suggests, drawing on philosopher Anna Greenspan’s study *Shanghai Future: Modernity Remade* (2014), ‘transforming the very idea of what the future might mean.’

Our second scene within this set involves a move to a more than local perspective on London’s housing crisis, no longer remote

from 'Europe's last frontier: The spatialities of the refugees crisis', as described and interpreted by Dimitris Dalakoglou in our last issue (20.2), nor so far from the Gulf and Shanghai in the minds and intentions of global elites. It involves a look into our special feature on London's 'housing crisis and its activism' (20.2). The internal move here is a reflexive one, across the academe/agora boundary, a conference, and now a report. Researcher-photographer-writer Debbie Humphry has realised our collective intention to celebrate CITY's twentieth anniversary in a way that captures the lived 'town-and-gown' quality of our praxis in a situation where action informed by knowledge that is close to the ground is essential. On this occasion, though, the racial dimension of the crisis was neglected, a lack that has to be remedied.

But even thus extended would such exercises in normal socio-spatial science be enough? In the above article and special feature listed above, Dalakoglou gives significant attention to the more than 'ostalgic' film 'Good bye, Lenin!' (2003); and Paul Watt in his paper, 'A nomadic War Machine..' makes intensive use not only of Deleuze and Guattari but also of our series on assemblage and critical urban theory, as well as Zvyagintsev's film, 'Leviathan' (2014), set at 'the edge of the world'. At the London Housing Conference Aditya Chakraborty, Senior Economics Editor of the *Guardian*, developed at length a critique of the 'defining down' process at work in the UK political economy (referred to here briefly in Debbie Humphry's report on the conference, and to be followed up in CITY). We turn to a consideration of additional approaches.

Alpha, Aliph. Aleph: Scenes from the South-East

"[T]he Aleph' [is] named after the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, with close resemblance to the Arabic 'Aliph' or the Greek 'Alpha'. For Borges the Aleph is the only location from which the ability to see,

feel and hear the city and beyond reaches its ultimate climax." (Yiftachel)

The second set of scenes takes up Palestine and Jerusalem. In 'Reimagining resilience: Urbanization and identity in Ramallah and Rawabi,' Arpan Roy's focus is on Rawabi, the 'first planned city in Palestinian history', and its context(s). Rawabi has not forgotten its historical roots:

'Palestine, in its symbolic self-image, is not an urban civilization. The two visual symbols of Palestine are the checkered kufiyah, a headscarf with roots in Arab folk culture, and the seemingly infinite olive tree ...'

'Yet,' he concludes, 'just as Brenner and Schmid (2012, 13) write that 'the "non-urban" appears increasingly to be an ideological projection derived from a long dissolved, preindustrial geohistorical formation', the reality of urbanization in the Palestinian territories will soon confine their rural identity to realms of folklore.'

But is that formation necessarily and correctly classified as a prehistorical, even long-dissolved formation, about to be confined to realms of folklore? Should not the case be considered for its re-placement within the categories of historic, living and possibly transformative importance? Palestinian colleague, Nasser Abourahme, in an analysis that seems to confirm the analyses of Roy and Brenner and Schmid, also hesitantly and tentatively comments:

'Palestinian life has had to retain aspects of 'traditional'/non-industrial holism and self-dependence with regards to land and food production (often out of necessity, if nothing else); and this has in some instances begun to prompt forms of thought on the issue.' (email, May, 2016)

This possible beginning already touched on in this journal is one to which we shall return.

Another approach, is to select one particularly complex and significant city as a paradigm. The selection in this case is not from the North, Los Angeles or New York and

other such cities seem to have had their days in this respect, nor exclusively from the South, but from the South-East. Jonathan Rokem in his editorial introduction to our special feature 'Learning from Jerusalem: Rethinking urban conflicts in the 21st century' states that 'The underlying theoretical supposition in this special feature is that what have been labelled *contested* cities have growing similarities to less polarized cities—similarities found in the expansion of ethnic, racial and class conflicts that revolve around issues of housing, infrastructure, participation and identity.'

However, though there is a need for such work its actual treatment lacks a sense of depth and of existential and historic conflict. This is particularly to be regretted in the case of Camillo Boano's 'Jerusalem as a paradigm: Agamben's 'whatever urbanism' to rescue urban exceptionalism' in which a valuable survey of his conceptual vocabulary is assembled in a way that leaves it as largely immobile, inert and praxis-free.

The major exception to this lack of dynamism is Oren Yiftachel's commentary, 'The Aleph—Jerusalem as critical learning'. Yiftachel makes use of a short story. 'The Aleph', by the Argentinian writer Jorge Borges which Yiftachel admirably sums up as 'delving into the meanings and power of home, love, money, place and the threat of imminent destruction, through which a magical spot is imagined, found and eventually lost.'

In exploring this story he not only deploys the story as an illustration of how to include sociospatial narrative in urban studies, he also seeks to advance urban studies 'as an epistemological inspiration for a revised critical approach of the urban, for which Jerusalem serves as an omnipotent emblem—the example of examples.' Yiftachel not only provides a succinct re-reading of the other five papers in the feature but also of one of current debates in which, he argues, critical urban studies seems too often to have lost its cutting edge by, to take just one recent controversial case, announcing no less than

'the end of urban studies', in the name of an all-inclusive putative process of 'planetary urbanism' (Brenner and Schmid 2015).

Yiftachel sums up his theoretical approach, the development of a 'new CUT' (critical urban theory), as one of 'dynamic structuralism' emphasizing the use of a less predetermined, yet more critical 'Aleph approach' 'as a foundation for translating critical theories into political, advocacy and professional practices aimed at progressive and radical social transformations'.

This particular version of the approach considers urban political economy as but one of several structural forces: but there is an abundance elsewhere of base-heavy approaches. All in all, Yiftachel's 'The Aleph—Jerusalem as critical learning' is a seminal paper, increasing the range, depth and 'cut' of critical urban theory.

On the Edge?

'The planetary urbanization of capital entails the collapse of all traditional morphological distinctions into a seething morass of implosion—explosion that recalls the creative—destructive fury of a black hole...' (Wilson and Bayón)

We complete this series of sets of scenes, before concluding with a survey of the ground covered and the sources deployed and their utility—with a representation of planetary urbanisation that seeks to grasp the scale and nature of its negative dimension by deploying the phenomenon of a black hole as a basis for identification. Wilson and Bayón match here the now somewhat bland, shop-worn but deeply ideological notion of creation-destruction with one of fury. In 'Black Hole Capitalism: dimensions of planetary urbanisation' Japhy Wilson and Manuel Bayón handle the analytical tensions carefully as they do the use of its metaphorical and scientific base. The fact that their account rests to some extent upon a metaphor might seem to make it suspect. But the new

physics, having passed through its revolutionary paradigm change has by-passed the sociospatial 'sciences', still guided by maps and procedures that make them suspicious of metaphors, are still largely locked in the 'clean and binary opposition', that Graham refers to, 'between 'factual' and 'fictional'...' Much of the tension, in recent debates over planetary urbanisation, arises from the refusal of the mainstream power holders and their followers to acknowledge that the sociospatial sciences are engaged in the painful early stages of a paradigm shift that necessarily involves surpassing the opposition to which Graham refers. It is to Wilson and Bayón's great credit that their paper includes a much wider range of literature and more sophisticated theoretical discussion than the mainstream allows and that they extend and test this through field work and their reading of that work.

The human implications of the creative-destructive fury to which Wilson and Bayón refer are explored in two contexts below, in a reference to some of the results of their fieldwork in Ecuador and to its wider setting, and to a short story emerging from global struggles and a particularly profound representation of them in L.A. (as both a real and a symbolic place).

The Manta–Manaus multimodal transport corridor, Ecuador and utopia

'At the event horizon of black hole capitalism, where the crushing agglomeration of capital threatens to obliterate all social life, the seemingly impossible construction of Real utopias becomes an urgent necessity. The dynamics of this process are illustrated by the case of the Manta–Manaus multimodal transport corridor, which reveals the possibilities, limitations and antagonisms of utopian urban projects under conditions of black hole capitalism'. (Wilson and Bayón)

The almost overwhelming setting of the multi-modal transport project is in a corridor that 'runs from Manta, on the Pacific coast of

Ecuador, to Belen on the Atlantic coast of Brazil, via the booming industrial city of Manaus in the Brazilian Amazon.' The project is, Wilson and Bayón tell us:

'part of the Initiative for the Regional Integration of South American Infrastructure (IIRSA), a US\$158 billion infrastructure project that aims to transform the entire continent in the image of transnational capital.'

Though this project has failed, the succeeding 'accelerating pile-up of oil capital... has shattered the dreams of market integration and geographical freedom that Manta–Manaus had once inspired in the poor and marginalized inhabitants of the region.' The inhabitants, the Sekopai and the Kichwa, are not opposing the market utopia but are seduced by it and want to be involved, while it is the oil industry that blocks this possibility and that imposes their dispossession, leading to what Wilson and Bayón call the real utopia of Sumak Nambi (a kichwa community).⁴

A significant feature of much of this literature is its greater openness to the dramatistic potential of popular culture, a possibility largely abandoned sometime ago in sociology when it gave up its momentary dramatistic or dramaturgical turn. That perspective went to Performance Studies, a grave loss to sociospatial studies in these extremist times (though, in this issue Arpan Roy has a place for Victor Turner).

Our two authors here at the Edge make use of that potential. Wilson and Bayón make repeated and effective use of part of the lyrics of 'Talking Heads' punk-influenced 'City of dreams':

'We live in the city of dreams. We drive on the highway of fire.'

Our second scene takes us to a U.S. 'edge' where Andrea Gibbon's 'The El Ray Bar' speaks from a feisty anthology, 'Send My Love and a Molotov Cocktail!' (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2011), in the Switchblade series giving: 'a different slice of hardboiled

fiction where the dreamers and the schemers, the dispossessed and the damned, and the hobos and the rebels tango at the edge of society.'

Lost Angeles

'The sun fell from the sky today, about fucking time too. Weeks it had been loose, wavering, drunkenly unsteady across the sky. I watched its thread snap, though no one else saw. It hit the city. Bounced once and disappeared to sink into the ocean's swallowing. It gave itself up without a struggle.' (Gibbons)

Andrea Gibbons' short story, 'The El Rey Bar', opens with the sun falling from the sky. The 'I' whose italicised voice tells us of that part, perhaps mythical and prophetic, of the story is also the narrator of the apparently social realist non-italicised tale of a fatal brawl inside the Bar, climaxing in the brutal killing of her one-time friend, Angel.

The voice returns, italicised, partly socially realist, partly bordering on the mythical solar-environmental dimension, and partly prophetic in drawing on a runaway phantasmagoria of strangers building walls against each other. The story concludes, after the search for a suitable place for the body, at length finding a church:

'There is so much I have to do. A harvest of tragedies in the lives of the ones I love. The things I can't answer about how people get by in this world. The fucking wall. On my eyelids I see pieces of Angel, in a silhouette surrounded by candles.'

Utopian Reciprocities: From the Edge to the Centre (and back)

'[F]uture urban worlds as gritty and half-decayed places ridden by extreme time-space compression, population explosions, environmental exhaustion and terrifying advances in technology (virtual realms, cyborg beings, hyper-surveillance and the like).' (Graham)

The opening epigraph no longer looks so alien in this extended view of the company of the Oriental Pearl Tower. The journey from 'the centre' via 'the aleph' to 'the edge', seen as within as well as without the walled cities of the centre can, is and has to be taken on.

The overall approach adopted here is not one of comparing cities but one of establishing reciprocities between them. There can and should be utopias but there have to be deep-seated reciprocities across time and space. Some pasts and presents have to be lived for there to be any chance of future utopias. The future has to be 'prefigured'. Otherwise, we will have at best utopiates.

Some of our contributors doubt this. For them it seems at times to be a case of utopia yesterday, utopia tomorrow but never utopia today. So it seems, at least, for Graham, Wilson and Bayón. Graham relies, to some extent, on Lefebvre and Merrifield's reading of Asimov's science fiction of Trantor to light up the path to utopia. Wilson and Bayón gather some hope from Sumak Nambi but only after Marxian and Zizekian readings of the tea leaves for times of total catastrophe. Roy has, as noted, some faith in Victor Turner as he himself clings on to a necessarily re-imagined notion of resilience.

Yiftachel, inspired by Borgese's Aleph, finds a foundation for action *now*. But his reading of the Aleph vision is not quite complete. He ends with a quotation from *The Aleph* (Borgese gave the title of the story, marking its importance, to the book). A key passage in that quotation is: 'I saw the earth in the Aleph, and the aleph once more in the earth and the earth in the Aleph'. It could be argued that the repetition of 'the earth and the Aleph' is rhetorical more than substantial, though no other 'object' is given such emphasis. The earth here in Borgese, but not in the planet as represented in the planetary urbanisation literature, is seen as distinctively earthy. The earth here is in a list that is very material and strongly associated with humanity (a particular cemetery in

Buenos Aires, a loved one's remains, the circulation of life-blood, and, a little later their faces and his viscera) as well as, in a sense, symbolic.

Why dwell on all this? Because that is a deeply significant dimension of *life* (*human, animal and plant*), inside and outside urbanisation but banished by much of the planetary urbanisation literature—as noted in passing by Roy and Yiftachel—and by the actual process of the black hole of capitalism within which urbanisation is increasingly canalised as though there is not the flowering and riverrun earth outside even when it is apparently canalised and contained.

The reach and 'cut' of mainstream and critical urban studies need to be extended and to become (once again, if one takes in late 'Russian' Marx, late Herbert Marcuse and the relatively late Guattari of *Three Ecologies*) more critical, more sensitive, sensual and liberatory. There have been recent signs of this, without seeing the solidarity of their forebears in Merrifield and Chatterton and colleagues and now in Wilson and Bayón's Ecuadorian insights, Graham's cyberpunk vision.

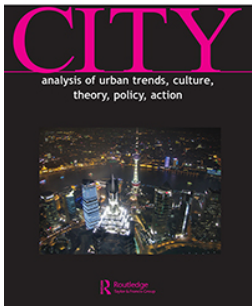
Gibbon's L.A. insights into a wavering and plunging sun and into the spreading realities of an at times evidently hysterical appropriation of the 'fucking wall' of her story from five years ago which has now taken form for a moment in a U.S. presidential candidate's manic obsessional programme ('I am building a wall!').⁵ But so too, alternatively, there is the survivalist and liberatory perception of 'a harvest' of personal and communal tragedies, silhouettes surrounded by candles, of pieces of the body of a one-time friend turned fallen angel leaving so much to be done by comrades and even scholars.

Utopia's edge cannot be isolated in some distant place and time but here and now in the inter-related moments, *reciprocities* of a movement.

Notes

- 1 Stephen Graham, 'Vertical noir: Histories of the future in urban science Fiction,' *City* 20.3 (this issue).
- 2 Graham's latest series is this one on the vertical dimensions of cities. It includes, in addition to 'Vertical noir' (supra), 'Life Support: The Political Ecology of Urban Air,' *City* 19, nos. 2–3 (2015): 192–215; 'Luxified Skies: How Vertical Urban Housing became an Elite Preserve,' *City* 19, no. 5 (2015): 618–645. See also Stephen Graham, *Vertical: The City from Above and Below* (London and New York: Verso, 2016).
- 3 We keep in mind throughout the need to explore continuities across disciplinary boundaries, both within each issue of the journal and across successive issues, and to supplement and challenge the established disciplinary boundaries and attempted interdisciplinary work of 'normal' socio-spatial science with some of the transdisciplinary excursions required by a paradigm shift towards 'revolutionary' or liberatory knowledge. See, particularly, the Editorial for 20.1, 'Planetary' urbanisation: insecure foundations, the commodification of knowledge, and paradigm shift.
- 4 It is such work that informs the transition in one area of CITY's already stated transition from the consideration of the Brenner and Schmid's founding epistemological paper to some of the work introduced in Brenner's edited volume, *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanisation*.
- 5 Two distinguished pieces of journalism illustrating our claim for the role of journalism in and around a new extended form (post-'normal', liberatory sociospatial studies) are Mark Danner's 'The Magic of Donald Trump', *NYRB*, 26 May 2016 and Dave Eggers' 'Welcome to the Trump Show', *The Guardian* (Review section), 18 June 2016.

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Black hole capitalism

Utopian dimensions of planetary urbanization

Japhy Wilson and Manuel Bayón

The planetary urbanization of capital entails the collapse of all traditional morphological distinctions into a seething morass of implosion–explosion that recalls the creative–destructive fury of a black hole. As an invisible presence–absence only identifiable by its spatiotemporal effects, the black hole resembles both the Lacanian Real and Marx’s value-theoretical understanding of capital. Utopian fantasies of postmodern hyperspace and rational spatial order function to fill in the void of the Real of Capital, but are ultimately undermined by the chaotic forces that they conceal. At the event horizon of black hole capitalism, where the crushing agglomeration of capital threatens to obliterate all social life, the seemingly impossible construction of Real utopias becomes an urgent necessity. The dynamics of this process are illustrated by the case of the Manta–Manaus multimodal transport corridor, which reveals the possibilities, limitations and antagonisms of utopian urban projects under conditions of black hole capitalism.

Key words: black hole capitalism, planetary urbanization, utopia, fantasy, Real

Introduction

‘We live in the city of dreams. We drive on the highway of fire.’

(Talking Heads, *City of Dreams*)

‘What we call “reality” implies the surplus of a fantasy space filling out the “black hole” of the Real.’

(Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry*)

‘Instead of just destroying the arrangement of matter, the black hole environment could conceivably encourage a new start.’

(Caleb Scharf, *Gravity’s Engines: The Other Side of Black Holes*)

In *Representing Capital*, Fredric Jameson (2011) notes the impossibility of directly representing the unimaginable totality of global capitalism, ‘in which the informing power is everywhere and

nowhere all at once, and at the same time in relentless expansion, by way of appropriation and subsumption alike’ (7). Jameson insists, however, that the representation of capital must be attempted, drawing our attention to Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams*, which ‘presupposes that any full or satisfactory representation of the drive is impossible’, while nonetheless asserting ‘the possibility in the drive of some minimal expression’ (Jameson 2011, 7). Slavoj Žižek (1999) makes a similar argument, suggesting that the unrepresentability of capital embodies

‘the Lacanian difference between reality and the Real: “reality” is the social reality of the actual people involved in the production process, while the Real is the inexorable “abstract” spectral logic of

Capital which determines what goes on in social reality'. (331)

Although capital is Real, and as such is located outside the symbolic order, we can deploy the power of metaphor to grasp something of its intangible existence. As Žižek (1992) explains, in such circumstances it is 'precisely by "looking awry" [that we can see] the thing in its clear and distinct form, in opposition to the "straightforward" view that sees only an indistinct confusion' (11).

This paper aims to contribute to the impossible representation of capital by looking awry at the phenomenon of planetary urbanization, which we metaphorically reimagine as *black hole capitalism*. In recent years, an emergent literature has begun to theorize the latest wave of capitalist development in terms of planetary urbanization (see, e.g. Arboleda 2015; Brenner 2014a; Brenner and Schmid 2014, 2015; Kanai 2014; Merrifield 2013a, 2013b).¹ Drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre, this literature understands planetary urbanization as a process of creative destruction that is collapsing the traditional morphological divisions between urban/rural and city/countryside into a churning morass of 'implosion–explosion', through which capital agglomerates into ever greater concentrations while simultaneously extending the urban fabric into the furthest reaches of planetary space. As such, the concept of planetary urbanization resonates with the cutting edge of cosmological theory, according to which black holes are not purely destructive forces, but also emit vast quantities of energy that structure the galaxies that surround them (Bartusiak 2015; Scharf 2012).

The black hole metaphor, however, extends beyond these parallel processes of implosion–explosion to grasp material and ideational dimensions of planetary urbanization that the current literature does not adequately address. This literature follows Lefebvre in focusing its analysis of planetary urbanization on the state, which for Lefebvre is the key agent in the production of abstract

space (see, e.g. Brenner 2014b, 20; Lefebvre 1991, 51), and in reproducing Lefebvre's dialectic of ideological representations and material reality (see, e.g. Lefebvre 1991, 33; Wachsmuth 2014). In this paper, we begin instead from a synthesis of historical geographical materialism—which prioritizes value over the state in its understanding of capitalist development (Harvey 1982; Smith 1984), and the psychoanalytic critique of ideology—which locates the key ontological rupture of the social world, not in the relation between representation and reality, but in the gap between a symbolically constituted 'reality' infused with fantasmatic representations, and a traumatic and unrepresentable Real (Žižek 1989, 1997). As an invisible point of infinite density only identifiable by its spatiotemporal effects, the black hole resembles both the Lacanian Real (as a hole in 'reality' around which the symbolic universe is structured) and the Marxian theory of value (as a void at the heart of capitalist society).

The metaphor of the black hole thus allows us to 'look awry' at planetary urbanization, bringing into view certain intangible dimensions of the phenomenon that are missed by much of the literature on the topic, which could be accused of attempting an overly 'direct representation' of global capitalist dynamics (Wilson and Bayón 2015a). In particular, the metaphor invites us to explore the utopian dimensions of planetary urbanization, which have been given scant attention by the dominant strands of the literature. This is somewhat surprising, given the avowedly Lefebvrian foundations of planetary urbanization theory, and Lefebvre's own commitment to the concept of utopia (Pinder 2013). It is, however, an absence that the literature on planetary urbanization shares with the majority of contemporary critical urban research (Baeten 2002), as a symptom of the broader crisis of radical thought (Buck-Morss 2002). This absence is not total. Andy Merrifield (2013b) has identified the planetary with an immanent space of non-work, and Marcelo Lopes de Souza

(2015) has called for the right to the city to be replaced by a 'right to the planet'. But the more hegemonic contributions to this literature have tended to represent planetary urbanization in terms of the rational implementation of technocratic strategies and the implacable grinding out of economic mechanisms, in which there would appear to be little space for utopian possibilities. In the conclusion to their programmatic statement on planetary urbanization, for example, Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid's (2015) utopian vision is limited to the suggestion that 'urban society is ... never an achieved condition, but offers an open horizon in relation to which concrete struggles over the urban are waged' (178).

The metaphor of the black hole would seem to be of little help in this regard, given the distinctly dystopian connotations of its cosmological point of comparison. Yet the chaotic violence implicit in this metaphor is intended to contribute to the generation of a certain apocalyptic utopianism, functioning as what Cunningham and Warwick (2013, 434) have called

'a scenario for which it is not the future but our own present re-imagined as apocalypse that operates as a para-science fiction political strategy—one which seeks to make the reader or viewer perceive that catastrophe is not to come, but is already here'.

It is only on the basis of such a realization, as Žižek (2011) has suggested, that a Real utopia becomes possible, in contrast to the utopian fantasies through which the catastrophe of global capitalism is displaced and concealed. Recent astrophysics has rendered the black hole metaphor consistent with this apocalyptic utopian possibility, through the discovery of the black hole environment as a space of wild creative energies as well as a vortex of destruction (Scharf 2012). Here the traditional division between utopia and dystopia breaks down, as it is precisely the traumatic confrontation with dystopia that generates the circumstances in which a Real utopia can and must emerge.

We therefore draw on the black hole metaphor in exploring the utopian dimensions of planetary urbanization, replacing the utopia/dystopia dichotomy with a dialectic of *utopian fantasies* that function to conceal the apocalyptic dynamics of the Real of Capital, and *Real utopias* constructed out of urgent necessity at the event horizon of black hole capitalism. These ideas are illustrated through the case of the Manta–Manaus multimodal transport corridor, and its implementation in Ecuador. Launched in 2007, the corridor runs from Manta, on the Pacific coast of Ecuador, to Belén on the Atlantic coast of Brazil, via the booming industrial city of Manaus in the Brazilian Amazon. It is part of the Initiative for the Regional Integration of South American Infrastructure (IIRSA), a US\$158 billion infrastructure project that aims to transform the entire continent in the image of transnational capital. The IIRSA has been identified by Neil Brenner (2014c, 184) as a paradigmatic example of planetary urbanization in practice, and would appear to be a purely technocratic project devoid of utopian elements. Indeed, an animated graphic produced by Brenner's Urban Theory Lab at Harvard shows a web of economic infrastructure including the Manta–Manaus corridor spreading silently and inexorably across South America, and generating the impression of 'large-scale territorial planning strategies' (Brenner 2014b, 20) being automatically realized on the ground.² Yet our field research on Manta–Manaus has shown it to be infused with a multitude of utopian dreams and desires. Through an exploration of these dimensions of the Manta–Manaus corridor, we demonstrate black hole capitalism to be a far more hope-filled place than it may at first appear, while arguing that a Real utopia can only arise at the point at which all such hopes have been annihilated.

We begin by looking awry at planetary urbanization through the metaphor of black hole capitalism, and setting out its relationship to utopian fantasies and Real utopias. We then illustrate this relationship by

appeal to the twin utopian fantasies that frame the dialectic of implosion–explosion in the case of Manta–Manaus. On the one hand, fantasies of postmodern hyperspace and geographical freedom have romanticized the *explosion* of the Manta–Manaus highway. On the other, fantasies of ecological capitalism and perfect spatial order have domesticated the *implosion* of capital in Providencia—an intermodal port city in the Ecuadorian Amazon, where Manta–Manaus shifts from road to river. These twin fantasies have been shattered by the Real dynamics that they conceal, as a rapid agglomeration of oil capital has appropriated the infrastructure of Manta–Manaus and destroyed the planners’ dream of a green and pleasant ecology. At the event horizon of this maelstrom, a marginalized indigenous community has urgently constructed a Real utopia in the form of an autonomous urban project created to prevent its dispossession. The paper concludes with some further reflections on the utopian dimensions of black hole capitalism.

The hole world

Black holes are the eternal endgame of huge exhausted stars, whose explosive powers have lost the battle against their own gravitational forces. Smaller stars become red giants before shrinking into white dwarfs or neutron stars, in which the last structures of matter are able to retain their integrity. But the enormous mass of black holes causes them to enter a state of infinite collapse. According to Einstein’s theory of relativity, gravity is generated by the distortion of space-time caused by the mass of the objects within it. The space-time around a black hole becomes so contorted that light cannot escape, and black holes are therefore invisible. The point at which this occurs is called the event horizon, because from the point of view of a distant observer the extreme velocity with which objects approach it would make time appear to stop. Inside the event

horizon, however, unobservable processes continue to unfold. The gravitational power of the black hole draws in vast amounts of matter from the galaxies that surround it. Having crossed the event horizon, this matter continues to collapse towards the singularity, an impossible point of infinite density buried deep within the void of the black hole. Yet as matter approaches this point of no return, it sheds vast quantities of energy that pour back into space. Through this combination of gravity and energy, black holes structure the entire universe, and at the heart of almost every galaxy is a supermassive black hole (Bartusiak 2015; Scharf 2012).

Black holes are therefore ‘real holes in space-time’ (Bartusiak 2015, 15), which are unobservable and unrepresentable, and whose existence is only betrayed by their effects on the galaxies that surround them (Scharf 2012, 95–121). As such, they are the cosmological equivalent of the Real in Lacanian psychoanalysis. According to Lacan, our sense of reality is structured by a combination of symbolic and imaginary elements that defend us against a traumatic and unsymbolized Real. Just as black holes are invisible voids that structure the material universe, so the Real is ‘a hole, a gap, an opening in the middle of the symbolic order—it is the lack around which the symbolic order is structured’ (Žižek 1989, 170). Like black holes, the Real is unobservable and its existence ‘can be constructed only backwards, from its structural effects. All its effectivity lies in the distortion it produces in the symbolic universe of the subject’ (Žižek 1989, 169). The Real is therefore variously defined by Žižek as ‘the central “black hole” around which the signifying network is interlaced’ (Žižek 1992, 40); the ‘destructive vortex ... which we cannot approach too closely’ (Žižek 2008, civ); and ‘the unfathomable X which ... curves and distorts any space of symbolic representation and condemns it to ultimate failure’ (Žižek 1997, 124).

This understanding of the Real also resonates with Marx’s theory of value.

According to Marx (1976), the value of a commodity is entirely abstracted from its material use value, existing as a pure measure of the socially necessary labour time expended in its production, which is determined by innumerable acts of exchange conducted by private producers throughout the world market. Just as gravity structures the material coordinates of the universe, despite having no concrete materiality of its own, so the law of value determines the space-time of global capitalism, despite the fact that value is a social relation and not a quality inherent in discrete material 'things'. As Marx himself once argued, value, like gravity, is therefore 'immaterial but objective' (Marx, quoted in Harvey 2013, 70). Building on this understanding of value, Chris Arthur (2002) has argued that 'capitalism is marked by the subjection of the material process of production and circulation to the ghostly objectivity of value' (154). Like the Lacanian Real, value is therefore an unobservable presence-absence that structures our entire social universe—'a void at the heart of capitalism' (154). This description again recalls the image of the black hole, which has been defined as 'mass without matter... the mass disappears from our view; only its gravitational attraction remains behind to affect us' (John Wheeler, quoted in Bartusak 2015, 107). Furthermore, like the black hole, value not only structures the universe of global capitalism, but also drags an ever-increasing mass of use values into its sphere of expanded reproduction, as 'a shape opposed to all materiality, a form without content, which yet takes possession of the world the only way it can, through draining it of reality' (Arthur 2002, 167).

This understanding of value resonates with Moishe Postone's (1993) theorization of capital as 'an abstract form of domination', which is created and progressively reinforced by our own alienated productive activity. Postone follows Marx in arguing that capitalist production is undertaken for the sole purpose of extracting surplus value through the exploitation of living labour.

Competition compels all capitalists to obey an increasingly monolithic logic of 'accumulation for accumulation's sake', and capital emerges as an abstract form of domination, which is 'blind, processual and quasi-organic... an alienated, abstract self-moving Other, characterized by a constant directional movement with no external goal' (Postone 1993, 270, 278). This process begins with what Marx conceptualized as the formal subsumption of labour to capital: the subordination of pre-existing forms of production under the reign of wage labour. Formal subsumption, however, is limited to the production of absolute surplus value. This can only be increased through the expansion of the labour force and the extension of the working day, and as such has concrete limits. In its blind desire for endless self-valorization, capital therefore drives the transition from the formal to the real subsumption of labour, through which the labour process itself is transformed in accordance with the requirements of capital. Real subsumption enables the production of relative surplus value, through the deployment of technologies that increase the productivity of labour and the rate of surplus value extraction, thus further empowering capital as an abstract form of domination (Marx 1976, 1019–1038; Postone 1993, 283–284). This entails a corresponding transition from the formal to the real subsumption of space. If capital initially occupies and exploits the space that it encounters, the shift to real subsumption implies the concrete transformation of this space into an apparatus for the production and realization of relative surplus value (Harvey 1982, 186). Planetary urbanization can be understood as the realization of this 'tendency towards real spatial integration' (Smith 1984, 186), through the interconnection of global megalopolises, the construction of transnational transportation systems and the opening of vast terrains of resource extraction at the boundaries of planetary space.³

Planetary urbanization thus transforms the planet into 'an infernal machine' for the

endless valorization of value (Jameson 2011, 146), through which capital ‘realizes its own agenda of “accumulation for accumulation’s sake, production for production’s sake”’ (Harvey 2014, 58). Like a black hole, this machine ‘must continue to absorb everything in its path, to interiorize everything that was hitherto external to it’ (Jameson 2011, 146). This process of implosion is dialectically related to an explosion of infrastructure networks and transportation systems dedicated to ‘the annihilation of space by time’ (Marx, quoted in Harvey 2001, 244), which further contributes to the process described by David Harvey (2001, 123) as ‘time-space compression’—an expression that recalls the extreme distortion of space-time produced by a black hole. This dialectic of implosion–explosion mirrors the dynamics described by the astrophysicist Caleb Scharf (2012): ‘The more matter is fed into its core, the more food there is for the black hole, and the more the black hole will pump out disruptive energy’ (165). The contradictory forces of planetary urbanization likewise unleash a wave of creative destruction that takes the form of a ‘kaleidoscopic churning of socio-spatial arrangements’ (Brenner 2014b, 17) reminiscent of ‘the enormous whirlpools of turbulence’ that surround ‘the thrashing forces of a supermassive black hole’ (Scharf 2012, 180, 166).⁴

Utopian fantasies/Real utopias

These are the chaotic material dynamics of black hole capitalism, driven by the Real void of value at its heart. Just as Georges Bataille’s scandalous image of a ‘solar anus’ sought to parody and undermine Cartesian and Romantic veneration of a universal harmony (Bataille 1931; Boldt-Irons 2001), so the metaphor of black hole capitalism aims to shatter any illusions of planetary urbanization as a rational or controllable process. This brings us to the utopian dimensions of planetary urbanization. According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, we can only retain

our sense of ‘reality’ by deploying fantasies that obscure or explain away the gaps and holes of the Real, in order to conceal the fact that ‘the symbolic order is structured around some traumatic impossibility, around something which cannot be symbolized’ (Žižek 1989, 123). Fantasies are therefore not dreams by which we escape reality, but are fundamental to the structure of ‘reality’ itself, allowing us to come to terms with the ‘traumatic kernel’ at ‘the very heart’ of our symbolic universe (Žižek 1989, 133). In the case of planetary urbanization, these fantasies must paper over the traumatic Real of black hole capitalism, by concealing the power of capital as an abstract form of domination. Such fantasies take countless forms. Here we focus specifically on those that frame the implacable dynamics of implosion–explosion as objects of social need and human desire.

Black holes generate ‘jets of matter ... that can accelerate particles to huge velocities that are significant fractions of the speed of light’ (Scharf 2012, 158). At the level of our social reality, capital is also an infernal engine of acceleration that relentlessly compels the production of territorial infrastructures that drive towards the annihilation of space by time. In his study of the historic emergence of planetary urbanization, *In the World Interior of Capital*, Peter Sloterdijk (2013) has noted the profound existential consequences of this endless obliteration of spatial distance and stability, embodied in an unconscious knowledge that we ‘can no longer rely on anything except the indifference of homogenous infinite space’ (23). Our subjugation to this liquid and volatile space-time is framed by a variety of utopian fantasies, chief among which is ‘the neoliberal ... zero gravity utopia, where flows push towards light speeds’ (Featherstone 2010, 128). The etymology of utopia is ‘no place’ (Pinder 2002, 237), and the fantasy space of neo-liberal capitalism takes this literally, ‘despatializing the real globe, replacing the curved earth with an almost extensionless point’ and revelling in ‘the cult of explosion’

(Sloterdijk 2013, 13). This futuristic capitalist utopianism also possesses its radical counterpart, embodied in the heroic modernism of the socialist development projects explored in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, in which Marshall Berman (1982) celebrates the Faustian pact made with capital's own dynamics, in accordance with which 'the most valuable commodity, from Mephisto's perspective, is *speed*' (49). The latest incarnation of this tradition is the currently influential *Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics*, which embraces the ferocious dynamics of global capitalism, insisting on a revolutionary politics 'at ease with a modernity of abstraction, complexity, globality and technology', while emphasizing that these gains are 'not to be reversed, but accelerated beyond the constraints of the capitalist value form' (Srnicek and Williams 2013).

The vast streams of energy exploding from black holes are dialectically related to the tendency for matter 'to fall into, to pour into, the deep wells and bowl-like distortions in space-time caused by mass' (Scharf 2012, 125). In black hole capitalism, the explosive rage of planetary urbanization is likewise profoundly entangled with an equally powerful drive towards implosion, both in the massification of existing agglomerations and in the rapid concentration of capital in previously peripheral hinterlands (Brenner and Schmid 2015). This chaotic process of implosion is both expressed and concealed by the fetish object of 'the city', which David Wachsmuth (2014, 356) has claimed 'is an ideological representation of urbanization processes rather than a moment in them'. But ideologies themselves can be productive of the realities that they misrepresent. As Žižek (1997, 6) has noted, 'the relationship between fantasy and the horror of the Real it conceals is much more ambiguous than it may seem: fantasy conceals this horror, yet at the same time it creates what it purports to conceal'. The history of capitalism is replete with utopian fantasies of perfectly ordered cities that do not merely remain 'on paper', but that are endowed with the social power to transform

reality in their image. As Ross Adams (2010) has noted, these utopian schemes are typically underpinned by a 'collective fear of some palpable sort, whether it be fear of revolution (Le Corbusier in the 1920s) ... or our new fear: ecological collapse ("green architecture")' (2). In the latter case, Adams argues, the ideological function of the contemporary 'eco-city' is transparently evident: 'it is merely a phantasmatic screen, prohibiting us from confronting the true terrors of ecological catastrophe, while at once imploring us to silently identify this terror with the collapse of liberal capitalism itself' (7). As in the case of explosion, these implosive bourgeois utopias are paralleled by a radical tradition of 'utopias of spatial form' (Harvey 2000, 104–113), embodied in a long history of communes and autonomous zones. It is precisely this 'folk political' tradition, however, that the accelerationists oppose, mocking the idea that 'the abstract violence of globalised capital' can be successfully countered by 'the flimsy and ephemeral "authenticity" of communal immediacy' (Srnicek and Williams 2013). Merrifield (2013b, 28) agrees, insisting that 'The supersession of capitalism ... comes about ... by running through its corridor of flames', and asserting the impossibility of a reversion 'to quaint, archaic times, when cities were village and less intimidating, both conceptually and existentially'.

This tension between utopian fantasies of implosion and explosion is underpinned by a shared humanist affirmation of hope, which has traditionally animated the pursuit of utopia. According to Ana Dinertstein (2014, 23), hope is 'the strongest of all human emotions that, when educated, allows us to properly engage with a hidden dimension of reality that inhabits the present one: the *not yet*'. This faith in hope is not only shared by Ernst Bloch, Lefebvre and other utopian thinkers, but is also evident in those anti-utopian strains of Marxism that insist that the 'hidden dimension' of the 'not yet' is to be found in the internal contradictions of capital, rather

than in folk political struggles to immediately realize the future worlds that allegedly dwell within the capitalist present. These opposed positions structure revolutionary thought. But from a Lacanian perspective, their shared faith in the ‘not yet’ is precisely the obstacle that blocks the possibility of a Real utopia, functioning as what Žižek (1997) calls a ‘sublime object... the spectral object which has no positive ontological consistence, but merely fills in the gap of a certain constitutive impossibility’ (97). The very structure of this ‘symbolic field’ is therefore ideological, to the extent that it contains the ‘not yet’ as ‘the place of some structural impossibility, while simultaneously disavowing this impossibility’ (98). The construction of Real utopias can only begin by traversing this fantasy and confronting the constitutive impossibility that it conceals: the absence of any inherently utopian dimension either within or beyond the Real of Capital.

As we will see in the following sections, the politics of planetary urbanization is infused with utopian fantasies of implosion and explosion that contribute to the long tradition of ‘obscure utopias’ referred to by Jameson (2005), including ‘liberal reforms and commercial pipedreams, the deceptive yet tempting swindles of the here and now, where Utopia serves as the mere lure and bait for ideology’ (3). But black hole capitalism is also a space of Real utopias, which traverse these fantasies through the urgent construction of possible worlds at the impossible frontier of the event horizon. As the border of oblivion, the event horizon would appear to be the point at which all hope is lost. But Žižek (2011) argues that it is precisely this *loss of hope* that opens the possibility of a Real utopia:

‘The true Utopia is when the situation is so without issue, without a way to resolve it within the coordinates of the possible, that out of the pure urge of survival you have to invent a new space. Utopia is not a kind of free imagination. Utopia is a matter of the utmost urgency.’

To the extent that utopian fantasies are structured to avoid a direct confrontation with the Real, and as such function to reproduce the established coordinates of reality, so a Real utopia can only be constructed in the context of the disintegration of all such fantasies, in which the political subject ‘undergoes a “loss of reality” and starts to perceive reality as an “unreal” nightmarish universe with no firm ontological foundation; this nightmarish universe is... that which remains of reality after reality is deprived of its support in fantasy’ (Žižek 1999, 57). In the context of the present discussion, we could reformulate this argument as follows: black hole capitalism is the ‘nightmarish universe’ that remains after planetary urbanization has been deprived of its support in utopian fantasies, and ‘the traumatic passage [through] this “night of the world”’ (Žižek 1999, 38) is a necessary moment in the creation of a Real utopia. Indeed, black hole imagery is frequently encountered in psychoanalytic sessions, in which it is sometimes interpreted not as a sign of psychotic breakdown, but rather

‘as pointing towards possibilities of becoming that are not yet represented. ... The “black hole” or “void”, the no-thing, can open the space for the emergence of new elements. This experience may precipitate trauma and disruption, but also a “rearrangement” or “transformation” of subjectivity as well as cultural creation.’ (Hinton 2007, 433, 444)

From this perspective, the event horizon is not only a space of destruction but also a place of potential creative power, in which utopian fantasies are traversed and Real utopias are forced into existence. The latest astrophysical theory resonates with this possibility, pointing towards ‘opportunities for stars to be born within the great gathering disk of material accreting into a black hole’, and suggesting that ‘disturbances in the circulating matter could allow for its localized agglomeration into new objects. Instead of just destroying the arrangement of matter, the black hole environment could conceivably encourage a new start’ (Scharf 2012, 212).

City of dreams, highway of fire

After looking awry at planetary urbanization through the metaphor of black hole capitalism, we must now turn our attention to the more mundane environment of ‘surface appearances’, and the more prosaic task of direct representation, although the Real of black hole capitalism will continue to ‘shine through’ the everyday phenomena that we describe, appearing as ‘the grimace of reality’ (Žižek 2008, xxix) ... Our aim in the remainder of this paper is accordingly to illustrate the utopian dimensions of planetary urbanization through the case of the Manta–Manaus multimodal transport corridor. As Jameson (1989, 44, 49) has emphasized, the utopia of ‘postmodern hyperspace ... is not merely a cultural ideology or fantasy but has genuine historical (and socioeconomic) reality’ in the vast material landscapes that necessarily underpin the accelerated circulation of capital on a global scale. One such landscape is currently being produced under the aegis of the Initiative for the Regional Integration of South American Infrastructure (IIRSA). Launched in 2000, the IIRSA seeks to reorient the energy, transportation and communications infrastructures of the continent towards transnational circuits of capital through the construction and modernization of ports, airports, bridges, tunnels, roads, railways, hydroelectric plants and electricity networks (COSIPLAN 2013, 33).⁵ The IIRSA thus embodies the explosive dynamic of planetary urbanization through which ‘landscapes are being comprehensively produced, engineered, or redesigned through a surge of infrastructure investments, enclosures, and large-scale planning strategies intended to support the accelerated growth and expansion of agglomerations around the world’ (Brenner 2014b, 20). As such, it can be interpreted as a strategy for the real subsumption of space to capital, through the acceleration of global circulation and the reduction of ‘socially-necessary turnover time’ on a planetary scale (Harvey 1982, 186). In its radical upheaval of continental space, the IIRSA

thus gives material expression to ‘the ontological gravity of the events we discuss as globalization’ (Sloterdijk 2013, 9).

Among the most emblematic of the IIRSA projects is the Manta–Manaus multimodal transport corridor, which is one of several interoceanic corridors included in the IIRSA (Dávalos and Albuja 2014; Wilson and Bayón 2015a). The Manta–Manaus corridor begins from the planned deep water port of Manta, on the Pacific coast of Ecuador, crosses the Ecuadorian Andes via over 800 km of new and modernized highways, transfers to river at the new intermodal port of Providencia in the Ecuadorian Amazon and then heads downriver for over 3000 km via the Brazilian jungle city of Manaus to the Atlantic port of Belén. Plans for Manta–Manaus justify it in terms of ‘less time, less cost’ in comparison to alternative global trade routes (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 2010), and predict that the project will transform Ecuador into ‘the key node of ... commercial exchange between the Amazon basin and the Pacific rim’ (Autoridad Portuario de Manta 2006).

Manta–Manaus thus embodies the commitment to competitive acceleration characteristic of planetary urbanization. But as David Harvey (2013, 48) has noted, ‘Speed-up, turnover time, and the like, when driven onwards by the coercive laws of competition, alter the temporal frame not only of the circulation of capital but also of daily life.’ These processes can provoke resistances from the lifeworlds that they transform, but are also frequently embraced by previously marginalized communities hoping for inclusion in the postmodern hyperspace of globalized consumer capitalism (Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012; Larkin 2013). For the majority of the excluded and impoverished population of the Ecuadorian Amazon, the Manta–Manaus corridor has not been resisted as a threat to their established ways of life, but has been infused with a utopian fantasy of market integration and geographical freedom. One inhabitant of Providencia, where the new intermodal port is being

constructed, told us that he had been 'impressed' and 'inspired' by a promoter of Manta-Manaus who had visited the community with a laptop computer and had shown them a video with animated images of 'great ships' arriving at Providencia by river. His aunt then awoke him late at night, telling him that she had just had a 'spectacular' dream about Manta-Manaus, and insisting that they purchase land along the riverbank.⁶ The leader of the Sekopai, an indigenous nationality based near Providencia, also told us that he hoped that the corridor would create economic opportunities, which his community would be able to 'take advantage of by creating companies'. Manta-Manaus, he declared, was 'the dream of the Sekopai nation'.⁷ Capital's furious abolition of all spatial limits thus becomes dusted with 'the glitter of progress, the lure of profit, the promise of circulation, movement and a better life' (Harvey and Knox 2012, 534), even for those whose lives it threatens to destroy. We all get to drive on the highway of fire, and we can all be part of the cult of explosion.

The explosion of infrastructure networks across South America is dialectically related to the implosion of capital in other parts of the world, functioning to channel the natural resources of the continent into the unprecedented process of real subsumption currently underway in East Asia (Veltmeyer and Petras 2014). At the same time, the production of new infrastructures and the opening of new spaces of accumulation are catalysing the rapid agglomeration of capital into the newly constructed hubs and nodes of this emergent network. Providencia, as the intermodal port of the Manta-Manaus corridor, is one of these new sites of implosion. Before the arrival of Manta-Manaus, Providencia was an isolated indigenous community, which could only be accessed by river. In 2013, a new highway was completed, cutting through 46 kilometres of Amazonian rainforest to arrive at Providencia, where a container port is now being constructed. The economic strategy for the new port city

is being designed in collaboration with Greg Lindsay, author of a seminal text of neo-liberal urbanism entitled *Aerotropolis: The Way We'll Live Next* (Kasarda and Lindsay 2011). Lindsay celebrates 'the aerotropolis as globalization made flesh' in the form of new world cities like Dubai constructed around airports. In an era of 'frictionless competition' in which 'humans aren't bound by distance, but by time', the proliferation of integrated transport systems means that 'it's possible to imagine a world capital in a place that was once an absolute backwater' (Lindsay 2006). As Will Self (2011) has noted, *Aerotropolis* is

'a classic example of the *Fin de Siecle* scientific romance in its utopian guise. It aims, like its predecessors, to resolve the contradictions and divisions of the present by thrusting its readers ... into a future typified by plenty, social accord, and clean, green cities linked together by clean, green jets.'

The urban plan for Providencia is entitled *Divining Providencia: Building a Bio-cultural Capitol for the Amazon* (cityLAB 2014). It reproduces Lindsay's utopian fantasy of planetary urbanization as a harmonious and contradiction-free process, with international airspace replaced by the vast fluvial network of the Amazon, along which sustainably produced and ethically sourced products will be shipped from Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil (cityLAB 2014, 57), and with Providencia serving as the 'material, scientific, and commercial repository for the biodiversity of the entire basin' (48). Providencia will be 'a new type of trade zone, one that combines the global presence and exposure of free trade zones with ... the more buyer-producer model of Fair Trade' (87), 'establishing a synergy between IIRSA, which will ferry resources there from throughout the Amazon, and the knowledge and artisanal skills of local indigenous peoples capable of transforming them into unique cultural products of human use and value' (149). The new city will also become a biotechnology centre 'devoted to the discovery, cataloguing,

conservation and commercialization of... the entire Amazon basin's biodiversity' (150). When interviewed, Lindsay explained that 'Instead of chopping down the rainforest... you would try to financialize it in a different way, through... sampling the genetic diversity... and trying to turn it into IP [intellectual property] which can then be licensed to pharma.'⁸ Like the utopian novel *Ecotopia*, Lindsay's vision 'answers standard capitalist objectives by offering an ecological which is also an entrepreneurial Utopia' (Jameson 2005, 12), and *Divining Providencia* embodies the fantasy space of the contemporary eco-city as 'the liberal answer to ecological catastrophe: an enclosed, self-contained economic free zone' (Adams 2010, 7). The implusive forces of black hole capitalism are simultaneously celebrated and concealed by a utopia of spatial form that promises a harmonious and sustainable form of capitalist development without addressing the fundamental social antagonism that underpins it, corresponding precisely to Žižek's (1989) definition of utopian fantasy as 'a belief in the possibility of a universality without its symptom' (23).

Event horizon

The utopian fantasies of Manta-Manaus and *Divining Providencia* embody the apparently opposed ideologies of technological progress and ecological romanticism, which as Žižek (1997, 13) has noted, ultimately function together as 'two complimentary gestures... obfuscating the underlying deadlock'. As such, these twin fantasies recall the Newtonian universe of planetary clockwork suspended in absolute space, with the dialectic of implosion–explosion concealed by the smooth space of accelerated capital circulation on the one hand and the rational distribution of urban objects on the other. But Newtonian representations of universal harmony have long since been undermined by the dialectics of Einsteinian space-time, in which 'processes of gravitational

agglomeration' are tangled up with 'the disruptive energy blasting from... black holes' (Scharf 2012, 204), and the fantasy space of Manta-Manaus and *Divining Providencia* has been equally overwhelmed by the Real dynamics of black hole capitalism.

As Marx (1973) once noted, 'from the fact that capital posits every... limit as a barrier and hence gets *ideally* beyond it, it does not by any means follow that it has *really* overcome it' (410). This is not the place to enter into the labyrinth of factors that have contributed to the failure of Manta-Manaus, which we have explored elsewhere (see Wilson and Bayón 2015b). For the purpose of the present discussion it will suffice to note that while Manta-Manaus has failed as an interoceanic corridor, its infrastructure is functioning to advance the internal expansion of the Ecuadorian oil frontier, unleashing a wave of creative destruction that has laid waste to the ecological capitalist fantasy of *Divining Providencia*. In 2013, the Ecuadorian government announced the exploitation of Block 43, also known as ITT, a rich and controversial oil field that is partly located within the highly biodiverse Yasuni National Park (Economist Intelligence Unit 2014). Block 43 occupies a vast extension of territory adjacent to Peru, and is accessed via the Napo. With the completion of the new highway in the same year, Providencia became the closest port to Yasuni accessible by road, and is now being rapidly transformed into the oil port for Block 43. Oil services companies have bought up land along the river bank to build a series of private ports, and a wave of land speculation is driving up prices and intensifying the deforestation of the area.

The accelerating pile-up of oil capital in Providencia has shattered the dreams of market integration and geographical freedom that Manta-Manaus had once inspired in the poor and marginalized inhabitants of the region. The leader of the Sekopai who had described Manta-Manaus as 'the dream of the Sekopai nation' told us that 'There is no room for the [indigenous]

nationalities, or the *colonos* [*mestizo* colonizers], or anyone, we are just the observers of big deals between big interests... We have nothing. We are in a total desert.⁹ Another indigenous leader similarly argued that Manta–Manaus ‘is built for millionaires. We just stand here and watch them make their money.’¹⁰ Despite having invested over US\$50 million in the highway and the port, the government has not installed water or sanitation in Providencia, and community members have had to connect their own electricity lines from the mainline that feeds the oil ports. In the words of a third local leader, ‘They take all the black gold from here and leave us with nothing.’¹¹

Providencia thus stands at the event horizon of black hole capitalism, where the agglomeration of capital threatens to collapse all social structures into a space of absolute disintegration. Yet these crushing forces of implosion have generated a process that echoes the apocalyptic cosmological utopianism of the event horizon itself—a point of total catastrophe in which, as we have seen, the forces of material destruction simultaneously open the possibility for the ‘localized agglomeration’ of ‘new objects’ and conceivably encourage ‘a new start’ (Scharf 2012, 212). In 2010, when they first began to receive warnings and threats of expropriation, the *kichwa* indigenous and *mestizo* population of Providencia decided to organize to defend themselves against this eventuality, forming an association called ‘Sumak Ñambi’, which roughly translates as ‘Gorgeous Road’, conveying the utopian hopes that at that time were still embodied in ‘the highway’. Since then the community has been confronted with further threats of dispossession, and the completion of the highway has been followed by the building of the official port and the multiple private oil ports; the arrival and departure of huge diesel-spilling barges shifting materials down to Block 43; and the construction of a stone-crushing factory in the middle of the village to generate the gravel for the ITT infrastructure. The few remaining thatched

wooden houses of Sumak Ñambi have been engulfed within this churning, roaring space of frenzied agglomeration.¹² In March 2015, the president of Sumak Ñambi, Nelson Castillo, called an assembly and addressed the association. Shouting over the growling engines, blaring reverse sirens and crashing rockslides of a constant line of trucks loading gravel onto barges bound for ITT, Castillo insisted on the need to act:

‘Look at the machinery they bring here every day, the pollution, the impacts that we suffer without compensation... We are peaceful, gullible people, waiting for the goodwill of someone who might one day decide to help us, when instead we should be demanding our rights... We are going to keep being dispossessed little by little, as is already happening... It is time for us to wake up and live in unity!’¹³

The association decided that the most effective way to defend their claim to their land would not be to seek to salvage the despoiled fragments of the rural space that remained to them, but rather to assert their *right to the city*, by creating their own urban project on the land they still possessed, in a process that embodied the spirit of ‘amateur urbanism’ (Merrifield 2015).¹⁴ Unable to afford to contract an urban planner to design their new space, they instead invited a local topographer to draw up a plan in return for membership of their association and a plot of land in the new town. The resulting plan locates the town in 10 hectares of rainforest along the riverbank to the east of the official port. Five quadrangular blocks are divided into a total of 60 lots, each of which has space for a house and a large garden. The plan also includes a plaza, a cemetery, a basketball court, a guesthouse, a space for tourist projects and a communal meetinghouse.¹⁵ Not long after Castillo’s speech to the assembly, the opportunity to realize this plan unexpectedly presented itself, when a shipping and haulage company attempted to purchase the riverside land of the community, with the aim of opening yet another private port.

Rather than simply refusing the offer on the basis of the non-alienability of their land, Sumak Ñambi made a counter-proposal: in exchange for the lease of a space for the port at the far eastern end of their land, the company would cut and surface the roads for their town. Within two months the roads had been sliced through the jungle, with the felled trees providing the wood for the construction of the houses. Every weekend Sumak Ñambi gathered in *minka* (collective community labour), and the town began to take form. In Castillo's words, 'We were happy and content to be realizing our project.'¹⁶

Faced with an apparently impossible situation, Sumak Ñambi were forced to 'invent a new space', demonstrating that a Real utopia is not an exercise in 'free imagination' but an act 'of the utmost urgency' (Žižek 2011). There is nothing overtly utopian in the conventional spatial form of Sumak Ñambi's humble town. It expresses no political ideology, and it contains no ambition to either transcend or subtract itself from the dynamics of black hole capitalism. Yet it conceals a Real utopian kernel—the desperate decision of a historically marginalized community to assert its equal right to the very process of planetary urbanization that threatens its destruction. As Alain Badiou has argued, 'A change of the world is real when an inexistent of the world starts to exist in the same world with maximum intensity' (quoted in Swyngedouw 2014, 171). As such, the construction of Sumak Ñambi's simple settlement in the midst of the maelstrom of black hole capitalism was not only an authentically utopian act. It was also a *political event* in Jacques Rancière's sense of the term, occurring at the precipitous edge of the event horizon, at the very point at which such an event appeared to be impossible. According to Rancière (1999, 27), politics exists when 'those who have no right to be counted ... make themselves of some account, setting up a community by the very fact of placing ... the contradiction of two worlds in a single world'. By

materializing their utopia in the midst of a world that had no place for them, Sumak Ñambi brought this contradiction 'of two worlds in a single world' to the surface of social reality, confronting the utopian fantasies of Manta–Manaus and *Divining Providencia* with a 'return of the repressed' (Žižek 1989, 55).

The response of 'professional urbanism' (Merrifield 2015) was swift and uncompromising. As soon as they had been informed of the situation, the municipal government imposed a legal order that halted construction and prevented any further development of the site.¹⁷ The municipality was now working with other levels of government on the implementation of *Divining Providencia*, and Sumak Ñambi's new town was being constructed on land that had been designated as an industrial zone for the eco-products of the Amazon. The absurdity of this situation, of course, was that Providencia had become a de facto oil port, and the twin fantasies of Manta–Manaus and *Divining Providencia* already lay in ruins. The Real utopia of Sumak Ñambi had therefore been cancelled out in the name of a utopian fantasy that would never be realized. As Žižek (2015) has noted: 'If you're caught in another's dream, you're fucked.'

Conclusion

Global capitalism has collided with the limits of planetary space and is now surging back in upon itself in a tidal wave of creative destruction that implodes into seething agglomerations and explodes into tangled highways and wastelands of resource extraction. This chaotic totality is structured by the immaterial objectivity of value at its heart. The intangibility of value, the imperceptibility of the dialectical relationship between implosion and explosion, and the unimaginable vastness and complexity of the global system, all contribute to the impossibility of representing capital. But as Jameson (2011) has argued, 'the conclusion to draw here is not that,

since it is unrepresentable, capitalism is ineffable and a kind of mystery beyond language and thought; but rather that one must redouble one's efforts to express the inexpressible in this respect' (7). To this end, we have reconceptualized planetary urbanization as black hole capitalism, and have illustrated this metaphor through an exploration of planetary urbanization in practice, in which the Real of Capital has continued to shine as 'the grimace of reality'.

Like planetary urbanization, the black hole is a dialectical process of implosion–explosion, in which immense gravitational forces of agglomeration are intertwined with dramatic expulsions of energy and matter; a process that is both destructive and creative, and that forms a structuring principle of space in its totality. But while the majority of the literature on planetary urbanization is content with providing direct representations of these material processes, the metaphor of black hole capitalism allows us to 'look awry' at the same phenomena, in order to capture something of what would otherwise remain unrepresented. Like the black hole, value is an abstract form of domination, an invisible and immaterial presence–absence that can only be identified by its structuring effects upon our socio-spatial universe. As such, it is Real in the Lacanian sense of the term—a hole in our symbolic universe where representation breaks down, which is concealed by social fantasies that mask its traumatic (lack of) content.

The 'reality' of planetary urbanization thus 'obtains its consistency only by means of the "black hole" in its centre ... i.e. by the exclusion of the Real' (Žižek 1992, 19). In the examples of Manta–Manaus and *Divining Providencia*, we have seen how the Real process of implosion–explosion is excluded and made possible by dreams and fantasies that seek to conceal and domesticate its uncontrollably destructive dynamics. The implacable drive of capital towards the annihilation of space by time has been represented by the promoters of Manta–Manaus as a postmodern hyperspace of

smooth accelerated circuits, and infused with the desires of poor and marginalized populations for full participation in an imagined world of market integration and geographical freedom. Meanwhile the equally relentless pressure of agglomeration has been framed by *Divining Providencia* as a fantasy of perfect socio-spatial order, in which sustainably sourced eco-products and genetic codes will be serenely shipped from throughout the Amazon Basin to Providencia, where they will be fashioned into biotechnological commodities by the healthy, happy inhabitants of the new eco-city. These twin fantasies of explosion and implosion function to mutually 'obfuscate the absolute synchronicity of the antagonism in question' (Žižek 1997, 14). In practice, however, both fantasies have been shattered by the material dynamics of this synchronicity. The monolithic imperative of endless accumulation has driven the expansion of the Ecuadorian oil frontier and appropriated the economic infrastructure of Manta–Manaus, while the rapid agglomeration of oil capital in Providencia has triggered a chaotic process of accumulation by dispossession that has overwhelmed *Divining Providencia's* vision of a rationally ordered eco-city.

The dominant literature on planetary urbanization lacks a utopian dimension. But by looking awry through the metaphor of black hole capitalism, we have seen that this process is filled with multiple dreams of different worlds. In the cases of Manta–Manaus and *Divining Providencia*, these dreams amount to nothing more than fantasies that conceal the Real of Capital and mobilize hope and desire towards the expanded reproduction of the status quo. In contrast to these utopian fantasies of implosion–explosion, Sumak Ñambi briefly constituted what we have called a Real utopia, located at the event horizon of black hole capitalism, where the seductions of hope are extinguished, and the creation of possible worlds becomes an urgent necessity. This utopia had no transcendent political

ideology. It sought neither to accelerate beyond nor break away from the capitalist system. And despite its fragile initial successes, it was quickly crushed by the immeasurably greater social forces that rapidly engulfed its fleeting materialization. Yet it was Real, to the extent that it began, not from a folk political faith in an autonomous anti-capitalism of an immediate present, nor from an accelerationist commitment to the redemptive powers of an imagined future, but from the stark realization that all hope had been lost. It was this realization that suddenly forced the community into action, catalysing the production of a possible world under conditions of seemingly objective impossibility, and constituting what Žižek (1999) has described as a real political act, 'which occurs *ex nihilo*, without any phantasmatic support' (460). There is a lesson here for the rest of us, seduced by the utopian fantasies that sustain our own unsustainable worlds. We live in the city of dreams. We drive on the highway of fire. But we are all hurtling towards the event horizon of black hole capitalism. In the words of the Invisible Committee (2009, 23), which capture the spirit of a Real utopianism: 'From whichever angle you approach it, the present offers no way out. This is not the least of its virtues.'

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Notes

- 1 A critical literature is rapidly emerging around the concept of planetary urbanization, and much of the debate is being played out in the pages of this journal: Bob Catterall has noted the neglect of the concept of the planet itself in the literature (Catterall 2013a, 2013b), as well as its lack of attention to cultural factors and the rural world (Catterall 2014); Mark Davidson and Kurt Iveson (2015) have asserted the continued critical relevance of the category of 'the city' against its declared obsolescence in the planetary urbanization literature; and Richard Walker (2015) has questioned Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid's (2015) claim that planetary urbanization demands 'a new epistemology of the urban'.
- 2 The animation can be seen at: <http://www.urbantheorylab.net/projects/extreme-territories-of-urbanization/> (accessed 9 May 2015).
- 3 Just as the theory of natural selection was arguably made possible by the emergence of competitive capitalism, so it is interesting to note that the epochal shifts in the emergence of capital as an abstract form of domination closely correspond to the key dates in the development of the theory of black holes. The possibility of a 'dark star' from which no light could escape was first posited in the late 18th century by John Mitchell, just as real subsumption was first getting underway, and Adam Smith was formulating his theory of 'the invisible hand of the market' (which can itself be interpreted as a fetishized representation of capital as an abstract form of domination). The first Einsteinian theory of a black hole was formulated by J. Robert Oppenheimer (the inventor of the atomic bomb) in 1939, in the midst of the most profound crisis in the history of world capitalism. And black holes entered popular consciousness in the early 1970s, just as global capitalism was entering its next major crisis, and value was being 'dematerialized' by the dissolution of the gold-dollar standard (see Bartusiak 2015 for a history of the science of black holes).
- 4 The uncanny parallels between black holes and planetary urbanization raise the thorny old Marxist question of whether nature itself is dialectically structured. Dialectical materialism has been widely rejected by more 'progressive' strands of Marxism, owing to its association with Stalinism and with Engels's allegedly 'positivist' distortion of Marx's

thought. According to the Marxist ecologist John Bellamy Foster (2000), however, Engels's position was more ambiguous than his detractors allow: 'Engels sometimes writes as if the dialectic was an ontological property of nature itself; at other times he seems to be leaning toward the more defensible, critical postulate that the dialectic, in this realm, is a necessary heuristic device for human reasoning with regard to nature' (232). It is in this latter, 'heuristic', sense that we understand the relationship between the Real of nature and the symbolic universe of the dialectic.

- 5 The IIRSA includes 583 projects with a combined cost of US\$158 billion. These projects are being financed by the national states themselves, as well as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) and the Brazilian state-sponsored National Bank of Economic and Social Development (BNDES) (Sanahuja 2012, 15).
- 6 Local landowner, interview 11 February 2015, Shushufindi, Ecuador.
- 7 Elias Piaguaie, leader of the Sekopai nation, interview 10 February 2015, San Pablo, Ecuador.
- 8 Greg Lindsay, interview 16 June 2015, New York, USA (via Skype).
- 9 Elias Piaguaie, leader of the indigenous nation of the Sekopai, interview 10 February 2015.
- 10 Kichwa inhabitant of Providencia, interview 26 February 2015, Providencia, Ecuador.
- 11 Nelson Castillo, speech delivered at an assembly of Sumak Ñambi, 29 March 2015, Providencia, Ecuador.
- 12 Our account of Sumak Ñambi is comprised from numerous interviews with members of the association and personal observations drawn from six visits to Providencia between January and July 2015.
- 13 Nelson Castillo, speech delivered at an assembly of Sumak Ñambi, 29 March 2015, Providencia, Ecuador.
- 14 Sumak Ñambi's assertion of the right to the city, while not articulated in these terms, is entirely consistent with Lefebvre's insistence that 'The right to the city ... can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed *right to urban life*. It does not matter whether the urban fabric encloses the countryside and what survives of peasant life, as long as the "urban", place of encounter, priority of use value, inscription in space ... finds its morphological base and its practico-material realization' (Lefebvre 1996, 158).
- 15 Nelson Castillo showed us the map of the town, explaining its layout (20 June 2015).
- 16 Nelson Castillo, interview 20 June 2015, Providencia, Ecuador.
- 17 This was explained to us during interviews with the heads of planning of the prefectural and municipal governments (both interviews conducted

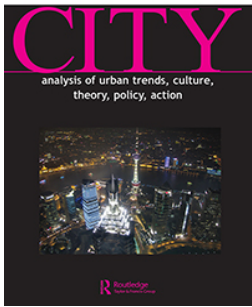
on 18 June 2015, in Lago Agrio and Shushufindi, respectively).

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Arpan Roy

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Reimagining resilience

Urbanization and identity in Ramallah and Rawabi

Arpan Roy

*Although Palestinian society is urbanizing at a rapid rate, the land and its people remain steeped in rural imagery and symbolism in the Palestinian self-imagination. Meanwhile, to accommodate real estate demands in Ramallah, the West Bank's cultural and political hub, an ambitious new satellite city is being built that markets itself as the 'first planned city in Palestinian history'. I develop the position in this paper that Rawabi, situated 9 km from Ramallah in the central West Bank highlands, is a symptom of an emerging trend in which a new capitalist class is reimagining the Palestinian symbolic self-image in terms of an urban strategy that Henri Lefebvre (2003, *The Urban Revolution*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 144) believed 'can only proceed using general rules of political analysis', and that this political process relies on emulating successful Zionist models of state-building that Palestinians have observed for about a century. This reimagination transcends the existing status quo of the existential relationship between Palestinians and the land, generally understood as sumud 'steadfastness', and brings into form a new ethics in Palestinian politics that is at once global while also particular to a distinctly colonial situation.*

Key words: Palestine, Ramallah, Rawabi, Israel, urbanization, modernity

Introduction

This paper addresses a movement within West Bank Palestinian society of a burgeoning modernity that is presented here through the allegory of Rawabi, a new planned city marketed as the first planned urbanization project in Palestinian history; an ambiguous campaign that flirts with historical memory in a region that is not particularly prone to amnesia. I see the lure of projects like Rawabi in terms of what Yiftachel (2009, 245) calls 'new subjectivities among excluded groups, particularly in urban

colonial situations in which such groups are out of the reach of hegemonic projects, yet within the economy and "ground" politics of their cities'. That is, urban development by Palestinians may be seen as a movement within greater Palestinian movements in which a particular vision of modernity is etching out a space within what Bourdieu (2000, 234) viewed as a 'margin of freedom for political action aimed at reopening the space of possibles', while the greater population body enters into this opening with ambivalence. With the rural to urban transformation in the Palestinian territories now at an advanced state, I

posit in this paper that Rawabi is an instance that serves to mitigate a temptation for the West in which Palestinians are themselves the agents of urbanization, modernization, etc., a veritable sea change for Palestinian identity at this historical conjuncture. Known as ‘convergence’ in the globalization discourse (Marcotullio 2003) and ‘planetary urbanization’ in urban theory (Brenner and Schmid 2012), rural to urban shifts are steadily unfolding anywhere the rural continues to exist, but Palestine makes for a particularly interesting case, bracketed as it is by cultural and political conditions necessarily contingent on the dynamics of the Israel/Palestine conflict.

Palestine, in its symbolic self-image, is not an urban civilization. The two visual symbols of Palestine are the checkered *kufiyyah*, a headscarf with roots in Arab folk culture, and the seemingly infinite olive tree. Palestinian movements, harbingers of modern Palestinian identity (Khalidi 1997), are rich with such rural imagery. Nationalist posters rely heavily on representations of sickles and stalks of wheat alongside Kalashnikovs, and early resistance leaders thematically aligned the Palestinian struggle with peasant guerrilla uprisings in Asia and Latin America in contextualizing the Israel/Palestine conflict in its early decades (Lybarger 2007, 22). Mahmoud Darwish, Palestine’s greatest poet, embodied the Palestinian narrative with a lexicon of rural, pathos-laden metaphors. In Darwish’s poems, Palestine is depicted as an idyllic peasant landscape uninterrupted by urbanity, and one in which Palestine’s formerly great port cities are conspicuously absent (Nassar 2008, 195). Written in 1964, roughly coinciding with the rise of the Palestinian resistance (Collins 2004, 58), ‘Identity Card’ is perhaps Darwish’s most reproduced poem:

‘My father came from a line of plowmen,
and my grandfather was a peasant
who taught me about the sun’s glory
before teaching me to read.
my home is a watchman’s shack
made of reeds and sticks
—Does my condition anger you?’

Yet, just as Brenner and Schmid (2012, 13) write that ‘the “non-urban” appears increasingly to be an ideological projection derived from a long dissolved, preindustrial geohistorical formation’, the reality of urbanization in the Palestinian territories will soon confine their rural identity to realms of folklore. *Sumud* ‘steadfastness’ is a concept Palestinians proudly cite to celebrate their resilience and preservation of traditional cultural forms despite over six decades of living with restricted rights and movement. Meghdessian (1998, 41) sees *sumud* as a ‘means to protect the integrity of Palestinian society’; that is, to preserve it, to shield it from colonial corruption. Its practice is existential. Halper (2006) calls it ‘a strategy within non-strategy’. Yet, how nationalism as such expresses itself in Palestine is increasingly shifting away from symbolism rooted in the pre-colonial and being reimagined instead as laissez-faire economic growth, a new source of tremendous pride for members of the business and professional classes—the new architects of Palestinian identity. This is what I propose to be viewed as a still emerging response to a prolonged political equilibrium meaningfully untethered by resilience alone. It is also a radical departure from *sumud* as it has been lived, believed, reproduced.

Rural and urban populations in the West Bank are now approximately evenly distributed, while population density in Gaza ranks among the highest in the world. In accommodating these shifting demographics, Palestinian cities in the West Bank are experiencing a real estate and development boom that is curious, at best, when considering that it is a quasi-state perhaps best described as *liminal*, as traditionally imagined in anthropology to be an existential condition most commonly associated with Victor Turner’s (1969, 1973, 1974) classic writings. Turner (1969) described liminal individuals as ‘threshold people... betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony’ (95) and anthropomorphic liminal processes like rituals, pilgrimages, etc. as places and moments ‘in and out of time’

(Turner 1973, 214). I extend the metaphor to the concept of the quasi-state in the Palestinian context. Palestinian liminality at the state-organizational level may be imagined as functioning in three tiers, with an outer tier of international patronage under organizations heavily invested in Palestinian rights, economic and humanitarian development, and statehood—e.g. the United Nations, United Nations Relief and Works Agency, Médecins Sans Frontières, the International Red Cross and Crescent, etc.—an intermediary but totalizing tier of Israeli control of precisely the areas where these aforementioned organizations are active, and a final inner tier of autonomous Palestinian self-government in pockets of this area. This tiered organizational pattern of the Palestinian territories embodies a *liminality*, a straddling between an imagined quasi-state in the eyes of the world—in the words of Hage (2009, 66): ‘an anthropomorphically imagined affective political entity’—and a being-in-the-world as bantustans (see Abourahme 2009) within a colonial enterprise in which its existential condition is defined through its relationship with the *Israeli-other* both anthropomorphically and politically. Any discussion of development in Palestine must be framed within Palestine’s existential condition as a politically liminal entity/non-entity. It is this politically uncertain habitus that facilitates the rise of a particular hegemonic vision.

This paper draws from research conducted over eight months of fieldwork in Ramallah between 2012 and 2014, a time during which Rawabi became increasingly common as a divisive conversation topic in the city and a prominent visual landmark in the hilly terrain of the central West Bank highlands.

I arranged with Rawabi staff to interview a dozen families in the summer of 2013 who have purchased flats in Rawabi with formally structured questions, and I intersperse their stories into my analytical framework to provide an ethnographic dimension from precisely the social actors whose agency will constitute Rawabi’s anthropomorphic reality, but who are also themselves interesting for being

in a liminal state of zigzagging through a rapidly changing Palestinian habitus. I also draw from unstructured interviews with Rawabi sales representatives, Ramallah-based real estate agents and architects, and from many informal conversations with Palestinians. My own experience living in Ramallah during fieldwork was to a great extent dependent on the people in my life, namely, members of the Palestinian urban middle class. I know their struggles with the confluence of modernity and Palestinian identity, both personal and collective, to be quite real. I see it is as the task of anthropological writing to shape these anxieties into critical theory.

Ramallah’s colonial present

By the time I first visited Rawabi in the summer of 2012, the project had already become a household name in the West Bank. I caught a ride in a pickup truck from the service road at the entrance of the township, then heavily under construction, to the showroom and office up the hill. My driver was Ahmed, a cheerful young man from a village near Ramallah who works in construction in Rawabi, a new city being built 9 km northwest of Ramallah. ‘There’s no money in Ramallah’, Ahmed complained. I pointed out to him that Ramallah is enjoying something of a consumer boom in which hotels, restaurants, malls and new European cars are defining life in the city, but he merely frowned. When I asked him what he thinks of Rawabi, he told me, ‘I will live here. It will be very nice, very modern.’

We were arriving at the showroom, overlooking bright red cranes and steel building frames against a backdrop of purplish hills. In the distance, I could make out the Tel Aviv skyline. ‘And Ramallah is not modern?’, I asked.

He frowned again, his determination to buy a flat in Rawabi unshaken. ‘Ramallah is also nice, but it’s not like this.’ This paper, to a great extent, is an attempt to understand this inconsistency.

Ramallah, until relatively recently, was a small Christian town known primarily as a holiday getaway for wealthy Jerusalem families (Taraki 2008a). Through the dramatic demographic transfiguration of the Palestinian lifeworld after Israel's conquests in 1948 and 1967 (Abdulhadi 1990; Abu Helu 2012), and after the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995 articulated a political base for Palestinians in the West Bank (Tamari 2009, 58), it is today the undisputed cultural and political hub of Palestine. Local and international non-governmental organization (NGO) workers crowd the city's many bars and cafés, in an ambiance evoking Rick's Café American from *Casablanca*. Pedestrians stroll the lanes off Rukab Street, Ramallah's vibrant shopping thoroughfare. Visiting corporate executives stay in luxury hotels in al-Masyoun, a high-end neighborhood that aims to recreate the lazy affluence of West Jerusalem lost to Palestinians. Among the city's cosmopolitan residents are a handful of Israeli dissidents who, in perhaps the ultimate political statement, have decided to live in Ramallah. Partly a sophisticated outward-looking city but still partly an archaic Arab market town with an underlying foundation of traditional kinship-based power, Ramallah continues to be an anomaly. The combined population of Ramallah, its twin municipality al-Bireh, and nearby refugee camps and villages, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2014, 26), is estimated to be 338,000, a number that can only be stated but rarely experienced, given that this population is one of the least dense among West Bank governorates. Its sparseness preserves the quaintness of a village in places.

On the other hand, Ramallah is surrounded by Jewish settlements on all sides. Jerusalem, only 16 km away, is cut off from most Ramallahis by a walled Israeli military checkpoint that doubles as a kind of intranational border crossing. Travel to the nearest accessible airport in Amman is a grueling and unpredictable adventure of about five hours, while passengers arriving at Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion Airport will almost certainly be denied entry

if they declare their intention to visit the Palestinian territories. Its seemingly booming economy is, in fact, artificially stimulated by foreign aid and remittances from the Palestinian diaspora in Europe and North America, who maintain close ties with Ramallah and color the local culture with a worldview that is increasingly apolitical and consumption-driven (Abourahme 2009, 505). In many ways, as sociologist Lisa Taraki (2008b) has observed, Ramallah is an 'enclave micropolis', in which certain classes are better connected financially and culturally to the Palestinian diaspora and to the Arab metropolises Cairo, Beirut and Amman than to other Palestinian cities, which have seen their bourgeois and middle classes majorly shaken by over six decades under Israeli rule.

Ramallah, of course, is only one among numerous Palestinian cities and its challenges are only a few among many in the lifeworld of Palestinians, but Ramallah and its environs make a compelling case study for the protracted Palestinian state of emergency as, in the words of one Jewish Israeli friend who visited me in Ramallah during the course of my fieldwork, 'It's amazing that this place even exists.' As Abourahme (2009, 508) emphatically writes:

'How we plan and articulate Ramallah has much to do with how we construct and articulate ourselves. The design of this city and its relation to Palestine's other urban spaces is inexorably linked with, not only how we confront an inescapable "colonial present", but also with what kind of society we end up living and dying in.'

Rawabi in context

Thomas Leitersdorf, the Israeli architect who headed the planning of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement near Jerusalem, writes about Palestinian vernacular architecture (in Segal and Weizman 2003, 160):

'A man builds a home, a son is born, the son gets married and they need to add something,

so they add it on to the area of the street. But so long as there is still room enough for the donkey, there is no room for the car and all that it entails. But if you look at this process logically, by today's standards, you can't build a city this way. You can't pass up the necessary infrastructure or traffic and you can't provide a minimum level of services. But in terms of beauty they are way ahead of us! Architecture without architects—this is the Arab village, and this is its beauty. It is always better than when an architect comes in; the architect only spoils things because the architect has to work logically, and they do not.'

This statement has been derided for reinforcing orientalist stereotypes of an archaic and monolithic 'Islamic' architecture (Hertz 2012, 105; Weizman 2007, 44) but in comparing Jewish settlements to Palestinian villages and cities, a visible distinction is readily perceived. Jewish settlements, with their orderly rows of houses with red tiled roofs, lawns and supermarkets, are often described by visitors as resembling California suburbs. Palestinian cities, by contrast, are organic spaces that very much resemble overgrown versions of the Arab village described by Leitersdorf—in the Chicago School discourse: 'natural areas' determined by unplanned, subcultural forces (Sassen 2010, 5)—with archetypal features like densely built centers, houses with shared walls and narrow alleyways (Slyomovics 1993, 33). With available land for purchase diminishing in Area A, the archipelago-like 18% of the West Bank under Palestinian quasi-autonomy, new construction tends to be vertical rather than horizontal (Abu Helu 2012, 135). Furthermore, because of the confusing amalgam and often contradictory set of laws set in place by the successive regimes that have ruled over Palestinians in recent centuries—Ottoman, British, Jordanian and Israeli—it is not difficult to bypass or reinterpret building codes and erect new structures in cramped spaces where families already own land and, thus, avoid having to purchase or rent new land elsewhere (129). Meanwhile,

and perhaps paradoxically, sprawl is emerging as a major observable phenomenon in Ramallah due to the same confusion, as it is, to a lesser extent, in the Bethlehem–Beit Sahour–Beit Jala conurbation. Most of it is a result of housing constructions to accommodate the arrival of internal migrants from within the West Bank, as well as second homes for returning members of the Palestinian diaspora (Al-Houdalieh and Sauders 2009, 2). Unfinished housing constructions are ubiquitous in the outskirts of Ramallah, many of which are either structures that were abandoned during construction in the violent times of the second intifada, or projects initiated but not completed by real estate speculators in anticipation of a post-conflict housing boom. In Ramallah's old center, a Haussmannization unfolded over the years, replacing some of the city's oldest buildings with apartments and broad streets with commerce in mind. Riwaq, a conservationist group working with heritage sites in Palestine, identifies a mere six heritage buildings remaining in the vicinity of the old center. Since 2005, there has been a renewed interest in the city's heritage, mainly through the initiative of Riwaq. In 2014, bricks were laid on the neighborhood's streets to evoke a feeling of antiquity; a sign of changing attitudes.

In the near absence of planning, parks and green spaces have been excluded from new developments and neighborhoods, creating dense, claustrophobic environments surrounded by vast expanse that is under the jurisdiction of the Israeli military. Ironically, some features of Jewish settlements are diffusing into Palestinian vernacular architecture. New Palestinian structures adopt the red tiled roof that was once the 'ubiquitous symbol of Jewish settlements', as outlined by architect Weizman (2007, 126) in his landmark book on Israeli settlement architecture. Palestinian developments are also beginning to be built in the outward-facing style of settlements, but with the crucial difference of being settled on low hilltops or along canyons while Jewish settlements almost

always occupy the highest available hills. The two often resemble dueling townships.

The tiered liminality of Palestinian being-in-the-world is reflected in the liminality of Palestinian development. Writing about urban ‘gray spaces’, Yiftachel (2009, 242) posits that ‘though still weak, the subaltern are shifting their strategies by partially (if not completely) disengaging their behavior, identity and resource-seeking from the state, and by developing an alternative vision to civil integration as citizens in an inclusive state’. But this alternate vision is dominated in scale and efficiency by hegemonic subjectivities within Palestinian liminality, namely, a rising capitalist class with the resources to shift the Palestinian symbolic self-image away from the village house and olive grove—as I will show later in my discussion of *sumud*—and to markers of modernity like high-rises, condominiums, glass-façaded banks, etc.

Let me stress here that a majorly overlooked factor in the anxieties stemming from a disrupted habitus of rural to urban transformation aside, the kind of sprawl occurring in Palestinian metropolitan areas is itself an expansive process, the inverse of rural to urban, of urban to rural. Henri Lefebvre (2003) asserted, now already half a century ago, that the term ‘city’ itself is antiquated and that it is the *urban fabric* that ‘grows, extends its borders, corrodes the residue of agrarian life’ (3). The hard version of this is highlighted in Anthony Leeds’ (1994) claim that ‘all rural people are urban people’ (56), though I advocate a more moderate view myself. ‘Rural’, for Leeds, refers ‘simply to a subset of specialties of an urbanized society and *rural people* as referring to part of subsocieties of urban societies’ (56). This, generally speaking, is ‘*planetary urbanization*’, as observed by Brenner and Schmid (2012, 12):

‘Even spaces that lie well beyond the traditional city cores and suburban peripheries—from transoceanic shipping lanes, transcontinental highway and railway

networks, and worldwide communications infrastructures to alpine and coastal tourist enclaves, “nature” parks, offshore financial centres, agro-industrial catchment zones and erstwhile “natural” spaces such as the world’s oceans, deserts, jungles, mountain ranges, tundra, and atmosphere—have become integral parts of the worldwide urban fabric.’

The major exception to the haphazard planning record outlined above and the clearest example of burgeoning hegemonic initiatives from a powerful new capitalist class is Rawabi, which transcends the problems of other Palestinian housing developments on virtually every level. Envisioned as a green satellite city to Ramallah, Rawabi will be built in stages (see Figure 1). Its two sections, including the fully planned town center dotted with parklets, opened with 200 families moving in as initial residents in late 2015, scaled back from earlier hopes of 40,000 residents, after many years of delays and difficulties in connecting the project to Israel-controlled water resources. Aiming to offer ‘affordable apartments to middle and upper-middle classes’, as one sales agent informed me, prices range from \$70,000 to \$200,000 per unit, significantly cheaper than real estate in Ramallah. In the Rawabi showroom, all the major banks operating in the West Bank are present with cubicles and teller windows, ready to offer home loans to those ready to make the plunge.

Rawabi is the pet project of Bashar Masri, a Palestinian-American entrepreneur and head of Ramallah-based Massar International, who is partnering with Qatari Diar in building Rawabi’s central 23 neighborhoods and commercial center before it is turned over to a municipality overseen by the Palestinian Authority, like any other city in Palestinian-controlled Area A of the West Bank. Hailing from one of the wealthiest and most elite families in the West Bank, Masri is an all around polarizing figure. Palestinian leftist activists decry Masri for his professional connections with his Israeli peers and the involvement of private Israeli firms in Rawabi’s construction—*tatbiyaa* ‘normalization’, in



Figure 1 Rawabi under construction in summer 2013 (Photo: Author).

the activist discourse; a veritable taboo—while *fellahin* ‘peasants’ and other members of lower socioeconomic classes in Rawabi’s vicinity also regard the project with suspicion, a cynicism that is unsurprising, as weaker members of Palestinian society are most vulnerable to being duped out of land by the Israeli legal system. ‘Rawabi is not for us’, I am told by Abu Majd, a roofer from the village of Abuwen, near Rawabi. His daughter, an Arabic teacher in Ramallah, asks, ‘Do you think we Palestinians can build something like this?’ Walking downhill from Abu Majd’s house to the village center, Rawabi appears, disappears and reappears between houses. It is the most prominent thing in sight.

Rumors about Rawabi range from Israeli involvement in its construction to the whole project suspected of being a cleverly disguised Jewish suburb of Jerusalem. Israeli buyers, rumor has it, are gobbling up units. Most provocatively, Palestinian leftists regularly decry Rawabi as a ‘Palestinian settlement’, a sentiment that bridges the gap

between the cynicism of the vulnerable lower classes, à la Abu Majd, and the equally cynical Palestinian leftist intelligentsia. Žižek (1989, 25) has made a strong argument for cynicism being a kind of ‘enlightened false consciousness’, but my argument shows here that it can also be a mechanism to internalize and navigate through a rapidly changing lifeworld. Cynicism is not always analogous to an inadequacy of reason.

The local resistance to Rawabi, in my view, draws from emotions that I believe run deeper than the present political quagmire and from psychoemotional disorientation in the urbanization of the Palestinian lifeworld. Writing about planetary urbanization, Merrifield (2013, 911–912) posits that ‘the urban is now an ontological reality inside us, one that behoves a different *way of seeing*: it is a *metaphilosophical* problem of grappling with ourselves in a world that is increasingly urbanized’. Merrifield refers to the urban as ‘another “way of seeing”, another way of conceiving urbanization in

our mind's eye . . . to grasp it as a complex adaptive system, as a chaotic yet determined process' (912).

I see the resistance to Rawabi on two fronts, the first being a resistance based on 'folkloric particularities' (Lefebvre 2003, 96) as in the case of roofer Abu Majd. Lefebvre argued that 'the critique of the city on behalf of the older community (tribal, village, parish) is a critique from the right' (95) and that protest 'based on *particularities*, generally of peasant origin, should not be confused with an opposition to repressive bodies or with an awareness and acknowledgment of *difference*' (96). On another front, members of the Palestinian leftist intelligentsia, still rooted in the revolutionary ethos of early Palestinian movements, are resisting Rawabi in terms of Lefebvre's second criterion. They are not exactly asking who has the 'right to the city', as per Lefebvre, David Harvey, etc., but, rather, who has the right to *build* the city?

Taraki (2008a, 68) finds that this 'unraveling' of a hegemonic culture in Palestine is concurrent with a middle class that finds itself 'thrust upon a changed world' and 'witnessing the collapse of the national project in its different variants, thrown to the vagaries of global markets, and forced to fend for itself' (70). It is precisely in this unraveling that the new capitalist elite is reimagining resilience.

What is indisputable in our case is that there is a blurring of identities occurring among Palestinians at this historical conjuncture in which urbanization plays an indispensable role. But, in terms of what Bourdieu (1977, 37) called 'official ideology', Palestinians are indifferent to such trends and continue to negotiate a cognitive space between rural and urban that is yet to find its full expression. Redfield (1947, 293) wrote in a classic essay that 'folk societies have certain features in common which enable us to think of them as a type—a type which contrasts with the society of the modern city'. The distinction, he adds, 'is ideal, a mental construction' (294). Consider then the following from Palestinian essayist Raja Shehadeh (2008, 27–28), who tells the story of

Abu Ameen, a farmer from the village of Harrasha who dwells bitterly in his cramped Ramallah house, dreaming instead of the rural life of his youth:

'Every morning he emerged from the house feeling drowsy, close to being asphyxiated from the carbon monoxide fumes of the charcoal they burned on the small metal *qanoon* inside the house to keep warm. The toilet was outside the house and during cold winter nights the animals were brought inside and slept in the downstairs area. It was confined, stuffy and noisy. His cheeks would be flushed, his head so heavy that he would be surprised by the fresh air. He claimed he suffered headaches from the continuous chatter of the women. He could hardly wait for the end of winter so he could be out again in the hills, sleeping on the roof of his *qasr* under the starry night sky, waking up in the morning with his clothes wet from dew. It was the silence that he craved most of all. That unique silence of the hills where you could hear the slithering of a snake in the undergrowth.'

Abu Ameen dwells thus somewhere between a nostalgic memory of his village and a semi-rural urban lifeworld, replete with material traces of his formerly rural life in the form of livestock, *qanoon* heating, etc. but transposed to the center of Ramallah's Old City. This betwixt and betweenness is the Palestinian identity at this historical conjuncture. It is, as Tamari (2009, 49) describes, 'a peasantized culture functioning in an urban context'. It is in this liminality that major urbanization projects like Rawabi are being constructed, much to the awe and bafflement of the likes of Abu Ameen.

Israel/Palestine as moieties

I do not want to minimize the importance of the asymmetry of power in Israel/Palestine. Nonetheless, I favor the view that there are deeper underlying cultural processes through which Arab and Jew in Israel/Palestine function as moieties. Literary critic

Ammiel Alcalay (1993) has put forth an ‘ecological model’ for Israel/Palestine, advocating an ‘examination of how cultures produce *themselves* within the conditions in which they happen to exist and evolve’ (33). If there is one truism one can make about the Israel/Palestine conflict, it is that, despite the walls, checkpoints, state and private security apparatus, mutual hostility, *intifadas*, et al., Arabs and Jews live together in a single conceptual space in which members of a community are divided into ‘two parts which maintain complex relationships varying from open hostility to very close intimacy, and with which various forms of rivalry and co-operation are usually associated’, as per Lévi-Strauss’s (1969, 69) description of societies with a dual organization system. Individuals in such societies are defined in relationship to each other ‘essentially by whether or not they belong or do not belong to the same moiety’ (71). In a strict anthropological analysis, the outcome of two social groups living in close proximity is formulaic. Diffusion of ideas, culture, taste, etc. towards an increasingly homogenizing entity is what was called in early anthropology a ‘culture area’, most famously by Kroeber (1939). This is perhaps outside the purview of what Bourdieu (1977, 37) called the ‘official version of social reality’ for the actors involved, but, for the world, there is no Israeli without Palestinian and no Palestinian without Israeli. Edward Said (1974) wrote of this inextricability in 1974, somewhat cryptically: ‘Each is the Other’ (3).

This mutual mimesis is true materially as much ideologically, and often the two are intertwined. Take, for instance, the earliest urban development project in modern Israel/Palestine: Tel Aviv. Founded in 1909, the vision for and choice of location of the showpiece city of Zionist modernism is linked inextricably to Jaffa, the center of pre-1948 Palestinian urban life. Rabinowitz and Monterescu (2008, 206) write that Tel Aviv, from its beginnings, ‘had a problematic and ambivalent relationship with Jaffa—its

mother city turned rival. Like many cases of child–parent rivalry, this relationship focused on the complexities of separation and individuation’. Mimesis, then, is a condition of the Israel/Palestine rivalry from the beginning to the extent that urban development is concerned. In the dualities of Israel/Palestine, Zionist modernism is the other for the Palestinian rural self-image, Tel Aviv is the other for Ramallah—at least in the post-Oslo period—and Jewish settlements are the other for the Palestinian village landscape. In the case of the latter, and going further than the mere diffusion of red roofs, Weizman (2007, 52) writes of Palestinian villages:

‘The utilitarian modernist silhouette of their slab construction, supported over the hilly landscape by columns, was influenced by the modernist ethos of early Zionist architecture. Appearing as a local adaptation of modernist villas, they testify to a complete reversal, which the policies of Israeli domination have brought on the building culture of Israelis and Palestinians alike.’

It is because of this processual mimesis that the leftist critique of Rawabi, as per Lefebvre’s opposition of difference, cannot be accurately understood solipsistically, and the *Israeli-other* must also be included in the narrative. As wrote Sartre (1956, 364): ‘Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others.’

I return then, to the leftist critique of Rawabi as a ‘Palestinian settlement’ that is ubiquitous in the cafés and bars of Ramallah, where intellectuals crowded around clouds of shisha and cigarette smoke dismiss the project *en absolute*. The deconstruction of the ‘Palestinian settlement’ thus lies in the Jewish settlement and the mimesis that this duality implies.

I am reminded here of Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti’s (2004, 34) lyrical memoir of returning to his hometown after three decades of exile:

‘The first morning in Ramallah. I wake up and hasten to open the window.

"What are these elegant houses, Abu Hazim?" I asked, pointing at Jabal al-Tawil, which overlooks Ramallah and Bireh.

"A settlement."

Then he added: "Tea? Coffee? Breakfast is ready."

What a beginning to my resumed relationship with the homeland! Politics confront me at every turn.'

The history of *bityashvut* 'settlement' and *hitnachalut* 'squatting' activity by Zionist pioneers in Palestine began in 1878, but after the formation of the Israeli state in 1948 and the systematic Judaization of the Galilee and other areas with previously minimal Jewish presence (Falah 1991; Halper 2006, 64), 'settlement' has come to describe only new developments in the territories occupied by Israel after the 1967 War. In Israeli polit speak, there is a tendency to avoid both labels and use, instead, *yishuvim*, a generic and ambiguous term originating in the early Zionist period that does not distinguish settlements from collective agricultural communities like *kibbutzim* or *moshavim*. In the case of the Jerusalem area, new settlements are euphemized as *shhunut* 'neighborhood' (Weizman 2007, 8). But the difference between settlements and squats is a political one and not at all universal. Settlement construction after the 1967 War is legislated by the state and seen by centrist and many liberal Jewish Israelis as a legitimate extension of Israel, while the establishment of *hitnachalut* squatter communities, known in English as 'outposts', are seen as autonomous actions by renegade extremists (Newman 2008, 207–208). For settlers themselves, the difference is trivial. Gush Emunim, the religious-nationalist settler movement that emerged in the early 1970s and influenced virtually all other settler movements thereafter, embraces the inextricability between settlements and outposts as part of its foundational identity, recalling both the dual nature of activities by early Zionist pioneers, as well as Joshua's brutal but necessary conquest of

Canaan, as per the Bible (Newman 2008, 208).

Jewish settlements in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, now number over 200, including outposts, and have a population of 400,000. Many settlers are now third-generation Israelis living in settlements, meaning they have known no other home. Connected to Israel's 1949 armistice borders by an exclusive road system that circumvents Palestinian traffic and served with a modern Western infrastructure by the Israeli state, many settlers have only the vaguest idea of where they're living and what it means to be there in global geopolitical terms. Driving inside Israel and on Israeli roads, one dips in and out of the West Bank many times without anything really happening.

The West Bank holds a special place in the Israeli national consciousness. Judea and Samaria, as it is known by Israelis, is considered an integral part of Israel, and even liberal Israelis who support disengaging from the West Bank generally frown upon removing larger settlements like Ariel and Ma'ale Adumim, which are, in all logistical reality, fully functioning towns indistinguishable from those within Israel's 1949 armistice borders. It is worth noting that these liberal Israelis never held a similar emotional attitude towards Gaza, from which Israel evacuated its settlements in 2005. The Gaza disengagement, though, was a particularly sensational moment for Israelis, as the televised coverage of the forced evacuation of 8600 dramatic, hysterical settlers clinging to their homes has set a precedent for precisely how not to disengage from an occupied territory (see Dalsheim 2011).

A growing body of writing on Israel/Palestine etches out a Judaization of the character of the land from the pre-state period to the present day that, above all else, establishes Jewish roots in Palestine by an active and systematic engagement with it. Examples include the institutionalization of *ha'tiyul* 'hiking' to manufacture emotions between Jewish youths and *ha'eret* 'the land' (Azaryahu and Golan 2004; Ben-David 1997;

Kelner 2010; Stein 2009), or stimulating a mythistorical memory of a distant but glorious Jewish past via selective archaeological practices (Abu El Haj 1998, 2001), or by planting forests to distinguish Jewish inheritance of the land from its appearance under the Arab predecessors. 'For the Zionist settlers, trees were more than a visual or literary metaphor', writes Zerubavel (1996, 60). 'The act of planting a tree was seen as a necessary ritual of connecting to the land.' In the Ottoman and British periods, the success of a single settlement or an individual settler was a microcosm of the potential success of the Yishuv, the larger Jewish settlement in Palestine (63). More recently, the continuation of settlement construction and expansion acts as a lifeline for the existence of a Jewish Israeli state that relies on a demographic presence throughout the land to weaken calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state and to make a potential disengagement from the West Bank impossible. Jewish settlements, thus, can be seen to possess qualities that are active and not passive, ambivalent towards legality, and part of a perceived historical process that began in the biblical period and continues with the initiatives of both elected state leaders and non-state actors like Gush Emunim and succeeding movements.

Taking into consideration these notes about the history and ideology of Jewish settlements in Palestine past and present, I share the following words from Mazen. The director of a US-based NGO in Ramallah, he has just bought a flat in Rawabi with his wife. He explains his reasons for choosing Rawabi over new developments in Ramallah:

'From a patriotic perspective, we are building paradise over these deserted mountains that might be under threat of being confiscated by the Israelis. We know how much the Israelis are expanding their settlements day by day since we signed the agreement at Oslo. The number of settlements are maybe 10 times what they used to be during Oslo. In time they are cutting and eating these mountains bit by bit. For a Palestinian company to come,

like Masri and others who are building Rawabi, I think they are doing something good for Palestinians; first from keeping these mountains from being confiscated, and second, by allowing people a new chance of living a modern lifestyle in a city like this.'

Mazen's view of Rawabi reflects the embryonic stage of an initiative to resist Israeli dominance in the West Bank through active development and reimagination of the land, mirroring the ideology of Jewish settler movements of Judaization. This is, in fact, very different from the historical Palestinian approach to resilience, *sumud*, and is what I propose to be theorized as a new ideological frontier. It is a frontier that learns from an intimate acquaintance with Zionism.

Sumud and post-sumud

In the lexicon of Palestinian movements, two words stand above all others: *muqawama* 'resistance' and *sumud* 'steadfastness' (Schiocchet 2012, 67–68). *Sumud* is a term used by Palestinians to politicize their most unremarkable activities—dwelling, consuming, laughing, loving, etc.—in lieu of an everyday violence resulting from Israeli military rule; a kind of ordinary violence that 'occurs within the weave of life as lived in the kinship universe', to borrow an expression from Veena Das (1998, 181). It is conceived as a passive form of political resistance that manifests in routine modes of being ... Halper's aforementioned 'strategy within a non-strategy'. Lotte Buch Segal (2015, 42) offers an interpretation of *sumud* as 'practicing patience', relating it to an 'image of the Palestinian collective ... supporting activities of resistance'. But where does *sumud* as a resistance strategy/non-strategy intersect with resilience? 'We are all resisting', a Ramallawi friend told me. 'The shopkeeper across the street is resisting by not closing down his shop and moving to America.' This routine and often mundane maintenance of Palestinian integrity is *sumud* as an existential fact—a 'descent into everyday life',

to draw from Veena Das's work on the ordinariness of living with pain, trauma, hardship, etc. (see Das 2007). The shopkeeper's resilience is integrated into his being-in-the-world. It is here perhaps that we can see *sumud* an instance *par excellence* of the kind of ethics that Das (2015, 55) describes as 'inhering in the quotidian rather than standing out and announcing its presence through dramatic enactments of moral breakdown or heroic achievement'. But a broader definition of *sumud* includes the continuation of traditional Palestinian cultural forms, like the *dabke*, an Arab folk dance autochthonous to the Levant normally performed in peasant costumes, and bodies of art and literature that integrate into resistance motifs. A 1989 collection of Palestinian folk tales translated into English and later French titled *Speak, Bird, Speak Again*, published in the tumultuous midst of the first intifada, is one example of the politicized preservation of traditional forms. A cumbersome anthropological project that fortuitously coincided with the arrival of a Palestinian political consciousness, the collection's foreword by folklorist Alan Dundes states (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989, xii):

'It is perhaps a tragic irony of history that the Jews, who themselves have been forced by bigotry and prejudice to wander from country to country seeking even temporary sanctuary, have through the formation of a "homeland" caused another people to become homeless. Although this complex issue has engendered great emotion on all sides, one fact is beyond dispute: there was once an area of the world called Palestine, where the Arab inhabitants had—and have—a distinctive culture all their own. It is that culture that is preserved so beautifully in the magical stories contained in this volume.'

The existential antonym of *sumud* is *muqawama* 'active resistance'; that Palestinians attribute to everything from throwing stones to the kind of more severe warfare seen in Gaza and previously in the West Bank and within Israel's 1949 armistice

borders during the second intifada. But here there is a class divide that is esconded in the strategic essentialism of the Palestinian national movement. Class society in contemporary urban Palestine is marked by what Taraki (2008b, 7) describes as 'growing social disparities and their normalization; and the globalized, modernist urban ethos articulated by a new middle class'.

Yiftachel (2002) pairs the cultivation of *sumud* as a resistance narrative with the rise of settler movements like Gush Emunim in the 1970s, replacing the earlier dichotomy of *gola* and *galut* 'exile, diaspora' for Jewish Israelis and *manfah* or *ghourba* 'dispersion, estrangement' for Palestinians. In fact, for Palestinians, concepts of steadfastness and dispersion are not unrelated. The conviction to not budge from the land is a conscious response to the exile of 750,000 Palestinians in 1948, known as the *Nakba* 'catastrophe', and an acknowledgement that only roughly half the world's ethnic Palestinian population currently remain in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and Israel. Here the dual narratives of Jewish Israelis and Palestinians become nearly identical through a cultural ethos defined by what social psychologist Phillip Hammack (2011) calls a pattern of 'descent and gain' for Jews (117), referring mostly to the historical persecution of Jews in Europe that preceded the triumphant founding of the Israeli state, and 'dispossession and resistance' for Palestinians (122), and one in which both sides identify strongly with notions of exile, diaspora and estrangement. With time, and with questions of veracity and entitlement aside, the two narratives are becoming dual versions of one essential narrative. The importance and consequences of the Holocaust in the Palestinian national discourse is also worth considering here. The Holocaust features prominently in curricula in Palestinian schools (Adwan, Bar On, and Naveh 2012), and the persistence of the Holocaust on the global stage as a reference point for the tragedy of modernity utilizes its memory as the 'cultural foundation for



Figure 2 Model set of Rawabi (Photo: Author).

global human rights politics' even by populations that have no direct connection to it (Levy and Sznajder 2002, 88). For Palestinians, with their extraordinarily close if unusual relationship with Jews, the principal victims of the Holocaust, the influence of Jewish responses to the Holocaust on Palestinian resistance movements and discourse, namely, an acceleration in nationalist statecraft, cannot be ignored. Narratives diffuse no less readily than architecture.

Shifting from the conventionally understood forms of active *muqawama* and passive *sumud*, Rawabi is a notable development that borrows considerably from Israeli experiments with settlement. In one sense, its self-fashioned modernity aims to transcend common misconceptions about Middle Eastern cities that are often bogged by idioms like 'stagnation, traditionalism, and backwardness' (Rabinowitz and Monterescu 2008, 195), while its architectural styling of uniform, almost garish high-rises moves Rawabi closer to satellite cities and townships in much of the global South and, specifically, the Gulf (see Figure 2). The involvement of Qatari firms in Rawabi's construction as an

obvious factor aside, the persistence of the exuberantly wealthy rulers of Gulf cities to become an influence on Palestinian and other Arab populations as a marker for modernity pushes Doha, Abu Dhabi and Dubai to fill the void left by Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo of bygone eras, albeit with mixed results. Interestingly, after Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005, pro-Israel commentators sardonically challenged Palestinians to build a 'Dubai on the Mediterranean', ignoring the spartan living conditions imposed on Gazans by Israel after its withdrawal of settlements (Roy 2005, 65).

On the other hand, the closest city with any kind of resemblance to Rawabi is Modi'in, a planned city pegged to Israel's 1949 armistice border along the West Bank. Designed by Moshe Safdie, a student of architectural giant Louis Kahn, Modi'in was founded in 1993 to much curiosity from the Israeli public, but during my visit to the city I sensed only gloomy late-Soviet decline. Could this be one of Rawabi's possible futures? While researching Rawabi's optimal options, Safdie was consulted by Masri and his staff on the successes and

failures of planning a city in the region, and Rawabi's architects toured Modi'in up to four times a week during initial planning stages, visits that are cited by Masri's detractors as evidence of his collaboration with Israel. More interestingly, Israel's Civil Administration, the unit of the military that governs the West Bank, has permitted the planting of 25,000 trees around Rawabi. Not only is this noteworthy for being the first Palestinian forestation project approved by Israel, but also for being the first serious Palestinian attempt at forestation after observing Zionist forestation projects for about a century. The theme of mimesis in the Israel/Palestine moieties reemerges here.

But who are the Palestinians buying flats in Rawabi? My interviews with Rawabi buyers tell the stories of ambivalent social actors who are being ushered dreamily into a hazy future that as yet has not come into view. Abu Sami is from a farming family in Salfit, a village near Nablus, who works as a police officer in Ramallah:

'I built my house over many years. My house is located between Areas B and C. I am very close to my other neighbors, who are fully located in [Israeli-controlled] Area C and are under the threat of being demolished by the

Israelis. So even if I want to expand my house and make it bigger, I can't. So it's whatever I have now. I can't add even one room. The area I'm living in is very limited for land available for building. Forty percent of the houses there are under threat of being demolished.

Expansion is not an option. I have kids and they're grown up. I'll need more rooms and a bigger house. As Palestinians we always suffer. Rawabi is a creative and ambitious city. It's a very creative idea.'

Abu Sami is choosing to buy a flat in Rawabi over Ramallah because Rawabi, located approximately halfway between Salfit and Ramallah, will allow him and his family easier access to his village (see Figure 3). The village is the center of emotional life in the Palestinian imagination. Asking Ramallahis where they are from, the answer will almost always be the name of the village of their parents, whether it be in the West Bank, inside Israel, in Gaza, or one of the 530 villages emptied or destroyed during the nakba. A Ramallah journalist originally from a village near Jenin who is buying a flat in Rawabi tells me, 'Emotionally all my connections are to Deir Ghazaleh.' He pauses to select his words carefully, bemused by the anthropologist quizzing the



Figure 3 Abu Sami and his family in the Rawabi showroom (Photo: Author).

journalist. 'I make sure I participate in all the social events that happen there. I live in Ramallah because my work is in Ramallah.'

The determination of Palestinians to maintain a link to the village is a dimension of the Palestinian self-identification with peasantry, but also an extension of the dominant themes of the Palestinian narrative—exile, estrangement, dispersion; themes that permeate to an understanding of the urban experience as unnatural and bound by temporariness. But to what extent is the village landscape held in the hearts and minds of Palestinians an idyllic lost past not only for its loss to Israel, but also to capitalism, globalization, modernity, etc.? Take, for instance, Salwa, an economist who dwells comfortably in an upscale neighborhood of Ramallah, regularly travels internationally and lives a life not dissimilar to those of practicing academics elsewhere in the world. In no way can she be seen to be in colloquy with the village lifeworld. Yet, in conversation with her regarding Palestinian identity, she uttered, decisively: 'We have for centuries worked on the land.' I was immediately struck by her choice of pronoun—the first person plural—which locates her belonging to within a peasant identity naturally suited to the Palestinian village. Is this a strategic choice to generate difference between colonized/colonizer, or a more depoliticized affiliation stimulated by the disorientation from rapid, planetary urbanization?

It is true that Palestinians from business and professional classes, in a disavowal of class and cultural incompatibilities, continue to principally see themselves as *fellahin* (Swedenborg 1990), but as younger generations are raised entirely in urban environments and memories of an idyllic pre-nakba national past recede to childhoods deeply shaped by two intifadas, barbed wire, checkpoints and modernity, it is interesting to postulate what significance the *fellahin* will maintain in the Palestinian identity of the future. This, in part, is the shift away from *sumud* as it has been traditionally practiced.

Nonetheless, in the process of the urbanization of Palestine, the village house, like the olive tree, continues to symbolize roots and resilience. As villages grow to towns and towns grow to cities, and as internal migration of labor becomes commonplace, the Palestinian house becomes a material link between the imagined identity and the burgeoning reality. Emad, a sales agent at Rawabi, tells me:

'For the Palestinian people, the houses and apartments they live in have a strong emotional connection to them. Most of the time they inherit these houses from their parents and grandparents, and by the time this house becomes a very important location in the city, its financial value goes sky high. So although these families are sometimes in need of financial help, or selling this house could make them really rich and turn their lives around 180 degrees, they still can't take the decision to sell it, because of the emotional connection with that location. Also, there's another social consideration. People, neighbors, and relatives consider it kind of a shame. It's not something people would like if you sell a house you inherited from your parents. All for emotional reasons.'

I am reminded of an anecdote from Susan Slyomovics's ethnography of Ein Hod in Israel. The Palestinian village of Ein Houd was evacuated during the nakba and later became an Israeli artist community by the name of Ein Hod, a Hebrew variation on the original Arabic. Palestinian villagers returning to Ein Houd after the hostilities of 1948 subsided were surprised to find their homes inhabited by Jews. In the confusion, the Palestinian villagers built a make-shift village on a nearby hill that has since attained a state of permanent limbo. Slyomovics (1993, 34) relates the only known instance of an effort by a resident of the new Jewish Ein Hod to compensate a resident of the former Palestinian Ein Houd for his house:

'[...] Abu Hilmi always assumed he would return to his land and house, which had

become the property of the artist Isaiah Hillel ... Hillel tried to pay Abu Hilmi for the house, according to the architect Giora Ben-Dov ... Ben-Dov's is the only known Ein Hod anecdote recounting such a gesture: after Hillel received ownership title he walked up the mountain to visit Abu Hilmi to offer financial recompense. Hillel, a fluent Arabic speaker, was graciously received and thanked, but with these much-quoted words Abu Hilmi refused: "Because it is a house and you cannot sell a house."

Returning to the factors motivating internal migration in the West Bank that attract buyers to Rawabi, legal and infrastructural difficulties in expanding existing homes is a recurring theme, as in the case of Abu Sami. This trend is also observable in Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, which is a compelling development in the saga of Jerusalem as a contested city and a political focal point in the Israel/Palestine conflict. Fadi is a construction worker from the Al-Tur neighborhood of Jerusalem, better known by its English name, the Mount of Olives:

'We feel very tight in Jerusalem. The area we live in is very tight, very small. Even though we have land there, it's not easy to get a permit to build. When my father applied for a permit to build a house, they asked for 850,000 NIS [approx. \$240,000], just as taxes and fees. For the time being, because my father is old, I will have to be between here and there. I will not claim that I live in Rawabi. My address will be in Jerusalem. Rawabi is one option. I want to buy outside Jerusalem because in Jerusalem I cannot. Even a small house I had in Area C has been demolished. So all the options available for Jerusalem are very limited.'

In the palette of color-coded identity cards issued to Palestinians by Israel, the blue Jerusalem identity card holds a privileged position for the freer mobility it allows in comparison to the green West Bank identity card or the dreaded orange Gaza identity card, and also for the sheer *sumud* in it being evidence of a Palestinian presence in

Jerusalem. Fadi, by moving to Rawabi, invites the possibility of his Jerusalem identity card being revoked if Israeli authorities discover his purchase. 'It's risky', Rim, another buyer tells me. She is a single mother from Jerusalem who faces the same dilemma. My friend Mostafa, a native of Jerusalem, had his blue identity card revoked when authorities determined that his confectioner's shop in Ramallah violated Israel's 'center of life' policy that requires Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to orbit their existence around the holy city in order to be permitted residency in it. 'They're sick bastards', Mostafa tells me. His wife and two daughters, who were not stripped of their blue identity cards, are now obliged to make weekend visits to see him in Ramallah, where he lives in a micro-exile only 16 km away. In his newfound isolation, he has taken up writing short stories.

Much of the developments popping up in the West Bank sprawl are second residences for Jerusalemites preparing for the possibility of being evicted from Jerusalem at any moment. I cannot help but deduce a kind of fatalism in Jerusalemites buying flats in Rawabi. Fadi, the construction worker from the Mount of Olives, seemed fatigued from years of nursing his elderly father. Rim was between jobs. The struggle for Palestinians to maintain a presence in Jerusalem since the Israeli capture of the Old City and its eastern environs in 1967 has been a difficult one, as the Judaization, or, inversely, de-Arabization, of the city has increasingly forced Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to choose between jobs in Jerusalem and homes in the West Bank (Makdisi 2010, 177), or vice versa, through measures of control that include but are not limited to land expropriation, zoning regulations, denial of building permits, home demolitions and evictions, and refusal of commercial permits. Proportionate to the demographic decline has been the diminishing visibility of Palestinian culture in the city. This is observable in young Jerusalemites who prefer to drive to Ramallah or other Israeli cities for bars and

bohemian life, but also it is a problem on an institutional level. For instance, Jerusalem's turn to host the UNESCO Arab Capital of Culture program in 2009 was a disastrous affair mired by Israeli police shutting down numerous events with arrests and road blockades. The Hakawati Theater, the only Palestinian theater in Jerusalem, is perpetually operating with fear of imminent seizure by the Israeli Enforcement and Collection Authority.

'I forget the houses that inscribed my narrative', wrote Mahmoud Darwish (2009, 153) in his twilight years. 'And I remember my identity card number.' As with all other Palestinians, the identity card is shorthand for the Palestinian experience in Jerusalem. Jerusalemites crossing the Qalandia checkpoint from Ramallah to Jerusalem carefully unwrap their identity card from layers of plastic, as if it were a piece of jewelry. It is the tangible physical substance through which the abstract relationship between Palestinians and the invisible apparatus of state power is mediated (Tawil-Souri 2011, 82). To risk losing the blue Jerusalem identity card is to risk becoming further stateless. For these and other Palestinians voluntarily leaving their homes, the lure of Rawabi and the modernity that it promises, perhaps, is acquiescing with dignity to a superior power.

Discussion: reimagining resilience

This paper is, in one part, an attempt to understand the significance of Rawabi as an ontological fact, but I also use Rawabi as a vehicle to understand a larger movement, still emerging, that departs from *sumud* as it has been traditionally understood. If *sumud* has, for decades, been strategy within a non-strategy, then this new ideological frontier uses active initiatives to stake a claim on the land through engagement. What is at stake in this engagement is not only what may be called a 'neoliberal turn' in Palestinian politics (see Dana 2015), but, ironically, a political/ideological orientation that puts Palestinian

identity greatly in conversation with the Zionist legacy in Israel/Palestine. Rawabi is an instance of this inheritance reimagined in purely capitalist terms.

It is important here to consider the class reality in the West Bank. The fate of the dominant classes in Palestinian society is a rare instance in our world where the wealthy are, in many ways, as powerless as the poor. As colonial subjects in the West Bank, no amount of social status, buying power, Western education, foreign language acquisition, etc. leverages the upper classes over lower ebbs of society against Israel's policy towards Palestinians in the West Bank. There is a social ladder to climb, but it does not lead to Israel. In terms of political activism, there is also a disparity in which members of the dominant classes restrict themselves to spheres of knowledge production like advocacy, writing, scholarship, politically motivated art, etc.—Bourdieu's (1985, 731) 'production of common sense'—while it is the subaltern youth from urban peripheries, refugee camps and villages who engage in *muqawama* and suffer the fatal pitfalls of clashing with Israeli soldiers. Stone-throwing Palestinian subaltern are a classic case of what Žižek (2012, 53) describes as 'those outside the organized social sphere, prevented from participating in social production, who are able to express their discontent only in the form of "irrational" outbursts of destructive violence, or what Hegel called "abstract negativity"'.

Can we employ the same language of rationality/irrationality for the problematic of urban development in Palestine? 'Absurdity' is the term Marx used to describe what he called the 'epidemic of over-production' (Marx and Engels [1848] 2008, 42). Is this what critics of Rawabi mean? That there is, to quote Marx again, 'too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce?' (42). This conflict between an overproductive modernity and the yearning to maintain traditional cultural forms—the pre-colonial, real or imagined—is another way to frame the

emergence of a new ethics that departs from *sumud*; the major source of what I describe in this paper as disorienting.

Many of the emerging trends in Palestine, and particularly in Ramallah, are coated in *laissez-faire* glitz. I speak here of high-rise hotels, a taste for expensive European cars and other markers of modernity that Ramallahis are quite proud of. This is interesting given the socialist ethos and rhetoric of early Palestinian movements, the persistence of strong support for communist parties in areas of the West Bank and, again, the insistence of Palestinians to continue self-identifying with peasantry in spite of steady urbanization. Rawabi's critics are an audible voice in the Palestinian leftist intelligentsia, but this criticism tends to be restricted to the involvement of Israeli firms in the project as a breach of the boycott movement against Israel. 'Normalization', an ambiguous term with many possible interpretations regarding the Israeli occupation of the West Bank—never positive—is brought up incessantly. But the no-holds-barred capitalism, as private sector real estate development projects tend to be, is unquestioned. Writing about the Palestinian nationalist program in the late 1980s, Bowman (1988, 35) warned that 'even when a potentially nationalist community has developed national consciousness, there is no necessity for that population to develop politically separatist programs'. He suggests that there are 'other routes for it as a whole to follow—into assimilationist ameliorism, into revolutionary internationalism, or into despair, fragmentation, and anomie'. This paper suggests that the rise of the *laissez-faire* glitz within a Palestinian gray space presents a separatism of a hegemonic capitalist elite within a nationalist consciousness, and everyday Palestinians—they who are ultimately the agents of change—are entering into what Bourdieu (1990, 53) called a 'structuring structure' (etched out by this powerful new class). That is, as my interviews with Rawabi buyers show, Palestinians who are moving to Rawabi are doing so because of

practical difficulties in their lives and not the grand vision of modernity of those constructing it. But hegemonic discourse, of course, is only equipped for the dominant narrative and not the multitude of connections in the makeup of a social reality.

The inevitable imitation of the global North by the global South in its path to modernity, known as 'global convergence', is a conversation I borrow here from the globalization discourse (Marcotullio 2003; Myllylä and Kuvaja 2005, 228). At a glance and on a superficial level, Rawabi is a planned city in the developing world envisioned by enterprising private sector investors that fits squarely within this formula. In these plain terms, Rawabi offers the consumer a planned, green city in a region where all other urbanization is unplanned, arguably unsustainable and chaotic. But in any discussion of development and planning in Palestine, it cannot be ignored that the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza are politically liminal, still occupied territories by international law, and that the whole of Israel/Palestine, in some circles, has currency as the quintessential colonial project in the contemporary world (see Visweswaran 2012). I cannot surmise another instance where the colonized have built great cities within the colony.

Ultimately, the story of Rawabi will be told in the decades to come. It will almost certainly never be a Dubai in the West Bank highlands, but it could very well be a model for how urbanization is managed by Palestinians in the future. It could also be a total failure, or fall into bland nothingness like Modi'in. In the meantime, for many Palestinians who are most affected by the difficult nuances of the conflict, particularly Palestinians from areas where housing options are veritably challenging, like Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank, the Rawabi option is a kind of resignation in the guise of modernity. By accommodating the departure of Palestinians from places where they are unwelcome, ventures like Rawabi, inadvertently, help accelerate the Judaization of

parts of Israel/Palestine that as of yet have not succumbed to this fate. Perhaps this is the criticism against Rawabi that the Palestinian left intuitions, dismissing the project as a 'Palestinian settlement', but is not able to articulate.

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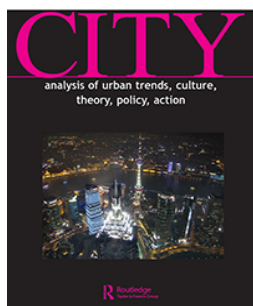
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Vertical noir

Histories of the future in urban science fiction

Stephen Graham

*Unerringly, across its whole history, urban science fiction has offered up imagined cities that operate about remarkably similar and highly verticalised visions. These are heavily dominated by politics of class, resistance and revolution that are starkly organized around vertically stratified and vertically exaggerated urban spaces. From the early and definitive efforts of H.G. Wells and Fritz Lang, through J.G. Ballard's 1975 novel *High Rise*, to many cyberpunk classics, this essay – the latest in a series in *City on the vertical dimensions of cities*¹ – reflects on how vertical imaginaries in urban science fiction intersect with the politics and contestations of the fast-verticalising cities around the world. The essay has four parts. It begins by disentangling in detail the ways in which the sci-fi visions of Wells, Lang, Ballard and various cyberpunk authors were centrally constituted through vertical structures, landscapes, metaphors and allegories. The essay's second part then teases out the complex linkages between verticalised sci-fi imaginaries and material cityscapes that are actually constructed, lived and experienced. Stressing the impossibility of some clean and binary opposition between 'factual' and 'fictional' cities, the essay explores how verticalised projects, material cities, sci-fi texts, imaginary futures, architectural schemes and urban theories mingle and resonate together in complex, unpredictable and important ways which do much to shape contemporary urban landscapes. The third section of the essay explores such connections through the cases of retro-futuristic urban megaprojects in the Gulf and forests of towers recently constructed in Shanghai's Pudong district. The essay's final discussion draws on these cases to explore the possibilities that sci-fi imaginaries offer for contesting the rapid verticalisation of cities around the world.*

Key words: cities, science fiction, verticality, urban contestation, urban representation, futurism

Introduction: vertical worlds

'We don't go into the future from zero, we drag the whole past in with us.' (Syd Mead)²

Through more than a century of history, from H. G. Wells, the dystopian classics like Fritz Lang's 1927

film *Metropolis* and J. G. Ballard's 1975 novel *High-Rise*, to the iconic cyberpunk films of *Blade Runner* (1982) or *The Matrix* (1999), the image of the radically verticalised cityscape has so dominated science fiction as to be almost a cliché.³

Unerringly, across the whole history of the genre, sci-fi cities tend to operate about

remarkably similar visions. Towering, slab-like edifices inhabited by solipsistic and domineering elites rise like mountains high above sewer-like urban streets. Pod-like cars or flying vehicles whisk their patrons instantly upwards through the poisonous air to dock at the top of some impossibly high structure lurking far above the smoke and mist. Repressed minions toil like moles deep in the subterranean bowels of the city-as-machine to maintain the leisure and luxury of elites far above.

The politics of resistance or revolution, in turn, inevitably tend to centre on efforts by the repressed below to work through the architectures and technologies of control set up to keep them—quite literally—downtrodden.⁴ Through so doing they can literally rise up to undermine the fragile and pampered worlds of the protected elites above.⁵

Another important continuity in sci-fi cinema is the endlessly repeated depiction of the collapse of the towering structures of the city through apocalyptic events or violence. In 1965, the American writer Susan Sontag famously wrote of a dominant ‘aesthetic of destruction’ in dystopian sci-fi and fantasy cinema—of the pleasures, as she put it, of ‘wreaking havoc, making a mess’.⁶ In countless movies, video games, novels and cartoons, both before and since 9/11, the lofty aspiring verticality of cities like New York reached a predictable and spectacular demise as it is brought low in an instant to symbolically underline the fragilities of modern civilisation. Thus, Sontag argued, viewers are able to enjoy the extraordinary thrill of the visceral fantasy of their own demise.

In a world of apparently endless, hyper-mediated and all-too-real disasters, however, such imaginations are inevitably interrupted. This is especially so when the well-rehearsed visions of dystopian science fiction increasingly seem, through a perverse inversion, to become fact through real-world catastrophes. Literary scholars Efraim Sicher and Natalia Skradol write that 9/11, for example, ‘was an intrusion of the real that made it impossible to un-imagine dystopia as nightmare or

fantasy. This destruction ... showed that the world was in a permanent state of unending disasters.’ As with Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy and the 2011 Japanese tsunami disaster, there was in such events ‘an uncanny sense of an end that has been almost predestined ... 9/11 put an end to the distinction between speculation and reality in dismissive definitions of science fiction as a genre’.⁷

Examining a few of the most famous examples, verticalised sci-fi cityscapes help demonstrate the remarkable consistency through the history of the genre.

The first example comes from one of the founders of modern science fiction: H. G. Wells. As Lucy Hewitt and I discuss in an earlier paper, Wells’ first novel, *The Time Machine* (1895), envisaged a future starkly separated into two classes: the ‘Eloi’ living in a bounteous upper world, maintained by the slave-like Morlocks confined to a dark subterranean realm of wells and tunnels.⁸ Wells’ later classic, *When the Sleeper Awakes*—first published in 1899—took such vertical metaphors further (Figure 1). Graham, the novel’s main protagonist, wakes after sleeping for 203 years. He finds his home city of London transformed through startling and bewildering verticalities. Staring out in disbelief from his balcony, Graham’s impression:

‘was of overwhelming architecture. The place into which he looked was an aisle of Titanic buildings, curving spaciouly in either direction. Overhead mighty cantilevers sprang together across the huge width of the place, and a tracery of translucent material shut out the sky. Gigantic globes of cool white light shamed the pale sunbeams that filtered down through the girders and wires. Here and there a gossamer suspension bridge dotted with foot passengers flung across the chasm and the air was webbed with slender cables. A cliff of edifice hung above him ...’⁹

As the story progresses, Graham quickly becomes aware that London’s vertical growth has sustained a geologic stratification of power and status within which he is an

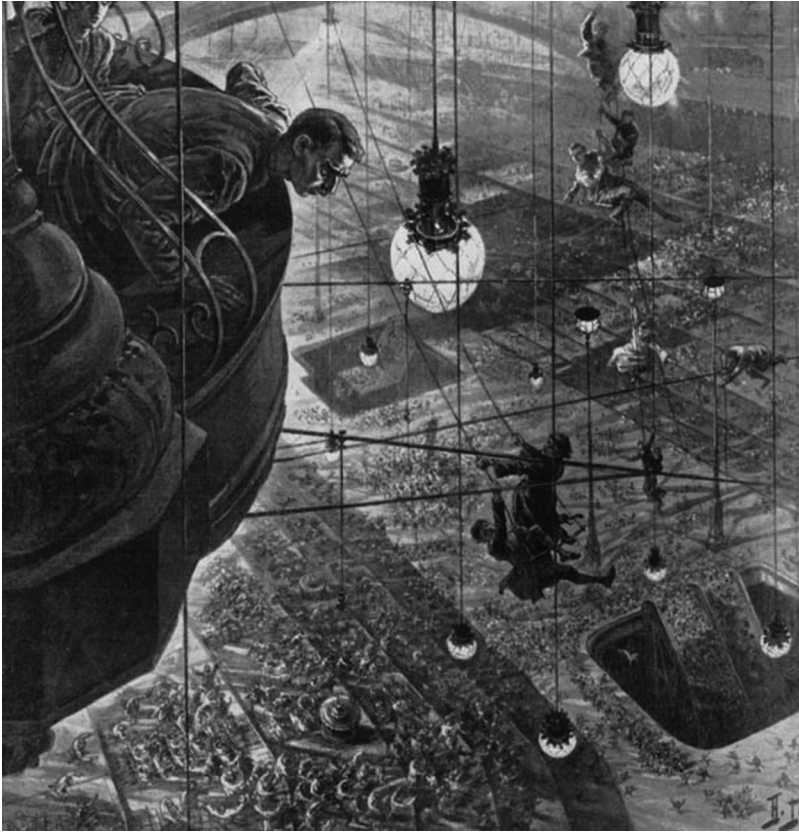


Figure 1 Contemporary illustration accompanying the serial publication of H. G. Wells' *When the Sleeper Awakes* in 1899 (Source: <http://madamepickwickartblog.com/2013/04/no-escape/>; public domain).

unwitting figurehead. Workers are trapped deep in the subterranean realms of the city as virtual slaves. 'For the poor there is no easy death'; they are, rather, condemned to a life of hard labour, brutality and ill-health in the city's subterranean labyrinths.¹⁰

Moving far below the exalted towers, Graham is led to a world literally crushed beneath the vast weight of the vertical city above—and its privileged elite. It is a world that resonates powerfully with the verticalised social stratifications of Victorian London. 'They penetrated downward, ever downward, towards the working places ... through these factories and places of toil, seeing many painful and grim things', the novel relates:

'Everywhere were pillars and cross archings of such a massiveness as Graham had never before seen, thick Titans of greasy, shining brickwork crushed beneath the vast weight of that complex city world, even as these anaemic millions were crushed by its complexity. And everywhere were pale features, lean limbs, disfigurement and degradation.'¹¹

The most influential science fiction of all time—Fritz Lang's remarkable *Metropolis* (1927)¹²—took Wells' vertical allegory to further extremes (Figure 2). *Metropolis* was powerfully influenced by the nascent skyscrapers Lang witnessed on a trip by cruise liner to Manhattan in 1924. The verticality of 1920s New York at night totally transfixed

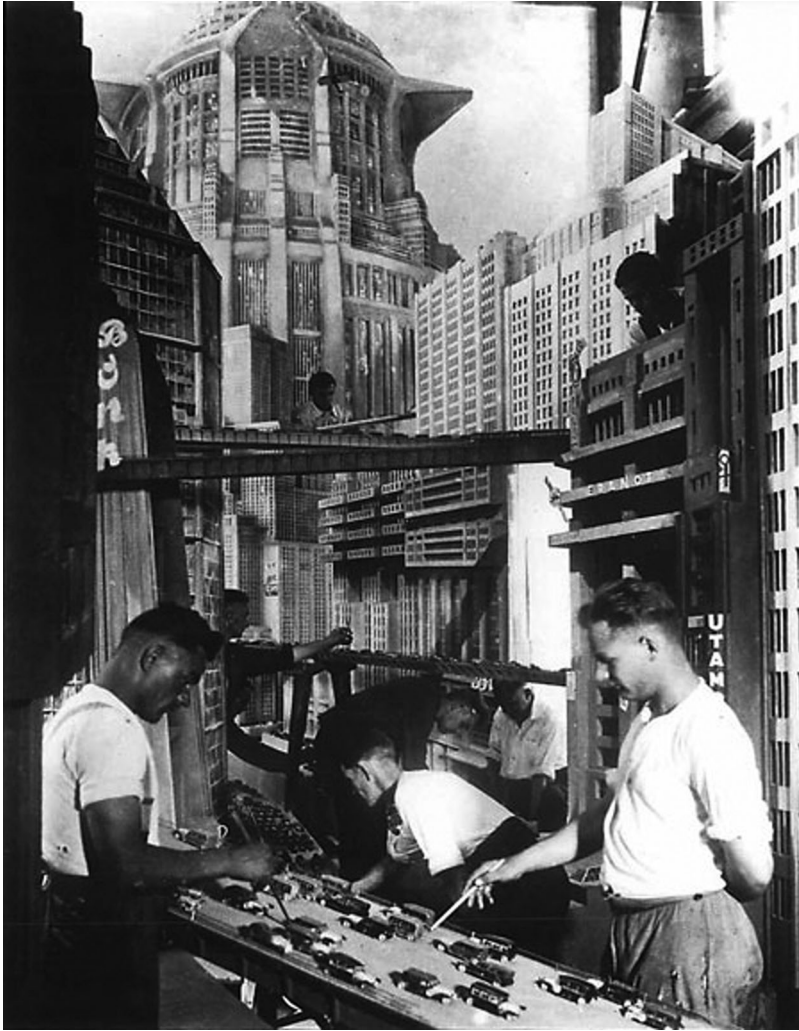


Figure 2 Technicians completing one of the models used in the making of Fritz Lang's classic sci-fi film *Metropolis*, 1927 (Source: <http://photographyblog.dallasnews.com/2014/02/movie-magic-several-gems-from-the-archives.html/>; public domain).

him. 'High above the cars and elevated trains,' he wrote, 'skyscrapers appear in blue and gold, white and purple, and still higher above there are advertisements surpassing the stars with their light.'¹³

Metropolis combines a radical exaggeration of the spatialities of Manhattan with a powerful evocation of the tense contradictions of Weimar Germany. The film's infusion of fears of the perils of rapid industrialisation, economic and social collapse, communist

revolution, modernism and racialised Others—what film scholar David Desser calls the 'ideological motifs' of Weimar Germany¹⁴—are structured into a series of allegorically vertical cityscapes of mammoth proportions.

The cityscape in *Metropolis* is starkly divided into high and low. Far below the decadent, heaven-like 'Garden of Earthly Delights' of the elites on the summits of vast towers lie the hell-like subterranean

catacombs and machine halls of the subjugated proletariat, who commute vertically between them like serried ranks of automations in massive elevators.¹⁵ Lacing the strata are complex webs of staircases, sloping tunnels, raised highways, aircraft and futuristic elevators.

Such a dialectic of above and below corresponds clearly to differences in class. 'The workers labour below; the upper classes who benefit from their labour frolic above', Dessler writes. 'Scenes of upper-class life revolve around pleasure, even debauchery; scenes of the workers reveal mechanised, depressed figures who seem barely human.'¹⁶

Joh Fredersen, the 'Master of the Metropolis', is the creator of the city. He peers down at his creation from his penthouse-cum-control room at the apex of the New Tower of Babel high in the sky. Fredersen's son, Freder—newly radicalised by witnessing the workers' misery and sacrifice in the bowels of the earth—travels back to the summit and challenges his father. 'To the new Tower of Babel—to my father', he tells his chauffeur. With startling resonance to the mass killing in the contemporary construction of vertical city projects in the Gulf, Fredersen responds to the deaths of workers in the city's bowels dismissively. 'Such accidents are unavoidable', he says.

'Where are the people whose hands built your city?', Freder asks desperately. 'Off where they belong!', his father replies scornfully. '*In the depths!*' (original emphasis). His father then closes the blinds to his penthouse, shielding his gaze from the lower depths of the city below. 'The hymn of praise for one man', Maria, the film's heroine—a daughter of one of the workers who cares for their children—exhorts, 'became the curse of others!'¹⁷

Half a century later, J. G. Ballard's classic dystopia *High-Rise* offers a further twist on the use of biting allegories of class and verticalised space. This time the setting is the clean modernist lines of a concrete residential high-rise in post-war London. Ballard's fictional account of high-rise living was a direct

engagement with the deepening trend in urban planning to redevelop entire cityscapes as archipelagos of modernist high-rise towers laced together by raised walkways and 'streets in the sky'.

It's hard not to believe that parts of the plot for *High-Rise* were inspired, at least in part, by architect Ernő Goldfinger's decision to inhabit the Balfour Tower—one of two of his brutalist designs that were built in London between 1967 and 1972—for two months after its completion as a publicity stunt. Resonating with today's world of skyscraper housing for the überwealthy, *High-Rise* is a searing critique of the solipsism that is possible when high-rise housing towers are organised, as Ballard put it, 'as a huge machine designed to serve, not the collective body of tenants, but the individual resident in isolation'.¹⁸

Once inhabited, Ballard's 1000-suite tower quickly becomes 'a small vertical city, its two thousand inhabitants boxed up into the sky'.¹⁹ The tower's own vertical structures, however, are starkly stratified within what Ballard terms the 'natural social order of the building'²⁰—an order radically isolated from the wider social world. Indeed, the tower becomes what Ballard scholar Rick McGrath has called 'an isolation tank for 2000 people'.²¹

Reviewing the book on its initial publication, novelist Martin Amis captured its resonances with the spiralling crises surrounding modernist housing in the UK at the time. In an early example of the use of Ballard's sci-fi dystopias to reflect on contemporary urbanism, Amis felt that the scale of the crisis was such that the whole of London would one day 'take on that quality common to all Ballardian loci' by becoming 'suspended, no longer to do with the rest of the planet, screened off by its own surreal logic'.²²

As the narrative in *High-Rise* progresses, vertical class distinctions quickly become exaggerated and violent as the complex machines and systems sustaining modern urban life in the tower, and the norms of

grudging social toleration, both collapse and decay.

Soon enough, Ballard writes, 'the high-rise had already divided itself into the three classical social groups, its lower, middle and upper classes'. Thus,

'the 10th-floor shopping mall formed a clear boundary between the lower nine floors, with their "proletariat" of film technicians, air-hostesses and the like, and the middle section of the high-rise, which extended from the 10th floor to the swimming pool and restaurant deck on the 35th floor'.

The central floors of the tower, meanwhile, housed its middle classes, a population:

'made up of self-centred but basically docile members of the professions—the doctors and lawyers, accountants and tax specialists who worked, not for themselves, but for medical institutes and large corporations . . . Above them, on the top five floors of the high-rise, was its upper class, the discreet oligarchy of minor tycoons and entrepreneurs, television actresses and careerist academics, with their high-speed elevators and superior services, their carpeted staircases.'²³

Like Goldfinger in his Balfron Tower in 1967, at the top of Ballard's dysfunctional vertical enclave we find Anthony Royal—one of the building's architects. Royal's position 'on top'—a zenithal location where he can survey the surrounding cityscape as an aesthetic backdrop—is a source of myth, intrigue and tension for the other residents of the high-rise.

Royal is 'well-to-do', arrogant and defensive. He is 'determined to outstare any criticism' of the building he helped to conceive.²⁴ Retreating into a hermit-like existence Royal feels, 'for the first time that he was looking down at the sky, rather than up at it. Each day the towers of central London seemed slightly more distant, the landscape of an abandoned planet receding slowly from his mind.'²⁵

Crucially, Royal is also, ultimately, impotent—able only to limp through the building

as it crumbles materially and socially. In the end, he is destined to die rambling and starved amongst the human and architectural debris.

Liberated from the need to repress anti-social behaviour, Ballard portrays the vertical architecture as the purveyor of an amoral world of psychopathic and violent desires unleashed. The building emerges, in Ballard's words, as 'a model of all that technology had done to make possible the expression of a truly "free" psychopathology'.²⁶

Finally, the exaggerated vertical scale is widely used to signify futurity in the myriad of postmodern, cyberpunk speculations about the spectacular future urbanism produced between the late 1960s and 1990s. Cyberpunk rejects the clean lines of modernist dystopias like *High-Rise*. Instead, it depicts startlingly verticalised future urban worlds as gritty and half-decayed places ridden by extreme time-space compression, population explosions, environmental exhaustion and terrifying advances in technology (virtual realms, cyborg beings, hyper-surveillance and the like). In such worlds, philosopher Anna Greenspan writes, 'spectral entities unleashed by the modern machine haunt dark cities teeming with nocturnal life'.²⁷

Scott's *Blade Runner*—his iconic 1982 treatment of Philip K. Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*—is by far the most influential example here (of which more later). But the tried and tested techniques of radical vertical exaggeration remain pivotal to the genre. In his 1988 novel *Islands in the Net*, for example, cyberpunk author Bruce Sterling depicts a future Singapore in which vertical dimension was also radically extended. The city 'was like downtown Houston', he wrote. 'But more like Houston than even Houston had ever had the nerve to become.' The City:

'was an anthill, a brutal assault against any sane sense of scale. Nightmarishly vast spires whose bulging foundations covered whole city blocks. Their upper reaches were pocked

like waffle irons with triangular bracing. Buttresses, glass-covered superhighways, soared half a mile above sea level.²⁸

Reel to real: urban facts and fictions

Sterling's conflation of a futuristic Singapore with a contemporary Houston brings us to the complex connections between sci-fi imaginaries and lived cities. Imaginations of future cityscapes as vast, three-dimensional volumes work, like all science fiction, in one of two ways. On the one hand, they radically extrapolate perceived current trends within contemporary cities into future scenarios of 'cultural prophecy'.²⁹ On the other, they offer future allegories to act as a lens to look 'back' at the contemporary, highlighting the political and ideological tensions within contemporary life.³⁰

Either way, sci-fi cities, whilst being futuristic fables, inevitably resonate powerfully with contemporary concerns.³¹ They are also, as we shall see, pivotal in constituting the materialities of contemporary cities. Rather than expecting sci-fi dystopias to simply mirror contemporary societies, cultural researcher Mark Fisher stresses that 'their value lies in hyperbolic excess, in their capacity to convert real political tensions into mythical terms and dream-like images'.³² This is crucial to the power of science fiction in creating what sci-fi theorist Darko Suvin called 'cognitive estrangement'—the process of taking viewers out of their everyday worlds into a world which seems strange and disjointed, but believably so.³³

As such, the linkages between sci-fi cities and material cityscapes that are actually constructed, lived and experienced are so dense as to make some clean separation impossible. Dichotomised and binary opposition between 'factual' and 'fictional' cities are not—and never have been—possible. Built projects, material cities, sci-fi texts, imaginary futures, architectural schemes and urban theories mingle and resonate together in

complex and unpredictable ways. This occurs within broader 'postmodern' cultures dominated by multiple circuits of mediation, prediction and simulation. These, in turn, fatally undermine remaining notions of an 'authentic' urban life which exists in advance of its representation in fiction and media.³⁴

Contemporary portrayals of future cities are so hyper-mediated in films, fiction, video games, architecture and other media these days that science fiction, film and media, rather than reflecting the lived worlds of built cities, very often become a dominant initial experience which, in turn, powerfully shapes their production.³⁵

At the outset, sci-fi cities are obviously influenced both by their creator's experience of built, existing cityscapes and prevailing ideas of futurism in architecture itself. Beyond Fritz Lang's visit to Manhattan, Ridley Scott famously admitted that his rainy, industrial superstructures in his iconic 1982 film *Blade Runner* owed much to his childhood in and around the vast chemical, steel and shipbuilding complexes in his native Tyneside and Teesside.³⁶ Scott also stressed that his experiences of travelling in the short-lived commercial helicopter flights between Kennedy airport and the heliport on top of the Pan Am skyscraper provided a further inspiration.³⁷

Like many sci-fi filmmakers, though, Scott was not simply interested in projecting a putatively futuristic cityscape. Through classic postmodern techniques he toyed with the very idea of linear and modernist notions of the historic, the present and the future. In fact, he playfully hybridised aspects of all three. *Blade Runner*, Scott famously said in 1982, was a 'film set forty years hence made in a style of forty years ago'.³⁸ In other words, it was a *retro*-futurist classic: an intervention invoking historic ideas about the future refracted through the historic tropes of the history of Manhattan refracted through film noir Los Angeles (LA).

As such, as we shall see, *Blade Runner*—and other retro-futurist verticalised sci-fi

movies such as *The Fifth Element* (1997), the 2005–2008 *Batman* trilogy³⁹ and numerous others—has surprising and important links to the retro-futurist architecture and infrastructure mushrooming to the skies in contemporary cities like Shanghai.

Syd Mead, the influential ‘visual futurist’ and ex-architectural draughtsman who contributed much to the detailed set design for *Blade Runner*, set the film’s scene by exaggerating the vertical scale of the LA of 2019—where the film was set—by multiplying the scales of the world’s highest skyscrapers in 1982 by $2\frac{1}{2}$ times.⁴⁰ Within his city of 90 million people, like Lang, Mead and the other set designers on the team then drew of Langian and Wellsian traditions to inscribe their powerful stratification of class and race vertically. ‘The street level becomes the basement, and decent people just don’t want to go there’, Mead said in 2015. Meanwhile, he continued, the 700-storey pyramid-like towers inhabited by corporate elites were all equipped with a sky lobby, ‘and nobody goes below the 30th floor, and that’s the way life would be organized’.⁴¹

Blade Runner—arguably the second most influential sci-fi film of all time after *Metropolis*—has had such an effect that all sci-fi cityscapes since rather inevitably seem to directly imitate it. It is one of the few postmodern cultural outputs to have achieved the rather oxymoronic status of the canonical.⁴²

‘The “standard” version of the city of the future,’ cultural scholar Aaron Barlow wrote in 2005, ‘now comes from the Los Angeles that Scott and his “visual futurist” Syd Mead created for *Blade Runner*’.⁴³ In this, the sci-fi city’s rich and complex vertical stratigraphy—as well as its horizontal geography—is depicted in ways that make the experience of the city both familiar and bewildering to viewers and readers.⁴⁴

Ballard’s *High-Rise*, meanwhile, was published in 1975, just as the backlash against high-rise living in the UK was gaining full force.

Once produced, sci-fi cityscapes in turn work to profoundly influence the imaginary geographies that shape urban culture—in

art, film, novels, cartoons, theatre, militarism and video games. The influence is also especially powerful in architecture.

‘Big architects have copied *Blade Runner*’, Ridley Scott said in 2015. What he described as ‘the biggest architect’ in the world—hinting that it was Richard Rogers—said to him recently “I run *Blade Runner* once a week in my office for the staff.”⁴⁵ *Blade Runner* is clearly an influence on much of contemporary architecture. The most startling and clear current examples of such influence, however, come from the vast architectural edifices now proliferating in the Gulf region and in China.

In both regions there is an uncanny sense of entire cityscapes rising rapidly to the sky which directly mimic many of the verticalised tropes of urban science fiction. Such a phenomenon led sci-fi author William Gibson to offer one of his famous aphorisms in 2003. ‘The future has already arrived’, he wrote. ‘It’s just not evenly distributed.’⁴⁶

Futurism in the Gulf

In the Gulf, Qatari-American artist Sophia Al-Maria suggests in particular that the particular fetish for super-tall and highly futuristic skyscrapers—as sheiks seek to out-engineer each other through extreme vertical architecture like schoolboys in a playground—is directly linked to the depiction of vertical cityscapes within iconic cyberpunk sci-fi films.

Drawing heavily on French theorist of postmodernism Jean Baudrillard, Al-Maria terms this ‘Gulf Futurism’.⁴⁷ It involves a cocktail mixing an obsession with hyper-consumption, hyper-elitism and hyper-reality, with absurd, utterly unconvincing greenwash about the environmental sustainability of their constructions.⁴⁸ Also crucial is a preoccupation with erecting extraordinary vertical structures in an environment of endless, horizontal desert—a standard trope in Western science fiction—as harbingers of a putative ‘future’ materialised in today’s landscapes.

‘A generation [of Arab elites], forced indoors because of intense heat,’ journalist Natalie Olah speculates, ‘developed a view of the future informed almost exclusively by video games and Hollywood films.’⁴⁹ Endlessly reworked futurism also saturates corporate and local media in the region. Al-Maria recalls a children’s TV show in the Gulf

‘where these kids get on a monorail in the modern day, they travel through a lab and are teleported to 2030. They come out the other side and there are even bigger buildings and the train is flying through the air.’⁵⁰

Funded by petrodollars and constructed through bonded labour, the resulting aesthetic obsessions, when these elites became sheiks, CEOs or presidents, are since being materialised in steel, glass, concrete and aluminium.

Occasionally, such mimicry is surprisingly direct. *Blade Runner*’s Syd Mead, for example, visited Bahrain in 2005 and discussed future building projects with the royal sheik there, Abdullah Hamad Khalifa. He also visited Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. ‘I am here because of the unique excitement of seeing the future come true in Dubai’, he said.⁵¹

In 2013, meanwhile, legendary cyberpunk author Neal Stephenson, stung by the sense that contemporary sci-fi writers were not as bold as their forebears on imagining new technologies, put his weight behind a tower fully 20 kilometres tall—fully 24 times higher than the Burj Khalifa—that would help launch craft into space (Figure 3).

Inspired by sci-fi author Arthur C. Clarke’s important role in the invention of the communications satellite in the 1940s, the idea was, Stephenson said, a ‘somewhat playful, somewhat serious attempt’ to stir the minds of a generation he considered to be starved of really big, step-change innovations by technologists’ preoccupation with banal IT and social media apps.⁵²

On other occasions, key Western skyscraper architects import their own sci-fi

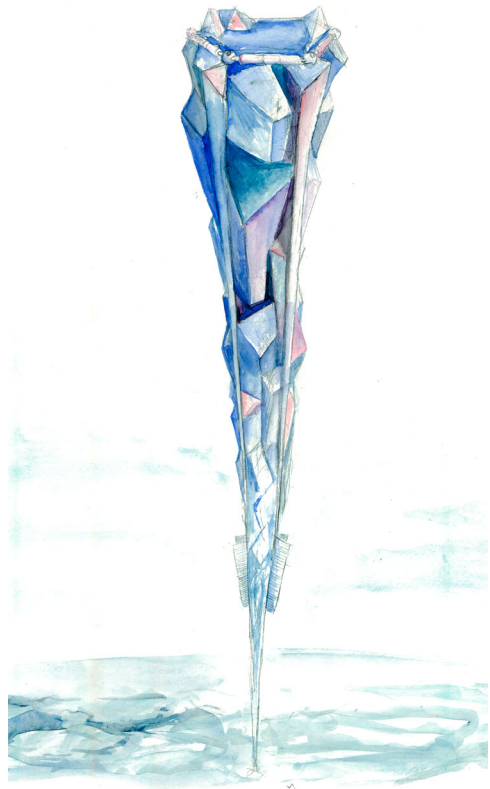


Figure 3 ‘Project Hieroglyph’: artist’s impression by Haylee Bolinger of the 20-km tower envisaged by cyberpunk sci-fi author Neal Stephenson in 2015 in partnership with engineers at Arizona State University (Source: <http://hieroglyph.asu.edu/story/tall-tower/>; illustration used with permission of Arizona State University).

influences from their childhoods. Adrian Smith, of Chicago’s SOM office—designer of the Burj Khalifa (Figure 4) and 7 of the world’s 15 tallest skyscrapers as of 2014—is a powerful example here. Smith’s own influences in designing the Burj Khalifa was the futuristic skyline of the ‘Emerald City’ in MGM’s 1939 film *Wizard of Oz*. ‘I just remembered the glassy, crystalline structure coming up in the middle of what seemed like nowhere’, he admitted in 2007.⁵³

No wonder, then, that people remark on the eerie sense of visiting sci-fi movie sets when they travel to Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi or Dubai. In addition to futuristic



Figure 4 The 828-metre Burj Khalifa tower in Dubai. Opened in January 2010. It is the world's tallest skyscraper—for now (Source: <http://www.everystockphoto.com/photo.php?imgeld=17812395&searchld=aa64abcf0aca61fb01fc7c07d204db11&npos=123>; A. Davey Attribution Licence).

towers, the region's other megaprojects hint at similar influences. The world's largest underwater hotel, in Dubai, for example, will give inhabitants of its 21 sub-sea rooms 'windows' onto deep-sea ecosystems under the tag line 'enjoy the highlife at a subterranean level'. It seems to be a direct retro-

futurist imitation of Tracey Island from the 1960s puppet sci-fi series *Thunderbirds*.

It seems brutally inevitable, too, that fast-rising cities of the Gulf are vertically stratified between the super-elite inhabiting the cool, airy and prestigious heights of helicopter flights, flyovers, VIP elevators and

penthouses, and the slave-minions and societal outcasts trapped on or below the terrestrial surface far below. Such circular relationships between filmic, virtual and material cityscapes become further convoluted when new cityscapes become the next movie sets. Hollywood quickly turned up to use the new landscapes of Dubai as a futuristic set for its next iteration of sci-fi and action epics.

Indeed, Dubai is so redolent of the stage sets of many sci-fi movies that it may even be supplanting the need for stage or digitised sets for future sci-fi films. Michael Winterbottom's dystopian portrayal of a starkly segregated urban future in *Code 46* (2003), for one, simply intercuts scenes of Dubai—as well as Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seattle and London—to stand for its global archipelago of high-tech, hyper-surveilled interiors and abandoned peripheries.⁵⁴ In 2015, it was announced that the latest *Star Trek* movie—*Star Trek Beyond*—was going to be largely set in Dubai. 'We came searching for the future and found it', Jeffrey Chernov, one of the film's producers, reflected.⁵⁵

Retro sci-fi Shanghai

'Shanghai is a city hungry for the future. To get a taste, head to the heights of the financial district in Pudong's Lujiazui. At dusk, the view from the ninety-first floor of the Shanghai World Financial Center is fantastically alien. Outside the enormous windows, the metropolis stretches out like an off-world fantasy; a film apparition of a science-fiction city.'⁵⁶

In China, meanwhile, *Blade Runner's* retro-futurism and retro-noir—itself influenced of course by orientalist Western imaginations of Asian cities such as Hong Kong and Tokyo at night⁵⁷—have in turn hugely influenced the architecture and design of fast-verticalising cities. With modernist beliefs in linear progress toward prosperity through new technology and architecture maintained in aspects of Chinese culture, long after

their abandonment in the West, such influences have combined with influential memories of China's—and especially Shanghai's—pre-communist cosmopolitanism.

As in the Gulf, Shanghai's great leap into the sky since the mid-1990s—the greatest concerted construction of vertical architecture in human history—has been shaped by historic ideas of the vertical future as well as a desire by elites that such efforts will, in turn, allow the city to emerge as the global icon of urban futurity in the 21st century. 'Shanghai's ambition—to emerge as the great metropolis of the 21st century—requires not only that it impart what is in the future but also, more fundamentally, that it transforms the very idea of what the future might mean.'⁵⁸

To Western eyes, the architectural futurism in Shanghai's extraordinary vertical growth spurt directly seems to invoke historic, Western ideas about future urbanism embodied so powerfully in 'retro' aspects of *Blade Runner's* futurism (Figure 5). The 468-metre Oriental Pearl Tower, completed in 1994, is a pivotal example here. The tallest tower in China until 2007, the tower was built to symbolise the massive vertical constructions that followed it in the new district of Pudong. It is now the most important architectural icon in Shanghai.

Recalling American 1950s pulp science fiction, Cold War TV towers and 'space needles' like the one built in Seattle in 1962, once built, the tower seemed, in philosopher Anna Greenspan's words, like 'an apparition of a future that had already past'.⁵⁹ She interprets this as the result of the city's elites working to 'fill in' the 'lost' period of cultural and urban dominance and futurism that coincided with the communist period between the city's 'golden age' in the 1920s and the communist party's reforms in the mid-1980s.

Many of Shanghai's skyscrapers built since the Oriental Pearl Tower mimic its retro-futurism. Roof top restaurants within densely clustered forests of outrageous skyscrapers are shaped like UFOs. At night, dazzling digital screens and neon lights festoon



Figure 5 Night-time view of the Oriental Pearl Tower, along with other illuminated skyscrapers, in Shanghai's Pudong district. The photographer uploaded this and other images onto the skyscraper city website under the title 'Blade Runner: Nighttime Edition' (Source: <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1163669>; R@ptor, Attribution Licence).

flyovers, river boats, towers, skyscrapers and historic buildings. These create carefully choreographed futuristic lightscapes which refract ominously through the hot hazy smog created by China's pollution crises.

'This futuristic new skyscraper glows green, then purple, then yellow, then red as it curls to a height of more than 2000 feet', Dave Tacon writes on the opening of the Shanghai Tower, the world's second tallest skyscraper, in 2015. 'It's no wonder that its present has come to double as the future in films such as the Academy Award-winning *Her* and the Bruce Willis blockbuster *Looper*.'⁶⁰

Meanwhile, fleets of driverless, high-tech trams, monorails, subways and MAGLEV trains seem to directly mimic historic Western fantasies of future mobility. Expo pavilions display classic Western sci-fi films on repeat; elites shelter from the lethal air within air-filtered bubbles. Visitors to the startlingly

verticalised and mediatised landscapes of contemporary Chinese megacities, meanwhile, commonly remark on how closely the experience feels to inhabiting an upscaled *Blade Runner* set.⁶¹ In both cities, journalists, travelers and bloggers compete to draw or image the most obvious resonances with *Blade Runner* and other classic sci-fi movies.

Shanghai's Oriental Pearl Tower, 'would have fitted right in with the apocalyptic cityscape in Ridley Scott's film,' journalist Cath Urquhart wrote in 2005, 'while Shanghai's smog and flashing billboards make it a dead ringer for the Los Angeles of the movie.'

A travel blogger, meanwhile, responding to Shanghai's multi-coloured and vertical nightscapes, reflected that 'it was just like *Blade Runner*, without Daryl Hannah trying to kill me with her thighs'.⁶² And a visitor who put a video of Pudong at night seen from the top of a skyscraper up on

YouTube in 2013 commented that ‘the only thing missing is flying cars!’⁶³

The often thick and polluted atmospheres of Shanghai and Beijing only add to their allure as live imitators of *Blade Runner* sets. One image of a large video screen showing ads through the murky air atop a large tower in Beijing went viral around the world in 2015 precisely because it so closely resembled scenes from the film (Figure 6).

Contemporary Chinese megacities, thus, gain a good deal of their power over Western imaginations through their role as what Swedish media theorist Amanda Lagerkvist, calls a ‘hyper-representational landscape’. By this she means that they offer cityspaces carefully shaped to achieve their ‘allusion to the position that towering cities occupy in the science fiction genre’.⁶⁴ The allusions are so powerful that tourist companies in Shanghai even offer ‘*Blade Runner* nights’ jogging tours to Western tourists which are routed through the city’s most *Blade Runner*-esque landscapes. Meanwhile, the ‘Shanghai Syncopators’—a group of British singers—give concerts containing classic songs from the 1920s and 1930s heyday of cosmopolitan Shanghai,

combined with songs from the *Blade Runner* sound track.

It is important, though, to interpret China’s spectacular urban futurism as a great deal more than merely an uncanny déjà vu for Western tourists filtered, no doubt, through the lenses of a long history of Western orientalism. Such an interpretation is prey to accusations of a crass ethnocentrism. As philosopher Anne Greenspan stresses, whilst naïve utopian futurism has long been discredited in the West, we should not see the sci-fi futurism of Shanghai or Beijing as merely some Chinese replacement for long-dead Western modernist cultures. Rather, she argues, China’s dynamism and confidence—linked to its very different cultures and sense of history and time—relate powerfully to its own faith—or at least the faith of its elites—in an absolute (rather than relational) futurism.

This is manifest in China’s obsession not with running period expos demonstrating the sorts of futures where progress might eventually lead, but with building entire set-piece cityscapes, at almost any economic, social or ecological cost, as futuristic visions



Figure 6 Beijing: ‘This is *not* a scene from *Blade Runner*’: a video screen shows ads through the polluted gloom atop a large tower in Beijing, 2015 (Source: Photo by Marty Halpern).

materialised in the here and now. Rather than linking specific technologies or urban landscapes to a time in the putative future, then—as in Western modernism—China's elites remodel its verticalising cities by reanimating a lost futurism without reference to linear notions of time.

In such a model, invoking sci-fi futurism works as the model for central, set-piece urban megaprojects precisely because a century or more of cultural work has been made by traditions of sci-fi media. These allow the present landscapes of Shanghai, Beijing and other Chinese cities to become a virtual realm infused retroactively with the effects of previously imagined sci-fi futures.⁶⁵ 'The future is not only a prospect, it is physically located here, in Pudong', Amanda Lagerkvist stresses. 'And in that sense it is now.'⁶⁶

Contesting sci-fi cityscapes

Real and imagined sci-fi cities, finally, offer powerful opportunities for progressively challenging contemporary urban transformations. Occasionally, as with George Orwell's 1984, they end up framing a whole contested political world. Struggles against intensifying surveillance across the world rely heavily on invoking Orwell's omniscient figure of 'Big Brother' and widely describe trends in surveillance as 'Orwellian'.

Steven Spielberg's 2002 film *Minority Report*—like *Blade Runner*, based on a Phillip K. Dick story—has also become a standard reference point for those analysing and contesting the growth of many types of anticipatory and pre-emptive surveillance systems that have paralleled the 'war on terror'.⁶⁷

Those contesting the vertically stratified class structures in contemporary cities also have a host of sci-fi urban dystopias to invoke in their efforts. These offer powerful resources through which to contest a world where the überwealthy increasingly cocoon themselves off in a raised strata of penthouses, sky-pools, air-filtered domes, luxury decks, and private

aircraft and helicopters whilst oppressed minions—flown in from some of the world's poorest places in the very 'planes that carry the coffins of their forebears—construct and maintain the airy refuges of the elites from below (with often lethal consequences).

One thing here is certain: in the contemporary world, as architect Pedro Gadanho has put it, 'you don't have to beam yourself to Mars to envisage a sci-fi urbanism that is conceived in the face of extreme conditions'.⁶⁸ There is a powerful sense, rather that the tropes of apocalyptic science fiction are increasingly here and increasingly now. 'The catastrophe is not coming', the Invisible Committee write in their powerful 2008 manifesto against neo-liberal globalisation, *The Coming Insurrection*. 'It is here.'⁶⁹

In this vein Andy Merrifield, following Henri Lefebvre's 1968 book *Le Droit à la Ville* (The Right to the City) published at the height of the Paris insurrections in 1968,⁷⁰ is using Isaac Asimov's discussions about fictional planets from his novels in the *Foundation*, *Robot* and *Empire* series to add power to his discussions about the urbanisation of planet earth.⁷¹

Asimov's fictional planet Trantor, in particular, offers a startling allegory of contemporary and near-future earth.⁷² Its 40 billion inhabitants, for whom green countryside is but a folk memory, inhabit a single, world-scale city which covers the entire surface of the planet. Far below millions of steel domes rising into the sky, the vast bulk of the population inhabits machinic warrens burrowed deep into the crust and continental shelves. And much of the planet's social life occurs within deep architectures where light and air are climate-controlled. Whilst acknowledging that Asimov takes urbanisation 'to the max', Merrifield—and Lefebvre—both stress that its seeds can be recognised in the contemporary urbanisation of our world.

Perhaps, then, the present needs to be reimagined as apocalypse so that efforts to mobilise against it can themselves learn from the political strategies deployed in science fiction?⁷³

Activists and urban critics experiencing and contesting recent cycles of hyper-austere ruination and despair in Athens, for one, have powerfully invoked the city's experience as a kind of 'science fiction of the present'.

Life in contemporary Athens certainly mimics many tropes of dystopian science fiction in the here and now. Civilian liberal and urban life in the city has been assaulted in parallel by systematic immiserisation by international financial regimes and systematic repression by high-tech, increasingly militarised—and often self-avowedly fascist—police. Above all, post-Enlightenment notions of future 'progress' and modernity have been systematically reversed.

The increasingly ruinous city seems to confront an apocalypse straight out of a sci-fi film—one where the future seems indefinitely suspended—but also one curiously unnoticed in the outside world.⁷⁴

Powerful resonances also exist between the anomie of verticalised cityscapes in lived and sci-fi cities. Architect Julian Gitsham of the major global practice Hassell reflects on how one scene in *Blade Runner* underlines the worrying level of isolation and anomie experienced in many verticalised and fortified cities. 'In one scene, Deckard [Harrison Ford's character, the main protagonist] drives through town via a tunnel, goes into a basement car park, takes the lift and goes into his apartment, all without talking to a single person', he writes. 'When you build tall, you can become incredibly isolated.'⁷⁵

In 2003, meanwhile, cyberpunk author, William Gibson, reflected on the pervasive invocation of the term 'Blade Runner' to describe the gritty, dense and decayed—yet often hypermodern—streetscapes of many verticalising megacities. Gibson even turned the term into a verb, suggesting that a multi-tiered expressway in the Roppongi district of Tokyo—itself used as 'future city found' in certain scenes in Andrei Tarkovsky's classic 1972 sci-fi film *Solaris*—had since 'been Blade Runnered by half a century of use and pollution'; its 'edges of concrete worn porous as coral'.⁷⁶

However, problems can emerge here precisely because of the deep continuities in the iconography of sci-fi cities over a century or more. Because it is so common and so easy, the tendency to invoke the vertical gigantism of sci-fi cities in the contested politics of lived ones can easily become hackneyed and clichéd.

The urban writings of California-based critic Mike Davis—with his penchant in his influential books such as *City of Quartz* and *Ecology of Fear*⁷⁷ for what film theorist Peter Brooker has called 'grimly sublime apocalyptic rhetoric'⁷⁸—are clearly influenced by noir and science fiction. Despite this, Davis criticises the ways in which *Blade Runner* was so lazily invoked as a dystopian depiction of the kind of hyper-corporate and radically inegalitarian urban shifts that characterised Los Angeles in the late 1980s.⁷⁹ 'Virtually all ruminations about the future of Los Angeles,' Davis wrote in 1990, 'now take for granted the dark imagery of *Blade Runner* as a possible, if not inevitable, terminal point of the land of sunshine.'

Davis is unconvinced by suggestions that *Blade Runner* is a simple dystopian alter-ego for LA, even though the film is notionally set in that city (in 2019). This is precisely because the film seems to offer up merely a postmodernised re-hash of the urban gigantism served up by Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* in 1927 (which, in turn, relied on thinly veiled copies of the skyscrapers depicted by 1920s US Futurists like Hugh Ferriss).

Davis is especially sceptical of the rather clichéd use of the common trope of verticalised science fiction—from Wells through to *Blade Runner* and beyond—to offer up the future city relying merely on the idea of 'everything swollen up to vast proportions and massive beyond measure'.⁸⁰

A final issue is that many sci-fi cityscapes, offered up as dystopian cities, offer a sense of beguiling possibilities as well as hellish nightmares. In the early 1980s, Western planners were in the throes of replacing the clean and sterile functional city of modernist utopias with visions of cities restored with

dense, pedestrian-friendly and vibrant streetscapes. This meant that, when the thronged and teeming street life of *Blade Runner*'s streets hit the cinema screens in 1982, to many urban professionals, rather than some chilling dystopia, the film actually became a normative model of a desired city to be planned for. By 1997, 'three out of five leading planners agreed that they hoped that LA would someday look like the film *Blade Runner*'. Rather tongue in cheek, Australian planner Stephen Rowley suggests, 'if vibrancy and vitality are what we're after, there is a lot to like about this fictional Los Angeles of 2019. It has plenty of street-level convenience retailing and restaurants.' And 'the nightlife looks fantastic'.⁸¹

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Notes

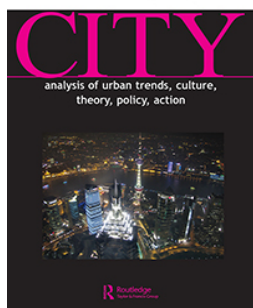
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 - 77 Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Vintage, 1990); Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Macmillan, 1998).
 - 78 Brooker, 'Imagining the Real,' 219.
 - 79 Mike Davis, *Beyond Blade Runner: Urban Control, the Ecology of Fear* (Westfield, NJ: Open Media, 1992).
 - 80 *Ibid.*
 - 81 Stephen Rowley, 'False LA: *Blade Runner* and the Nightmare City,' in *The Blade Runner Experience: The Legacy of a Science Fiction Classic*, ed. Will Brooker (New York: Wallflower Press, 2005), 203–212, at 203.
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Learning from Jerusalem

Jonathan Rokem

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Learning from Jerusalem

Rethinking urban conflicts in the 21st century

Introduction

Jonathan Rokem

Jerusalem—its past, present and future—will serve as the foundation of our understanding of the geographies of cities within contemporary urban theory and practice in the 21st century. The underlying theoretical supposition in this special feature¹ is that what have been labelled *contested* cities have growing similarities to less polarized cities—similarities found in the expansion of ethnic, racial and class conflicts that revolve around issues of housing, infrastructure, participation and identity. In this sense, Jerusalem represents a rather exceptional case study and demonstrates a powerful spatio-political urban pattern in the field of urban studies. The examination of Jerusalem can advance our understanding of the relationship between planning conflicts and urban geopolitics in a growing number of cities worldwide.

With its unique position as the global center for the three largest monotheistic religions Jerusalem's history stretches back to biblical times. For the last century it is at the epicenter of a violent Israeli Palestinian nation-building project earning its place in the urban studies and planning literature as a self-explanatory category of an *ethnically contested city* (Bollens 2000; Shlay and Rosen 2015). However, *the contested or divided cities* label commonly used in most Western academic writings has profound shortcomings. More precisely its focus on ethno-national violence oftentimes lacks an ordinary understanding of the historical, political and religious daily frames of reading the urban. It is impossible to understand the

history of municipal politics in cities with ethnic diversity that have been at one time or another under European control without relating to the colonial foundations of modern urbanism. In this sense colonial power relations remain an integral part of the contemporary urban condition that still resonate today (King 1990; Jacobs 1996). With regards to Jerusalem, it is impossible to discard the concept of *colonialism*, especially in the historical sense, but also with regards to present conditions; increasingly, researchers are diagnosing the distinct colonial features here—see Oren Shlomo (2016) and Oren Yiftachel (2016), with the latter proposing taking this line of thought a step further, insinuating that Jerusalem should not be treated as an exception but rather as a window to understand neo-colonial relations emerging in a multitude of other cities worldwide.

Broadly used within this special feature, *ethnically contested cities* and *colonial urbanism* serve as alternative and partial theoretical frameworks that offer dominant explanations within urban studies literature to some of the deep-rooted forces of ethnicity, nationalism, religion and class conflicts. Precisely, the combination of all these interrelated forces shaping spatial and social conditions on the ground move us away from all-inclusive explanations of the politics and power nexus in Jerusalem. Instead, it points us towards the theoretical and practical potential of *Learning from Jerusalem* as a way to approach wide-ranging (un)ordinary complexities constituting local and global

conflicts in cities at the core of every ordinary urbanism.

This special feature is based on a critical reading of the expanding literature on urban conflicts and contested cities, and consists of six papers covering a broad range of topics, including: gentrification, urban sovereignty and infrastructure, Agamben's theories, comparative urbanism and flexible structuralism. It is important to note it is not suggested that Jerusalem is a *model city* of urban conflict (nor that such a category exists), but rather that other cities are starting to echo some of the extreme urban conditions seen in Jerusalem (see Safier 2001; Yiftachel and Yacobi 2002; Wari 2011; Bollens 2012; Rokem 2013; Dumper 2014).

One rapidly evolving field of research within urban studies is the spatio-politics of contested urban space (Hepburn 2004), especially in relation to the role of planning in such sites (see, e.g. Anderson 2010; Bollens 2001, 2012; Calame and Charlesworth 2009; Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011; Pullan and Baillie 2013; Rokem and Allegra *forthcoming*). This interest is not surprising, given that several cities and postcolonial regimes are witnessing violent ethnic, racial, religious and class-based conflicts. This has led to an increasingly critical review of some of the contributions to the study of spatio-politics of contested cities. Although most of the research about spatio-politics in contested cities has been associated with extreme national conflicts concentrated in urban areas such as Jerusalem, Belfast, Sarajevo and Nicosia (see, e.g. Calame and Charlesworth 2009; Bollens 2012), conflicts related to nationalism, ethnicity and race are becoming more common and relevant to a growing number of urban spaces worldwide (Marcuse 2002). More specifically, the majority of contemporary urban studies literature overlooks similar conditions in a growing number of *ordinary* urban areas, which are not considered part of the typical *contested cities category* (see Allegra, Casaglia, and Rokem 2012).

Mass urbanization has meant that cities have developed 'brand identities' to attract

tourists and investments. Noticeably, some cities highlight social and political values, which Bell and de-Shalit (2011) have described as a city's *ethos* or *spirit*. Different cities compete globally and become known for specific qualities to attract tourists and new residents. In this sense, Jerusalem is a religious magnet for three major world faiths, placing it in the same urban typology as Varanasi, Mecca and the Vatican. However, as the following papers will discuss in detail, it contains several other qualities that can be used as a focus for wider comparison.

When discussing the comparative value of urban difference (McFarlane and Robinson 2012) it is useful to acknowledge the current lively debate regarding the Euro-centricity of the canonical theories of the academic field of urban studies (Roy 2009; Peck 2015). This debate has focused on the validity of singular cases from the global North as main sources of urban theory production, instead arguing that such cities should be considered as *ordinary cities* within a multifaceted conceptual framework (Robinson 2006, 2011). It is suggested that the texts throughout this special feature should be read as a hypothetical framework for an academic discipline more open to the varieties and complexities of urban conflicts.

We are fully aware that de-exceptionalizing Jerusalem within a wider prism of global urban conflict runs the grave risk of de-historicization or homology. As several of the papers in this feature suggest, this might be overcome by a contextual understanding of the local conditions. Building knowledge from a particular case can uncover in what ways the more extreme political and historical circumstances in Jerusalem are echoed in contested urban practices and policies and how they compare across the wider world of cities (Robinson 2011, 2014).

The initial proposition is that emphasizing the uniqueness of Jerusalem (and other contested cities) can prevent us from recognizing the commonalities between this iconic city and other cities with social and spatial

divisions. Obviously, there is no intention here of ignoring Jerusalem's past and current colonial geographies; yet the very question that remains open is whether one should challenge the canonical differentiation between causal categories of spatial segregation, division and conflict (i.e. driven by market gentrification, state led or social dynamics, with the latter perhaps encompassing some form of societal *othering* of individuals and communities). Indeed, there is a tendency in the literature to essentialize specific *contested cities* as the containers of particular attributes that distinguish them from other urban areas. In this sense, it may be better to reconsider the conventional urban division and the way it is utilized to define spatial and social conditions in different cities (van Kampen 2007).

One such example is the claim that a major part of urban growth worldwide—and the global *West* and *North* are no exception—takes place in informal settlements. Theoretically labelled *urban informality* (Roy and AlSayyad 2004) or *grey space* (Yiftachel 2009) and encapsulating a multitude of groups, bodies, housing, lands, economies and discourses, these settlements lie in the shadows of formal cities and exist outside the gaze of state authorities and city plans.

Cities are becoming increasingly polarized, with ethnicity and migration augmenting the existing multi-layered (physical, legal, symbolic) city boundaries. However, existing *theories of everything* (see Yiftachel 2016), such as dominant globalization discourses (Sassen 2001), urban age theories (Burdett and Sudjic 2006) and more recently planetary far-reaching neo-liberal explanation of *the urban without an outside* (Brenner 2013; Brenner and Schmid 2015) do not explain the new forces behind the partitioning.

The papers in this feature take a less all-inclusive approach and focus on case studies of the built environment and planning policy in the formal and informal processes of urban development. The papers portray individual urban planning stories involving diverse communities. Overall, the aim is to

learn from the local conditions in Jerusalem and to focus on spaces of conflict and negotiations on the one hand, and on territories of hope and cooperation on the other.

The first paper by Hila Zaban investigates the gentrification processes in West Jerusalem's Baka neighbourhood. It presents the story of the housing market and its shift from the Palestinian residents to Jewish immigrants of Moroccan origin. In the last few decades, houses in Baka have increased in value and it has become one of Jerusalem's most sought-after areas with an influx of affluent immigrants from the USA displacing the earlier Moroccan population. Zaban suggests this adds a layer of complexity to the past and present transformation of the neighbourhood. Oren Shlomo investigates the darker side of planning, with a specific interest in the multidimensional aspects of sovereignty in urban systems. This paper assesses Israeli policies and practices and their impact on the ongoing (lack) of infrastructure development and its (mis-)management as a means to control East Jerusalem's Palestinian population. Amina Nolte unpacks the complexity of the recently opened Light Railway and its dual role in both connecting and dividing Palestinian and Israeli populations in Jerusalem. Nolte questions whether large transport infrastructure is inherently political or if there is a *politics of infrastructure* at stake in Jerusalem where the Light Rail can be seen as an effective governance tool but also as a political claim in that it connects the current de facto separated Palestinian side with Jewish West Jerusalem. Moving on to a wider look at the prism of the *contested* and *ordinary* debate in urban studies, Camillo Boano's investigative theoretical approach employs Agambenian *paradigmatic whatever urbanism* and Foucaudian *governmental* and *biopolitical* readings, suggesting 'an alternative narrative for the urban'. The direct research by design activity experiences of the author are discussed as a means of contrasting the 'hyper-potential case of Jerusalem beyond its exception', pointing towards what we can learn from

comparing incommensurable cities. This is further elaborated upon in my own contrastive assessment of Jerusalem and Stockholm within Jennifer Robinson's (2006) *ordinary cities* theoretical framework. I argue that via a development of urban patterns based on local contextual factors, there is a growing need to start de-orientalizing the research on extreme urban conflicts.

In the concluding commentary, Oren Yiftachel further reflects on the various types of structural forces that can be found in Jerusalem: colonial, religious, gendered, national, global, political and ordinary. Grounded on a South-Eastern theoretical perspective, *dynamic structuralism* is proposed by Yiftachel as a framework to capture and unpack the overarching forces shaping the contemporary urban. Metaphorically captured within Jorge Borges' short story of the *Aleph*—*A Place of All Places*, Yiftachel calls for a more reflective research agenda suggesting a move beyond the logic of most traditional critical urban theories (CUT), which tend to privilege a particular all-inclusive narrative of the world. Yiftachel compellingly concludes that Jerusalem is not an exception, but a hyper-example of the major forces that shape the contemporary city. Rather than being extreme, it is the harbinger of things to come.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Note

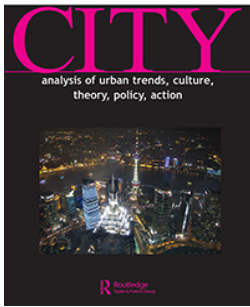
- 1 The papers in this special feature result from an academic workshop ('Learning from Jerusalem—Rethinking Planning and Urban Geopolitics') conducted in May 2014 in Jerusalem, organized by Jonathan Rokem and Haim Yacobi. The event was funded by The French Research Center in Jerusalem (CRFJ-CNRS) and the Bezalel Urban Design Program, Jerusalem. Special thanks to Haim Yacobi, Laura Vaughan, Oren Yiftachel, Michael Safier and Oren Shlomo for their constructive comments on earlier versions of this text.

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'Once there were Moroccans here—today Americans'

Hila Zaban

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‘Once there were Moroccans here—today Americans’¹

Gentrification and the housing market in the Baka neighbourhood of Jerusalem

Hila Zaban

Gentrification, and its expressions in the housing market, is a burning issue, bearing many social implications. This paper examines this issue through the case study of the Baka neighbourhood in Jerusalem. Baka has a unique history as a Palestinian neighbourhood, turned into a poor immigrants’ neighbourhood in the 1950s and today a highly gentrified and desired place of residence. Baka’s gentrification resulted from both the geopolitical changes in Jerusalem’s borders after the 1967 war, which turned it from borderline into an inner-city neighbourhood, as well as the re-enchantment of Palestinian homes caused by new architectural trends. While the gentrification process of Baka was initially dominated by the secular and educated Israeli middle class, over time Jewish immigrants from Western countries—mainly the USA, France and England—have become dominant. The paper is based on lengthy ethnographic fieldwork, and analyses the developments in Baka’s housing market through a reading of the stages of gentrification as they appear in the contemporary literature. The argument advanced is that gentrification is a neo-liberal process driven by market forces and encouraged by the state. It is therefore not a free market process open to everyone, but rather one which benefits strong social groups that are considered hegemonic in the Israeli context and excludes other populations, with lesser financial abilities. The case study also reveals how in modern Israel ‘real estate language’ replaced ‘national language’, and that the usage of such a language disguises ethnic and ethno-national stratification as well as class inequalities.

Key words: gentrification, housing, inequality, Jerusalem, Israel

Introduction

Gentrification, and its expressions in the housing market, is a burning issue bearing many social implications. This paper will examine this issue through a case study of the Baka neighbourhood in Jerusalem. Based on the findings of

my ethnographic fieldwork in Baka between 2008 and 2013, and relying on the contemporary literature on gentrification, I shall analyse the developments in the neighbourhood’s housing market according to the stages of gentrification known in the literature (Gale 1984). I argue that gentrification is a neo-liberal process driven by market

forces and encouraged by the state. It is therefore not a free market process open to everyone, but rather one which benefits strong groups that are considered hegemonic in the Israeli social context, and excludes other populations, with lesser financial abilities. Through this case study I will also show how in modern Israel the 'neo-liberal real estate language' replaced the 'national welfare language', and argue that while the usage of such a language aligns Jerusalem's experience with that of most other 'neo-liberal' cities, at the same time it bears ethnic stratification, class inequalities and territorial and demographic ethno-national colonialism, directed against the Palestinians. Moreover, while the national/neo-liberal is expected to represent a binary opposition, in Israel, and particularly in the case of Jerusalem, they do not. Both 'languages'—the national and the neo-liberal—discriminate against people on ethnic and ethno-national grounds, which often correlate to socio-economic status. Where the state apparatus discriminated before it is market forces currently driving discrimination, but they can only do so with the support of state policies.

The next section describes the history of Baka's housing market before gentrification began. I then turn to examine the developments in the housing market according to the neighbourhood's stages of gentrification: Stage I—from 1967 to the mid-1980s; Stage II—the 1980s and 1990s; Stage III—from the late 1990s to the present. I conclude with a theoretical discussion.

The pre-historical phase: Baka's housing market before gentrification, 1889–1967

Baka was established in the late 1880s, under Ottoman rule. During the period of the British Mandate in Palestine (1917–48), Baka developed and experienced a building boom resulting from its strategic location. Many new buildings and building additions were built then. Baka ceased to be a wealthy Palestinian neighbourhood and home for

British officials in May 1948, when it was conquered by para-military Jewish forces (Avizohar 2002). The fate of Baka resembled that of other Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods: the Palestinian residents fled or were expelled from their homes; their assets were declared 'absentee property' and became property of the Jewish state.

After the war, the neighbourhood was declared a closed military area for several months, and was only re-occupied in early 1949. Yoram Levy (2001), who grew up in the nearby Mekor Haim, writes in his memoirs about the discovery of Baka:

'In the early days there was great fear to go into the beautiful Baka. Most of the houses were single-storey, surrounded by spectacular vegetation and fruit trees, and inside—expensive furniture. Shortly after, people started entering the neighbourhood to see its beauty and majesty, but no one dared to take an apartment or house for permanent settlement. And as the neighbourhood seemed vacant, residents of surrounding neighbourhoods found the houses and their content an inexhaustible source for booty. A few weeks after this phenomenon the Absentee Property Unit blocked the houses and prepared them to be populated by new immigrants.' (121)

Two groups of people settled or were settled in Baka's vacant homes. The larger group consisted of recent immigrants who needed housing solutions. These came mainly from North Africa, but also from post-war Europe. The second group included state employees, military veterans or evacuees from the Jewish neighbourhoods damaged in the war. The Jewish Agency divided the houses into rooms, one or two rooms per family, and settled families there under terms of protected tenancy. The living standard of the entire population, regardless of origins, was quite low and everyone lived frugally. With time, differences in residents' social status were also manifested in their living standards.

Until the 1970s, and some say until the beginning of the 1980s, Baka was considered

a poor, crime-infested neighbourhood. The neighbourhood population, especially the proportion of *Mizrahi* families (Jews from Arab and Islamic countries), increased significantly during the decades following the evacuation of the nearby Talpiyot temporary immigrants' camp (*ma'abara* in Hebrew) in the 1950s; the construction of new housing projects built in the 1960s; and the arrival of borderline neighbourhood residents who suffered from sniper fire (pre-1967 war) to Baka, which was safer. The high residential density diminished over the years, as many gradually left the neighbourhood. The thick walls and high ceilings of the Palestinian architecture made it difficult to heat these houses and during the winter tenants suffered from the cold. Renovations and extensions were made with cheap and available materials and without planning.

Until the 1960s, Baka was not densely built. People who grew up there then mentioned spaces, open fields and unpaved streets. During the 1960s, many housing projects were rapidly built in Jerusalem, and throughout the country, in order to provide housing for the massive waves of immigration which flooded the new state. In Baka, the projects were built in haste, and their location and manner of placing resulted from land availability. These large constructions were disproportionate with the existing built environment, and were designed in modern architectural style, *à la* Le Corbusier.

Gentrification Take-1, high ceilings and a garden: 1967 to the mid-1980s

Baka's signs of change started following the 1967 war. The geopolitical expansion of the city led to Baka's centralisation (Cohen 1985; Gonen 2002). At the same time the new discourse of architectural post-modernism started to examine the Palestinian homes with more appreciation and saw them as native, local and authentic (Nitzan-Shifan 2005; Yacobi 2008). The gentrification process of Baka is a result of these two

factors—the geopolitical changes and the new architectural trend—when some 'pioneers' saw the potential of the Palestinian homes. These 'pioneers', who can be found in every gentrification process, were mostly architects and artists, who understood the value of those homes.

Palestinian architecture was the 'engine' of Baka's gentrification process. It was only logical that Baka, built as a prestigious neighbourhood, should re-gain its status, but it was the new quest for authenticity that triggered the process. Palestinian homes are often termed 'Arab houses' in Israel. This term is granted a positive, neutral and de-politicised meaning, unlike other terms containing the title 'Arab'. Yacobi (2008) argues that the architectural post-modernism, which affected the re-enchantment of Palestinian homes, was used for 'depriving the Palestinian memory of its political contents while utilising architectural preservation practice' (96). He also claims that the Palestinian homes were suddenly appealing to Jews, only because they no longer had Palestinians or *Mizrahim* in them and because they became a symbol for the authentic 'local' landscape (112). While Palestinian architecture is currently preserved and admired, it is completely detached from any acknowledgment of the Palestinian past in the city and certainly from any demands or claims Palestinians may have over their properties.

While these houses triggered the process from the bottom, it could not have happened without an accompanying top-down policy: the changing policy of the Israel Land Authority with respect to the absentee properties. The handling of these properties (but not the ownership thereof) was done by the Development Authority (*Rashut Hapituah*), and was transferred in later stages to Amidar (a government-operated housing firm). The policy adopted in the late 1960s was to encourage the sale of properties. The first right of purchase was offered to the protected tenants, entitled to large discounts. Tenants could also sell at full price immediately after purchasing the properties. This nationwide

change of policy, which was the beginning of the widespread sale of public housing, was very significant for Baka.

Gentrification processes consist of several stages: first, a small group of 'pioneers' enters the neighbourhood. They are mainly artists and architects with knowledge, time and ability to perform the restoration, and are not very wealthy. They are usually followed by others, of similar characteristics. This stage lasted in Baka until the mid-1970s. In the second stage, homebuyers and investors enter the neighbourhood, and buy properties for much higher prices. This stage occurred in Baka from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. In the third stage, businessmen, realtors, developers and builders enter the neighbourhood and greatly increase the value of assets (the first signs of this appeared in Baka in the early 1980s, but the main process occurred in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s) (Gale 1984). Contemporary literature on gentrification refers to the next stage of the process as super-gentrification (Lees 2000). This process began in Baka in the late 1990s and continues still. This section focuses on the first and second stages of the process.

The first wave of gentrifiers included mostly young couples and families, secular, educated, not particularly wealthy and on the political left, who came from the more established neighbourhoods of the city, but were not necessarily born in Jerusalem. Detached homes with a garden for attractive prices could also be found in the satellite neighbourhoods of Jerusalem or in the suburbs. Those who came to Baka did so because they preferred the inner city, were attracted to the aesthetics of the Palestinian architecture and saw the potential of the homes and of the neighbourhood. Amiram Gonen claims that middle-class Jewish households always preferred the inner city, and the trend of suburbanisation had not really changed that. And yet, the significant cultural change was that since the early 1970s the Jewish middle-class bias against the old quarters of the lower classes has

declined (Gonen 2002, 728–729). The Palestinian homes not only fulfilled the quest for authenticity, but also their new owners' dream to live in a detached inner-city home at a cheap price. They also enabled them to express their tastes and skills through the renovation of the homes. In fact, the very choice to purchase a property in a low status neighbourhood reflected cultural capital (Cohen 1985).

In its beginning, the gentrification was primarily driven by the Israeli-born population, although immigrants from Western countries have taken part in the process all along. In fact, in the early 1980s, Western immigrants accounted for about 30% of new residents in Baka (Cohen 1985). These immigrants came to Israel in the great immigration wave from the West prompted by the 1967 war and its achievements, which lasted up to the Yom Kippur War (1973). At first mostly American immigrants settled in Baka along with the Israelis. Only a few of them were Orthodox and many came from secular, Reform or Conservative backgrounds. Most immigrants were young and single, educated and not particularly wealthy (Avruch 1981). The characteristics of the immigrants who would come to Baka in later stages would change greatly.

Amos and his wife moved to Baka in 1970 with their two children. They were young, secular *Ashkenazim* (of European decent), academics and on the political left. In an interview in 2011 Amos said:

'We were looking to buy something that would be affordable, and our first house in Baka was relatively cheap. It was the beginning of the gentrification process. There were only a few people from our "milieu" here and we knew no one.'

When the house became too small for their needs, they purchased another Palestinian home in the neighbourhood, to which they moved in 1980:

'The tenants in this house gradually left. The conditions were uncomfortable. Amidar

evacuated them, sealed the rooms and offered them alternative housing. When we came here, only an old Bulgarian couple remained. They were protected tenants and wanted to leave. There was a legendary real estate agent here, Marciano, who is a part of Baka's story. He was of Moroccan descent and used to be the agent, a real myth. There were a lot of people who wanted to leave here and move to new housing projects. The value of these homes did not seem high to them. They wanted modern facilities and amenities. He was the man who entered this niche and mediated. The Bulgarian tenants here needed money. Amidar was willing to pay them for their part of the house and it was awfully little. They had the right to purchase the house themselves but they did not want to. We went to a lawyer who wrote the agreement. They bought their part of the house and we bought the right to purchase the house from them.'

Such transactions were called 'combination transactions' and sometimes also 'triangular transactions' or 'circular transactions' (Cohen 1985). Such transactions were common due to Israel Land Authority's decision to sell the apartments. In practice, the Authority's decision had only become effective in Baka with the increased demand for properties there. The buyers bought the properties from their protected tenants, who acquired them from the Development Authority at significant discounts of up to 40% of their value. Tenants would often buy their property with the buyer's money, and immediately thereafter register it to the new owner. The buyers also paid tenants for their right to purchase the property. Other tenants, who wanted to stay in the neighbourhood and could afford to purchase their property, did so. If tenants were uninterested or unable to purchase, but wished to stay, the Development Authority sold the property to a third party, who had to allow them to stay as protected tenants.

Amos' comments indicate the role agents had as mediators between the bourgeois dreams of Jerusalem's elite and the dreams of old-time residents to improve their living

conditions. Amos represents the first wave of Baka's gentrification process (to which I refer as Take-1), which began in the late 1960s and continued until the mid-1980s. His words also expose gentrification as a class-related phenomenon, as indicated by Glass (1964). Indeed, gentrification begins with people of high social status and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986), but not necessarily with much economic capital. That is, in its early stages it is a class-related phenomenon socially and culturally, but less so economically.

Real estate professionals, especially agents and developers, have played a key role in the real estate revolution of Baka. Helen, an experienced agent who frequently works with the religious Anglo crowd, told me in an interview in 2011 what the housing market in Baka was like in the early 1980s:

'How did I know that Baka would become an expensive quarter? Because there were a lot of old Arab houses with gardens. People were starting to ask for gardens or terraces and Rehavia and Talbiya did not have a lot of them. Buildings there did not answer the needs of younger couples with three-four children or older overseas people, who wanted bigger properties. I worked with a developer who went knocking on doors asking people if they wanted to sell their properties telling them he could bring them buyers. So it was a combination of people deciding to leave, because they had "key money property" [protected tenants], and on the other hand we had buyers who were looking for such properties.'

Agents are closest to the clients. They are the fastest to identify demand and affect how a phenomenon develops. As a real estate agent, Helen realised that her clients' needs could be addressed in Baka, and managed to position herself as an expert in finding such properties. Agents' involvement in encouraging gentrification processes is certainly not unique to Baka, and was mentioned in other contexts too (e.g. Betancur 2002 in the context of a Chicago neighbourhood).

Over the years, most of the apartments in Baka, which had earlier been leased to protected tenants, became owned apartments. Many sold and left or decided to purchase their apartments and stay. But what happened when people stayed without purchasing their homes? Ziva, daughter of post-war Polish immigrants, born in 1954, talks about the case of her parents and herself:

'My parents were housed in this apartment by the Jewish Agency and paid rent to Amidar. Later, someone bought the house from Amidar and they paid rent to the new owner. My mother could buy the apartment but she was reluctant to do so. When she died the landlady sued me because I did not have rights on the apartment. Although I lived there since I was born, she claimed that my father was signed on the contract and therefore my mother had no rights of her own. After his death, my mother lived there on his rights, and I had no rights at all. I lost the trial and was evicted.'

Ziva's case demonstrates that in Baka too, like many other gentrified neighbourhoods, people were evicted from their homes (Atkinson 2000; Zandberg 2008; Herzfeld 2009). The evictor is usually the municipality or a housing company but in Ziva's case it was done by a private owner, and according to the law. The policy of the Israel Land Authority made the concept of protected tenancy almost non-existent. Under the Tenant Protection Act of 1972, which replaced the 1940s Key Money Law, the right for protected tenancy cannot be inherited, but can pass under certain conditions to another tenant after the death of the tenant signed on the contract: a spouse or a child, if they lived there with them and do not own another apartment. As Ziva was not entitled to these rights she had to leave the apartment in which she had lived for 52 years.

This case reflects broader processes characteristic of the neo-liberalisation of the Israeli economy. Sale of apartments run by housing companies to individuals is part of the progressive termination of public

housing in Israel (Werczberger 2007). When apartments are sold to tenants it may help them improve their living conditions, but when they are sold to third parties, original tenants are usually pushed out. This policy therefore encourages gentrification.

Contemporary gentrification literature mentions several forms of gentrification: gentrification marked by the renovation and de-conversion of older residential housing stock from tenancy to owner-occupation; new-build gentrification; and gentrification that involves conversion of older non-residential buildings to residential use (Walks and Maaranen 2008). The gentrification process of Baka is mainly a combination of the first two forms, while new-build gentrification only started once the process had been geared by the first form. This will be described in the next section.

Gentrification Take-2, here come the developers: the 1980s and 1990s

In his study of Baka in the early 1980s, Cohen (1985) identified signs of the gentrification process known as 'the third stage' in the literature. In fact, in Baka, this stage began a little earlier with several new constructions in the late 1970s, mainly in the north of the neighbourhood, which developed first. Gentrification processes do not usually end with the penetration of real estate professionals into a neighbourhood, but keep evolving years thereafter. In Baka, this stage marks the second period in the neighbourhood's gentrification process. This period was characterised by two parallel processes. One was the acquisition of Palestinian homes by developers or in conjunction with them, and not just by individuals. Such properties were turned into apartment buildings, utilising all the building rights granted to them. The other process included new construction of single buildings and large projects. These projects had a major effect on the development of the gentrification process.

As prices and demand were constantly rising and fewer properties were to be found, a new option was introduced: building additions on Palestinian homes. For this a developer or building contractor was needed. They would buy the property, turn it into an apartment building and sell for a large profit. Here, too, real estate agents had a major role, in finding both the properties and the right contractor/developer, who agreed to take the risk and build in a neighbourhood still considered problematic and where real estate values were relatively low. However, from the mid-1980s it became more evident that the neighbourhood was on its way up. Helen, the agent formerly mentioned, explained the process:

‘When properties became available, an agent approached a builder and suggested that he buys it, build it and sell it. But some of the builders in those days came from Baka and were convinced that it was a place for drugs and poor people. When my house became available in the late 1980s, we could not get a builder. In the end we found two people, American and English, who were doing some developing, and they did the combination deal and built the building. They sold their apartments before they even finished.’

According to this description, it seems that the market had gone a step ahead of the developers. While the demand for this kind of properties was rising, developers were still concerned with the risk involved.

The second development in Baka’s housing market at this period was new construction. The neo-orientalist style became very popular then. This architectural style tried to ‘speak the language’ of Ottoman architecture, with its arched windows, decorative elements and iron shutters; this was in part ideologically motivated; an attempt to adapt to the built environment, but was also driven by economic and marketing reasons. This trend increased over the years and is often criticised, especially by architects. Yet, copycat architecture is only external. Inside, these are large apartments with interiors that meet high standards. Not

only individual buildings were designed in the neo-orientalist style but large projects too, most notably the Dan Street Project. There, not only were the buildings designed in the neo-orientalist style, but there was also an attempt to emulate a Palestinian village through a courtyard of narrow ‘streets’, with several ‘wells’ at the centre, which are actually vents for the car park underneath.

This project was built on vacant land and included 20 three-storey buildings surrounding a courtyard. The courtyard is maintained by the tenants but open to the public. In practice, as the houses turn their backs on the street and the courtyard is not visible from the outside, it is only accessible to tenants, which makes the project a pseudo gated community (Rosen and Razin 2009). Many have seen this project as a cornerstone in Baka’s development. Although apartments were not quickly sold at first, when Baka started to attract a middle-class population, the project attracted young families, many of them religious Western immigrants. Another project was built right across the street on Ben Azai Street, according to the same principles and for the same population.

The 1980s were critical years for Baka. Ethan, a resident of Baka and an experienced real estate attorney, said in a 2010 interview that:

‘The real estate revolution here began and ended in the 1980s. In ’81–’82 it was still a crime-infested slum and in 1990 it was already a prestigious neighbourhood. Before that there were only dribs and drabs. Most of the new buildings in the neighbourhood, including additions to Arab homes, are from the late 1980s onward. In 1981 a 100 square meters apartment with a garden in an Arab home in Levy Street cost the same as a 3.5 room apartment in Bait Vagan [another Jerusalem neighbourhood]. The latter is now worth about 250 thousand dollars, while the apartment in Baka is worth over a million dollars. These are the proportions.’

Ethan describes this period as a ‘real estate revolution’. But this decade had not only

changed Baka's housing market, but also its population. The 1980s and early 1990s seem to have been the tipping point of the gentrification process, a peak beyond which Baka had become a prestigious middle/upper class neighbourhood. The new residents became a critical mass and led changes in the fields of education, religion, commerce and civic participation. If until the mid-1980s Baka's houses were the main point of attraction, from the mid-1990s onward people were also moving there because it was considered a good neighbourhood with good education and services and unique religious communities.

Gentrification Take-3, anything goes: from the late 1990s to the present

From the late 1990s onwards Baka has been considered a prestigious neighbourhood. Since then, all new constructions meet the standards of luxury apartments. The demand became so high that all available land had been acquired and almost no unplanned spaces remain. At the same time, the state-run neighbourhood rehabilitation programme in Baka saw most of the housing projects of the 1960s renovated. The housing prices, at this stage of the process, are constantly rising.

Ethan (quoted above) described the changes in Baka's housing market and in its social and demographic characteristic:

'In '95-'96 real estate prices throughout the country fell, and in Baka less so. When there was a renewed growth in the late 1990s Baka began to speed up. There are no cheap apartments in Baka today. Nowadays, every semi renovated three-bedroom apartment in the blocks is sold for 250 thousand dollars. It's certainly not affordable. The market adapts. Just like water tends to run from every exit, the market tends to sell to the highest bidder. As long as the demand is high, new building would only aim for the wealthy crowd. There is almost nothing to be done. 80 percent of the projects' population has already been replaced. The old-time *Mizrahi* population

that was 95 percent of Baka's population thirty years ago now constitutes about 15 percent–20 percent of the population. There is something like 5–10 percent overseas people who only come during the holidays. Another 20 percent are very rich people who can afford large apartments in new buildings or in Arab homes. The rest are young people who either live here in rentals or bought an apartment in a block, or residents who came here in the 1970s.'

Ethan describes how the housing market developed hand in hand with the gentrification process. According to him, the market adjusts to the demand and as long as the demand for luxury apartments continues, this will be the only form of construction. Ethan's comments reflect a neo-liberal economic discourse which examines real estate as an economic phenomenon devoid of political and social implications. Sociologist Yehouda Shenhav argues that the real estate mechanism has always been a fiction, created by state institutions, financiers and technocrats who hold a professional and so-called apolitical common sense. This fiction not only controls the manner in which the real estate market develops but it is also discriminatory and insensitive to the poor and 'unwanted' groups. These discriminatory practices are disguised by the technocratic field (Shenhav 2000). Ethan, as one of those 'technocrats', might see the insensitivity of the market but does not believe that it can or should be changed. This is what the replacement of the 'welfare national language' by the 'neo-liberal real estate language' actually means. The state withdrew its responsibility for housing and the free market entered this vacuum, encouraged by state institutions. Therefore, precisely because gentrification processes are free market processes, they are discriminatory, inequitable and accompanied by various social and political outcomes. In Baka, the departure of vulnerable populations and the entry of hegemonic population were encouraged. The new projects designed for middle-class families further intensified gentrification. As Ethan specified, in the 1990s

and early 2000s the gentrification process also reached the housing projects of the 1960s. At that stage, the young professionals who could have bought unique Palestinian properties in the 1970s and early 1980s were only able to afford two-bedroom apartments in housing projects. As most projects were later renovated and expanded through the neighbourhood rehabilitation programme, their attractiveness increased.

The neighbourhood rehabilitation programme was a government programme that began in 1976 (Carmon and Hill 1988). The Jerusalem Municipality applied this plan to Baka's housing projects in the 1990s, and in practice many of them have only been rehabilitated at the beginning of the millennium. Carmon and Hill argue that the programme's goal was to rehabilitate without gentrifying. It renovated and rehabilitated buildings in selected neighbourhoods while residents stayed intact. The neighbourhoods were selected according to the physical condition of the buildings and not the socio-economic status of tenants, despite the understanding that it might also benefit people who are not the most vulnerable in society. The idea was to encourage residents to stay, even if they could leave, so that the environment does not deteriorate (Carmon and Hill 1988). In Baka, however, even before the programme was applied, the projects' population already included many people with better options elsewhere who preferred living in those projects because of their location. While the rehabilitation and expansion of the projects enabled young professionals to stay even after their families expanded, it also resulted in further population turnover. This was partly due to the ageing of original tenants whom the apartments no longer suited. Apart from three large housing projects that had not entered the rehabilitation programme for various reasons, all other housing projects in Baka were rehabilitated.

In recent years, the Jerusalem Municipality has promoted a new master plan for Baka. One of its main goals is to decide

how and where housing units can be added. The plan aims to preserve the heart of the neighbourhood, which is part of the 'historic city' (built pre-1948), where buildings shall not exceed four storeys in height, while significantly developing the edges. Such development would be carried out within the framework of current urban renewal programmes. The housing projects and the buildings predating 1980 would be where the majority of new housing units be added. This plan will have major effects on Baka's housing market and significant social implications, as urban renewal is in fact nothing but a euphemistic name for gentrification.

'In numerology Baka equals heaven': the super-gentrification of Baka

It is impossible to say when a gentrification process is completed. As other social processes, it is dynamic and has different characteristics in different places. The end of gentrification is vague. It may 'end' once all or most old-time residents are replaced by newcomers of higher class, it can remain in an incomplete state for decades and it can develop into something new. Often enough, when the process is 'completed', it turns out that the residents of high social status (reflected mainly in education)—the first-wave gentrifiers—were partially pushed out (Filion 1991). Walks and Maaranen (2008) argue that near the end of the process, with virtually all the social and economic risk eliminated, the most risk-averse bourgeois households make their home in the neighbourhood. Remaining tenanted buildings are de-converted, both housing and retail are re-renovated, and the neighbourhood completes its transformation, potentially into one of the most desirable locations in the city. Loretta Lees (2000) calls this super-gentrification; when the upper class (the super-rich) pushes out the middle class. Although differences in scale between the super-rich of Baka, who are far less wealthy than the

oligarchs or the super-rich of the Gulf States who settled in cities like London and New York, it is nonetheless super-gentrification that we see in Baka. Furthermore, Baka is undergoing super-gentrification while at the same time 'regular' gentrification continues. The latter continues in the housing projects and buildings from the 1970s and 1980s, while super-gentrification refers to luxury apartments—in new construction or additions on Palestinian homes (Figure 1(a)–(c)).

In an interview from 2010, Yaron, a local architect working with the affluent Anglo population, described what super-gentrification in Baka looked like:

'During the 1990s people with means started coming here and prices doubled. These clients demanded higher standards and the quality of construction greatly improved. Now every apartment is luxury apartment, and land prices increase too. There would be thirty millionaires competing on each vacant land in Baka, individuals who want a property in *Eretz Israel*. [My American clients] are people who made a lot of money in America and want to start anew in Israel or continue their business overseas but raise their family in a better environment from a Jewish perspective. In architecture they want things they are familiar with, like garden apartments and duplexes, which are like American town houses. The interior design resembles the American style: there would always be a den, an informal room in the basement. They prefer electric under-floor heating, which they know from America. There is a whole obsession with the kitchens, unknown here before the American clientele; a central vacuuming system; parquet floors. In a new project we built in Baka there is not a single Israeli. It is the price, but also the fact that it was marketed in English. The buyers are affluent and religious overseas people. You know what they say about Baka? That in numerology Baka equals heaven. I do not like the American clientele. They like kitsch architecture and are fixated on their perception of "the Jerusalem style". Aesthetically, they are not fun to work with,

but I got used to it because there is nothing a Jew would not do for a living.'

Yaron raised several significant points, reinforced by two other architects I interviewed, who worked with the same population. First, the buyers were usually religious and wealthy Anglo and French families. The father was often a businessman and sometimes continued to work abroad. Most buyers actually lived in the apartments and did not just use them as second homes. The latter phenomenon characterised about 6% of dwellings in Baka, much less than in other adjacent neighbourhoods (Leurer 2007). Second, architecturally the Anglo audience was interested in 'Jerusalem style' buildings, either original Palestinian architecture (especially from the Ottoman period) or imitations of it. Architects' efforts to talk private customers or developers out of it were rejected. While the first might have been 'fixated', the latter knew what would sell. Some architects grumble about their clients' orientalist taste but deliver, as Yaron did, while others stood more firmly for their principles. Ultimately, architects profit much from this clientele, and therefore tend to compromise. Architects' complaints of their clients' bad taste are common, as indicated by Yacobi (2008) in the context of the 'build your own home' project.

A third point Yaron raised involved the quality of construction. The adjustment of the housing market to the requirements and needs of the wealthy religious American/European target audience increased the quality of construction throughout Jerusalem. In fact, as land prices in Baka are so high, it is not profitable for developers to build anything other than luxury apartments for this particular audience. The marketing followed accordingly, using only English and French, thereby excluding native-born Israelis. As buyers wanted large homes and could afford them, any attempt to promote a population mix through the directive to build small apartments is doomed to failure in face of 'bottom-up' opposition.

Discussion

As demonstrated through the case study of Baka, the way the housing market develops determines who enters and who leaves, for

what reasons and where to. In this paper I argued that gentrification is a neo-liberal process driven by market forces and encouraged by the state, and therefore not a free market process open to everyone, but rather



Figure 1 (a)–(c) Examples of new luxury apartments in Baka (Photos: Author).



Figure 1 Continued.

a process which benefits strong and hegemonic groups and excludes other populations, with lesser financial abilities. Moreover, through the ethnography from Baka I demonstrated how the 'real estate language' replaced the 'national language', and how despite the fact that the 'real estate language' reflects Israel's neo-liberal turn, it is still very much embedded in the national project and its aims. The use of real estate language thus disguises ethnic and ethno-national stratification that are deeply linked with class inequalities. While the state no longer dictates who gets to live where (in cities at least), it allows the housing prices to determine it. Unsurprisingly, the results are more often than not just the same.

As shown, the gentrification of Baka is not only a class-related process but also involves ethnicity. The early stages of Baka's gentrification process were characterised by a clear ethnic division: the *Mizrahim* left and the *Ashkenazim* entered. Today, as part of the super-gentrification process, the ethnic division changed: native Israelis leave while Western immigrants, particularly from the USA, France and England, enter. Ethnicity and class are intertwined. The early stage *Ashkenazim* were more educated and rich than Baka's *Mizrahi* residents, while today, Western immigrants are often more affluent than native-born Israelis. The ethnic and class divisions are seen and felt in everyday life and are expressed in what Judith DeSena (following Daniel Monti) calls 'parallel play'. This means that different communities, divided along lines of ethnicity and class, are interacting next to each other while focused on their own group and activities (DeSena 2009).

The housing market of Baka (and of inner-city Jerusalem in general) also bears political implications. The high prices push Jews with lesser abilities to the satellite neighbourhoods built on annexed post-1967 areas or to the occupied territories in the metropolitan area of Jerusalem, where housing is cheaper. This trend holds significant implications for any future agreement with the Palestinians.

The gentrification process of Baka also includes a religious aspect. While primarily

this process was mostly secular or non-Orthodox, most of the population now entering the neighbourhood is religious-Orthodox. This population includes three dominant groups: English-speaking immigrants, French-speaking immigrants and young religious yet liberal families. This is particularly reflected in a blooming of religious life and various types of religiosity in the neighbourhood.

As shown, Palestinian homes were the 'engine' of Baka's gentrification process, pulling in the educated middle-class population. Their acquisition was made possible following the Israel Land Authority's decision to sell the assets. Therefore, Baka's gentrification process has not only developed from the bottom up, but was also encouraged by state institutions. The rising demand led to new construction designated for the middle class, and as Baka became a prestigious neighbourhood, construction was increasingly aimed at the upper class. In fact, from the onset of the gentrification process Baka's housing market evolved in clear preference of strong populations, considered hegemonic in the Israeli context. As argued, real estate professionals of all kinds are major players. Agents identify and then direct and strengthen market trends; developers and builders determine whether, how much and what to build and for which population; and architects hold aesthetic influence. In fact, real estate professionals had a hand in creating two parallel housing markets in Jerusalem: one for Israelis and another for overseas people and affluent Western immigrants.

Many gentrification researchers tend to see gentrification as a negative process, for its impact on vulnerable communities. However, in many ways gentrification might be actually healthy for the city and the particular neighbourhood where it exists, and many benefit from it, including the original population that stays. In Baka, gentrification mostly damaged—sometimes only indirectly and in retrospect—those who left the neighbourhood in the early stages, and who did not enjoy the financial profits or the improving quality of life in the neighbourhood. As

the process proceeded, middle classes were also affected, as they were pushed out by the upper class. The question is whether all forms of conservation and urban renewal necessarily harm long-time residents or perhaps, as Herzfeld describes in his study of a town in Crete, it may also improve current residents' economic status without forcing them to leave, therefore incorporating principles of conservation with social justice (Herzfeld 2006). This was actually the purpose of the neighbourhood rehabilitation programme (Carmon and Hill 1988). However, as is evident from Baka, despite the intention of keeping residents in place, the market has had the upper hand. The economic temptation to sell a renovated apartment in a housing project exceeds the desire to keep it, which explains why the project's population has almost entirely changed.

Although the gentrification of Baka was initially marked by the renovation of older residential housing stock (Palestinian homes), a form which later continued in the housing projects of the 1960s, from the late 1970s onward, Baka's gentrification was also in the form of new-built housing. New constructions were built for hegemonic populations, in terms of class and ethnicity, thus excluding and indirectly gentrifying other populations (Davidson and Lees 2005). The urban renewal programmes that are currently promoted in Baka will cause further gentrification, and reduce the housing mix and remaining heterogeneity.

Paradoxically, despite the affection for heterogeneity many of my respondents expressed, people also wanted to live near others 'like them'. Western immigrants seek the proximity of the Anglo or French 'bubbles' (Zaban 2014) and young religious liberals are attracted to the unique religious institutions spanning the neighbourhood. The two ambitions—for heterogeneity and homogeneity—cannot coexist for long. The explanation lies in Jane Jacobs' argument, that the few residential districts that become outstandingly magnetic and successful at generating diversity and vitality are ultimately subjected to forces of self-destruction. So

many people want to live in the locality that it becomes profitable to build, in excessive and devastating quantity, for those who can pay the most. Accommodations for this narrow, profitable segment of population multiply, at the expense of all other tissue and all other population (Jacobs 1961).

What the future holds for Baka, unless a drastic change of policy occurs, is simply more of the same. On the one hand, super-gentrification shall continue in full force, as new constructions would continue to be built to the highest standards. On the other hand, urban renewal plans would eliminate small rundown, as well as middle-range apartments, from the housing market, replacing them with larger renovated apartments, to be accompanied by further population exchange and more intensified gentrification. The authorities can influence things by paying more attention to what is being built and for whom. Yet, this issue is un-debated in a neo-liberal environment which accepts the superiority of the free market. In the foreseeable future Baka's housing market will therefore only consist of expensive and very expensive apartments, and accordingly of rich and super-rich people only.

Although this case study of a Jerusalem neighbourhood is deeply embedded in very particular circumstances, it, too, has much to contribute to the understanding of gentrification processes elsewhere. Not much has been written on the combination between gentrification, high-status immigration and religion, although it is currently an issue relevant to many other places. Also, most research on gentrification is coming from cities in the global North, while this case study can contribute to the understanding of such processes in other parts of the world, and the realisation that similar economic processes—neo-liberalism, affluent immigrants and overseas homebuyers—effect various locales worldwide and the communities residing there. As shown, even a holy and contested city like Jerusalem is subject to the same mundane processes as other cities, or maybe, just maybe, even more so?

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- 1 The quote is taken from an interview conducted in 2011 with Tzila, a resident of Baka, of Polish origin, who has lived in the neighbourhood since 1949.

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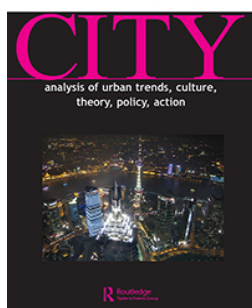
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Between discrimination and stabilization

Oren Shlomo

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Between discrimination and stabilization

The exceptional governmentalities of East Jerusalem

Oren Shlomo

This paper discusses Israeli rule in East Jerusalem through the lens of urban colonial governmentality, with a focus on the control and management of urban systems, institutions and services. Although Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem appeared stable, at least up until the early years of the new millennium, Israel never fully controlled Palestinian urban institutions and services in the city; to a great extent, large parts of these institutions and services continued operating after annexation under the auspices of Jordan or the Palestinian National Authority, in adversarial autonomy to Israeli rule. In this paper I analyze these ambiguities of rule as forms of governmental exceptions to the State's administrative and managerial norms; exceptions which constitute an essential component of Israel's control over East Jerusalem. I will argue that while political and urban theory ascribe exception from law and administrative normative order to a state's offensive and discriminatory policies towards marginalized individuals and groups, in East Jerusalem we find a different type of governmental exception. This is manifested in the State turning a blind eye to adversarial governmental arrangements in order to achieve the normalization and stabilization of rule. By analyzing patterns of governmental exceptions in East Jerusalem since 1967, the paper discusses the ways urban institutions and services in contested cities emerge as an arena of colliding flows of practices and rationales of governmentalities and counter-governmentalities, shaped by rival strategies of dominance and control over the regulation of urban everyday life and identity.

Key words: East Jerusalem, colonial governmentality, colonial urbanism, exception

Introduction

Israel's occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem can be described as a consistent formation of a certain type of colonial urbanism essentially manifested in Israeli political and spatial expansion over Palestinian space and population (Braier 2013;

Jadallah 2014; Yacobi 2015). This type of colonial urbanism is characterized by the implementation of the policy of Judaization of the annexed areas in ways that prevent any future division of the city, alongside policies of enclavization and discrimination against the Palestinian inhabitants (Cheshin, Hutman, and Melamed 1999; Margalit 2006;

Dumper 2014). On the Palestinian side it is characterized by efforts to resist their forced inclusion within State apparatuses and to retain their urban identity by separatism and resistance to Israeli rule. The outcome of this urban constellation is commonly conceptualized within a framework of divided, polarized, contested or frontier cities (Bollens 2000; Klein 2005; Pullan 2011; Dumper 2014; Yacobi and Pullan 2014). Accounts like these offer political and spatial explanations rooted in the framework of extreme ethno-national urban segregation, both functional and spatial, between Palestinians and Israelis.

However, while segregation and discrimination have been extensively investigated and verified as stable and consistent aspects of Israeli rule over East Jerusalem, less attention has been paid to the more mundane governmental modalities. This paper discusses the form and type of the governmental arrangements and interactions between the State and the adversarial Palestinian urban sphere that enable this sphere to function under Israeli administration. This line of inquiry suggests that although the city is perceived as deeply divided, in order to fully comprehend urban and political relations in East Jerusalem, investigation of its functional and governmental *modus operandi* under Israeli rule is in order. Hence, this paper aims to shed light on the 'softer' facets of State power and resistance which emerge in the governmental sphere of control and management of urban systems, services and institutions.

The point of departure for this line of inquiry is that while Israel has asserted sovereignty and applied its jurisdiction over East Jerusalem, it has never really controlled and managed East Jerusalem in the way it has controlled and administrated most of Israel. Instead, in large parts of Palestinian urban domains, the State and municipal authorities were, at least until the turn of the millennium, only minimally involved due to unwillingness, inability or severe discrimination on one side, and

Palestinian separatism and distancing from State apparatuses on the other. This can be seen in large parts of core urban systems, services and institutions such as the Waqf administration, the Islamic Sharia Court, public education, and health and transportation systems (Romann and Weingord 1991; Hasson 1996). These systems have constituted an arena of separatism and resistance to Israeli rule, and retained a significant measure of functional autonomy from Israeli control, under either Jordanian or Palestinian auspices. Thus, in order to maintain day-to-day urban life under the more pressing imperative of unification, Israel was continually required, to varying degrees, to exempt these urban systems from the Israeli administrative order. This was done mainly through the disregard and apathy of Israeli officials towards Palestinian urban functions and administrative arrangements, whether formal or informal.

My main argument is that the exception of governmental arrangements in East Jerusalem, which lie outside governmental and administrative Israeli norms—and in some cases even Israeli law—is a key feature of Israeli control over the city, which facilitates the stabilization of the Israeli project of 'unifying' the city under its sovereignty. This argument offers a different view of the 'state of exception' which is commonly perceived in urban and political theory as manifested in the State's discriminatory policies or the political subject's lack of legal protection (see Agamben 1998). In East Jerusalem, governmental exception manifests an additional and essential aspect of urban colonial rule, seen in the adjustment of policy towards the preservation of pre-occupation urban order and arrangements aimed at reducing friction and achieving the State's geopolitical objectives.

This analysis follows a Foucauldian perspective, in which governmentality refers to the operation of the State's array of knowledge-based mechanisms and institutions, conduct and administration, as a form of

power designed to shape and regulate a population's domestic parameters, societal norms, behavior and aspirations (Foucault 2007; Huxley 2008). Thus, governmentality relates mostly to the 'caring' aspects of State power, which seeks to maintain the population's security and well-being.

Even though governmentality is associated with the Eurocentric and liberal origins and of Foucauldian thought, and is perceived as a mode of power which relies on consent between regimes and populations, the literature on colonial governmentality has demonstrated how non-liberal or colonial regimes do not rely on enforcement or sheer violent State power alone, but also use softer mechanisms of space and population management in order to shape and direct populations' behavior towards certain ends (Scott 1995; Legg 2007).

Colonial governmentalities in East Jerusalem are characterized by the contestation between the State and local Palestinian stakeholders over the control and management of urban institutions and municipal services. This contestation is manifested in colliding governmental practices and rationalities in various aspects of urban life such as the school curriculum, public transport routes and ownership, and the affiliation of the Sharia courts to the State. Hence, colliding governmentality may be understood according to what Foucault called 'counter-conduct' or 'revolt of conduct' (Foucault 2007, 196). These concepts may be applied to the ways Palestinian urban systems and services maintain a considerable degree of functional and managerial autonomy from Israeli State apparatuses as a mode of resistance. In this realm of colliding urban governmentality, Israeli-affiliated urban services and systems are perceived by Palestinians as embodying State rationalities, norms and values which aim to wear down and subsume Palestinian urban identity and resistance.

The colonial governmentality analysis presented here therefore seeks to analyze how these practices and counter-conducts of

urban life and institutions operate under annexation and the application of the Israeli law over East Jerusalem. It thus targets the seemingly analytical contradiction of this urban and political constellation, as annexation implies inclusion under State sovereignty, while colonial-type occupation means political exclusion and oppression. In light of this ostensible contradiction, the colonial governmentality approach presented below offers a more nuanced account of the form and patterns of inclusive exclusion that Israeli rule performs in East Jerusalem, which goes beyond a conventional and more 'pure' Agambenian approach (see Agamben 1998).

The structure of this paper is as follows. In the next section I describe the Israeli form of control over East Jerusalem as a 'mongrel regime' combining West Bank military occupation mentality and norms with the application of Israeli law. In this section I explain two modes of logic and practices of rule: a 'governmental moment' and a 'colonial moment', which together serve as a general conceptual framework for Israeli form of rule in East Jerusalem. However, and as noted, this paper provides a more particular and detailed analysis regarding the governmental moment and the ways it is charged by, and saturated in, the colonial one. This is followed by two sections of theoretical and empirical analysis of different modes of production of governmental exception. I explain these modes as being used by the State to discriminate against groups and individuals in line with Agambenian thought, but also to stabilize everyday life under local and adversarial urban arrangements in order to facilitate control. The analysis relies on a genealogical approach in which I identify changes in modes of governmental exception in relation to geopolitical conditions. It is based on existing literature on Israeli control over East Jerusalem up to the early years of the new millennium, and on analyses of a new emerging process, which indicates the development of new governmental arrangements since then.

Mongrel regime of colonial governmentality

Israel's occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem has had a powerful and enduring effect on the ground, reconfiguring and shaping space and societies into social and political hierarchies by applying colonial-type measures of land expropriation and demographic development, exploiting resources and denying political rights to Palestinians (Gordon 2008; Azoulay and Ophir 2012). However, Israel's decision immediately following the 1967 war to expand its sovereignty over the Jordanian part of Jerusalem and an additional 64 square kilometers of the West Bank and its population led to an urban political constellation in these areas in which occupation was carried out not by a military regime as in the rest of the West Bank but by State and municipal civil apparatuses.

The imposition of Israeli law over East Jerusalem and its population diverges somewhat from the common model of colonial rule in which colonizing states stop short of imposing their sovereignty over the colonized territory and its population in order to avoid their inclusion in their own body politic (Stoler 2006). Hansen and Stepputat (2005, 20) describe this kind of colonial control as 'configurations of sovereignty' characterized by a lack of legal and administrative uniformity. In the colonial world, government authority and violence were not restricted by the rule of law but channeled arbitrarily and differentially over groups and space according to the ambitions and needs of the colonizing forces.

In East Jerusalem the control of life, movement, restrictions and rights is not subject to military commanders as in the West Bank, but to State authorities. Jerusalemite Palestinians are not subjected to the 'phantom sovereign' (as Shenhav and Berda [2009] termed it) of the military regime unbounded by transparency and jurisdiction accountability. Likewise, the police rather than the military are responsible for the somewhat milder State violence Palestinians experience, and

they are eligible to freedom of movement to the rest of the West Bank and Israel. On the other hand, the inclusion of Jerusalem's Palestinian inhabitants under Israeli law is partial and discriminatory, as evident in their inferior and conditional civil status.¹ It is also evident in governmental practices such as land expropriation, discrimination in budget allocation, infrastructural development and spatial planning (Cheshin, Hutman, and Melamed 1999; Margalit 2006). Israel also takes physical and bureaucratic punitive measures in East Jerusalem that are significantly harsher than those within the 1967 borders. Such measures bear greater similarity to military practices in the rest of the West Bank such as systematic arrests of minors, deportations and denial of residency rights, punitive house demolitions and other forms of collective punishment (ACRI 2015).

The implications of this 'mongrel regime'—between the West Bank military rule and the application of Israeli law—include Palestinian resistance and detachment from State mechanisms and a wide range of urban informality alongside policies of State neglect and apathy. Hence, East Jerusalem has the characteristics of what Oren Yiftachel (2009) terms 'grey space', a space neither fully included in nor fully excluded from the hegemonic national project, which maintains antagonistic relations towards the State's social and political order. One manifestation of the 'grey spacing' of East Jerusalem is the way this space is distanced from State apparatuses via the maintenance of separate urban institutions and services which the State views as being located between 'legality' and 'illegality', permanently prone to enforcement measures, or to formalization and validation (see also Braier 2013).

I suggest examining this mongrel regime of rule by deconstructing it into two moments of rule—colonial and governmental—which together construct, in colliding or coinciding ways, Israel's colonial governmentality in East Jerusalem. I use the word 'moment' in order to analytically specify distinct logics

and practices of rule that have their own dynamic and inertia over time. Deconstructing Israel's colonial governmentality in East Jerusalem serves here as an analytical means to observe rule structure and dynamics: whereas colonization and unification imperatives and their resulting harsh policies—represented here by the colonial moment—have remained rigidly constant, if not intensified. However, since 1967, the 'softer' aspects of governmentality and conduct were performed elastically and transformed over time in affiliations and actualization. Thus, a kind of analytical deconstruction enables us to focus on the significance of the central role of the dynamics of governmentalities to the regime's endurance, despite its inherent contradictions.

The colonial moment represents the imperative logic of annexation: ensuring the city's 'unification' under Israeli sovereignty mainly through demographic and colonization policies. It refers to the rawer State power exercised in a straightforward way, through State violence and offensive policies and practices. Thus, the colonial moment represents aspects of colonial governmentality which operate in a more intimate relation to Foucauldian sovereign power (Legg 2007). Out of Foucault's (2007, 143) triangle of forms of power (sovereignty, discipline and governmentality), sovereign power represents a unified and supreme authority of rule and operates mainly through law enforcement and territorial defense; it is exercised mainly by means of State violence. The colonial moment is manifested in East Jerusalem, for example, in Israel's sheer occupational and colonization practices such as the dismissal of the Palestinian city council immediately after the occupation, deportation of political and community leaders who opposed it, massive expropriation and Judaization of lands, and the policy of maintaining a Jewish majority (Jabareen 2010). The colonial moment also accounts for the antagonistic political relations in the city and Palestinians' resistance to Israeli rule, manifested for example in their ongoing boycott of

municipal elections, and their efforts to maintain a separate urban identity. Furthermore, the colonial impetus explains the extension of norms and practices used by the military regime in the rest of the West Bank into the area on which Israeli law has been imposed. As Neve Gordon (2008) suggests regarding the West Bank, except for a brief preliminary period after the occupation, in which Israel tried to governmentalize the population through biopower, sovereign means of violence were constantly and increasingly deployed. The correlation between the ways Israeli authorities perceived the West Bank and East Jerusalem in terms of ruling methods is clearly evident, for example, in the Separation Wall built around Jerusalem in 2002. The wall left several neighborhoods, populated by approximately 100,000 Palestinians, on its east side, effectively excluding them from urban services and infrastructure. Since the construction of the wall, these municipal areas developed as a kind of no-man's land, trapped between the military regime of the West Bank and the Separation Wall. Recently, the municipality asked the military to take responsibility for those areas and residents (Levinson and Hasson 2012). One clear example of the consistency of the colonial moment is the construction in 1997—during peace talks associated with the Oslo Peace Accords—of the Jewish neighborhood Har Homa, in large part on confiscated private Palestinian land (Klein 2001, 278).

The governmental moment, however, derives from a different logical ground: unlike the occupation regime in the rest of the West Bank, the annexation of East Jerusalem requires Israel, at least to some extent, to conduct the population's life. Its inertia and logics are consequences of the imposition of Israeli law, which at least *de jure* was directed to incorporate the annexed area and population into State and municipal administration and to implement 'unification'. Its foremost manifestation is the granting of Israeli residency to the Palestinians, and enabling their participation in the labor

market and welfare system. It was evident also, for example, in the very first days of the occupation, by the rapid removal of border barriers between the two parts of the city, the unification of the water systems, the renewal of the electricity supply by the Jerusalem District Electric Company (JDEC), the reemployment of Palestinian police officers formerly employed by the Jordanians and the overall integration of several municipal bureaucratic systems into the Jewish municipality (Benziman 1973).

The tension between the oppressiveness of colonial governmentality and its ambiguous relation to administrative integration under the rule of law—which thus also involves logics of care and conduct as well as the allocation of rights—has been extensively discussed in postcolonial literature. It is usually tackled by indicating the inconsistency and varied forms of emergencies and exceptionalism of colonial judicial systems, resulting in arbitrary policies and the use of extreme violence (Hussain 2003; Mbembe 2003; Hansen and Stepputat 2005). However, what distinguishes Israel's colonial governmentality in East Jerusalem is the State's declared intention to enforce its law, judicial system and administration in a coherent and consistent way as though this were an integral extension of its own democratic regime.² Hence, in the following section I will expand on that type of colonial governmentality, focusing on its governmental moment and its exceptions as they appear on the ground within the dynamics of control of urban systems and mechanisms.

Patterns of governmental exceptions

The account of governmental exception in East Jerusalem presented here builds on and applies both the concept of governmentality and the Agambenian concept of exception. As argued below, patterns of governmental exception in East Jerusalem indicate a more complex and less 'pure' notion of exception than that articulated in Agambenian thought

or in the work of most of his commentators. The Agambenian concept of 'state of exception' originates in Carl Schmitt's critique of the liberal State's inability to defend itself from its inner enemies. Schmitt (1985) argued that a key feature of modern sovereignty is the sovereign's ability to suspend, and operate with disregard to, the law. Agamben (1998) spatialized and further developed Schmitt's argument by applying it to a particular space—the camp—where legal protection for its inhabitants is suspended, constituting them as 'bare life', subject to abandonment by the law and arbitrary violence.

The concept of the Agambenian camp and its 'bare life' political subjects was further developed by political geographers and urban scholars who emphasized that the camp is not a location or site of sheer death or torture, but a typological space wherein rules and norms are obscurely suspended and life is unprotected (Hagmann and Korf 2012; Shewly 2013). According to Ram (2015, 22), 'encampment' is a process in which a space is transformed into a 'space of exception' through ongoing processes, dynamics and practices of unregulated sovereign power which operate offensively towards its subjects, such as in border areas, refugee camps and pockets of urban neglect or spaces designated for destruction. These approaches extend the idea of 'space of exception' in both the spatial and political planes. They perceive the range of exceptional political attributes applied to the space as constituting the space as exceptional (i.e. it is not only the Agambenian concentration or detention camps which we can regard as 'spaces of exception'). These approaches also moderate the absolute nature of the suspension of law which characterizes the Agambenian camp, and thus present a research framework that enables the investigation of the politics and practices of suspension of rights, norms and regulation usually attributed to the administrative and governmental sphere (Schinkel and van den Berg 2011). The emphasis here is that exception

does not necessarily appear as an absolute state, but as a contingent state, which infuses practices and discourse of emergency within a range of governmental arrays and operations.

Hence, some of these approaches to understanding states and spaces of exception and vulnerability use the term 'exception' in a purely Agambenian way as indicating the suspension of legal protection and the exposure of the political subject to violence. Others understand the term in a more moderate form as indicating the violation of various human or civil rights as a result of the suspension of norms and regulations or politics of discrimination. However, they all generally view practices of exception as those, which result in unidirectional suppressive policies, and practices towards certain groups or individuals.

Accordingly, East Jerusalem can be viewed as a space of exception, where Israeli control—even if Israeli law is applied—does not meet the norms of the rest of Israel within the 1967 borders. And indeed, Agamben's work has inspired critical research regarding Israeli control of East Jerusalem. Boano and Marten (2013), for example, focus on the implications of the Separation Wall around the city and the ways it constructs 'exceptional urbanism'—'encamping' Palestinian areas and inhabitants as 'bare life' with inferior urban rights. Analyzing a different domain, Yair and Alayan (2009) show how the public school system in East Jerusalem, despite being under the formal responsibility of the Israeli Ministry of Education, operates according to norms and standards fundamentally different from those practiced in Israel proper. They analyze the paradoxical split in forms of pedagogy and administration that straddles State control in public schools which are also affiliated with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), or with the private sector operating outside of State monitoring and control. Applying the Agambenian concept of exception to this governmental anomaly, in terms of both curriculum and resource allocation, they

explore the creation of structural educational inferiority in East Jerusalem, which denies local students educational rights.

These arguments are informative in their analysis of the governmental sphere in East Jerusalem since they clarify the inclusive exclusion of the Palestinian part of the city vis-à-vis State systems, manifested in the policy of neglect and governmental incapacity and paralysis. In this view, East Jerusalem constitutes a space of exception in which disregard, discrimination and hostile policies towards Palestinians are manifested mainly through exceptional and inferior governmental practices and arrangements. As argued above, this view implies a one-dimensional explanation of Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and its exceptional methods of rule. Focusing on the governmental moment of rule shows that since the very first days of annexation and up to the new millennium, governmental exceptions in East Jerusalem have played a significant role not only in facilitating discrimination and neglect as in the Agambenian perspective, but also in enabling and sustaining the Israeli claim of sovereignty by maintaining Palestinian counter-governmentalities. In other words, governmental and administrative exceptions in East Jerusalem normalized Israel's incapacity to implement its administration over urban systems and population and hence enabled the normalization and stabilization of annexation.

This political and urban constellation has created an anomaly of rule whereby means of sovereignty are declared and imposed over space and population (i.e. the application of Israeli law) while at the same time the State demonstrates reduced governmental capacity to shape and control local institutions, apparatuses and norms.

However, as I argue, it is precisely this 'hollow governmentality' that enabled the stabilization of the Israeli claim for 'unification' and sovereignty. Allowing the urban systems of East Jerusalem to continue their functional inertia by exempting them from the State's governmental and administrative

norms and order served three geopolitical objectives connected with annexation: (1) maintaining everyday urban life and demonstrating ‘business as usual’ to the international community, thereby quieting its concerns about Israel’s actions in the city (Benziman 1973); (2) avoiding confrontation between State agencies and the local population over public, cultural and civil domains which the State could not enforce, such as curriculum or the use of Israeli religious courts or Israeli public transport; and (3) avoiding the need for huge administrative and capital investment to upgrade Palestinian urban services and institutions to meet Israeli standards. At the same time it is crucial to note that the exception of East Jerusalem from Israel’s governmental norms and standards, while taking on different forms and intensities since 1967 according to changing geopolitical and urban conditions, *never* took on any form that might contradict or threaten the colonial moment of rule—but rather always served it.

Another important point in this analysis is the way governmental relations in East Jerusalem were shaped by Palestinian agency. These relations are immersed in colonial-type power relations: on the one hand, Israeli attempts to apply its jurisdiction and governmentality, and on the other hand, Palestinian resistance. From this perspective, the exemption of East Jerusalem from Israeli administration and governmentalities enabled Palestinian institutions and administration as well as many of the urban services to operate as they were before the occupation, in line with the population’s demands and under Jordanian or PNA patronage.

While the colonial moment constitutes unilateral measures imposed by the State upon the population and space, the governmental moment requires a certain degree of cooperation and the population’s adoption of new everyday governmental arrangements and norms. For example, while land expropriation and colonization policies were strictly and effectively enforced, the changing

of schools’ curriculum from Jordanian to Israeli in the annexed areas in 1967 engendered wide popular resistance and non-participation in the public education system. In other words, Israeli governmental exceptions are shaped by an adversarial governmental movement, what Foucault (2007, 201) calls ‘counter-conduct’. In this example, governmental exception supported the colonial moment. Israel preferred to loosen its enforcement and supervision in order to avoid empty schools which would have served as tangible testimony to the failure of the city’s ‘unification’.

Here I suggest extending the explanations offered by Yair and Alayan (2009) and Boano and Marten (2013), and argue for various patterns of governmental exception. Until the late 1990s, governmental exception in East Jerusalem operated not only through subordination and neglect, but also in a form that drew back Israeli authority and granted Palestinians the space to manage their domestic systems at a distance from State apparatuses. In other words, we see here a hostile ‘excluding exception’ which meets the Agambenian view of neglect and abandonment; and we also see an excluding exception as a mode of disregard and withdrawal of State power that facilitates the regime’s objectives of annexation and colonization. A cumulative effect of the former form of exception is the thriving of East Jerusalem as an economic, political and cultural metropolitan center for the West Bank until the late 1990s (see Cohen 2011). This urban vitality developed despite Israeli governmental neglect and as a result of exempting the city from Israeli governmentalities and its ongoing function as an integral part of the West Bank.

Exception as stabilization

Since 1967, governmental exception in East Jerusalem has been characterized by practices and methods of ‘advance and retreat’, turning a blind eye to phenomena incompatible with

Israeli administrative and governmental norms, and legalizing local norms. As noted above, such practices aimed at maintaining a certain degree of administrative and legal uniformity in the 'united' city and inscribing the annexation in daily life. For example, in 1967 Israel failed to enforce a series of resolutions such as the prohibition on importing agricultural produce from the rest of the West Bank to Jerusalem, the closure of the Palestinian municipal slaughterhouse, the imposition of customs on goods available in stores prior to the occupation and the granting of franchises to the national public transport corporation in lines operated by Palestinian companies (Benziman 1973, 180). Israel also 'bent' rules against the employment of non-citizens in the public sector, in order to allow the continued employment of Palestinian municipal employees, teachers, police officers, etc. Certain labor laws were also disregarded, such as those concerning child labor and rest days (Roman 1984, 23).

In education, as noted, Israel attempted unsuccessfully to impose the Israeli curriculum in public schools. Here exception from Israeli governmentalities was manifested in the fact that schools continued teaching the Jordanian curriculum after Israel's attempt. Teachers and principals protested the attempt by striking, and parents refused to send their children to municipal schools. As a result of such protest measures, the 1968 school year started only in February, with only 50% of the high-school students. Insisting on the Jordanian curriculum was an expression of 'counter-conduct' to Israeli governmental measures, since it is related to maintaining the population's day-to-day life according to Palestinian cultural and national identity, and to affirming the education system's affiliation to universities in Arab countries and not those in Israel.

On the legal plane, Israel avoided anomalies by acting proactively in the legislation of the Legal and Administrative Matters (Regulation) Law (Consolidated Version 1970). This law was designed to

enable the appropriate Israeli institutes to register corporations, cooperative societies and certified professionals from East Jerusalem given their refusal to register voluntarily (see also Benziman 1973).

From 1967 to 1988, Jordan played a key role in maintaining Palestinian urban counter-governmentalities by supervising and funding urban systems and institutes, including the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce, the Waqf administration of Temple Mount and the Sharia Court (Klein 2001). Since 1967, for example, the Qadis (Islamic judges) in Jerusalem's Sharia Court have been steadfast in their refusal to accept salaries from the State of Israel; consequently, the court operates outside the formal Israeli legal system (Shahar 2015). This is another example of exception designed to stabilize the 'unification' project.

Israel acted similarly in its relations with the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce, whose status and dominance grew after the closure of Jordanian institutes in the city following the occupation when, in addition to its traditional roles, it was used as a covert conduit for urban governance activities, such as salaries paid by Jordan to officials in the education system and Sharia Court (Benziman 1973, 211). Israel was well aware of the chamber's subversive activities but the way it mediated between local interest and the Jordanian and Israeli government was convenient to Israeli authorities for its appeasement and normalization effect. Israel continued tolerating the chamber's activity during the Oslo years, after it had become administratively and politically realigned with the PNA. It was finally shut down in 2001, during the violent period of the Second Intifada, when it was perceived as a threat to the stabilization of Israeli rule. At that time Israel launched broad measures aimed at eradicating the PNA's political presence in Jerusalem, which effectively facilitated a governmental re-division of the city (Cohen 2011).

Another example is the Israeli failure to take over the JDEC, which in 1967 had

served 22,000 households in the West Bank (Dumper 1997, 155). Right after the occupation, Israeli authorities issued a dismissal warning for the board as a first step in an attempt to integrate the company with the 'unified' municipality. This act was met with vociferous protest and the company threatened to appeal to the International Court of Justice. Its chairperson argued that company operations were internationally valid, since it gained its concession from the British High Commissioner in 1928. After several other failed attempts to close the company on different grounds, Israel eventually gave up on its original intention in return for including two Israeli municipality representatives on the company's board and negotiation on functional and administrative details such as pricing and service zones (see also Dumper 1997; Amirav 2007).

The post-1967 'Jordanization' of East Jerusalem, as Amirav (2007, 263) puts it, continued into the late 1980s, and was abandoned after the collapse of the London Agreement between the then foreign minister of Israel, Shimon Peres, and Jordan's King Hussein, which sought to promote the 'Jordanian option' for settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In July 1988, after the outbreak of the First Intifada, King Hussein withdrew political claims to the West Bank as the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) gained increasing legitimacy worldwide as the exclusive representative of the Palestinian people. The immediate implication of these developments was a significant reduction in budgetary and administrative support for institutes and services in East Jerusalem and a shift in Palestinian governmental affiliations (Merhav and Giladi 1999). Until the late 1980s, then, the governmental exception of East Jerusalem was aimed at preserving and stabilizing urban functioning in order to normalize the annexation. As explained above, this kind of exception differs from the Agambenian form, but it must be noted that it also differs from the narrative of inevitable exceptional measures taken by states during implementation of modernization processes

in rural or pre-modern regions (Scott 1998). In this early stage of the occupation, Israel did not seek to fully 'modernize' East Jerusalem under State bureaucratic supervision, but only to stabilize control under Israeli law through governmental and urban arrangements.

The 1990s, the so-called Oslo years, were characterized by new geopolitical circumstances which transformed urban politics and functional and managerial affiliations. The violent outbursts of the First Intifada in the late 1980s stimulated Palestinian political activities in the city, a process institutionalized in 1993 with the establishment of the PNA which gradually eroded Jordanian dominance in the East Jerusalem urban sphere. The PNA managed quite a number of urban and national institutions in East Jerusalem with tacit Israeli agreement as part of the mutual recognition process (Klein 2001), which effectively resulted in split Israeli-Palestinian government domination (Cohen 2011). Most prominent among these institutions was Orient House, which served as a governmental institution supplying support and various urban advocacy services, in addition to its role as a political branch of the PNA.

While governmental exception during the era of stabilization served Israeli objectives of securing its interests over the annexed areas, the new geopolitical and urban consequence of the Oslo Accords threatened those interests and the colonial moment of rule. As negotiations went on, the Palestinian political presence in East Jerusalem became more tangible in the governmental sphere and played, as aforesaid, a significant role in advancing a future political division of the city. From the second half of the 1990s, Israel reacted to this process with offensive measures aimed at clearing the city of formal Palestinian institutions, forcibly closing most of them. A significant manifestation of the 'urban political clearance' of East Jerusalem was the closure of Orient House in 2001 (see also Klein 2001).

Post-Oslo years: stabilization of exception

Since the late 1990s, Israel has become increasingly involved in directly managing and controlling Palestinian urban systems. As in the first three decades after the annexation, this growing involvement included exceptional methods and practices which differed from Israeli administrative and governmental norms. However, unlike previous patterns of exception designed to stabilize control, latter-day Israeli involvement in the urban system signifies a different pattern of State penetration into Palestinian urban systems in order to extend its control via governmentalization processes; that is, the implementation of Israeli administrative norms which enable the functional and effective containment of these systems within State apparatuses.

In this sense, the Oslo years brought significant change to arrangements of control and management of the city. The failure of the peace process, the outbreak of the Second Intifada and the erection of the Separation Wall were accompanied by Israeli 'urban political clearance', in which Palestinian urban functions and institutions were pushed out to Ramallah (Klein 2005).

At the same time, these processes, particularly the erection of the wall, led to economic, social, political and functional urban decline—what historian Hillel Cohen (2011) calls 'the fall of Arab Jerusalem'. To a large extent, this process weakened the Palestinian urban 'counter-conduct', and exposed Israel's long-standing neglect. Large parts of the urban services and systems were at that time in advanced stages of degeneration, almost to the point of collapse. For example, towards the end of the first decade of the new millennium, some 80% of internal daily public transport journeys in East Jerusalem were run by informal operators, while the formal public transport system was nearing collapse. The education system was short of some 1000 classrooms, leaving many children compelled to enroll in private or semi-private schools.

These changes perpetuated the consequences of the politics of governmental exception which had existed in East Jerusalem in the first three decades of the occupation. This exception was convenient for Israel and to a certain extent also for Palestinians, as Klein (2001) asserts, but it was dependent on geopolitical circumstances which enabled Jordanian dominance and patronage over Palestinian urban systems during the first two decades, and Palestinian dominance in the 1990s. Thus, the politics of governmental exception in East Jerusalem is subject to the geopolitical constellation. The new millennium, as noted, brought a new constellation, which is the focus of a future research project I am currently preparing.

Conclusion

The above discussion illuminates one of the essential elements that enabled Israeli control over East Jerusalem in its current form, which includes the colonial imperative on the one hand and the application of governmental features of law enforcement and State apparatuses on the other.

However, while the colonial moment remained constant, or even intensified during the years following 1967, the governmental moment underwent various changes in forms and patterns. Urban colonial governmentalities in East Jerusalem are thus characterized by duality: on the one hand, local forms of control and administration over services and institutions under Jordanian auspices in the 1970s and 1980s and Palestinian auspices to a certain extent in the 1990s; on the other hand, ongoing Israeli exception of governmental norms and civil services.

Therefore, East Jerusalem's changing political and governmental constellations through the years of annexation can be described as 'something that is included solely by its exclusion', to borrow Agamben's words regarding 'bare life'. But East

Jerusalem's exceptional governmental arrangements are made up of different patterns and forms of exception which are contingent on geopolitical circumstances and on the dynamics of resistance and counter-conduct. While the 'pure' Agambenian exception means the abandonment of groups and individuals to arbitrary violence and the denial of rights, the exception discussed here enables the maintenance of both counter-conduct and urban life, alongside repression and discrimination. Overall, these arrangements of exception were effectively designed to stabilize Israeli sovereignty, as in the early stages of the occupation, or to deepen it through governmentalization processes during the last decade as my future work will aim to show.

This account portrays East Jerusalem as an extreme case of a divided city due to its explosive ongoing conflict which still includes struggle over core issues like national and urban identity, governmental conduct, and urban and municipal resource allocation. According to O'Connor (2014), of all well-known and well-researched divided cities, the situation in Jerusalem is most similar to Kirkuk: both cities are experiencing active conflict over root political issues.

The case of East Jerusalem shows that extreme urban division is not manifested only in spatial and functional segregation but also in everyday conflict over the control of systems and institutions required for the management of urban life. Understanding urban conflict through this lens underscores the significance of urban management and administration as a site of conflict. It must be emphasized that as long as there is no advanced process of power sharing in broad aspects of urban management and governance, the control of urban systems is likely to remain a political arena of colliding governmentalities and an obstacle to urban reconciliation. Thus, the path towards urban resurgence of deeply segregated cities must pass through a transformation of governmentality, from a form of power and a site of struggle to a sphere of shared content in

which the values and norms of communities are debated and materialized in urban systems and administration.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

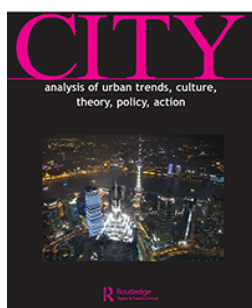
- 1 Jerusalem's Palestinian inhabitants are required to constantly prove their relation to the city as their 'center of life', and their residential status is liable to be denied should they live outside the city for a period of more than seven years; in practice, this is tantamount to expulsion.
- 2 For controversies regarding Israel's status as a democracy, see Yiftachel (2006).

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Political infrastructure and the politics of infrastructure

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Political infrastructure and the politics of infrastructure

The Jerusalem Light Rail

Amina Nolte

Against the background of a highly conflictive urban situation, the paper focuses on the planning and implementation of the Jerusalem Light Rail (JLR). Running from the west all the way to the east of the city, the JLR traverses and connects contested territory. While Palestinians and the international community consider East Jerusalem to be part of a future Palestinian state, Israel adheres to its claim to the whole city, a unified Jerusalem. It is to that end that the JLR was implemented and, as this paper argues, it can be seen as an important governance tool that not only serves the city's citizens and residents alike, but also works towards consolidating the Israeli authorities' claim to the whole city. Further, the paper discusses whether infrastructure is inherently political or if there is a 'politics of infrastructure' at stake in Jerusalem with regards to the JLR and its wider implications for the urban fabric. The paper suggests that much can be learned from major transport infrastructure in cities, not only for contested cities such as Jerusalem, but also ordinary cities, since infrastructure is always already part of the existing and emerging political power struggles in every city.

Key words: urban infrastructure, politics, conflict, Jerusalem

'I believe that this [Jerusalem Light Rail] should be done, and in any event, anything that can be done to strengthen Jerusalem, construct it, expand it and sustain it for eternity as the capital of the Jewish people and the united capital of the State of Israel, should be done.' (Ariel Sharon, cited in Civic Coalition 2009, 7)

The Jerusalem Light Rail (hereafter JLR) and the effect it has on the urban fabric of the city of Jerusalem is politically relevant. After a few seemingly 'normal' years after its launch in 2011, the JLR is now repeatedly all over the news, not only in Israel, but also in Europe (Sherwood 2014) and the USA (Booth and

Eglash 2014). Running from West to North-East Jerusalem, the JLR has changed Jerusalem's cityscape tremendously. Presented as a means of increased public mobility in a congested city, the JLR has attracted criticism since its inception. Some saw it as a prestige project of the Jerusalem Municipality, wasting millions that could have been invested in existing infrastructure. Others voiced concerns that the JLR would be an easy target for Palestinian terror attacks. Palestinians and others for their part condemn the JLR as yet another element of Israel's forceful annexation of East Jerusalem. Against this, authorities behind the JLR were eager to portray it as an efficient and modern

transportation facility, praiseworthy even for its promotion of coexistence between Jerusalem's different communities (Pfeffer 2012). Initially, the JLR was in fact well received and frequently used by Israeli citizens, Palestinian residents and international tourists alike. The existing segregation in the city seemed to take a back seat in light of the shared need for mobility (Figure 1).

This changed in summer 2014, when violent protests broke out in Jerusalem due to the kidnapping and murder of the 16-year-old Palestinian Muhammad Khdeir by right-wing Israeli youth. Palestinians took to the streets and protested against the violent murder. In doing so, much of their anger was targeted at the JLR stops in East Jerusalem: ticket machines were dismantled, tracks set on fire and stones thrown on the train itself (Hasson 2014). Events worsened later on in October and November amidst clashes on the Temple Mount or Haram al-Sharif. In November, the JLR was targeted by so-called hit and run attacks, in which two Palestinians from Jerusalem attacked passengers at the stations with their cars, killing four people (Sales 2014). Another hit and run attack close to the JLR tracks happened on 6 March 2015, in which seven Israelis were wounded and the Palestinian assailant killed (Yanovski 2015). The most recent events in autumn 2015, labeled by some a 'Third Intifada', in which violence escalated in and around Jerusalem, has brought many more attacks to the area of the Light Rail tracks. In the wake of the violence, many stopped using the JLR, voicing fear and concern of future attacks. The Municipality has announced that the stops in Shuafat in East Jerusalem are to be monitored by surveillance balloons in order to prevent Palestinian attacks on the JLR (Eisenbud 2014).

It is against this background that the JLR has to be seen and studied in Jerusalem. Rather than being a simple means of mass transit infrastructure, the JLR needs to be contextualized with regards to its wider implications for the city of Jerusalem. Hence, in this paper I put forward an

argument that stresses the importance of a critical discussion on infrastructure such as the JLR, not only in cities that are as conflicted and segregated as Jerusalem, but also cities that defy these labels at first glance. Importantly however, I do not seek to study Jerusalem as a 'contested' city as opposed to ordinary cities. Rather, and I follow Oren Yiftachel in his well-argued commentary in this issue, I consider Jerusalem as 'neither a model city, nor as an exception, but rather as a hyper concentration of forces, events and movements to be found in most urban regions in various combinations and assemblages'. Or, as Jonathan Rokem concludes in the introductory paper to this special feature, Jerusalem, '[r]ather than being extreme [...] is the harbinger of things to come'.

As such, Jerusalem is here singled out as an example to illustrate how politics and 'the political' are always inherent to infrastructure, as an assemblage of 'simultaneous forces, movements, agents and politics that co-produce the nature of contemporary urbanism' (Yiftachel, this issue). The planning and implementation of the JLR, I argue, has to be critically studied against the background of its controversial routing, naming of stations and the regime of security that has been created around it. The way the JLR was planned, implemented and also represented in Israeli discourse makes it subject to a number of contentious acts that target the hegemonic imposition of the Israeli claim over all Jerusalem (Nolte and Yacobi 2015).

The contentiousness of the JLR, I argue, is premised on 'political infrastructures' (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008) and the 'politics of infrastructure' (Young and Keil 2010). The role of infrastructure around the construction of the city and the production of urban space has, in recent years, become more pronounced within the wider debate on urban planning (Graham and Marvin 2001; Graham 2009). Yet, while arguing for the consideration of a 'politics' of infrastructure, in which infrastructure turns into a tool



Figure 1 Jerusalem Light Rail (Photo: Amina Nolte).

of governance and control (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008), less attention has been paid to infrastructure as a site of 'the political' itself. The political, however, as I argue here, becomes evident in how the JLR is planned, negotiated and resisted: The 'political' plays out in several forms of agency that have been made visible again through moments of rare encounter on the Light Rail. This corresponding negotiation and contestation demarcates the JLR as a site of struggle. The city and hence the JLR as one of its many microcosms, is a 'difference machine [. . .] a configuration that is constituted by the dialogical encounter of groups formed and generated immanently in the process of taking up positions, orienting themselves for and against each other' (Isin 2002, 49). It is, according to Isin (2002, 30–35), where the 'political' plays out as a struggle over ownership, domination, belonging and representation. By taking Isin's argument on the city as a 'difference machine' a bit further and to

the specific context of Jerusalem, I suggest that infrastructure can also be regarded as the site of the 'political' itself. It is here that notions of access, representation, inclusion and exclusion play out and are negotiated, especially with regards to the newly built JLR system.

By discussing the JLR against the background of the 'politics of infrastructure' and as a site of 'the political' itself, this paper sets out to discern important features of cities in conflict, shedding light on how urban infrastructure adds to political contestation and how identifications are thereby simultaneously manifested and questioned. As such, Jerusalem serves here as an extreme example of the often racialized and hegemonic political urban regimes that govern cities. However, without neglecting the dominant forces that are at work in Jerusalem, the paper probes the agency of its inhabitants—citizens and non-citizens alike. As such, the paper recognizes the Israeli

hegemony imposed on the city, but leaves space for the ‘imminent possibility that the nature of engagement between these forces may change’ (Yiftachel, this issue). With regards to what is at stake here, much can be learned from infrastructure in Jerusalem and the JLR, for better or worse.

Connecting Jerusalem—infrastructure in a segregated city

Jerusalem is the object of the competing national aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians and to the religious claims of the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the wake of the hostilities between Israel and its Arab neighbors in the 1940s, the international community attempted to give Jerusalem the status of an international city in 1947. Those attempts failed due to the ongoing Arab–Jewish clashes and the outbreak of the 1948 war after Israel’s declaration of independence (Shlay and Rosen 2010). Jerusalem was divided between Israel (western part) and Jordan (eastern part) (Thawaba and al-Rimmawi 2013; Rokem 2013). The armistice line was called the ‘Green Line’ in the Rhodes agreement of 1949 (Shlay and Rosen 2010). In the 1967 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors, Israel captured and occupied¹ East Jerusalem and

‘adopted a multifaceted strategic plan to expand and control Jerusalem, and with amendments to existing legislation and administrative orders, applied its law to an area three times the size of prewar Jerusalem. The state executed an “occupation through municipal expansion” (Lustick 2004, 202), vowing that Jerusalem will “never be divided again”.’ (Shlay and Rosen 2010, 366)

While the international community has never recognized Israel’s claim to the eastern part of Jerusalem, rejected it in the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution number 478 in 1980, and declared it a violation of international law,² the Israeli authorities set

out to strengthen the physical and discursive control over the whole city, ‘the aim being to create “urban facts” which would make any future division of the city practically impossible’ (Chiodelli 2012, 6). Despite it being claimed by the Palestinian population as their political, cultural and religious capital, Israel annexed the eastern part of Jerusalem and manifested this claim as part of the Israeli basic law.³ This made the eastern and hence Palestinian part of the city legally an inseparable part of Jewish-Israeli Jerusalem under the administration of the Greater Jerusalem Municipality (Klein 2005). In claiming the land as part of ‘united Jerusalem, a fixed urban space, a given subject of Israeli sovereignty and ethno-national aspirations’ (Yacobi 2012, 55), the Jerusalem Municipality embraced the expansion of territory while constantly working towards containing the expansion of its Arab population through means of planning and the restructuring of the city (Chiodelli 2012, 7). This process hegemonically created the Jerusalem metropolis as a geopolitical entity, orchestrated by Israel.

This is especially obvious in the way the Palestinian population of East Jerusalem was treated after its supposed reunification: while the territory of East Jerusalem became officially part of ‘unified’ Jerusalem, most of its Palestinian inhabitants, despite being born in the city, are neither citizens of the State of Israel,⁴ nor part of the alleged self-understanding of Jerusalem as a Jewish city (Chiodelli 2013, 417). Since Israel’s illegal annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, ‘most Palestinian Jerusalemites are “permanent residents” under Israeli law, permitted to exercise a limited set of rights: they may live and work in Israel, travel to and from the West Bank, collect some social benefits and vote in municipal elections’ (Jefferis 2012, 95). Yet, as residents, they can lose their residency status at any time if they are not able to prove that Jerusalem is the ‘center of their life’.⁵ While claiming that Jerusalem is an ‘open city’ that is a place of harmony where Jews, Muslims and Christians could live peacefully side by side under Israeli

sovereignty, the Israeli authorities also consider it to be their national capital, and in turn discredit any other national claims to Jerusalem (Klein 2005, 54). While doing so, the Jerusalem Municipality, which is based in West Jerusalem and governs the whole city, is constantly working towards the Judaization of the city, that is, the promotion of both Jewish urban and demographic expansion in the eastern part of the city, and de-Palestinization, that is, the containment of Arab expansion of Jerusalem (Safier 2001; Chiodelli 2012, 2013; Pullan 2013).

In 2004, Israeli authorities launched a Master Plan that outlined the idea and development of a unified metropolitan Jerusalem until the year 2020. The plan aims at retaining a demographic balance of 60% Jewish to 40% Palestinian population (Jabareen 2010; Chiodelli 2012; Rokem 2013). Many authors have pointed to the political and ethno-national bias underlying the objectives of the Jerusalem Master Plan as the Jewish population is favored over the Arab-Palestinian population (Yiftachel 1998; Chiodelli 2012, 2013; Rokem 2013). This pertains to a constant segregation and fragmentation of the Palestinian neighborhoods, making it 'a mosaic of enclaves within enclaves resulting in a non-homogenous urban fabric' (Thawaba and al-Rimmawi 2013, 70). Moreover, there are few means of public transportation that link these neighborhoods with each other, let alone with western Jerusalem (Klein 2005; Thawaba and al-Rimmawi 2013). Meanwhile, Israeli settlements are characterized by an almost complete territorial continuity and therefore blurring the boundary between west and east of the Green Line. Those facts also attributed 'a sense of normality to the settlements, which suggests that they are not at the frontier, but a natural expansion of suburbia' (Pullan et al. 2007, 182).

Politics of infrastructure—planning and implementing the JLR

Notions of planning as a political tool of states, municipalities, urban planners and

architects are not new to the academic field. Henri Lefebvre has pointed to the inherently political implication of planning and mapping the city since 'the plan does not rest innocently on paper—on the ground it is the bulldozer that realizes the "plans"' (Lefebvre quoted in Elden 2004, 189). Planning is, according to Lefebvre (1991), always shaped by the hegemonic order from which it evolves and thus never independent from it. For Lefebvre, the city as a certain spatial configuration is the locus and outcome of power relations. Here the struggle for physical, territorial and symbolic hegemony plays out through ways of planning and controlling the city. And sometimes planning the city is already part of controlling it. In his important contribution, Oren Yiftachel has described the ethno-national bias that underlies planning. He discussed the 'dark side of planning' as 'states become complicit in favoring one group over the other' (Yiftachel 1998, 400), which is always reflected in the planning and social engineering of the city. He sees planning as a tool through which the nation-state produces and reproduces its own national space by means of segregation and the containment of ethnic minorities. By equally emphasizing the association between social and spatial control, Mazza (2009) has added some valuable insights to the debate. He highlights the role of authorities in promoting their own ideological principles through acts of planning and to legitimate national ideological choices. From his perspective, 'planning is not only the art of building cities, it is an instrument of governance' (Mazza 2009, 114) that exerts spatial and thus social control by means of distinction of inclusion and exclusion. The power of distinguishing between spatial inclusion and exclusion is manifest in 'space-related practices' (Höhne 2012, 148). It not only assumes a landscape that is subject to and shaped by power relations (Fields 2010) and the power to plan and design the built environment, but is also its ultimate representation. Planning and implementing urban infrastructures is hence at the heart of the power struggle in the city. They 'can be at the core of

transformations in wider territorial governance' (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008, 365). Infrastructure is planned and implemented, it is not just 'out there', although its existence is often only rendered visible upon breakdown (Star 1999, 382).

Planning and implementing infrastructure happens against the background of certain political agendas, programs and ideologies. It is 'a physical fabric above and below ground, being produced, altered, repaired, maintained and demolished by a host of builders, developers, architects, engineers, bulldozers and diggers' (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008, 366). Infrastructure, one can therefore note, is materialized governance in a sense that it has the power to include and exclude, to territorialize and to de-territorialize (Höhne 2012). Governing infrastructure is a powerful means of controlling and 'disciplining' corporeal subjects (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008, 366)—being in control of planning and implementation can therefore be seen 'as politics pursued by other means' (Latour, quoted in McFarlane and Rutherford 2008, 370). The power to connect and disconnect, to territorialize and de-territorialize is hence a powerful tool to shape the city. Infrastructures that are built to connect thereby actually disconnect those non-central spaces that lie in between. This in-between-ness as a pertinent situation for many city inhabitants is politically produced. It is the outcome of planning, informed by national and ideological biases. Oren Yiftachel (2009b) labeled this condition 'gray space', which contains 'a multitude of groups, bodies, housing, lands, economies and discourses, lying literally "in the shadow" of the formal, planned city, polity and economy' (89). He has discussed the effects of these 'gray spaces' and their 'invisible population' with the example of Israeli politics towards Bedouins in Israel, and pointed to the inherently political situation of the marginalized as 'important actors in shaping cities and regions' (Yiftachel 2009a, 243). These processes of place-making, in which a certain condition of access or

mobility is improved at the expense of others, is an obvious phenomenon of 'centralized rail-based transportation infrastructure' (Young and Keil 2010, 90). The JLR is thus a good example for the underlying ethno-national biases of planning and implementing infrastructure. In addition to the extended network of highways, roads and bypass-roads that not only connect West Jerusalem to the Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, but also to the contested Jewish settlements in the West Bank (all of which are illegal under international law), the Israeli government approved the establishment of the JLR project in 1999 (Shlay and Rosen 2010; Thawaba and al-Rimmawi 2013). Following basically the same path as Route no. 1⁶ towards the east, the JLR connects the western side of Jerusalem with the Jewish neighborhoods in North-East Jerusalem (Barghouti 2009; Thawaba and al-Rimmawi 2013). As a part of the Master Plan for Jerusalem that aimed to hinder Palestinian growth in Jerusalem while expanding Jewish presence and domination throughout the city (Chiodelli 2012, 2013; Yacobi 2012), the JLR was the 'brainchild of the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan, jointly administered by the Ministry of Transport and the Jerusalem Municipality' (Barghouti 2009). Twelve out of 23 stops of the JLR are built in East Jerusalem, thereby fostering the physical and territorial annexation of the city to Israel. While the JLR stops at three stations in Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem (namely, al-Sahl, Shuafat, Beit Hanina), it serves as a connecting tool between West Jerusalem and the Jewish-Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem. In this sense, planning has been adapted to the needs of Jewish-Israeli citizens who live in contested settlements on Palestinian territory, facilitating an easy and quick mobility between the city center of Jerusalem and its 'satellite-communities', as the settlements are called in Israeli discourse.⁷ Any Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem is thereby foreclosed, not only discursively, but also territorially. For many Palestinians and Human Rights

Organizations, the JLR will therefore ‘fast diminish any chances of East Jerusalem becoming the future capital of a Palestine State’ (Civic Coalition 2009, 11). The planning and routing of the JLR thus clearly indicates it as the Israeli authorities’ tool to strengthen their physical grip on the city. Vested with the political power to not only plan, but also implement it against any national and international critique, the JLR project is a clear statement of the Israeli government’s attempt to unilaterally work towards a territorial ‘unification’ of Jerusalem (Shlay and Rosen 2010, 374). Erasing any notion of the ‘Green Line’, the JLR was hence turned into a symbol of ‘unity’ between East and West Jerusalem, providing speed and mobility to Israeli citizens. Thus, the JLR perpetuates at once a process of territorialization between West and East Jerusalem, and at the same time a clear de-territorialization of the Palestinian areas of Jerusalem is undertaken. This is also reflected in the security fence/wall that cuts Palestinian Jerusalem from the West Bank and so clearly obstructs mobility for Palestinians through planned and implemented fragmentation (Pullan 2013).

In its discursive representation, the JLR is officially serving the Israeli citizens and Palestinian residents of Jerusalem alike. On the ground however, Palestinian presence on and around the JLR has evoked a heated debate. Much controversy evolved around including three stops in Palestinian parts of the city to the JLR network. The presence of Palestinians on the JLR was from the beginning tolerated rather than desired by Israeli authorities (*The Guardian*, September 24, 2014). The Citypass Consortium which is responsible for the implementation of the JLR made headlines in 2010 by distributing questionnaires to residents: among practical questions regarding the intention to ride the JLR, the route etc., the questionnaire entailed two particularly telling questions: ‘*The light rail includes three stations in Shoafat. Does that present a problem for you?*’; and in another question: ‘*All passengers, Jewish and Arab, enter the train freely and*

without the driver’s inspection. Is that a problem for you?’ (Hasson 2010).

Here, the implementation of the JLR is obviously linked to a new political geography of ethnocratic cities (Yiftachel 1998). It describes a bias that underlies the planning process and differentiates between certain populations: Jewish citizens of the city are openly asked whether Arab (Palestinian) presence on the JLR would pose a problem for them. Since Arabs would enter the JLR unchecked, a clear connection between Arabs and terrorism is evoked in the question. The questionnaire attracted much criticism and was also condemned by Israeli Municipality officials (Hasson 2010). However, it points to the underlying planning bias, in which the JLR was mainly thought to serve Jewish-Israeli mobility and continuity in the city while putting up with Palestinian presence on the train rather reluctantly. Here is at stake what Yiftachel (2009a, 246) has called the ‘continuous remaking of identities through contentious politics’: Palestinians are singled out and discursively presented as a potential danger to Jewish-Israeli citizens. Hence their presence on the JLR will also come to be perceived that way, as will be discussed below. These ‘politics of infrastructure’, that are based on the assumption and construction of difference, are active in the material realization of ‘peripheral, weakened and marginalized spaces’ (Yiftachel 2009a, 243). These actively created ‘gray spaces’, initiated as a means of urban control in the name of security, will be ‘undermined by this very process’ (Yiftachel 2009a, 242) through acts of contestation.

The politics of naming—narrating the nation

The ‘politics of infrastructure’ were also clearly at stake on a representational and symbolic level. According to Lefebvre, this is always actively intertwined with the level of its implementation (Nolte and Yacobi 2015). Representing the JLR to a broad

public was hence at the core of its implementation process, of which naming the stops was an important governance tool. According to Isin (2002), naming is symbolic power ‘to make something exist in the objectified, public, or formal state [...] the power of naming usually comes with the power of representing’ (28–29). Naming is a deeply political and ideological endeavor in every nationalist context because whoever does the naming holds the key for defining a certain space according to his/her interests and needs. They help ‘create a certain historical narrative, generating a sense of permanence so that the past, as portrayed by the state, becomes the accepted history and heritage’ (Shoval 2013, 612). Many scholars have pointed to how naming streets, for example, is part of the ongoing process of mapping the boundaries of the nation (Azaryahu and Kook 2002). The power of politics to name is thus a ‘powerful vehicle for promoting identification with the past and locating oneself within wider networks of memory’ (Aldermann 2008, 195). In Israel and especially in the contested city of Jerusalem, naming is inherently political—and so was the process of assigning names to the JLR stops. Israel’s most prominent linguist Avshalom Kor proposed to give names to the stops that endow Israel’s legacy in Jerusalem (Hasson 2009). The Hebrew newspaper *Haaretz* quoted his report in which he states that any attempt to give the stops Arabic names in East Jerusalem would not only eradicate the Hebrew past of the city, but also acknowledge ‘the illegal (Palestinian) construction’ in East Jerusalem (Hasson 2009; own translation from Hebrew). Kor proposed Hebrew names for all the stops of the JLR that emphasized the biblical, historical and military history of Israel. Some of his proposals, names such as ‘Davidka’ (an Israeli mortar that was used in the 1948 war of independence) and ‘Bikur Holim’ (literally translated: ‘Visiting the sick’) for the stop on the famous Jaffa street that traverses the western center of the city were accepted and subsequently implemented by the committee

appointed by the mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barakat. Out of 12 stops in East Jerusalem, three were given Arabic instead of Hebrew names. The Arabic names were officially chosen according to the name of the respective neighborhood, although all the stops are actually part of the encompassing Palestinian neighborhood of Shuafat.⁸ The nine other stops, all located beyond the Green Line, were given Hebrew names. Interestingly, there is a variation between the Hebrew, Arabic and English names. For example, the famous Damascus Gate, which is the core of Palestinian life in East Jerusalem and one of the central tourist entries to the Old City, is called ‘Shaar Shchem’ in Hebrew according to the first capital of Samaria (biblical times). The English name is ‘Damascus Gate’.⁹ In Arabic, the stop is called ‘Bab Al-Amud’¹⁰ as the area is known to Palestinians. Moreover, the stop next to the Palestinian neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah was named ‘Shimon HaZadik’ after the biblical story of ‘Simon the Just’. Interestingly, the next stop in the Hebrew version is named ‘Ammunition Hill’ (Giv’at Ha-Tichmoschet) and ‘Sheik Jarrah’ in Arabic. While the stops in Shuafat are translated from Arabic to Hebrew, the stops in Arabic indicate the actual location in Shuafat such as ‘South Shuafat’ (in Hebrew: al-Sahl), ‘Central Shuafat’ (in Hebrew: Shuafat) and ‘North Shuafat’ (in Hebrew: Beit Hanina). Thus, the Hebrew version indicates that the train stops in three different neighborhoods, while it actually has three stops in one neighborhood. In fact, ‘Beit Hanina’, another large Palestinian neighborhood located north of Shuafat, does not even have a stop, although the Hebrew name of the station suggests so. This might be because Beit Hanina is geographically located next to Pisgat Ze’ev, a Jewish-Israeli settlement, where the JLR tracks terminate. Beit Hanina as a major Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem is thus dis-connected from the mobility that the JLR provides, even though the naming of the adjacent stop in Hebrew suggests otherwise. It is a ‘gray space’ that is not

only disconnected from mobility, but also from basic services, such as access to basic education, waste disposal and security.

Hence naming in this case was obviously a matter of politics. Different names were assigned to the same stops for different addressees. While the Hebrew names in East Jerusalem clearly link the stops to a wider narrative of biblical and historical sites only indirectly or not at all connected to the location of the stop, the Arabic names (or some of them) were chosen according to the actual location. No Arabic/Palestinian historical or other traditional names were given. Sensitive names such as 'Damascus Gate' and 'Ammunition Hill' were assigned different names that carry different meanings and stipulate distinct imaginations. Clearly, the planners of the JLR must have been aware of the sensitive issue of naming in the context of East Jerusalem. But no Palestinian residents able to suggest their own names were involved in the naming process. Naming and assigning the names was thus done from a hegemonic Israeli position and reinforced the Israeli territorial dominance in East Jerusalem on a representational and symbolic level. The 'politics of infrastructure' hence not only creates facts on the ground through planning and building, but are also plaited into a wider narrative of the city, its history and legacy, as the process of naming the stops of the JLR has revealed.

Political infrastructure

The politics of infrastructure are at stake in the process of planning, implementation and representation of the JLR. From the vantage point of the Israeli authorities, they are employed to provide legitimation to the connecting of West and East Jerusalem. While aiming at territorially uniting Jerusalem to emphasize the Jewish-Israeli claim over the whole city, the JLR does enhance mobility for Israeli citizens and Palestinian residents alike. But, as has been pointed out above, in

relative and differential ways for the two populations. On the other hand, it also deepens the already existing political, social and economic gap between Jewish-Israeli residents (in Jewish neighborhoods/settlements in West and East Jerusalem, respectively) and the Palestinian residents (in Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem). Israeli officials claimed that the JLR would serve all its residents equally by connecting the growing modern metropolis, relieve traffic congestion, provide public transportation and support efforts to renew the city's declining center (Shlay and Rosen 2010). Contrary to this claim, however, Palestinian and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) posit that the JLR is yet another step in the colonial occupation of East Jerusalem (Barghouti 2009). A legal case was filed against the French companies Veolia and Alstom,¹¹ two of the companies involved in the consortium that signed the contract with the State of Israel to build and manage the JLR (Barghouti 2009). In addition, more than 170 Palestinian political parties, unions, organizations and networks, 'representing a substantive majority of Palestinian civil society, issued a historic call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, or BDS' (Barghouti 2009, 50), and opposed international support for and economic cooperation with the JLR project.¹² The Civic Coalition for Palestinian's Rights in Jerusalem has issued a report in which the consequences and effects of the JLR on the Palestinian population are addressed.¹³ While the report stresses the building and construction process of the JLR as harmful to the Palestinian population and businesses in Shuafat, it also states that the 'impact of the Light Rail's construction and operation cannot be assessed separately from the existence of approximately 200,000 Jewish settlers who reside in 16 settlements within occupied East Jerusalem' (Civic Coalition 2009, 8).

The core of Palestinian critique of the JLR project lies in the manifest claim to the entirety of Jerusalem that the project embodies. The territorial continuity the JLR

provides between the center of Jerusalem and its suburbs/settlements not only emphasizes the Jewish claim to a united Jerusalem, but also enables it by means of quick transportation (Pullan 2013). As Baumann (2014) states, Palestinians argue that the JLR ‘quite literally—cements the presence of settlements in East Jerusalem, making their presence more permanent and perhaps irreversible’ (online article, no page number). As an outcome of Israeli planning strategies, the JLR is thus the result of different politics and policies that use infrastructure as a tool for political ends. At the same time, its physical presence also creates a situation of ‘uneasily shared space’ (Baumann 2014). Thus, Palestinians that heavily depend on the mobility the train provides, face and use an infrastructure in a city, the Jewish-Israeli prerogatives of which they politically oppose. Being singled out as a Palestinian (along identification markers such as language, identity papers or appearance) in this ‘uneasily shared space’ means to be marked as posing a potential security threat. It allows security personnel to check identity cards and request people to leave the JLR.¹⁴ This also enforces Israeli dominance and control. On the other hand, the JLR leaves many Palestinian residents in the city disconnected. Although suggesting otherwise (see above), the JLR does not stop in all Palestinian neighborhoods, hence it creates ‘gray spaces’ which are a ‘range of unplanned urban zones, lacking certainty, stability and hence development’ (Yiftachel 2009a, 243) amidst planned residential areas for Israelis. Palestinian residents are thus, although part and residents of the city, ‘out of the reach of hegemonic projects’ such as the JLR but ‘yet within the economy and “ground” politics’ of the city itself (Yiftachel 2009a, 245). Not being part of the population that is planned for in the city, Palestinians have clearly realized the way the JLR has altered their neighborhoods, regardless if they are included (Shuafat) or excluded (Beit Hanina) from the service it provides.

Thus, the JLR is being turned into a site on which the political plays out in many ways and forms. For Isin (2002), ‘being political means to constitute relationships between oneself and others either via affiliation and identification, or agon and estrangement’ (32). The JLR, as a space of encounter, is therefore productive of this difference, not only in the way people identify each other as belonging to one group or another, but also in the way difference is emphasized as a potential threat.

It is in this context that the violent escalations in Jerusalem and recent attacks around the JLR have to be understood. Instead of acts of mere barbaric destruction, as it was put in Israeli media, ‘the destruction was [...] instead a highly symbolic act’ (Baumann 2014). It targeted the symbolic and representational unification of Jerusalem that the JLR stands for, notwithstanding the service it provides. And it targeted the ‘difference machine’ that ‘relentlessly provokes, differentiates, positions, mobilizes, immobilizes, oppresses, liberates’ (Isin 2002, 284), territorializes and de-territorializes (Höhne 2012).

The anger that Palestinians turned against the infrastructure was an act of contestation ‘that constitutes them as active subjects of their own making’ (Isin 2002, 273). It also was an acknowledgement of their non-belonging to a Jewish Jerusalem, through which they enabled themselves ‘as political agents under new terms, taking different positions in the social space than those in which they were previously positioned’ (Isin 2002, 276). In Jerusalem, Palestinian presence is seen as an obstacle to Jewish unity and territorial continuity. Palestinians are therefore rendered invisible in many ways on a physical and symbolic level. Their neighborhoods are turned into ‘peripheral, weakened and marginalized spaces’ (Yiftachel 2009a, 243). Their existence is neglected and forcefully contained by means of planning and constructing.

Against that, when Palestinians attempt to reinforce their presence through violence, they perform a political act of becoming

visible. The act of attacking the JLR can thus be seen as a moment ‘when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part’ (Rancière 2004, 123). These acts of becoming political institute a sense of belonging for those that are otherwise rendered non-citizens and constructed as outsiders. Yiftachel sees the recourse to violence not as an abnormal or barbaric act, but rather as a collective antagonism to the hegemonic order (Yiftachel 2009a). He suggests that mobilization can turn violent once marginalized groups become politically aware of the inequality and exclusion they are subjected to (Yiftachel 2009a). In this way, being in the city, while being prevented from moving freely in it or settling and building lives therein, has impacted on the Palestinian notion of belonging in Jerusalem. Or as Isin (2002) puts it, ‘the city is a crucial condition of citizenship in the sense that being a citizen is inextricably associated with being of the city [...] Being political means being of the city. There is no political being outside the (difference) machine’ (283–284).

In return, the recent events and deadly attacks on passengers of the JLR have increased security measurements such as the deployment of surveillance balloons over stations in Shuafat. Already, passenger numbers have decreased by more than 20% and media reports quote passengers who express feelings of unease during the ride, Jewish Israelis and Arab Palestinians alike (Booth and Eglash 2014). The JLR as a place of encounter has thus turned into a place in which suspicion, fear and control dominate. Amidst the ongoing tensions in Jerusalem, Palestinian residents and Israeli citizens of Jerusalem thus increasingly fear the mutual encounter, expecting the respective ‘other’ to be a threat. The heightened security measurements, such as camera deployment, high border police presence and the application of surveillance techniques such as balloons might prevent a future attack, but also create an all prevailing sense of insecurity.

Thus, the JLR, once praised as a means of coexistence in Jerusalem, where passengers face each other during their journeys, has not brought the city residents closer together. Rather, it has actually deepened the divide as it has come to symbolize much more than mobility and transportation improvement. The JLR, for Palestinians, further proves the intention of Israeli authorities to enforce their claims to the whole city of Jerusalem. Hence, the continuity that the JLR provides territorially manifests those claims on the ground. With hardly any space left to negotiate their sense of belonging to a city that renders them strangers by means of classification and control, some Palestinians have taken to the streets to attack one of the most visible instances of their non-belonging to the city. In this paradoxical sense, the JLR has thus made Palestinians in Jerusalem visible again. While their protests, vandalism and violent attacks are often presented as pure barbarism, seeing them in the context of the struggle over the city helps to circumscribe their political dimension. Coming from the ‘gray spaces’ of the city, which are excluded from the official maps and narratives of the united Jewish city, Palestinians have turned to violence in order to express their disagreement with the way they are rendered invisible in the city—or visible only when it comes to matters of threat and security. Yet, the way those protests have been answered by the Israeli authorities indicates not only the reciprocity between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces, but also the asymmetries that characterize this relation.

Conclusion

The JLR is as much the outcome of the politics of infrastructure as a site of political contestation. In a city like Jerusalem, contested and territorially disputed between Israelis and Palestinians but unilaterally annexed and claimed by the Israeli authorities, a project such as the JLR is thus a tool of politics and a site of the political together.

Infrastructure, as has been discussed throughout the paper, is an important governance tool that materializes planning as a process of inclusion and exclusion, territorialization and de-territorialization. That is, infrastructure is decisive in any city and adds to the specific urban context in every city. Its visible and allegedly neutral existence sheds light on processes of power distribution as well as ideas of belonging and non-belonging that shape the situation of citizens and non-citizens, respectively. Thus, infrastructure as materialized governance not only manifests, but also creates difference; difference in the ways it connects and disconnects people, difference in the way it serves its inhabitants and difference in the way they are represented and treated. This 'difference-machine' as the generator for political contestation and negotiation is not only prone to conflict, it is part of the ongoing conflict around space, ownership, belonging and rights in the city itself. As such, infrastructure reproduces existing power struggles in conflict cities and can also deepen political and societal cleavages, even in places not as racialized as Jerusalem. Here, I follow Jonathan Rokem (this issue) in his suggestion that the research on processes of planning in Jerusalem (such as the JLR) 'can be useful in advancing our understanding of the relation between planning conflicts, and power in a growing number of cities worldwide'. While the discussion points to particular specificities at play in Jerusalem, this paper also suggests the inclusion of infrastructure in the analysis of the politics of urban regimes, as an important element of materialized power that brings about processes of alterity, identification, negotiation and resistance. As such, it is important to pay careful attention to the diverse and different urban structures that form and govern cities and to discern their particular forms and appearances while analyzing their potential impact. Thus, what is at stake in the situated history and infrastructure of Jerusalem might have different outcomes in cities where infrastructure has brought about new forms of urban

participation and inclusion, such as in Casablanca (Morocco) for example.

With regards to the discussion above, what then can be learned from the JLR project with regards to the politics of infrastructure and political infrastructure approach? I suggest that the findings are twofold: infrastructure is never neutral and always already inherently political, especially as an outcome of politics. Likewise, it is not only in a politically, socially and religiously contested city such as Jerusalem, that politics and infrastructure reflect existing power relations and constitute a site through which the contestation unfolds. The politics of infrastructure and political infrastructure are thus mutually constitutive. The former leads to the latter, while the latter warrants the former, which together cause contestation.

Disclosure statement

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Notes

- 1 These terms are highly politicized—Jerusalem is represented as the undividable capital of Israel that was long lost and legitimately regained by the Jewish people. Palestinians consider it their political and historical capital that was occupied by colonialist Jewish settlers in 1967 (Klein 2005).
- 2 The exact statement of UN Resolution 478 can be read here: <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/O/DDE590C6FF232007852560DF0065FDDB> (last accessed 6 March 2015).
- 3 The state of Israel does not have a written constitution but rather 11 so-called fundamental laws that 'are endorsed with a special position when compared to regular legislation, but since they are simple decisions of a majority of those present and voting, they can, in principle, be modified or done away with by a simple majority' (Mahler 2011, 103).
- 4 This is due to two factors: firstly, Palestinians in Jerusalem were offered Israeli citizenship in 1967, but most of them refused to accept it because they considered it an acknowledgement of the Israeli claim to Jerusalem. Secondly, the Israeli authorities

continue to employ certain practices that work towards a de-Palestinianization of the city. For details, see Cheshin, Hutman, and Melamed (1999).

- 5 This phrase was first used by Justice Aharon Barak in 1988 when Palestinian resident Mubarak Awad had lost his Jerusalem residency because he was not able to prove to the Israeli authorities that his center of life had been Jerusalem, although he had been born there. Since this ruling in 1988, the 'center of life' policy was applied thousands of times to force Palestinians to leave Jerusalem either to the West Bank or Gaza. It effectively renders Palestinians, mostly born and raised in Jerusalem, stateless. This policy contradicts the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. See Jefferis (2012).
- 6 Route no. 1 is a road that was built along the former Green Line and no-man's land that used to divide Jerusalem.
- 7 See http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/circulars/ec058/15_04_Daniel.pdf (last accessed 28 November 2014).
- 8 <https://www.google.de/maps/place/Shu%27afat,+Jerusalem/@31.8168836,35.230884,15z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x15032a1bda413655:0x83b2e0307cc22ef9> (last accessed 27 November 2014).
- 9 <http://www.citypass.co.il/default.aspx> (last accessed 27 November 2014).
- 10 <http://www.citypass.co.il/arabic/> (last accessed 27 November 2014).
- 11 Connex consists of the two French companies Veolia Environment and Alstom that are in charge of the technical part of the JLR project. On the Israeli side, the Citypass Consortium, comprised of the companies Polar Investments and Harel that form the financial part of the project. For more information, see <http://www.railway-technology.com/projects/jerusalem/> (last accessed 5 May 2014).
- 12 For a more detailed account of the legal and civil fight against the construction of the JLR, see Barghouti (2009).
- 13 See full report: Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinian's Rights in Jerusalem, *The Jerusalem JLR Train: Consequences and Effects* (December 2009).
- 14 <http://fugitivemomentsofcompassion.wordpress.com/2014/01/23/this-harassment-is-so-unnecessary/> (last accessed 27 November 2014).

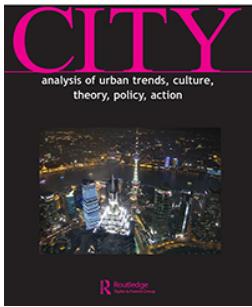
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Jerusalem as a paradigm

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Jerusalem as a paradigm

Agamben's 'whatever urbanism' to rescue urban exceptionalism

Camillo Boano

Can Jerusalem be considered a paradigm in urban studies and urban theory? Widening the debate over the 'contested' and the 'ordinary', this paper tries to address such questions whilst engaging with Giorgio Agamben's powerful concept of paradigms. Considering Jerusalem a super, hyper-exceptional case trapped in the tension between particularism and exceptionalism, the paper reflects on Agamben's approach to examples—or paradigms—which deeply engage the powers of analogy, enabling discernment between previously unseen affinities among singular objects by stepping outside established systems of classification. The paper suggests a possible new concept, 'whatever urbanism', to disentangle the apparent dichotomy between 'ordinary' and 'contested' as urban labels.

Key words: Jerusalem, Agamben, whatever, paradigm, contested urbanism

Introduction

Massimo Cacciari (2004), Italian philosopher and once Mayor of Venice, argued that 'the city does not exist, what exists are different and distinct forms of urban lives' (4), suggesting the impossibility of a common, universal definition of what a city is and calling for an anti-essentialist acceptance of the multiple origins and futures of urban territories. Tracing the etymological origins of now-often-used terms, such as *polis* and *civitas*, Cacciari suggests that the linguistic difference between them, the Greek and the Latin, is essential to the origin and the nature of the city itself. The *polis* for him is the place where determined people, *genos*, specific for traditions and uses, has its own *ethos*. On the other side the word *civitas* grounds its

origin in the *cives*, a group of people that got together to form the city under the same law and norms. With that in mind, it seems that the *polis* resembles, fundamentally, the unity of people, the togetherness of citizens, the place and the site of the origins; however, in the *civitas*, the original founding myth is the convergence of a diversity of gens who agree on the power of a common law: *Ab urbe condita*.

The Roman constitution does not recognize in the *civitas* the origin, but the result, of a process of becoming or as Cacciari (2004, 23) suggests 'growth, development and complication'. What holds together all such differences is certainly not the roots, the *genos*, but rather the aim, the end, the goal: the expansion of the empire. On the contrary, the issue with the *polis* is not excessive expansion in order to hold control over a

‘manageable’ territory within its borders and within which the *genos* is rooted—*civitas* grows and expands itself *de-lira*, transgressing its borders,¹ its limits. The issue with the contemporary city, Cacciari is suggesting, is exactly this renewed tension between two ideas of cities. What emerges is a city that is *polemos*, conflict, the stage of great tensions between rootedness (*polis*) and pact; treaty (*civitas*), fixity and movement; dwelling/property and exchange/commerce; memory and future. The essence of the urban appears to be the capacity to hold such competing different qualities in a dynamic perennial conflict, in an irreducible tension. The city is *polemos*, is contestation par excellence. The city is growing and changing through the courageous attempt of recombining the elements of such tensions, despite the inability to resolve them. The city is *cum-plexus*, what is embraced, weaved together, in a multiplicity of forms in an impossible final synthesis.

Cacciari was right in pointing to the fact that no single definition of the city exists. One single city is impossible. The city is in a continuous mutation, reassembly, change and transformation, but it exists just because it is inhabited, perceived and lived: its consistency is the plot of the different desires, ambitions, hopes and projects it is able to arouse. If the city is not unique, then the knowledge of contemporary urbanisms is not homogeneous as well, and thus no single universalist claim on urban epistemology is possible. The city appears to emerge from a complex interaction between ‘cultural structures, social values, individual and collective actions and observations of the material arrangements’ (Hou et al. 2015, 3); or, to put it as Yiftachel (this issue) does, it emerges ‘from the multiple, intense, dynamic relational nature of urban structural forces that co-shape the city’.

These claims of the impossibility of capturing the essence of the city in a unitary project, image and form, fit well into the recent resurgence of interest in the idea of comparative urbanism. As Peck (2015, 162) reminds us

‘the ongoing work of remaking of urban theory must occur across cases, which means confronting and problematizing substantive connectivity, recurrent processes and relational power relations, in addition to documenting difference, in a “contrastive” manner, between cities. It must also occur across scales, positioning the urban scale itself, and working to locate cities not just within lateral grids of difference, in the “planar” dimension, but in relational and conjuncture terms as well.’

This paper seeks to superimpose the reflection and the speculation involved in ‘learning from Jerusalem’, as a super, hyper-exceptional case built around the oppositional tensions between particularism and exceptionalism, onto a possible new concept—‘whatever urbanism’. This is undertaken around lines of thought in contemporary urbanism and the contested cities framework, introducing Giorgio Agamben’s concept of ‘whatever’—developed in his 1993 book *The Coming Community*—into urbanism discourse. In order to disentangle the apparent dichotomy between ordinary and contested, this paper reflects on Agamben’s approach to examples—or paradigms—which deeply engage the powers of analogy, enabling the discernment of previously unseen affinities among singular objects by stepping outside established systems of classification.

Analogy, for Agamben, is opposed to the principle of dichotomy that dominates Western logic. Against the alternative drastic ‘A or B’ (ordinary or contested, exceptional or universal), which excludes the third, it claims each time its *tertium datur*, his stubborn ‘neither A nor B’. The analogy intervenes not to compose dichotomies in a higher synthesis, but to turn them into a force field by polar tensions, where, as occurs in an electromagnetic field, they lose their substantial identity and suggest novel imaginations, possible future interpretations and meanings: in a way profaning the notions of ordinary and contested. In this way we come to envision novel groupings,

new patterns of connection—that nonetheless do not simply reassemble those singular objects into yet another rigidly fixed set or class but allow us ‘to see again’ and render such concepts inoperative. The pages that follow, although deliberately conceptual, use empirical evidence and factual narratives grounded in the author’s experiences in Cambodia, Italy and Colombia to contrast the hyper-potential case of Jerusalem beyond its exception. ‘Whatever urbanism’ can hopefully contribute to elaborating the tensions of debating a ‘particular case’, which is seen neither as a universal nor specific example. In this sense I hope Jerusalem with its manifold uneven and unstable social, economic, colonial and political urban forces and spatial dispositives could become a signifier of future urbanism; a *tertium datur*, a paradigm for urban studies. Somehow, along the lines of what the panopticon was for Foucault or the camp for Agamben, I hope Jerusalem in its complex *dispositif* at play in the same territory could become a theoretical object that one can learn from to better understand urban processes and forms.

Framing the discourse: between particularism and exceptionalities

The complexity of contemporary urban conditions creates the impossibility of a unitary vision, form, definition, design and image of a city. Urbanism and urban studies scholars face a seemingly contradictory task. On the one hand, the need to remain vigilant and to wage war on totality, that is, to critique and subvert any and all established systems of categories that span from the very being of the city (McFarlane 2010; Scott and Storper 2014; Wachsmuth 2014), or the multiplicity of urbanisms (Merrifield 2013; Brenner 2014) across the different fields of urban theory (Parnell and Oldfield 2014; Robinson 2014; Peck 2015). On the other hand, they need to, as Lyotard (1984, 82) says, ‘save the honor of the name’, that is, preserve the power of language to reveal and make sense

of our world and our lives. But how do we do both? How can we question and criticize the constant classification of cities and urban material conditions, ontological objects and subsume them within specific categories, and on the other side, recognize and respect language’s capacity to name, classify and assess real-world *in situ* experiences and singular assemblages? And how can we then recognize the existence of a multiplicity of urbanisms assuming their de facto contested nature? Specifically, it does seem important to acknowledge that in order to move towards a deeper contextual understanding of contemporary urbanism, we must continue to move beyond the global or world city discourse; the oversimplified term offering an authorized image of the city’s success that misleadingly ascribes characteristics of parts of cities to the whole (Robinson 2006).

Roy (2011) has proposed the concept of worlding, a term that seeks to recover and restore the vast array of global strategies of urban development and the production of urban space and models of urbanism that include those previously marginal in the production of urban research and theory. Robinson (2006, 126) instead, advocates the need to understand cities as ordinary rather than other and to develop ‘creative ways of thinking about connections across the diversity and complexity of economies and city life’. Postcolonial analysis and reflections have had an interesting impact especially in disrupting the formal/informal binary used to reproduce, albeit at a different scale, the division between global cities and megacities (Varley 2013). The postcolonial city has reconfigured itself in literature and culture, as an urban space that constantly explores its modernity along various, conflicting lines of identity, representation, production and reproductions (Bishop, Phillips, and Yao 2003; Yiftachel 2009). Also progressive ‘development planning’ (Levy and Allen 2013) has contributed to disentangling dichotomies, such as ‘developed’ and ‘developing’, global North and global South (Parnell and Oldfield 2014), problematizing

the making and the being of urban conditions. Beyond mainstream urbanisms, Shatkin (2011) suggests that ‘other’ urbanisms, rooted in alternative social dynamics, have challenged the vision, legitimacy and authority of master planning, pushing the emergence of different strategies into different locales. Recently, Hou et al. (2015, 7) suggested another ‘now urbanism’ as a ‘complex practice that is simultaneously, local regional and global [...] grounded in the imperfect, messy reality of the everyday’. Similar reflections have been recently elaborated in a paper titled ‘Cities Beyond Compare?’ by Jamie Peck (2015) who, in tracing the evolution of the urban theoretical discourses around comparative urbanism in its postcolonial and political economy perspectives, suggests that ‘uniqueness and particularity are back (again) and finding exceptions to—as well as taking exception to—general urban-theoretical rules have become significant currents in the literature’ (161). All reflections that somehow stem from what Lefebvre ([1970] 2003) suggested more than 40 years ago in *The Urban Revolution* while advancing the thesis of complete urbanization: a general transformation of society, changing the living conditions of habitable territories, a dissolution of the social and morphological structure and its dispersion in all sorts of fragments and the creation of an urban society as the result of contradictory historical processes full of conflicts and struggles (Brenner 2014; Stanek, Schmid, and Moravánszky 2015).

Recognizing that there are a myriad of relationships between the built environment and how it structures and is structured by social life, understanding this multiplicity of urbanisms, reinforces the need to also understand the political, economic and social dynamics at play within the urban fabric when acting in the urban realm across time and space. The compositional, messy, uncontrollable and recombinant nature of the present urbanism, and the differential knowledge at play in the construction of the urban as object and subject is anything but

straightforward. Rather it is energized and constructed in a continuous process of creation, legitimization and contestation. A renewed anti-essentialist shift in urban studies and practice is welcome as is

‘shaking up old explanatory hierarchies and pushing aside stale concepts [...] making space for a much richer plurality of voices, in a way that some have likened to a democratization of urban theory. In the critical literature, special places have been reserved for insurgent, rogue, subaltern and alt-urbanisms, as a premium has been newly attached to the disputation of generalized theory claims through disruptive or exceptional case studies.’ (Peck 2015, 161)

The present debate appears to be trapped in on the one side, by the exceptionalism of urban theory reflections with ‘the global city’ modelling and its countervailing reflections on ordinary cities guided with its anti-essentialist ethos and assemblage methodological inputs and, on the other, a more particularistic mode of enquiry with expansion of cases and non-usual, not-northern, not-neoliberal case-study singularities. The basic and somehow banal assumption of this paper is that the urban is a de facto process-oriented, contingent and contested condition. As I have argued elsewhere—inspired both by Cacciari and Lefebvre—the urban is embedded in a web of contested visions where the production of space is an inherently conflictive process, manifesting, producing and reproducing various forms of injustice; as well as alternative forces of transgression and social projects (Boano, Hunter, and Newton 2013). We use the notion of ‘contested urbanism’ (Boano, Hunter, and Newton 2013) to depict the inevitable impossibility of reconciling monolithic and unitary urban visions. The term, used as an intellectual framework, emerged in a study in Dharavi, Mumbai, where we depict the hegemonic and technocratic discourses that sit behind aggressive interventions, both state and market driven, focusing attention on the politics of urban transformations that

systematically excluded many urban dwellers whose visions, aspirations and everyday lives were ignored and ‘mastered’ in conventional, transnational alien forms of urbanism (Watson 2009, 2014). Since then we have recognized that the notion of contestation, certainly appropriate for the confrontational, speculative and situated politic that emerged in the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan, was not unique. Contestations, if understood as oppositional confrontational, resistive and situated politics of spaces, are part of being urban (Sevilla-Buitrago 2013). Certainly discovering and researching urbanisms at a global scale, especially in and from southern and eastern perspectives (Yiftachel 2009; Parnell and Oldfield 2014; Watson 2014), does seem to have its own advantage. In fact, problems often relate to multi-scalar processes in which many institutions intervene simultaneously, from the conventions that organize social life (including colonial legacies), to the formalized political processes that create state power and other forms of authority as well as multiple aspects from socio-ecological interactions to the possibilities of drawing democratic forms of governance within a given political and spatial system. These are all dynamic processes, which make outcomes unpredictable, mutable and not homogenous and where the current trend of urbanization (McGrannahan and Satterthwaite 2014; Stanek, Schmid, and Moravánszky 2015) is creating a variety of urban situations we actually lack the vocabulary to describe. Urbanism is certainly made and remade by encounters between different visions about what kind of future is desirable and, thus, conflict between different parties is often unavoidable, and may generate division and eventually new forms of negotiated collaboration. Certainly that is when the analysis moves onto ethnically contested urban space (Brand 2009; Gaffikin, Mceldowney, and Sterrett 2010; Bollens 2012; Pullan and Baillie 2013), that the contestation is taking violent form and sectarian spatialities are well developed and researched. From this short account of the literature,

partial and fragmented, it emerges that urbanism is contested per se, in its very nature, as illustrated in the opening erudite account offered by Cacciari. Different kinds of contested cities, then, share and are developing growing similarities stemming from ethnic, racial and class conflicts revolving around issues of housing, infrastructure, participation representation, access and certainly identity. Within the recurring debate around comparative urbanism, Mcfarlane and Robinson (2012) have recently called for the investigation of difference in comparative urban research, pointing to the interesting proliferations of urban labels and how to represent such a multiplicity of different urban forms. However, how do we treat particular urban labels? As an interesting recollection, Wood (1985) reminded us that ‘labelling is a way of referring to the process by which policy agendas are established [...] defined in convenient images’ which involves disaggregation, standardization and the formulation of clear-cut categories. Labels somehow—both in their narrative expansion as well as in their creation of knowledge subjects and political connections—suffer also from the phenomenon of exceptionalism. The creation and the justification of ‘exceptional cases’ stay in prominent situations due to their ‘exceptionality’, beyond the accepted norm circumstances. Labels are political in the sense that they construct subjectivity.

How, then, to disentangle the apparent *empasse* of urban studies where, on one side there is a great call for comparatives across scales, spaces and diversities, and, on the other, the exponential multiplication of discursive urban labels that attempt to define, specify and connote a specific urbanism? In addition, how is it possible to keep reflecting on transnational learning across cases, and also reflect on how those overly studied cases can become models, due to the popularity and richness of their urban contents? And specifically why can Jerusalem be located in that discourse? Despite the recurrent urban exceptionalism (Peck 2015) there is no authoritative definition of ‘exceptionalism’

as a political or legal concept. For our argument here we can see roughly two ways. The first is narrow and strong. It takes the 'ism' element of the term seriously, suggesting something more than merely being special and implying an exceptionalist attitude, perhaps even an ideology which attributes a larger meaning or an essential function to this or that phenomenon. In urban studies this 'ism' applies to Shanghai (Weinstein and Ren 2009), Cape Town (Watson 2009, 2014) and certainly Jerusalem (Rosen and Shlay 2010, 2014). The other possible meaning of the term is broader and weaker. It merely refers to the question of whether an entity or a case is special; normally using seemingly value-free comparisons that seek to identify characteristics. As such, exceptional-in-the-sense-of-special is sometimes used to construct rhetorical gestures and disciplinary regimes. Here, several cases of ethnically divided cities could fit into this category: Beirut, Sarajevo, Jerusalem again, etc.

Jerusalem: hyper-exceptionality

Few cities in the world fascinate and puzzle scholars like Jerusalem. As a city with historic, spiritual and cultural magnetism, it is well known for multiple controversies around identity, territory, space, history and nature; all inscribed in its historic and modern built environment. Jerusalem is a city mired in spatial conflict. Its contested spaces represent deep conflicts among groups that vary by national identity, religion, religiosity and gender (Rosen and Shlay 2014). In the past half-century, overt ethno-national rifts and Israeli actions to establish sovereignty over occupied Palestinian land spurred attention to extensive urban research (Hasson 1996; Benvenisti 1998; Klein 2001; Rosen and Shlay 2010; Allegra, Casaglia, and Rokem 2012; Chiodelli 2012, 2013; Allegra 2013; Boano and Marten 2013; Busbridge 2013, 2014). Since the mid-1990s, the rise of a right-wing

municipal government has propelled an acceleration of Jewish settlement-building in East Jerusalem and a progressive intensification of the securitization and Judaization (Yiftachel 1999) of the spaces of Israeli–Palestinian interaction—from checkpoints to the Separation Wall in the West Bank which has received incredible attention from critical geographers and other social scientists (Harker 2010; Boano and Leclair-Paquet 2014), whose focus was mostly on the profoundly negative consequences of spatial configurations associated, in particular, with the occupation (Ophir, Givoni, and Hanafi 2009) and their exceptionality (Boano and Marten 2013).

With the disintegration of the peace process, Jerusalem began to take on radical ethno-national significance, fuelling a cyclical justification of violence and culminating in a recent phase of ideological management of the landscape within the context of ethnic tensions and divisions. In Jerusalem, municipal, state and private entities collaborate in appropriating 'the city apparatus to buttress its domination and expansion' in a process that Yiftachel and Yacobi (2003, 673) refer to as urban ethnocracy. In such regimes, they argue, 'ethnicity, and not citizenship, forms the main criteria for distributing power and resources' (689). The city, here, fits into a broader Zionist colonization project aimed at expanding Israeli territory (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2005). To a large extent, the predominance of ethno-national splits and contested sovereignties has sidelined, or at least downplayed, mundane urban debates over growth and development. But capitalism, it should be noted, serves to further urban ethnocracy by attracting well-to-do diaspora Jews to this traditionally poor, divided city. Some recent studies (Hercbergs and Noy 2015) have argued that the enclosing and exclusionary practices of urban ethnocracy and privatization are reshaping the production and consumption of the urban landscape of Jerusalem. Charney and Rosen (2014) suggest, however, that 'ordinary' conflicts over

urban development (e.g. sprawling development on the urban edge, inner-city redevelopment and the provision of affordable housing) are relevant, in their operations and spatialization, and intersect and overlap with postcolonial urban processes. Chambers and Huggan (2015, 786) suggest that, in that respect, the postcolonial city can be seen as ‘a dynamic site of social and cultural interaction in which colonial legacies have effectively been superseded, [...] in which colonial ways of thinking and acting are either deliberately or inadvertently reinvented and rehearsed’. In this sense, postcolonial studies was certainly useful in depicting peculiar materialities—postcolonial cities, like all cities, make and unmake themselves in an ongoing process of creative dissolution in which the imaginative possibilities of ‘urban renewal’ are always shadowed by the material realities of ‘spatial decay’.

For Safier (2001, 136) there is probably no other city in the world where the “cultural dimension” of conflict, meaning inclusive systems of belief shaping ways of perceiving and acting in the world, has such direct and pervasive impact on its life and times’. Moreover, it all hinges on a fundamentally spatial struggle, making it a unique spatial apparatus where a complex interaction of historical, religious, cultural and political factors has, over time, produced an unusual city of enormous significance. As Gazit (2010) suggests, Jerusalem might serve as a prototype for a mixed city, an urban ‘situation’ in which two rival national communities occupy the same urban jurisdiction (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003). Such fertile ground produces political theorists, sociologists, historians, geographers and architects, increasingly focused on how Israel’s territorial—and more broadly spatial—policies undermine Palestinian territoriality and its exceptionality due to scale, visibility and aesthetic (Boano and Marten 2013).

In this sense, Jerusalem with its manifold uneven and unstable social, economic, colonial and political urban forces and spatial *dispositif* could become a signifier, a paradigm

for urban studies. The next part of the paper will illustrate Giorgio Agamben’s political theory of paradigms and his concept of ‘whateverness’ as an attempt to reflect on Jerusalem as more than a super, hyper-exceptional case. What we aim to suggest, although superficially, is that Jerusalem is located in the peculiar, extraordinary crux of several urban processes, and as such does appear to be the perfect model, the perfect example of any urbanism: illustrating, on one side, the constitutive conflict at the core of every urbanism, and on the other, the central colonial roots of all urbanisms.

Prior to embarking on such exploration it is worth mentioning that Giorgio Agamben’s reflections are concerned with the origins and development of Western political thought and the ways in which it supports the exclusionary structures of sovereign power; he does not explore the ways in which the geopolitical entity of ‘the West’ emerged through its imperial domination of others. Agamben maintains a relative silence about colonialism and appears disinclined to engage with anti-colonial and postcolonial writers and activists. However, his concepts, frameworks and methods of philosophical enquiry offer important and valuable resources for thinking critically about the political exclusions and abandonments characteristic of colonial situations (Svirsky and Bignall 2012). Despite a minor hint in his essay *Metropolis*, which describes at least in its most visible political etymology the only engagement with tropes of colonial and postcolonial analysis, Agamben (2006) is not ‘overtly concerned with concrete histories of colonization and the material legacy of colonial violence on colonized peoples’ (Svirsky and Bignall 2012, 3). Without lingering too much in the uncharted territory of the overlap of colonial studies, urban studies and Agambenian political theory, the next part of the paper provides a critical bridge connecting two previously unrelated fields of exploration: Agamben’s theorization of the *dispositif* and its concept of whateverness, which can

replace the oppositional tensions between particularism and exceptionalism, the contested and the ordinary.

Agamben's model and method: examples, signatures and *whateverness*

We might argue that Jerusalem stands to urban studies as Foucault's panopticon stands to disciplinary power and governmental control. As historical causality, Bentham's design² had minor influences in the development of a type or a practice; rather it exemplified, beyond the historical influence it exerted, the full realization of institutional control. In Foucault's hands, the panopticon becomes a paradigm for an entire governmental model. Panopticon was not only wide-ranging in a given moment in time, it was an example of something wide-ranging over time. Why is Foucault's panopticon important in a reflection on Jerusalem and its role in urban studies? In order to answer this question, we have to elaborate the notion of a 'paradigm'.

In one of his lesser-known books, *The Signature of All Things*, Giorgio Agamben (2009), the Italian philosopher—famous globally for his *Homo Sacer* project and his reflections on the state of exception—explained that he uses historical phenomena in his work, as 'paradigms whose role was to constitute and make intelligible a broader historical-problematic context' (9). Why did he use the word paradigm? Although he did not give any workable definition, many of his commentators have suggested that he uses 'paradigms to analyze political questions' and 'apply the same genealogical and paradigmatic method Foucault employed' (de la Durantaye 2009, 215). There is not a specific book where Agamben traces and explains his methodology, but as William Watkin (2014) notes, he did elaborate his philosophical enquiry method as, 'a single system called philosophical archaeology [composed] of three elements: the paradigm, the signature and the archaeology' (4).

Agamben (cited in de la Durantaye 2009, 218) wrote,

'when I say paradigm I mean something extremely specific—a methodological problem, like Foucault's with the Panopticon, where he took a concrete and real object but treated it not only as such but also [...] to elucidate a larger historical context'.

Elsewhere he stated that paradigm is something like an example, an exemplum, a unique historical paradoxical nature that 'on the one hand, every example is treated in effect as particular case; but on the other, it remains understood that it cannot serve in its particularity' (Agamben 2001, 14). As such, the paradigm is neither clearly inside nor clearly outside the group or set it exemplifies. Agamben exemplifies the coordinates of this paradigmatic method as a 'real particular case', or singularity with regards to what it is set apart from to exemplify, making it both a real concrete situation and representing instances. But how does he balance an understanding of the historical specificity of a paradigm with its exemplary value? Watkin (2014, 4) suggests that *signatura* serves to interpret this exemplary value as it stands for a 'mode of distribution of paradigms through time and across discourses [...] suspended between signifier and signified, so rather than being a sign as such, it is what makes a sign intelligible, by determining existence through actual usage'.

In order to understand the possible relevance to the notion of paradigms in the singularity/universality urban debate let's return for a moment to Agamben's (1998) epigrammatic statement³ made in *Homo Sacer* a few years back, 'today it is not the city, but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West' (181). What does Agamben mean when he says that concentration camps are the paradigm of our age? Certainly, he does not mean the return to that specific historical moment or a specific condition. Rather, he thinks that what has emerged there, specifically can illustrate other—in this case—

political moments. As proven in the widespread literature that stems from camps, such a historically specific mode of production of a space of detention and contention, serves to elucidate, to describe and to render visible other exceptional spatial and territorial logics (Boano and Floris 2005; Diken and Bage Laustsen 2005; Ek 2006; Giaccaria and Minca 2011). In a certain sense, a paradigm was for him what it already was for Plato—an ‘example’ (*paradigma* is Greek for example). However, it was not just any example, or rather it was an example used in not just any fashion. Following Agamben, a paradigm is at once embedded in a given historical situation and a tool for better understanding ‘the present situation. These paradigms must then walk a fine line between past and present, and for this reason they require the most careful understanding—at once historical and hermeneutic—if they are to achieve their end’ (de la Durantaye 2009, 350). As such their goal ‘is to render intelligible a series of phenomena whose relationship to one another has escaped, or might escape, the historian’s gaze’ (Agamben 2009, 33). In the opening of *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, Agamben (2009, 9) argued that in all his work,

‘I have had occasion to analyze figures such as the *homo sacer*, the Muselman, the state of exception, and the concentration camps that are, of course, discrete historical phenomena but that I have so treated as paradigms whose function was to constitute and render intelligible a vast historico-problematic context.’

For Agamben, the paradigm does not function merely as lens through which we see things that are already there, they not only render intelligible a given context, but they ‘constitute it’. As such, the paradigm is not a metaphor that follows ‘the logic of the metaphorical transport of a signified, but instead the analogical one of an example’ (de la Durantaye 2009, 349). Somehow reflecting on the potency and the limits of

analogy and metonymy from Foucault, Agamben apparently gives two other rules to the paradigm in addition to the epistemological, discursive relations given in the original Foucault: it is a singular case that, isolated from its context, taken as exemplary and then risen up, constitutes this isolation by making intelligible a new set that if constituted reveals its own singularity; and this means that it is ‘deactivated’ from its normal use, not so that it can move into a new context, which would be simply metaphoric, but so as to present the rule of its original usage.

For Agamben (2009), ‘giving an example is a complex act’ (18) because ‘what the example shows is its belonging to a class, but for this very reason the example steps out of its class in the moment it exhibits and delimits it’ (Agamben 1998, 20). The example, qua paradigm, is thus ‘suspended’ (Agamben 1999, 260) from its being one instance of a class and, conversely, the class’s supervening control of that example is ‘deactivated’ (Agamben 2009, 18).

What we found interesting in introducing Agamben’s paradigmatic logic is its irreducibility to the traditional universal–particular, part–whole dualism. This irreducibility makes it ‘impossible to clearly separate an example’s paradigmatic character—its standing for all cases—from the fact that it is one case among others’ (Agamben 2009, 18) placing one singularity-as-it-is-in-itself-in-language into a relation with other such singularities and with a set of singularities it uniquely constitutes. This dynamic analogical relation yields new potential comparabilities and relationships among singularities. But an example is not illustrative of something else (a generality, a pattern); it neither presupposes nor offers a partial preview of some prior whole. Understanding via examples or paradigms is not a fitting of something new into something else (a category, a framework). As Watkin (2014) suggests, ‘the paradigm is a mode of knowledge that moves between singularities. It does refute the general and the particular. It

does refute dichotomous logic in favor of “bipolar analogical modes”. It is always suspended’ (18).

Before proceeding to reflect back on Jerusalem’s lessons learned and its being paradigmatic, it is worth elaborating a bit more on ‘whateverness’ as a central possible characteristic useful in the debate here.

Giorgio Agamben (1993), in *The Coming Community*, reflected on a ‘whatever’ singularity as the subject of the coming community, a singularity that presents an ‘inessential commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence’ (9). The argument of the book revolves around the notion of *qualunque*—the Italian translation of the Latin *quodlibet*—translated as whatever, which Agamben (1993) translates as ‘being such that it always matters’ instead of the traditional translation, ‘being, it does not matter which’ (1). The whatever in question here, Agamben writes, ‘relates to singularity not in its indifference with respect to a common property (to a concept, for example: being red, being French, being Muslim), but only in its being such as it is’ (1). It is this formulation of the subject and this conception of singularity, such as it is, that is at the heart of whatever singularity and the coming community and that may now be useful in the urbanism debate.

Agamben considers singularity not in its indifference with regards to a common propriety but in its being as such (*tale qual è*); neither particular nor universal, neither individual nor generic, it refers rather to the ‘singular’ and expresses a pure singularity. Pure singularity has no identity, it is omnivalent: ‘It is not determined vis-à-vis a concept, but it is not simply undetermined either; rather, it is determined only through its relation to an idea, that is, to the totality of its possibilities’ (Agamben 1993, 55).

Being neither particular nor universal this renunciation of identity and its politics does not involve resignation but, rather, a new form of political action. Pure singularities ‘have deposed all identity in order to appropriate belonging itself’ (Agamben 1993, 14).

In other words, the disappropriation of all propriety constitutes the possibility for the appropriation of impropriety and inessentiality as the unique being that makes whatever singularities exemplar. The issue is in fact how to move beyond the logic of belonging, beyond the idea ‘being in’, ‘being defined as such’ (Salzani 2012, 214). Belonging itself, according to Agamben, is a state of being that acknowledges the (social and affective efficacy of) desire for inclusion while, at the same time, resisting the concretization of static categories (defined racially, nationally, sexually, religiously or otherwise) and would afford not only inclusion, but also exclusion. Agamben situates whatever being precisely at the border or ‘threshold’ between inside and outside, a point of contact with an external space that must remain empty.

Is then Jerusalem a paradigm? Three ways of looking at urban *dispositif*

Rather than an exceptional case (Boano and Martens 2013) or a very peculiar/specific example of a colonial city (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003) or a divided city (Allegra 2013), stemming from the above, can we consider Jerusalem a paradigm? Agamben’s (2006) short essay, *Metropolis*, seems, at least by way of a political etymology, to say precisely this about cities. In the essay he offers, ‘a banal consideration on the etymology of the word *metropolis*’, pointing out that the word *metropolis* has a strong connotation of maximum dislocation and spatial and political dishomogeneity, raising a series of doubts about the current idea of the *metropolis* as an urban, continuum and ‘relatively homogeneous fabric’. What Agamben does appear to suggest is to ‘keep the term *metropolis* for something substantially other than the city, in the traditional conception of the *polis*, i.e. something politically and spatially isonomic’. In separating the use of the term, Agamben tries ‘to understand the process whereby power progressively takes on the

character of government of things and the living, or if you like of an economy [...] nothing but government [...] of the living and things [...].’

As already mentioned, Agamben (2006) is not concerned with colonialism per se, but with the paradigm it provides for understanding a more general set of problems, here, bound to the term metropolis: ‘the metropolis is the *dispositif* or group of *dispositifs* that replaces the city when power becomes the government of the living and of things’. Signalling the possibility of a new exception in the spatial logic of the city and a need to study not the morphology but the governance of any space. *Metropolis* comes to mean, for Agamben, a ‘dislocated and dishomogenous’ space—one that can be traced in every city of the Western world, alluding to ‘the impossibility of univocally defining borders, walls, spatialisation’, because they are the result of the action of this different paradigm: no longer a simple binary division but the projection on this division of a complex series of articulating and individuating processes and technologies.

In order to reflect on such complex manifold, uneven and unstable social, economic, colonial and political urban forces, let’s turn our attention to a peculiar angle of the *dispositif* that Agamben suggests as a reflection on sovereignty, on life and governmentality. Agamben suggests that the *dispositif* is defined as a heterogeneous set of elements (discourses, regulations, institutions, architectures) and, at the same time, the network between such elements. It has a concrete strategic function and it is located in power relations. Thus, these are ‘contingent relations, subject to continual change and perpetual inventiveness over time, but which produce tangible material effects—in the forms of subjectivation and in terms of specific modes of construction (of buildings, of territories and cartographies) and treatment (of people, environment, etc.)’ (Agamben 2009, 11–12). Agamben alludes to the contemporary landscape, saying that advanced capitalism produces a great

accumulation of *dispositifs*, which in Jerusalem’s urbanism case is certainly pretty evident, where there are in place spatialized *dispositifs* of division and ethno-spatial patterns of archipelagos, enclaves, camps and camp-like (Weizman 2007). As we tried to elaborate elsewhere in other reflections (Boano and Marten 2013; Boano and Talocci 2014), *dispositifs* are useful because they allow the disentanglement of the relation between a certain notion of power and governmentality, and since today economics prevails over politics, *dispositifs* are massively proliferating in all urban settings and take several distinctive forms and all in a manner or another in order to govern our lives. Secondly, the *dispositif* is a set of elements and a network between such elements and thus allows a scalar territorial vision, aiming to depict functional management of the political economy in a strategic manner insisting on both space and time. Finally, according to Agamben, a *dispositif* is a comprehensive set of elements and so it is not ontology but a praxis that manages the being and thus it produces subjectivity and it can be violated through an act of profanation. What follows is a brief narrative of some certainly contested urban settings read through their urban *dispositif*. The different urban geographies chosen here are part of a continuous transnational action-oriented research that investigates the nature and the challenge of design and collective strategies in contested urban conditions. In maintaining their singularities—when read through the lenses of an urban *dispositif*—a contingent set of relations subject to continual change of discourses, regulations, institutions and architectures, is able to develop a new sort of intelligibility. And as such to expose new potential linkages among concepts, terms, objects and actions with Jerusalem’s singularities but without formally establishing linkages once and for all as a completed and all-inclusive set of determined simplistic labels. The following short detour around three different narratives of *dispositifs* are not intended to represent a complete

manifestation of the *dispositifs* but rather as examples from elsewhere to reflect on the tension between particularity and generalization of the urban in relation to Jerusalem—as such they are important to understand the tensions and opportunity of Jerusalem-as-paradigm.

Relocation *dispositifs* in Phnom Penh

Elsewhere (Talocci and Boano 2015) we investigated, with a socio-spatial ethnography, the complex and violent practice of eviction and relocation in Phnom Penh; focusing on those emerging from the eviction of Dey Krahorm, a very central informal settlement developed in the middle of the area known as Tonle Bassac Tribune earlier in 2009 to make room for a new development. The evictees have been scattered and their original sites re-composed in 54 extra-peripheral spaces, 20–50 km from the city centre. The act of emptying the urban fabric at the centre of the city has been paired precisely with the use of peripheral and therefore cheap land to relocate informal populations. Although forced displacements are in tension with both national and international legal frameworks (Lindstrom 2013), authorities use evictions and resettlements as an urban *dispositif*. Disregarding how forced displacement de facto means a disruption of livelihoods and social networks, authorities and developers have used relocations as a fundamental socio-spatial *dispositif* to govern the city's transformation and pursue objectives of land speculation and social cleansing, toward building the image of a 'charming, globalized and competitive city' (Talocci and Boano 2015, 16). While the spatial effects of the relocation *dispositif* are evident in their exclusionary dimension, their effects are visible also in non-discursive practices. The current evidence allows us to say that in the coming years it is likely that most of the relocation sites will configure as big peripheral holes: giant planning and urban design failures where populations strive to survive or decide to abandon

the sites and search for more secure livelihoods closer to the centre. Although rife with many contradictions, the different cartographies of relocation we found in Phnom Penh tell us that a new urbanity is being born in Phnom Penh's outskirts.

Squatter-occupied space *dispositif* in Rome

Studying and developing action research and participatory design actions in Porto Fluviale, a squatter-occupation community (Boano and Talocci 2014), which belongs to the galaxy of squatter occupations in Rome, we discovered that, in spite of the constant risk of eviction, each occupation develops a critical practice of reappropriation and reuse. In studying the spatial and socio-spatial dynamics in the squatter occupations, their adaptations and transformations, we noticed how they worked to counter the mechanism of the commercial and hyper neo-liberal strategy of the whole city:

'separated from the rest of the city but at the same time connected to a multitude of other spaces, mirroring the outside reality but more open, for instance when hosting events, or more closed, when an external threat is approaching [...] In such leftover pieces of urban fabric, Social Movements have been able to become the designers of their own everyday life and space, and to move the latter back to a neglected common use, achievement typical of a profaning operation [...] representing a form of negligence toward the mainstream production of space and knowledge in the city. Negligence that is manifested in appropriating and reshaping an urban fabric originally meant for other purposes and users—reinventing common uses, introducing new ways of doing politics within the squatter-occupied spaces.' (Boano and Talocci 2014, 711)

What seems important in the study of Rome was not only discovering such urban discursive formations and identifying their moments of operativity, but also the different experiences and practices that subvert the

sacred tenets of urbanism (Boano and Talocci 2014) able to deactivate the apparatuses of power which the urban governmental *dispositif* has put in place. The reflections on this squatter-occupation community depicts the dynamics of the contemporary neo-liberal side of the *dispositif* urban landscape, described and visible as profit-oriented, predatory speculations and accumulations by dispossessions and the continuous, discursive, culturally entrenched and overwhelming exercise of power that all actors of the urban transformation perform in order to guarantee themselves access and control over certain spaces of the city.

The upgrading *dispositif* in Medellín's peripheral urbanism

Despite the extreme popularization of the Medellín miracle (Davila 2013) in planning and architectural literature, we had the opportunity to engage in action research with the political nature of Medellín's urban interventions questioning the very nature of the social urbanism discursive practice (Ortiz Arciniegas 2015) implemented in recent years. Much has been written on the city from many disciplinary perspectives and around different events, including the World Urban Forum, as a supreme example of a social expression and an enlightened, progressive and must-follow spatial practice dealing with informality and slums. Regional comparative reflections emerged, also increasing the status of Medellín as paradigmatic example in the urban discourse of Latin America, as well as in the discussion around local government leadership in urban transformations. We were able to diagnose interactions between political agendas, architecturally invasive branded projects, architectural ego and urban marketing influencing a renewed urban discourse. The spectacular imagery of these interventions has transformed how 'a critical area of the city was perceived by insiders and outsiders... leading to relevant social, socio-spatial and

socio-economic revitalization, while promoting inclusive patterns of urbanization' (Blanco and Kobayashi 2009, 76); in effect, becoming another example of urban design that, masked with social discourses, capitulates to neo-liberal urbanization and state-led control, losing the opportunity to close the circle between abstraction and representation and the site specificity of architecture. Extensive action research around the territory of Comuna 8, in the central east part of the Aburra Valley, where about 40% of urbanization in Medellín has informal origin and intricacies with crime/armed conflict, was able to disentangle three fundamental elements of the informal urbanization politics in Medellín: first, the pressure on the growth management of Medellín's urban fringes and the obsessive control-like mechanisms deployed by various planning tools including the building code, environmental protections and green corridors. Second, the de-politicization of planning and architecture as discipline and praxis that allows for several discursive and material formations of disciplinary regimes of control, connectivity and access. Third, the aggressive and hyperbolic urban marketing, attached to the co-option of social movements by the rhetoric of urban equity, accessibility and governability. The social urbanism rhetoric organized around an urban politics of informality, which created a permanent space of exception, allowed for the creation of discursive and spatial *dispositifs* that fuelled political imagination locally and globally and that 'penetrates the bodies of subjects, and governs their forms of life' (Agamben 2009, 14).

Whatever singularity is 'singularity seen from an unfamiliar side—that of the singular' (de la Durantaye 2009, 162). The figure of whatever singularity thus points beyond the binary of the particular/universal, which has always taken a relevant part in the debate around urbanism. How exactly does whatever singularity escape the binary between the particular and the universal? To answer this question, 'the example' of the *dispositif*

and its transversal narrative across different cases is useful as an exemplar here because it 'is characterized by the fact that it holds for all cases of the same time and, at the same time, it is included among these. It is one singularity among others, which, however, stands for each of them and serves for all' (Agamben 1993, 9–10). As such, Jerusalem if read with its urban *dispositif* lenses becomes, as the other cases, sketched above, potentially, an example. Seeing it seen neither as a universal nor specific example, Jerusalem-as-paradigm, with its manifold uneven and unstable social, economic, colonial and political urban forces and spatial *dispositif* could become, not a perfect model, but a signifier of future urbanism; a *tertium datur*, a paradigm for urban studies, a theoretical object, a 'dislocated and dishomogeneous space—one that can be traced in every city of the [Western world]' (Agamben 2006).

Conclusion

Jerusalem, as a hyper-exceptional case is certainly trapped in tensions between particularism and exceptionalism. I attempted an alternative approach, suggesting Jerusalem-as-paradigm, illustrated briefly by reflecting on the notion of *dispositif* as the *locus* where different cases moved from singularity to singularity: they open or reopen our understanding of what we encounter in its whiteness, in its specific quiddity, rather than as a part of or example of anything. A singularity is positioned in relation to the class that it uniquely constitutes allowing 'statements and discursive practices to be gathered in a new intelligible ensemble in a new problematic context' (Agamben 2009, 18).

Agambenian paradigms offer us a powerful kind of third way, exposing a new kind of productive intelligibility, continually moving from singularity to singularity by way of analogy, exposing new potential linkages among concepts, terms, objects and actions but without formally establishing those linkages once and for all as a completed

and all-inclusive set; as the one we briefly sketched with the *dispositif*. At the same time, paradigms may provide urban theorists with a new approach, a new manner of engendering critique, inquiry and action in a more pluralist comparative urban theory without simply providing urban cases in contrast to dominant others, as exception to hegemonic and widespread trends, or simply as hyper-exceptionality; or as Peck (2015) puts it, 'enclaves from the explanatory tyranny of overdrawn structural forces' of city-centrism (170). An Agambenian paradigmatic understanding of Jerusalem directs us not to fixate on what is known and what fits into a set of parameters, but rather to explore whatever, outside those parameters, seems to stand in a potentially fecund conjunction and analogy with something inside them. As he says, what is at stake here is nothing less than 'the very possibility of thinking in terms of classes' (Agamben 1993, 70). For Agamben, the paradigm is ultimately about *learning to see again*, not starting with already perfectly known and categorized objects (or ideas or categories), but rather with a fresh experience of one individual object and the analogical relations it may have to others, and the novel groupings that may arise. If we follow Peck's call to constantly remake urban theory, learning to see again the urban and the contested nature of it via Agamben's whatever urbanism is a useful theoretical gesture to start thinking about urban theory for the 21st century. Jerusalem can serve to articulate relations between examples and class/types at three different levels: epistemological, a way of knowing the nature of contestations and conceptions of such knowledge, ethical as fostering of freedom from presupposed categories and reified principles (even the contested one) and ontological as a type of being that exposes the potential of knowing and communicating the intelligibility of contestation. Learning from Jerusalem then will hopefully resist constructing Jerusalem as the universal's illustrative 'contested city par excellence' or 'divided city par excellence', but

instead remain open to a multiplicity of engagements with it. Hopefully theoretically considering Jerusalem-as-paradigm can assist in resolving the tensions encapsulated in the history of urbanism and its colonial contested conditions. As such, being neither particular nor universal, but a paradigm, Jerusalem is not a renunciation of identity, and its politics does not involve resignation, but, rather, a new form of political action. Pure singularities 'have deposed all identity in order to appropriate belonging itself' (Agamben 1993, 14) and open the possibility for a whatever urbanism as being as 'it does not matter which' (1). The example Jerusalem is an 'empty space' where whatever singularities can communicate with each other without surrendering to the totalizing force of identity. This empty space, however, is not properly a physical or conceptual location or place, but is instead the experience of comparison and of a newly theoretical elaboration that is taking place. Jerusalem, as such, presents a potential character. It is in fact constituted by an infinite series of modal oscillations. *Quodlibet*, qualunque, whatever urbanism is not to be understood as indifference, generality or generic, but, rather, as being an urbanism such that it always matters.

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Notes

- 1 Lira was originally the line that separates and divides the city from something else a non-city. De-lirare—which in Italian gives the origin to the delirium—create the urban experience of the civitas, the result of a process.
- 2 The Panopticon origin lay in Jeremy Bentham's design first proposed in 1787, for a circular prison with cells arranged around a central well that would allow inmates to be observed at all times. The British

parliament accepted Bentham's design to be built at Millbank, in London in 1794, but when it was finally completed in 1816 the plan was no longer his.

- 3 This statement attracted a massive amount of commentary from different perspective due to the bold assertive dimension of the present exceptionality and the widespread diffusion of a form-like spatiality of the global governmentality, but also attracted more specific reflection on his 'method'.

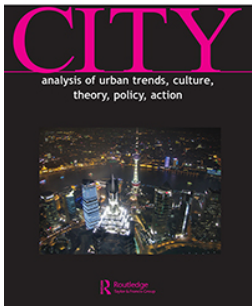
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Beyond incommensurability

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Beyond incommensurability

Jerusalem and Stockholm from an ordinary cities perspective

Jonathan Rokem

This paper's core argument is that we should start creating theories that encompass different cities and include them in a more flexible and relational comparative framework. This must include a new urban terminology which does not continue the all-too-fashionable labelling of cities on a continuum between first world and third world, global North-West and South-East or as I emphasize below, including what have been labelled extremely contested cities in a more flexible and relational ordinary cities framework. To introduce such a comparative approach, I will examine Jerusalem and Stockholm via three contrastive and relational patterns: institutional segregation; urban violence; and non-governmental organization involvement in planning. In so doing, I point towards the necessity to open up research on extreme urban conflicts, suggesting that when assessing specific contextual patterns, those labelled as extremely contested cities (such as Jerusalem) share more similarities with other more ordinary cities (represented by Stockholm) than was previously perceived, often stemming from ethnic, racial and class conflicts revolving around issues of politics, culture and identity, among others.

Key words: comparative urbanism, ordinary cities, contested cities, Jerusalem, Stockholm

Introduction

Cities have been sites of spatial and social segregation for centuries (Nightingale 2012). *Social inequality*, and its consequences in various forms, is one of the central causes of contemporary urban conflicts (Sevilla-Buitrago 2013, 467). In the past two decades, however, a fast evolving strand within urban studies has focused on urban conflicts within ethno-nationally contested cities, especially in relation to the role of planning (see, e.g. Anderson 2010; Bollens 2012; Calame and Charlesworth 2009; Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011). Jerusalem is characterized as one of the *extremely contested cities* in this regard (see Bollens 1998,

2000; Dumper 1997, 2014; Klein 2001; Shlay and Rosen 2015).

To theoretically frame my investigation into *radical urban difference*, I will place Jerusalem within the current critical debate in urban studies regarding the Eurocentricity of the field's canonical theories (Parnell and Oldfield 2014; Peck 2015; Roy 2009) and the relevance of this to the reassessment of the *extremely contested city* label. Of relevance to this research is Jennifer Robinson's (2006) *ordinary cities* concept and its emphasis on comparing different cities with diverse histories and contexts, especially her call for a growing need to re-think pre-defined *labels* and *models* attributed to cities and neighbourhoods (Robinson 2011). With these

observations in mind, my intention is to compare different *ethnically contested cities* and include them within a more flexible and relational understanding of the contemporary urban present (see Rokem 2016).

I will begin with a review of the *ordinary cities* framework and its comparative value and analytic significance for the research of two contrasting urban cases: Jerusalem and Stockholm. Next an overview of the two case studies and fieldwork is introduced followed by an investigation of social and spatial conditions via three selected cross-cutting patterns: *institutional segregation*, *urban violence* and *non-governmental organization (NGO) involvement in planning*. I conclude with some insights into methodologies and policies to manage socio-spatial conflicts; and the ways in which they are devised, sustained and transferred across incommensurable cities.

Comparing incommensurable cities

Until recently, few voices within the field of urban studies called for the expansion of comparative approaches from their narrow geographical foundations and much of what passed for universal theory was in fact parochial (Robinson 2011, 3–4). Robinson (2006) proposes a new *cosmopolitan* theoretical framework, moving away from the narrow Euro-American dominance to a wider look at cities and their differences and similarities. With an interest in empirically testing these theories, the places chosen for this research contain far more differences than similarities. The case study selection aims to move away from both the all too fashionable comparison of urban segregation in Euro-American cities *and* urban conflicts in ethno-national contested urban spaces. In the former, cities are compared that may or may not display similar spatial trends towards peripheral segregation of minorities, for example, see Wacquant's (2008) discussion of urban marginality in Paris and Chicago. In the latter there is an ongoing

research agenda to compare an exclusive group of cities with extreme ethno-national conflicts (Pullan and Baillie 2013). This paper chooses to focus on urban conflicts in Jerusalem and Stockholm questioning their incommensurability with the aim of shedding light on what we can learn from comparing urban contestations across radically contrastive political and historical settings.

Ward (2008, 407) notes that 'new empirical findings have led to the creation of new ideal types', such as the *extremely contested city* label in the current study. Much of the literature on urban comparison focuses on the abstract city level with marginal attention given to particular local urban context (Gough 2012, 866). Peck (2015, 162–163) notes that '[t]he ongoing work of the remaking of urban theory must occur across cases [...], in addition to documenting difference, in a "contrastive" manner, between cities' (see also Ward 2010). This all points to a growing interest in building knowledge from a particular context attached to specific cities and to the use of *difference* as a focal point within comparative urban research (McFarlane and Robinson 2012). In this sense, moving away from *ideal types* or *urban models* in this paper is the backbone of the comparison. My aim is to understand urban place-based context by granting a voice to urban dwellers, understanding their way of life, and its political significance (Gough 2012, 874). My intention is to identify specific causes of spatial division and to analyse how they operate and interact in each specific urban case (Allegra, Casaglia, and Rokem 2012) and taking up the challenge of comparing across different cases (Abu Lughod 2007).

To capture the local contextual patterns, we need to expose the more elusive planning discourses, typically unattainable from official documents and statements. This is achieved via an analysis of what local cultural and political beliefs are attributed and attached to the segregation formation process from the perspective of those Jensen (1997, 49) describes as *privileged speakers* (in this case,

Israeli and Swedish planners and policy-makers), and those who I call *unprivileged speakers* (local communities especially immigrants and minorities in the current study).

It is important to point out several crucial similarities and differences between the two case studies. First there is the politics of language and its significance in capturing the full meaning of the local planning discourses (Potter 2000). There exist quite different self-perceptions between Palestinians in Jerusalem and migrants/asylum seekers in Stockholm. The Palestinians regard themselves as the native inhabitants of a city while in Stockholm the feeling of belonging varies and depends on the time that has passed since arrival to Sweden. Another significant difference is that the rights of the local minority population vary considerably between the two cities, and this is crucial to understanding the local population's opportunities and daily practices. In Stockholm, most immigrants have full citizenship and residency rights, while Palestinians in Jerusalem are not recognized as citizens and hold limited residency rights, constantly eroded in recent years (Khamaisi 2010).

Following a brief introduction to the Jerusalem and Stockholm context, I will demonstrate the relevance of comparing differing urban patterns across contrasting political conditions, planning systems and discourses in two segregated neighbourhoods. The case materials presented below have been gathered through a combination of in-depth interviews, studies of primary documentary sources and various secondary sources with the aim of producing comparable data. Interviews in Jerusalem and Stockholm were conducted between 2011 and 2013 with planning professionals working in the everyday planning and development of the city, as well as local community leaders and civil society activists.

Jerusalem's urban context

West Jerusalem has been the capital of Israel since 1948 when the Palestinian neighbourhoods of West Jerusalem fell/were conquered

(depending on political narrative) in the war and the entire city has served as such since its reunification/annexation in 1967. At the end of 2013 the population of the Jerusalem municipality numbered 829,900. The Jewish and other (non-Palestinian) population totalled 522,300 (63%) and the Palestinian (Muslim and Christian) population 307,600 (37%) (ICBS 2014). Several factors differentiate Jerusalem from other cities. First, it is an important religious centre for three of the world's monotheistic religions; second, it is claimed as the national capital by two nations, placing it in the vortex of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict; and, third, it is not acknowledged as the official capital of Israel by the United Nations and most of the world's nation-states. One of the basic aims of Israel's policies since 1967 has been to spatially enhance the dominance of the Israeli Municipality's control over East Jerusalem (Rokem 2013). Furthermore, the Israeli Ministry of Interior and the Jerusalem Municipality have placed a strict development ban on almost any new construction in Palestinian neighbourhoods, which has had a profound impact on their local development (Braier 2013). Although Palestinians living in Jerusalem are permitted to vote in the municipal elections, most of them refuse as they believe that voting would afford legitimacy to what they feel to be Israel's illegal annexation of the city, and are consequently not electorally represented in the Israeli-governed Jerusalem Municipality.

The *separation wall* (also known as the 'security barrier' depending on political narrative) is a mega project constructed by the Israeli state. Since 2002 the wall has annexed 160 km² of the West Bank in addition to the 70 km² annexed after the seizure of East Jerusalem in the 1967 war. The wall enforces Israel's de facto political borders in Jerusalem and transforms it into geographically the largest city in Israel. The wall, and the attempt to create an Israeli geographic continuity, has resulted in a situation where the Palestinian Jerusalem neighbourhoods are damaged and completely isolated from their

West Bank hinterland (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2002). The unequal funding of urban planning and construction projects between the Eastern and the Western parts of Jerusalem has resulted in a segregated city split into two distinct growth poles, with crossover parts and old border areas remaining neglected between the two sides (for further reading about planning policy in contemporary Jerusalem, see Dumper 2014; Klein 2001; Rokem and Allegra forthcoming).

Al-Isawiyyah a local Palestinian Jerusalem neighbourhood

The Palestinian urbanized village of Al-Isawiyyah has an estimated population of 15,500, of whom 95% are Palestinian residents (Bimkom 2013). It is located on the eastern slope of Mount Scopus near the old 1967 border. As with many of the Palestinian areas in East Jerusalem, Al-Isawiyyah is characterized by high levels of poverty (Cohen Blankshtain, Ron, and Gadot Perez 2013) and lacks basic municipal services such as schools, community facilities and infrastructure such as open spaces, parks, new housing and paved roads. This has resulted in a dense and chaotic built environment. Like most of Palestinian East Jerusalem, Al-Isawiyyah has not had an official master plan developed by the Municipality and is lacking any sense of structured spatial planning. As a result, large numbers of *illegally built* (according to Israeli planning policy) informal houses are under constant threat of demolition by the Israeli authorities (see Braverman 2006).

To fill this growing gap in planning, and to resolve the problems caused by deteriorating housing conditions, the Israeli NGO *Bimkom—Planners for Planning Rights*¹ launched a joint collaborative planning process in 2003 which actively engaged with the local community to develop a master plan catering for future local needs and incorporating the illegal/informal housing to avoid demolition. The Jerusalem Municipality refused to approve the Al-Isawiyyah master plan explaining that it

did not cater for the local needs (Bimkom 2013). In addition, the last available vacant land which formed a central component of the future master plan as space for new housing was converted to a national park by the Israeli National Parks Authority with the support of the Municipality. This latest development diminishes the future prospects of implementing the Al-Isawiyyah Bimkom master plan. The deteriorating conditions were described by a local community leader:

‘How can we expect the Municipality to promote a plan when the basic needs of the residents are not taken care of [...] We have no sidewalks for the children to walk home safely, there are no playgrounds [...] garbage is only removed sporadically, creating a long term health hazard [...]’ (Palestinian local community activist, interview, May 2013)

The harsh living conditions are also illustrated from the authority’s side by the words of the Jerusalem municipal planner in charge of the neighbourhood:

‘Al-Isawiyyah is an extreme example of urban segregation and one of the worst cases in Arab East Jerusalem. [...] This is one of the neighbourhoods with the biggest planning issues and lack of cooperation between the residents and the Municipality. [...] The illegal construction and housing density is extreme [...] in order to develop something there is first a need to demolish several buildings.’ (Jerusalem Municipality Urban Planner, interview, June 2013)

Al-Isawiyyah as aforementioned lacks an approved outline plan for the area resulting in the observations by the municipality planner about the illegality of all new construction. This points towards the ambiguity inherent in the planning policy and the lack of adequate planning for the future development of the area. The illegal planning conditions contrast starkly with the local community activist’s perspective about the negligence by the Municipality. Both, however, illustrate a situation of intense segregation under extreme political and social stress where the

neighbourhood has become a contested space with a lack of adequate basic services for its local residents.

Stockholm's urban context

Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, had a population of 897,700 inhabitants at the end of 2013 and a total foreign-born population of 30.7%² (*Stockholm Statistical Yearbook* 2015). One central aspect of Stockholm's urban development has been the Swedish social welfare system, and its national goal of making housing and social services accessible (Cars and Harsman 2001, 87). Despite this, the issue of residential segregation has been on the Swedish political agenda since the early 1970s. Its appearance can be linked to the emergence and critique of the Million Homes Program (Andersson, Bråmås, and Holmqvist 2010, 237). The programme was part of the Swedish government's decision to build a million new dwellings in the period 1965–74 (Hall and Vidén 2005, 301). The construction of large numbers of new publicly owned houses mainly in *outer suburbs* meant it was convenient for the authorities to place waves of new immigrants there.

Since the early 1980s, Stockholm has experienced rising urban segregation and division emerging from the vast number of labour migrants and asylum seekers who have arrived mainly from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa (Musterd 2005, 333). The ethnic segregation is characterized by a concentration of several ethnic groups with a foreign background in a rather small number of planning districts on the city fringes (Harsman 2006, 1363; Lilja and Pemer 2010). This trend persists, and has led to a stark division process detaching the affluent inner city from the deprived outer suburbs where the migrants are located.

Fittja a Stockholm outer immigrant suburb

Fittja, an outer suburb located on the southern fringes of metropolitan Stockholm in Botkyrka

Municipality, had a population of 7781 in 2012 of whom 90.1% were immigrants (Botkyrka Statistics 2013). It is one of the more notorious Million Homes Program areas and has struggled since the 1980s with a high level of unemployment and delinquency compared with other parts of Stockholm and Sweden. Fittja is used numerous times in the media as a negative example, usually linking immigrants with urban criminality, poverty and violence (Valsquaze 2011, 175). The area has been the subject of various government policies and planning initiatives tackling social and spatial segregation. It has, nonetheless, become a place of mounting segregation dividing it from the wider Swedish society and culture. The newest local urban development programme *Framtid Fittja* (Future Fittja 2012) had its final consultation stages in August 2012:

'I hope the new plan will produce positive results. [...] I believe it has a potential to develop the area in a better way. But this is mainly dependent on the Municipality's political interest and to some extent also on national government assistance to invest in *Framtid Fittja*'s actual implementation [...]' (Botkyrka Municipality Planner, interview, August 2013)

The local planner perceived the newest *Framtid Fittja* master plan as dependent on funding and support from national and municipal politicians. The local issues were presented in an interview with a local activist and African immigrant, expressing in his words the lack of belief in the government and in the municipality master plan:

'[...] the feeling is that the government has given up on us [immigrants] here in the suburbs [...] they only care when there are problems and violence [...] I don't see any real changes coming from the new *Framtid Fittja* masterplan.' (Fittja local activist, interview, August 2012)

In both Stockholm and Jerusalem, minority activists living in the excluded areas and planners overseeing their long-term management collectively illustrate the ongoing failure in

dealing with the long-term alienation and segregation. The concentration of Palestinians in certain parts of East Jerusalem and immigrants or *ethnic others* (as they are described in official Swedish policy) in specific spatial zones on the outer rims of Stockholm has created neighbourhoods that are officially part of the metropolis but in practice spatially and socially disconnected from the majority population.

Contrastive and relational patterns across Jerusalem and Stockholm

Comparing cities with incommensurable contexts may hold some insightful lessons for urban theory and practice. Despite differing histories, cultures, planning policies and legal regulations, both Jerusalem and Stockholm have pushed their minority populations to the social and spatial periphery, leading to alienation and distrust of the central and local government. I will now discuss what we can learn from comparing the two cases based on three contrastive and relational patterns: *institutional segregation*, *urban violence* and *NGO involvement in planning*. The patterns emerged as significant themes from my field research conducted in Jerusalem and Stockholm between 2011 and 2013. The aim was to uncover local contestations and voices on the ground. Investigating these three patterns across Jerusalem and Stockholm challenges recent debates about the lack of convergence between *extreme ethno-nationally contested cities* and more *ordinary ethnically contested cities* (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011; Pullan and Baillie 2013) containing *different causal factors* (Pickvance 1986, 2005) as part of the general call to investigate difference in future comparative urban research (McFarlane and Robinson 2012).

Institutional segregation

Diverging from the well-known explanations of urban inequality shaped by neo-liberal

globalization (Sassen [1991] 2001) or by capitalist creative destruction (Harvey 2001), the state rather than the global economy has a dominant role in generating urban exclusion in Jerusalem and Stockholm. In both cases, to contend this fully would mean unveiling a set of structural forces absent from most current planning and urban critical theory by acknowledging the colonial cultural roots of modern planning's epistemology and ontology (Porter 2006, 393).

In Sweden, the national Migration Agency³ places refugees and asylum seekers mainly from African and Middle Eastern countries in outer edge suburbs. They are placed where municipalities are willing to accept them: in vacant, mostly poorly maintained, remote *Million Homes Program* housing. This is in contrast to the treatment of Palestinian areas in East Jerusalem since the 1967 war. The neighbourhoods closer to the Old City and urban core were annexed to Israel as part of the overall aim to *re-unify* Jerusalem under Israeli rule (see Rokem 2013; Rokem and Allegra forthcoming). This process has overlooked the local Palestinian population's basic planning and housing development needs.

In this sense, planning and housing policy keeps both Jerusalem and Stockholm's ethnic minority populations outside the official dominant cultural values and *belief mores* (Gaffikin and Perry 2012, 712). One major difference in the local institutional structure is the strong involvement of Greater Stockholm's Botkyrka Municipality and several central government initiatives funding urban regeneration plans for Fittja over the last few decades. The local residents, however, expressed their distrust in reaching any tangible change. This was demonstrated in an interview with an externally contracted professional leading the Fittja master plan community consultation process (Interview, August 2012). She argued that the majority of local residents' responses were that 'they don't want to say what they want again, but to see concrete results'. The effectiveness of the institutional commitment to involving

local residents in planning is illustrated by these comments from two senior municipal planners responsible for promoting the Fittja master plan:

‘I must say I know less about what is happening with the Fittja master-plan [...] I am responsible for approving it and presenting it to the Municipality officials and politicians but have had less local involvement [...]’ (Botkyrka Strategic Planner, interview, August 2012)

‘I have done the follow up consultation and amendments with the Municipality project group about Fittja’s spatial master-plan “Future Fittja” [...] I can say I know the place from the planning process but not so much the residents [...]’ (Botkyrka Urban Planner, interview, August 2012)

The two quotes further reveal the limited first-hand interaction between the planners and the local immigrant *unprivileged speakers*. This contrasts with the Al-Isawiyyah local community mobilization to promote a local master plan as the only hope for a positive change supported by the NGO Bimkom. The professional team deeply engaged in the local planning process, partially replacing the Municipality.

Urban violence

The images of violence in Jerusalem over the last decades, and in Stockholm’s 2013 suburban riots have prompted global media headlines and external interest. The framing of *urban violence* is significant to capturing the differences and similarities in diverse urban settings. This is partly due to ‘the growth of urban diversity, [and] the role of identity and belief structures becoming increasingly central to urban conflict’ (Rosen and Shlay 2014, 13). To capture the multifaceted condition, Bourgois (2001, 7–8) uses four classifications of violence: *direct-political*; *structural*; *symbolic*; and *everyday*. These will be employed to contrastively describe social and spatial conditions in which urban

violence manifests itself in Jerusalem and Stockholm.

In both cases *direct-political* violence includes physical violence administered by official authorities and those opposing it. In Jerusalem it has been evident during the peaks of the First (1988) and Second (2000) Intifadas (Palestinian civilian uprisings), and in the more recent summer 2014 unrests and during sporadic terror attacks. While Stockholm is generally more peaceful, in the words of a Butkyrka municipality community officer the spring 2013 riots signified the growing deep-rooted exclusionary conditions:

‘There is a problem generated by the media of a “black and white” image [...] this has created more fear of the excluded areas where the riots happened. [...] There is an urgent need to do something to solve the problem of the second-generation immigrant children’s hatred towards the [Swedish] authorities.’ (Butkyrka local community worker, interview, August 2013)

The Jerusalem reality, and the above observation about the 2013 Stockholm riots, shows that direct violence is a result of state-led *structural violence* comprised of ‘chronic, historically-entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality’ (Bourgois 2001, 8). Institutional state violence on various levels has sustained spatial and social inequality in Jerusalem and Stockholm over the last few decades.

In Israel *symbolic violence* towards the Palestinian minority is apparent on several fronts, for example, in discarding the Palestinian sovereign identity. Identifying comparable conditions in Sweden indicates the depth and severity of the relatively silent *symbolic* violence by the Swedish majority society towards minority immigrant populations. Such as official state policies grouping all asylum seekers and refugees as immigrants with no appreciation of their diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

This is further reproduced in *everyday violence* with expressions of fear on a micro-interactional level: interpersonal,

domestic and delinquent (Bourgois 2001). This can be seen in both the explicit oppressive views towards minorities converted into restrictive and exclusionary planning policy in Jerusalem, as well as in the municipal housing policy in Stockholm which aspires to assist immigrants but actually sustains increased urban segregation.

NGO involvement in planning

In Jerusalem and Stockholm, the 'norms of the governing culture are usually embedded in institutional frameworks of planning and policy expressing the values of the ethnically prevailing majority' (Sandercock 2000, 15). In both cases, minority communities attempt to bypass these *norms* by developing resistance and substitutes to the institutions and representatives of the ruling majority. For example, in the Fittja case, there was limited participation by the local community in the planning process.

In the Jerusalem case the NGO Bimkom took the mediating role in a process that was replete with complications due to a lack of cooperation by the *privileged speakers* in the Jerusalem Municipality. This was, in part, demonstrated above in the interview with the Municipality senior planning official who expressed his views of the severe conditions and challenges of planning in Palestinian East Jerusalem. In Sweden, the founder of Megafonen⁴ (a local grass-roots-led organization) expressed in one of the largest national newspapers his discontent with the Swedish authorities:

'[...] The [Swedish] government chooses to solve social problems with increased policing and militarization of the suburb. As long as this goes on, people will rise up against it. It does not create change, but many believe that the only way to meet the power is with violence.' (DN 2013)

In both cases, the planners' top-down treatment of the local conditions dismissed the real value of community or NGO

participation in the planning process, leading to resistance and the mobilization of minorities to seek alternative courses of action. In Jerusalem, when homes and communities' well-being are threatened, the local *unprivileged speakers* turn to Israeli NGOs to represent the local community struggle for equitable planning. In contrast, in the Stockholm case where such movements are only beginning to emerge, they turn to more grass-roots-led immigrant-based movements such as *Megafonen* to legitimize their actions and advance their agenda.

In both cases, although stemming from different causal factors (Pickvance 1986, 2005), this is a result of a lack in the ethnic minorities' national affiliation with the majority culture and scarcity of cooperation with authorities that has led them to seek alternative options. The interviews with local activists in Fittja and Al-Isawiyyah demonstrate that perceptions and actions are socio-spatial in nature and linked to the local community's feeling of belonging or estrangement to the neighbourhood, city and nation.

Conclusion

As far as the relation between planning and politics is concerned, Jerusalem represents a rather exceptional case study, in part because of its unique partisan urban planning policies developed by Israel and the extensive annexation of East Jerusalem. Still, as I maintain in this paper, the observation of planning in Jerusalem can be useful in advancing our understanding of the relation between planning, conflicts and power in a growing number of cities worldwide. The paper by no means suggests that urban segregation is identical in the two cities, but rather that we need more flexibility and porosity among different urban theoretical *categories* and *labels*. As the paper notes, Palestinians in Jerusalem have uncertain and partial rights and live in an annexed and deprived Jerusalem territory. In Stockholm, planning and housing policies are oriented towards creating a more just

society, but in reality they create spatial and social segregation. The paper has attempted to question the reasons for the parity of these urban phenomena, particularly since planning policies and political conditions in Stockholm are more favourable than in Jerusalem.

Rather than showing how the two cities are similar, the paper has analysed some of the causal agents producing urban segregation pointing to some contrastive patterns, with distinct structural differences characterizing how Jerusalem is fundamentally different from Stockholm. In this sense my aim in this paper has been to move away from a 'need to wait' for social or spatial phenomena to become the same before we can learn from experiences in different kinds of places (Robinson 2006, 62). This research suggests that rather than limiting the *extremely contested city* category to a selected number of places, there is an increasing need to broaden the category itself. Within this discussion, there is a still significant lacuna concerning the production of a general urban theory based on a complex array of similarities and differences among cities assembled on individual incommensurable cases.

There is a growing need to move from focusing and comparing the Euro-American *usual suspects* in urban studies and to open up the debate to a much wider perspective. The case of Al-Isawiyyah showed the limits of promoting a master plan challenging the political planning objectives of the urban and national ideology under extremely contested urban conditions. This was set in contrast to the Swedish authorities' treatment of immigrant populated *Million Homes Program* neighbourhoods. It could be concluded that in both the Jerusalem and Stockholm cases, the formation and increase of deep segregation are the product of state-led urban planning policy.

In this sense they are not directly associated to the dominant urbanization under capitalism debate (see Brenner and Schmid 2015) but more closely interlinked to continuing *institutional segregation* and NGO involvement in planning, which can be silent (in Stockholm) or much more apparent and one sided (in Jerusalem). The local cases

shed a partial yet critical light on a much bigger story of increasing and deepening urban segregation stemming from different causal factors (Pickvance 1986, 2005).

The continued incongruity within planning discourses reveals that planning in Jerusalem aims to construct a legitimate unit based on ethno-national ideology, from which only part of the city's population benefit, while in Stockholm planning reserves certain parts of the city for the ethnic Swedish population through *silent* exclusionary housing and planning strategies.

The current urban condition dictates the use of novel comparative frameworks, which include what have been labelled *extremely contested cities* in a more flexible and relational *ordinary cities* framework. Such a framework may point towards new CUT's (critical urban theories) about how city dwellers, vying for control in contested societies, use, appropriate and claim their space, affiliation and participation in urban life (see Yiftachel 2016). I suggest that this proposal should be read as one potential example for diversifying and re-inventing our theoretical thinking about comparing incommensurable cities.

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Notes

1 bimkom.org/eng/

2 The term foreign-born population refers to both individuals born abroad and individuals whose parents were born outside Sweden.

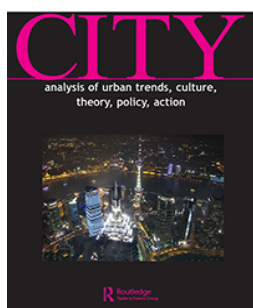
- 3 www.migrationsverket.se/English
 4 www.megafonen.com.

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Commentary

The Aleph—Jerusalem as critical learning

Oren Yiftachel

This reflective paper offers the metaphor of ‘Aleph’—the ‘place of all places’—as well as the material city of Jerusalem, as points of departure for rethinking critical urban theories. In the paper, Jerusalem is ‘prized open’ as a site of learning—exposing the diversity of structural forces shaping this—and any other—city. The ‘Aleph approach’ draws attention to the relational and often changing nature in which structural forces interact as they produce urban space and society. This is highlighted by a ‘guided tour’ of Jerusalem that reveals an array of colonial, capitalist, religious, gendered and political forces of domination and their fluctuations through time and place. As such, the paper offers a ‘South-Eastern’ perspective, framed by ‘dynamic structuralism’ as foundation for new and engaged CUTs—critical urban theories. Such theories, it is suggested, should be informed by the multiple and uneven nature of oppression and resistance, and by new concepts and categories that emerge from the analysis, without treating the city as simply ‘chaotic’ or ‘self-organized’. Urban theory should move beyond the numbing theoretical dominance of ‘globalizing’ or ‘neoliberal’ capitalism, and deal seriously with simultaneous forces, movements, agents and politics that co-produce the nature of contemporary urbanism.

Key words: Jerusalem, urban colonialism, dynamic structuralism, Palestine, Israel, grey space

‘It’s in the cellar, under the dining room [. . .] it’s mine—mine. I discovered it when I was a child [. . .] I stumbled and fell, when I opened my eyes, I saw the Aleph [. . .] down in the cellar [. . .] the point in space that contains all other points [. . .] Yes, the only place on earth where all places are seen from every angle, each standing clear, without any confusion [. . .]’

Jorge Borges’ ‘Aleph’ is a masterpiece of a short story, delving into the meanings and power of home, love, money, place and the threat of imminent destruction, through which a magical spot is imagined, found and eventually lost. This spot is ‘the Aleph’, named after the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, with close resemblance to the Arabic ‘Aliph’ or the Greek ‘Alpha’. For

Borges the Aleph is the only location from which the ability to see, feel and hear the city and beyond reaches its ultimate climax. The Aleph is the vista point from which every little detail about the world can be seen—‘the place of all places’.

Following Borges, and as a reflective epilogue to the diverse set of papers in this special feature, this paper seeks to ‘translate’ the mystical Aleph to more earthy realms of urban studies. Aleph provides a prism through which Jerusalem can be studied as the ‘place of all places’, and in turn suggests itself as a crucible for the broader study of contemporary urbanism. More specifically, Aleph is offered here as an epistemological inspiration for a revised critical approach of the urban, for which Jerusalem serves as an

omnipotent emblem—the example of examples.

Through highlighting some of the intense forces working in and on Jerusalem, I wish to lay conceptual grounds for what I provisionally term—an *'Aleph approach'*. That is, utilizing a focused and grounded gaze on Jerusalem as illuminating a (new) way of learning—an epistemology—and a foundation from which new CUTs (critical urban theories) can emerge. The point is not to present Jerusalem as a universal model, in the manner in which Chicago and later Los Angeles were presented in American-centered urban studies. The purpose is rather to take the intense and multifaceted nature of urban Jerusalem as a window through which to fathom the *relational* nature of urban forces; the possibility for the rise of new forces, categories and concepts; and the potential transformation in the way these forces 'produce' urban regions over time.

Hence, a central point advanced here is that learning Jerusalem openly and critically offers an opportunity to reflexively re-learn critical learning itself, thereby enriching the field of urban studies. Due to its conceptual nature, the paper will use scholarly referencing only when it refers to the battle of ideas in urban studies, and not a detailed review of Jerusalem studies which are aptly covered by the likes of Allegra, Casaglia, and Rokem (2012), Dumper (2014), Khalidi (2010) and Yacobi and Pullan (2014).

The five papers in this special feature are at once rich and important, while illustrating the need for a new approach. They present a diverse set of issues, forces and struggles existing at today's Jerusalem. The important point, however, is that each paper analyzes a central urban phenomenon, with clear structural causes and implications. Yet, there is no way to bring these papers into a single organizing theoretical framework, nor understand them as part of the same urban logic. Hila Zaban shows in the first paper the ways in which gentrification has replaced planned immigrant settlement in a previously peripheral neighborhood; Oren Shlomo

moves in the second to an entirely different discussion—the imposition of sovereignty—hotly contested in the city's colonized Palestinian parts. The third paper by Amina Nolte takes a different angle by analyzing the impact of new transport infrastructure on the politics and development of divided urban space. In the fourth paper, Camillo Boano deals with the philosophy of urban design, by exploring the tension between Agambenian sanctity and profanation in the management of what some regard as the global holiest city. Finally, Jonathan Rokem shows how processes evident in Jerusalem also surface in more 'normal' cities such as Stockholm, making a case for comparative urban methodology.

Learning the nature of cities

I place my conceptual comment in relation to a series of recent debates regarding the desired direction of urban studies as a field of inquiry. These have advanced a series of sweeping claims attempting to either promote one Marxian paradigm over all others in understanding the 'real nature of cities' (Harvey 2008; Scott and Storper 2014); or alternatively announce no less than 'the end of urban studies', in the name of an all-inclusive putative process of 'planetary urbanism' (Brenner and Schmid 2015). These claims—insightful and challenging as they are—appear to echo the remnants of the 'old CUT'—the uni-dimensional attempt of traditional critical theories to explain society by one coherent framework—a theory of everything—which would dominate all other theoretical approaches. In recent critical theories, global capitalism and putatively all-encompassing 'neoliberalism' have assumed such a status.

This uni-dimensional approach is not limited to neo-Marxian analysts. Liberal, statist, feminist, Foucauldian and procedural theories, to name but a few, have often claimed an all-inclusive narrative, within

which all other phenomena, not fitting their well-crafted view of city, policy and society, are relegated to ‘noise’ in the system (for reviews, see Robinson 2006; Brenner, Madden, and Wachsmuth 2011; Roy 2011; Marcuse and Imbrosio 2014; Parnell and Oldfield 2014). The main issue with these approaches has not been the well-appreciated depth or wisdom of their insights, nor the high levels of the scholarship, but rather the *Universalist* claims which have often silenced other logics and writings on urban development, politics and transformations.

These grand claims appear to gloss over a central theoretical point: there cannot, and should not, be one ‘correct’ perspective with which to analyze the nature of urban regions. As shown below in the case of Jerusalem, powerful colonial, capitalist, religious, national, gender and military forces—and many sites of resistance—have co-shaped the city. These and other forces have fluctuated in the levels of dominance over time, while negotiating tensions, contradictions and compatibilities in producing urban society. Yet, the multiplicity of forces does not mean the city is simply ‘postmodern’, chaotic or uncontrollable, as it is clearly shaped by conspicuous powers and institutions. The ‘Aleph epistemology’ offers a way out of the claims and counter claims, by suggesting the concept of ‘*dynamic structuralism*’, in which several central forces are identified as most powerful for a particular place and time, although these are neither stable nor perpetual.

There appears to be a geography of power to the politics of knowledge—the universalizing critical claims have most often emerged from North-Western scholars, working at North American or European institutions, and representing Western thinking. The Aleph approach, with its mystical origins in ancient Hebrew, and emergence from Latin South America, as well as its multiple and contradictory imageries, offers a ‘South-Eastern’ perspective (see Yiftachel 2009). It thereby links with other ‘Southern’ theorists in their critique of

North-Western origins of knowledge (see Connell 2013; Watson 2014).

Such approaches obviate the need to theorise—namely, offer urban theories from the global ‘South-East’, reflecting a diverse range of grounded conceptualizations emerging from the experiences of non-European-American regions. These perspectives, like the Aleph approach, emphasize the multiplicity of powers working on the city, and the manifold, uneven and unstable social, violent, economic and identity forces—together with numerous individuals and agents co-shaping space. As such, the Aleph approach echoes interventions in the debate on ‘the nature of cities’ made by critical scholars such as Roy (2014), who argues for the ongoing relevance of perspectives emphasizing postcolonial, gendered and governmentality approaches, while still accounting for the heavy impact of globalizing capitalism; or Parnell and Oldfield’s (2014) call for a ‘Southern perspective’ in studying cities, their development and urban planning. The idea is not to create a false neat distinction between global North-West and South-East, which are increasingly intertwined and resist simplistic dichotomies. It is rather to illustrate the existence of multiple structural urban logics, irreducible to any single force. These emerge from the diverse ‘South-Eastern’ settings that are wholly different to the typical liberal-democratic urban North-West, and provide fertile ground for new ‘meso level’ (that is, neither universal, nor local) concepts and theories (see Connell 2013; Parnell and Oldfield 2014; Watson 2014).

For Borges, the discovery of the Aleph is enmeshed in the struggle vis-à-vis several major forces prevalent in his Argentinian city—the landlord’s greed and his zeal to sell and destroy the house to make room for a newer, richer development; the personal attachment the storyteller has to the home; the hidden identity of the main house dweller; and the everlasting, though fading, lure of a past lover who was a regular visitor to the house. These forces cast a constant shadow on the story, and drive the

plot through the many details. They also lead to the discovery of the magical Aleph, through which one can unpack these forces and reassemble their existence through a wide range of places, concepts, pasts and presents.

Learning Jerusalem

Jerusalem offers a rare opportunity to ‘prize open’ a complex metropolitan area and show how urban regions, and engaged urban theorization, can progress beyond the debilitating fortification of theoretical and epistemological positions.

This is because Jerusalem can be conceptualized as a distinct Aleph, ‘a place of all places’. Because, as shown below, every place is constructed through time, Jerusalem also harbors a time of many times. Jerusalem is also a symbol, a signifier, an inspiration and a warning sign for the nature of future urbanism. Let us quickly walk into the city, and explore it using the vista point of the ‘Aleph epistemology’.

Fittingly, a short ‘walk’ through Jerusalem reveals a maze of forces shaping ‘the nature of the city’ which by and large cannot be reduced into one another. Some of these are often—and erroneously—overlooked by leading planning and urban theories, but are nevertheless critical in shaping of what Arabs often term ‘the flower of all cities’ (*Zaharat al-Madai’n*), or Jews ‘the complete city’ (*Ir Shalem*). In line with the Aleph approach, a short city ‘walk’ reveals a Jerusalem framed by parallel structural forces and discourses, including:

- *A colonial city*—the prominence of modern Jerusalem begins during the British rule, when its imperial-colonial government decided to place its provincial capital in Jerusalem. This gave the city an incredible impetus and reshaped its development according to foreign and imposed plans, methods, norms and resources. Later, in 1948, came a partition of the city between

Israel and Jordan, which saw mutual ethnic cleansing and the establishment of two ethno-national city parts; in 1967 Israel conquered Jerusalem and the entire West Bank, expanded the city’s municipal boundaries by a unilateral urban ‘unification’. It forcefully (and illegally) incorporated Palestinians as non-citizen residents, while launching a long-term colonial strategy of Judaizing Arab Jerusalem, as part of what Israel claims is the rightful return of Jewish rule to the nation’s ‘eternal capital’.

Since then, large parts of Arab Jerusalem have remained unplanned and underdeveloped. These areas have been characterized by informal or semi-formal ‘gray spaces’—developments and groups that are neither fully included in the urban polity, nor destroyed or evicted (Yiftachel 2009; Avni and Yiftachel 2014). The pervasive informality prevalent in Palestinian Jerusalem resembles past colonial cities in Africa and Asia. This setting also gives rise to a Palestinian indigenous struggle throughout the metropolitan region. The Arab part of the Jerusalem metropolis, which covers over two thirds of its area, now includes an assemblage of villages, towns, tribes, suburbs and settlements. These create an indigenous urbanizing space, insistently resisting Israel’s colonizing project, with only partial success.

Notably, despite the colonial nature of Jerusalem being a structural force of the first order, it is rarely mentioned in the literature on the city. Most scholars, influenced by state and Western academic hegemony, prefer to treat the city as ‘divided’, ‘contested’ or ‘fragmented’. Most Palestinian scholars refer to it as ‘occupied’, although the civil nature of Israeli control and the constant settlement of Jews, make it more akin to a settler-colonial regime rather than military rule. Hence, in order to be credible, any analysis of metropolitan Jerusalem must deal with the colonial nature of urban development and the associated discrimination, racism, resistance, violence and terror.

Importantly for this paper, even beyond Jerusalem—and true to the Aleph approach—the colonial management of Jerusalem should not be treated as an exception, but rather a window to understand neo-colonial relations emerging in many other urban regions, where whole populations are subject to discriminatory treatment based on their inscribed identity, in regimes that are ‘separate and unequal’.

- *A nationalized city*—the Hebrew word ‘Tziyon’ (Zion) describes both the city of Jerusalem and the entire holy land. Hence, Jerusalem has been an epicenter of the Zionist project. In parallel to the project of Judaizing Arab Jerusalem, the planning of the city has been governed by strong nationalist and ethnocentric influences, which have shaped its public spaces, resource allocation, employment and urban design. Israel has imposed its law over entire Palestinian areas of the city, as defined by Israel, and has attempted since to impose *law and order* as a basic trope for governing the city, applying a discourse of civil rule in areas essentially occupied and forcefully incorporated to Israel.

While not yet realized, Jerusalem (al-Quds) is also destined by Palestinians as their future national capital. This strongly shapes the Palestinian discourse about the city’s present and future, as the symbol of Palestinian national sovereignty. Therefore, and critically, Jerusalem is not only a contested *city*, but also a disputed part of two ethnocentric *states* (one existing, the other ‘in-the-making’), through which runs—at least legally and theoretically—one of the most contested interstate *borders* in the world (Yiftachel 2006).

- *A religious city*—it needs no retelling that Jerusalem is one of the world’s religious centers, accommodating some of the holiest places for Christianity, Judaism and Islam. As such, it occupies an immensely important place in the spiritual narratives and religious spatialities of all three religions. Jerusalem is commonly believed to be the core of creation, and the place

from which the Profit has soared into the afterlife above. Consequently, the city is a site of massive pilgrimage and religious tourism, matched only by the likes of Mecca and the Vatican. The city is also home to major religious and ultra-orthodox communities, mainly Jewish and Muslim. The identity politics of Jewish Jerusalem revolves strongly around the level of religiosity in the city, with constant conflict over housing, public culture and norms and governance between the city’s secular, traditional, orthodox and ultra-orthodox communities. Among the Palestinians, Islamic movements have traditionally been strong as reflected in the power of Hamas during past Palestinian elections. Jerusalem’s urban history and current planning are strongly shaped by religious narratives, and its management is dictated by the close proximity and hypersensitivity of its holy sites. Needless to say, religious narratives are closely intertwined with colonial, national and developmental interests, highlighting further the need to study several structural logics simultaneously at work in this diverse urban region.

- *A gendered city*—given the strength of religious narratives, the high visibility of traditional ethnic cultures, and the prominence of religious sites and practices, Jerusalem is a particularly gendered city. Most Jewish and Muslim religious spaces are governed by rules of strict gender separation, coupled with the exclusion of women from much of the public sphere. In several Jewish neighborhoods, even pedestrian spaces are separated by gender, as is the most famous and sacred Jewish space—the Wailing Wall. Muslim spaces, similarly, are generally segregated, with holy spaces, most notably mosques, being strongly dominated by men. Orthodox men and women, Jewish and Muslim, are bodily marked by a strict dress code, which creates visible inscribed boundaries between genders and communities. As is often the case in multi-ethnic cities where

politics of identity are of paramount importance, the gendered 'order of things' has come to symbolize the identity of entire communities, with consequences that are often detrimental to gender equality and civil liberties. The gendered logic of space in Jerusalem is thus a structural force, which cannot be ignored by any critical theory accounting for the working of the city.

- *A globalizing city*—Jerusalem is also a quintessential global city—forming an icon of global religious worship, a major focal point for Jewish and Palestinian worldwide diasporas, as well as a major site for global investment. Yet, it is rarely mentioned in the global cities literature and its associated rankings as such, thereby exposing the partiality and narrow economic-centered nature of much of the literature (see Sassen 2005). Even beyond its religious and national importance, Jerusalem also created a strong globalized economic base, especially in the Jewish Western quarters. Industrial and real-estate development, as well as tourist and traditional manufacturing industries have created an economic foundation, which continues to be buttressed by government investment and spectacular mega-projects. Jerusalem is also a center of international culture which forms a major hub of mainly global Jewish, but also Palestinian cultural production and consumption. Other 'globalizing city' phenomena strongly evident in Jerusalem include widening class polarization and a notable rise in the presence of impoverished populations; a growing gentrification of the inner-city area; expansion of 'gray spaces'; a rise in diasporic flows, capital and real-estate investment; and growing exposure to global media and discourses, that readily translate local events to global news. Given the nature of the global economy, it can be expected that Jerusalem will continue to rise as a global city, although much depends on the

unpredictable nature of the Jewish–Palestinian conflict.

- *A political city of ordinary people*—Jerusalem is also an urban region of over 1 million 'ordinary' people, living their daily lives within the colonial, national, capitalistic and patriarchal city. Ordinary people often deal with the various dominations and many opportunities the city offers in ordinary sites—schools, communities, markets, malls, sport, entertainment and quotidian activities and challenges. Some Jews and very few Palestinians mobilize politically, in urban or national political arenas, mainly through urban political parties, which are active in the city's Jewish areas. Most residents attempt to resist domination over their lives—be it colonial, capitalist, nationalist or patriarchal—privately or in their communities. Resistance in Jerusalem, like most cities, is often practiced through mundane, micro practices, and unlike its portrayal in the media, it is rarely heroic or violent. In that way, Jerusalem is also an ordinary city.

Interactions

Needless to say, the above is only a partial list of structural forces operating in the Jerusalem urban region—expanding, retreating, clashing, imbricating or cooperating in the rich fabric of this most diverse of urban regions. Undoubtedly, there are other forces which can be added to the list, but even in its partial nature, it enables us to dwell on a rarely explored aspect of critical theorization—the nature of *interaction* between structural forces, in the messy business of producing and shaping 'real' urban spaces in the Jerusalem region.

Exploring seriously the interactions between forces driven by different, often conflicting, logics is a fundamental epistemological and methodological concern, which needs much greater attention than possible here. Yet, we should draw attention to the

ceaseless and *coterminous* operation of major forces in the shaping of the Jerusalem region—resembling the multiple vectors of social control termed ‘intersectionality’ by feminist theorists (see Bilge 2010). This clearly ‘earns’ Jerusalem its description as an Aleph—‘a place of all places’, created by the spaces, mobilizations and meanings of its diverse urban components. Most create a multitude of ‘places within a place’ and reflect a wide range of narratives, aspirations, transactions and political projects operating in the same territory, albeit with very different powers and resources (see Figure 1).

These structural interactions, which frame the ceaseless activities of social agents and individuals, bring to the fore the arenas and practices where conflicts and negotiations take place, and the ways in which they shape the uneven development of all cities. In other words, focusing on the interaction of forces draws attention not only to the ‘what’ of social powers, but also to the all-

important ‘how’—the practices and tactics of spatializing abstract logics, interests and narratives.

Clearly, the above listing of forces is naturally not enough to form a new CUT. The ‘Aleph approach’ would require researchers to ‘unpack’ the ‘place of places’ and examine in depth the nature of *interactions* between these forces. It will thus seek to uncover the evolving power relations between the major logics driving the production of space, determined ‘through’ the planning and development of the city. This requires detailed analysis of the urban regime and the priorities it gives to certain projects, narratives and perceptions, in the allocation of material and symbolic resources, violence and oppression. Importantly, the Aleph approach will avoid assuming that hegemonic systems replicate themselves over time, but trace the changing nature of the interaction, which results in varying degrees of urban change. It will

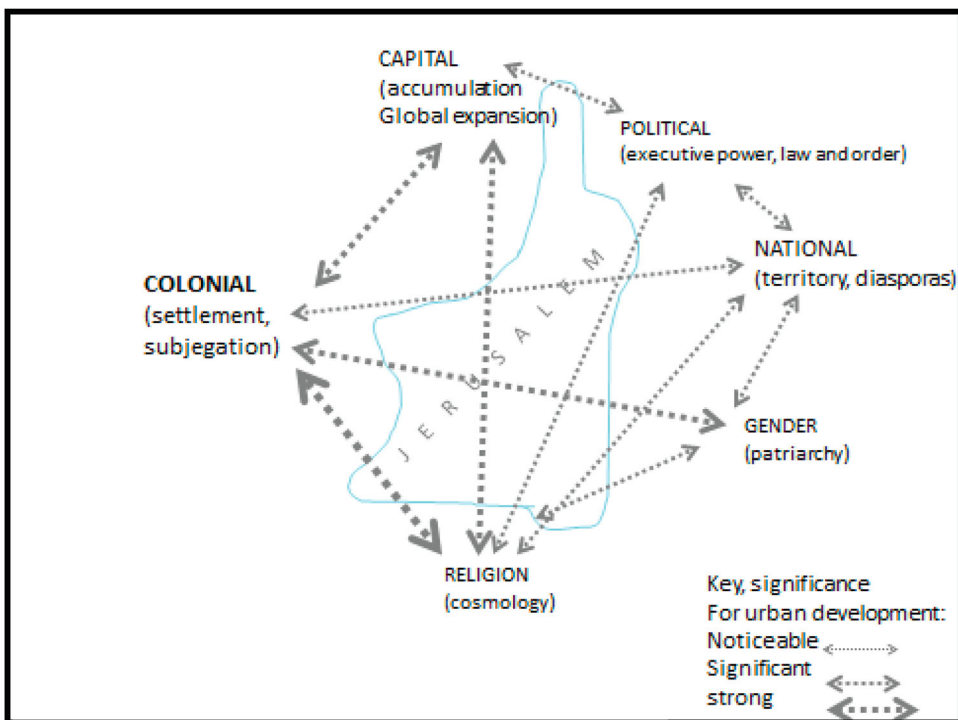


Figure 1 Unpacking the Aleph: structural forces and interactive logics in metropolitan Jerusalem.

acknowledge of course that social structures and oppressive regimes tend to endure, but will not take for granted their reproduction through space, time and society.

The papers of this special feature provide clear examples for the need to seriously study the dynamic (yet, never totally fluid) nature of structural interactions. This is clear in all papers, from which I draw one key example—the discussion by Oren Shlomo on contested sovereignty over Arab Jerusalem in general and the Silwan area in particular. Silwan lies at the southern edge of the Old City, and until 1967 was a near-city village, with tight traditional semi-rural community and mainly agrarian and pastoral economic base. During the British and Jordanian periods, the village became increasingly linked to the Jerusalem economy, and its space gradually urbanized. This was followed by an increasingly active land market and real estate development, still within a predominantly non-urban setting.

The Israeli conquest and colonization drastically changed the balance of forces. First, it ‘united’ Silwan with Jerusalem thereby accelerating its urbanization. Since the 1990s, urbanization was coupled with settling colonialism, exemplified by the construction of the highly contested Jewish project—City of David. Under the guise of this biblical–archeological and tourist project, Jews settled (illegally according to international law) in several parts of Silwan, launching a new type of urban colonial development ‘wrapped’ up with religious and national narratives and strongly supported by the Israeli state and Jerusalem municipality.

The new settler urban community has worked to introduce an essentialist and binary logic of segregated identities into the urban space, with colonialist, religious and nationalist, and gendered logics often overshadowing the logic of capital, development and good governance, used by Israel in other parts of the city. Without delving into detail, it is clear that the case of Silwan demonstrates both the coterminous existence of strong

colonial, capitalist and governance forces that shape urban change; and the imminent possibility that the nature of engagement between these forces may change. In order to arrive at a credible and critical understanding of the nature of urban change in Silwan, we need to first release ourselves of a pre-determined framing of urban change by one structural force, without losing sight of the import of such forces, and their dynamic interactions.

Dynamic structuralism

The Aleph approach thus departs from the accepted logic of most CUTs, which tend to privilege a particular narrative of the world, most often Marxian or postcolonial, and at times also gendered, liberal or Foucauldian. The insightful nature of these theories does not negate their inevitable partiality in accounting for the multifaceted dynamics shaping urban regions.

On the other hand, the Aleph approach recognizes that cities are not merely ‘complex systems’ in which nameless forces evolve into patterns of ‘self-organization’; as some theories claim (see Portugali 2000), nor are they ‘postmodern’ places where all structural logics ‘melt into air’ within diversity, complexity and constant change (see Dear 2000), nor an endless series of ‘a thousand plateaus’ creating ever-changing, ‘post-structural’, non-hierarchical ‘rhizomes’ of urban milieu, which cannot be articulated by our conceptual and analytical tools (Deleuze and Guattari 1988). Instead, as noted, the Aleph approach suggests that the city is shaped by powerful frameworks and logics of power, that are relatively stable and consistent, although the manner in which these forces intersect and *interact*, and the relative power of each structure, should be open to the historical, political and economic inquiry, attuned to the conditions of each city.

This new CUT would then search for the most profound urban oppressions, dispossessions and dislocations inside the spatial system, as well as the contradictions and

tensions, and ‘work back’ to understand and deconstruct their origins and formulations. It would seek to identify the drivers and resisters of power, opening itself to the possibility of multiple scales and forces (see Morston, Jones, and Woodward 2005). Such theory would thus provide a new *structural and dynamic* platform to understand the assemblages that make up the quotidian workings of urban life. In this way, the understanding of the city as an endless composition of changing assemblages may not be seen as an epistemological counter to a structural understanding of urban space (see Brenner 2009, 2013; McFarlane 2011). Instead, the Aleph approach will search for the structural logics of quotidian assemblages, and the manner in which tensions, contradictions and compatibilities create the patterns of the urban everyday, as well as possibilities for resistance and transformations.

This approach is set to enrich the leading paradigms in critical urban studies which at present embed the study of urban regions almost solely within the hegemonic context of globalizing capitalism (for review, see Marcuse and Imbrosio 2014; Scott and Storper 2014; Brenner and Smith 2015). The making of urban regions is routinely and too narrowly termed in most of the literature as ‘capitalist urbanization’, thus overlooking immense structural powers and urban politics that are often equally, if not more powerful, than global capitalism in shaping urban life.

There is no room here for serious illustration of this claim beyond mentioning, as one of many examples, the recent struggle over Cairo, which has shaken the ancient city over the last few tumultuous years. The fierce struggle over control of the city (and hence over Egypt) had more to do with demands for democracy, secularism or alternatively Islamism, and end to militarism, than with 21st-century global capitalism. This repeats itself in key cities such as Damascus, Istanbul, Baghdad, or Kabul. Needless to say, the logic of capitalism is ever-present in Middle Eastern cities, as in all cities, but it is far from a hegemonic factor.

Time

The nature of dynamic structuralism and the attempt to theorise ‘from the South-East’ also involves the introduction of *time* as an analytical element with which to fathom urban society. Global capitalism and neoliberalism which dominate existing CUTs are, by and large, timeless categories. Yet, time is a necessary, yet seriously understudied, foundation for grasping the nature of urban development and the meaning of particular territories, communities, identities and transformations. As famously noted by Sandercock (2003), constructions of time are embedded in the unending discursive and material making of every place. Consequently, the colonial, capitalist, gendered or religious forces identified above, as well as new concepts that may emerge, shape urban spaces with a particular construction time.

In this short paper we can only point to their existence and to the richness of obvious categories such as the framing of past, present and future of places; the construction of these times as diachronic and/or synchronic; as well as more sophisticated time-related categories such as linear and circular time flows, memory, salvation, speed, acceleration, suspension, erasure, as well as various degrees of urban permanency and temporariness. Urban development must therefore also be understood as an arena of ‘temporal spatializations’, in which different, and at times conflicting, notions of time negotiate and struggle, literally, over ‘their place’.

To illustrate, the status of ‘our time’ vis-à-vis ‘their time’ is a critical factor in privileging particular periods over others in the making of Jerusalem, as in any city. This has clear implications for preservation, destruction and valorization of urban areas and landscapes. The future, as an imagined time, also ‘belongs’ mainly to urban and national elites who can shape space at their will, while marginal groups are often left outside the planning process. In Arab Jerusalem, for instance, the period of Israeli colonization is

marked by the suspension of Palestinian time, urban meaning or future horizon. The Jewish colonization project and the attempts to resist it, form the main (though of course not sole) framework for understanding the recent development of Arab Jerusalem. In previous periods, such as Jordanian Jerusalem (1948–67), the main force in shaping the city was the Hashemite attempt to fully incorporate the population of Arab Jerusalem into the Jordanian nation-in-making.

Different perceptions of time relate naturally to the memories embedded in particular sites, and in their designated futures. In Jerusalem this does not entail only the attempts to anchor cultures in the urban landscape, but also in the attempt to erase, marginalize or alienate the time of groups threatening existing frameworks of power. Hence, urban time of particular Jerusalemite groups may also be continuous, ruptured, fragmented or imagined, thereby strongly shaping contemporary urban meanings and struggles.

In this way the Aleph approach would urge researchers to view urban spaces, developments, communities and conflicts through the construction of their contested times, as a fundamental framing of the transformation of urban power relations. This will add a critical factor in evaluating and reshaping the interaction between structural urban forces.

Beyond Jerusalem?

The Aleph metaphor and the above conceptual exploration, naturally open the horizon far beyond Jerusalem. Rather than presenting a closed and tight argument, the paper sees Jerusalem as an epistemological and political inspiration. It views the intense and diverse forces operating on the city as a baseline for renewed, engaged and critical understanding of the urban, governed by the logic of ‘dynamic structuralism’, and attentive to a variety of systematic forces of domination and resistance. It avoids the a priori

privileging of one such force, as do most of the critical theories that dominate scholarship. While globalizing capitalism and nationalism are often most potent in shaping urban regions, many cases demonstrate the importance of other, often previously unarticulated, systematic forces, governed by different time constructions and divergent spatialities. The Aleph approach is hence more political than narrow critical theories, as it addresses a wider range of powers and oppressions, ceaselessly operating present and targetable in political systems or most urban regions. It lends itself as a foundation for translating critical theories into political, advocacy and professional practices aimed at progressive and radical social transformations.

The Aleph approach also illustrates an attempt to ‘theorISE’ the city from the global South-East. It views urban regions as being often shaped by non-liberal tribal, religious colonial or nationalist forces. The ‘South-Eastern’ perspective allows the imminent possibility for the emergence of new categories, forces and concepts, which are articulated through engaged analysis. This is well illustrated by studies which already offer new categories and concepts as better grasping ‘South-Eastern’ urbanism, such as the de-colonization of planning (see Porter 2010); ‘deep difference’ (Watson 2014; Cohen and Margalit 2015); ‘multiplanar planning’ (Hillier 2011); ‘subaltern’ urbanism (Roy 2011); ‘metrozenship’ (Yiftachel 2015); ‘insurgent’ urban citizenship (Holston 2009; Desai and Sanyal 2012); ‘planning with insurgent religions’ (Luz 2015); or indigenization of the city (Perera 2002).

The Aleph approach holds that Jerusalem should be treated as neither a model city, nor as an exception, but rather as a hyper concentration of forces, events and movements to be found in most urban regions in various combinations and assemblages. Jerusalem exhibits a persistence of ‘old’ structural forces, such as colonialism, nationalism and religion, alongside ‘new’ trajectories such as globalizing capitalism, gentrification,

diasporism and expanding 'gray spaces'. Hence, Jerusalem can be said to simultaneously harbor *the past and future of the urban*. In Jerusalem we can thus see all types of cities, and in all other cities we can see Jerusalem, much like the Aleph, as described by Borges' magical pen:

'In the Aleph [...] I saw a monument I worshipped in the Chacarita cemetery; I saw the rotted dust and bones that had once deliciously been Beatriz Viterbo; I saw the circulation of my own dark blood; I saw the coupling of love and the modification of death; I saw the Aleph from every point and angle, and in the Aleph I saw the earth and in the earth the Aleph; I saw my own face and my own bowels; I saw your face; and I felt dizzy and wept, for my eyes had seen that secret and conjectured object whose name is common to all men but which no man has looked upon—the unimaginable universe.'

Disclosure statement

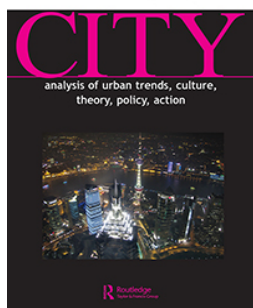
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The London's Housing Crisis and its Activisms Conference, associated with CITY's Special Feature (issue 20.2)

Debbie Humphry

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Report

The London's Housing Crisis and its Activisms Conference, associated with CITY's Special Feature (issue 20.2)

Debbie Humphry

This conference, organised by Paul Watt (Birkbeck University of London) and Anna Minton (University of East London) was a launch event for their CITY special feature 'London's Housing Crisis and its Activisms' (Watt and Minton 2016), commissioned by CITY journal for its 20th anniversary to celebrate and advance twenty years of research, publication and action. This conference was in turn brilliant, fascinating, depressing and hopeful. Like all the best conferences I have been to both speakers and audience came from a range of positions, adding activist, political, journalistic and tenant perspectives to the usual academic crowd (Figure 1). Sian Berry (Green Party) took a break from the Mayoral hustings to pledge her commitment to providing genuinely-affordable housing and stopping social cleansing (Figure 2), and journalist Dawn Foster of *The Guardian* and Loretta Lees (University of Leicester) chaired the two plenary sessions.

The plenary speakers largely focused on a structural analysis of London's housing crisis, such as Michael Edwards' (UCL) framing of London's extreme housing crisis within the context of overblown financialisation and the privileging of rent as a means of wealth accumulation, often by dispossession (Harvey 2003; Edwards 2016). Participants said they appreciated a better understanding of the underlying long-term causes of

London's housing crisis. Tom Keene, an activist from the Save Cressingham Gardens Campaign, said he found the day particularly useful in relation to learning about the bigger, global finance angle.

The workshops focused on activisms, with various groups explaining and dialoguing about their campaigns, which raised challenging questions and heated debate. This included Kill the Housing Bill Campaign¹ (Katya Nasim and Eileen Short); the 35percent campaign (Jerry Flynn) with Bob Colenutt (University of Northampton) and Nick Perry (The Hackney Society) (Flynn 2016) (Figure 3); Save Cressingham Gardens (Pam Douglas and Tom Keene); Architects for Social Housing (ASH, Simon Elmer and Geraldine Dening), and Focus E15 with Tom Gillespie (University of Sheffield), Kate Hardy (University of Leeds) and Penny Bernstock (UEL).

That mothers felt able to attend with their children is testament to the inclusivity and exciting audience mix of the conference (Figure 4). This was made possible in part due to attention to the material as well as the cerebral, in terms of the low cost of the conference - £5 for the unwaged and free for everyone else.

People were brought together not just by a common interest, but also by a common passion to fight housing inequality (Figure 5). This engendered the kind of social 'encounter'



Figure 1 Jasmin Parsons of Our West Hendon contributes to the debates. Photo by Debbie Humphry.

highlighted by Paul Watt in his presentation, created through synergy and solidarity. New contacts were made amongst the various participants, who exchanged knowledge and of course emails. Aditya Chakraborty, Senior Economics Commentator on *The Guardian*, said, ‘I thought it was a really lovely atmosphere. A really good meeting of academics, activists and people who were just generally concerned. It was a particularly well-organised respectful event, which I thoroughly enjoyed.’

This is not to say there were no differences or conflicts. When Guy Nicholson (Cabinet Member for Regeneration Hackney Council) presented he came in for vocal criticism from Architects for Social Housing (ASH) who,

via their support for tenants and leaseholders undergoing ‘regeneration’, had witnessed first-hand Labour councils riding roughshod over residents’ wishes (for example, Elmer and Denning 2016). This included failures by Labour to consult effectively on the Cressingham Gardens estate, which formed the basis of residents taking their Lambeth landlords to Court, in which the consultation regarding demolishing up to 300 homes was deemed unfair and therefore judged unlawful (as discussed in the Cressingham Gardens workshop and Douglas and Parkes 2016). However, overall the mood of the conference was captured by Luna Glucksberg (Goldsmiths University of London) who said, ‘it was understandable to non specialists, debate was



Figure 2 Sian Berry, Green Mayoral candidate, pledges to fight social cleansing. Photo by Debbie Humphry.



Figure 3 Jerry Flynn explains viability Assessments. Photo by Debbie Humphry.

encouraged and everyone who wanted to contribute was able to and listened to. It was passionate and intense but polite enough for contrary opinions to be heard and not shouted down.’ (Figure 6)

Introduced by Bob Catterall (Editor-in-Chief, CITY), as a ‘deviant academic’, Paul Watt (Birkbeck University of London, conference organiser, editor of CITY Special Feature) drew on his grounded involvement



Figure 4 An audience member attends the conference with her daughter. Photo by Debbie Humphry.



Figure 5 A mixed group of people passionate about fighting housing inequality attended the conference. Photo by Debbie Humphry.

with housing activism and cerebral engagement with academic theory to deliver an impassioned analysis of the distinctive and inspirational Focus E15 housing campaign (Watt 2016) (Figure 7). He described how

Focus E15 dared to break through the ‘striated’ boundaries of the metropolitan state and open up a ‘smooth space’ of politically-generative encounters (Deleuze and Guattari 1972, 1980; Hardt and Negri 2009).



Figure 6 An audience member engages in debate. Photo by Debbie Humphry.



Figure 7 Paul Watt talks about a new kind of activism by the Focus E15 campaign. Photo by Debbie Humphry.

Throwing in an analogy to Andrey Zvyagintsev's film *Leviathan*, Watt describes how the young mothers engaged in a series of temporary occupations. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a nomadic war machine, he emphasises the role that fluid and deterritorialised assemblages play in enabling the flow into and erosion of the interstices of striated space: not least as embodied by the gathering together of mothers, children and buggies, which led to creative encounters that expanded their personal quest to remain in the city into a broader campaign for housing rights. Watt argues this demonstrates that such tactics, by refusing containment within state-directed channels, have the capacity to reverse the power relations with it.

Anna Minton (author of *Ground Control*, UEL, conference organiser, editor of *CITY Special Feature*) vividly presented us with the reconfiguration of London that government responses to the housing crisis are engendering (Figure 8). Central to this reimagined city are the intertwined processes of social housing estate demolition and luxury tower construction (Minton, Pace, and Williams 2016). As thousands of social

homes are destroyed, thousands of private luxury apartments are produced. As policy enforces the mass sell-off public properties and land, huge privatized enclaves appear all over London. Re-iterating a running theme, Minton emphasised that Labour as much as the Conservatives is driving these policies, referring to Labour councils leading estate demolitions, and at the national level pointing the finger at Lord Adonis (former Labour cabinet member, now chair of the Conservative's National Infrastructure Commission) who argues for releasing the high land value of council estates via 'regeneration' that is open to market rent developments and private speculation. Minton is clear that underpinning the implementation of such policies is a democratic failure of government. This includes sham consultations and use of scare tactics and misinformation by councillors at the local level, whilst at the national level the Housing and Planning Act is the most recent and devastating in a series of welfare and housing policies that disregard the electorate's wishes.

So what of the future? In the spirit of hope running through the conference, Minton suggests we may have reached a tipping



Figure 8 Anna Minton discusses a politically reconfigured London. Photo by Debbie Humphry.

point as the sale of luxury tower apartments is slowing. With the gathering force of opposition, reflected in the passion and diverse demography of this conference, this is the time for an alternative re- imaging of the city based on saner, more equitable and democratic solutions.

Aditya Chakraborty, the Senior Economics Commentator on *The Guardian*, was

a keynote speaker (Figure 9). He delivered a scorching critique of a political structural process since Thatcher of ‘defining down’ the UK economy so that it cuts out some industries, regions and people via the construction of London as a global and financial centre. He explicated how an entire national economy is reduced to little more than a bet on London, with a lock-out of families who

don't have assets as Britain's speculative economy squashed the productive economy in a series of deliberate policy moves both by Labour and the Conservatives. Hence people are losing their homes in London as they become globally-traded assets. Chakraborty calls instead for a 'taming of finance' by cutting back its power and redirecting assets to re-include the people and places currently shut out.

Stuart Hodgkinson (University of Leeds) gave a sobering yet rousing presentation on the rise of private equity firms as global corporate landlords (GCLs), termed as 'vulture capitalists' because of their exploitation of rent gaps to accumulate wealth by dispossession (Beswick et al. 2016) (Figure 10). Applying analysis from an international research project investigating the rise of GCLs in American and European cities, he warns of London's future vulnerability to corporate takeovers of social housing stock. He argued that state-led policies from 2010, including the aggressive Housing and Planning Act (2016), will drive mass stock transfer of public housing to the private sector, leaving the door wide open for GCLs to take them over and financialise the private rental sector, incurring massive rent hikes and the dispossession of existing residents. Hope came, however, at the close of the presentation as Hodgkinson described how a GCL takeover of Hackney's New Era estate was averted by tenants' resistance, resulting not only in the estate's transfer to charitable landlords assuring affordable rents, but also marking the London's rental sector as carrying reputational and political risk. So, as Hodgkinson urged, for those wanting a more equitable housing system, let's make London toxic.

Drawing on research into London's elites, Luna Glucksberg (Goldsmiths University of London) provided an accessible insight into capital flows and foreign investment, making the prime market for housing comprehensible for the non-expert as relayed through an ethnographic lens (Glucksberg 2016) (Figure 11). She broke foreign investors

down into four distinct types, ('buy to invest', 'buy for business', 'buy for children' and 'buy to leave'), detailing their varying motivations, property types, locations and use, and impact on the housing crisis. She concluded that rather than foreign investment into housing 'trickling down' in a beneficial way as argued by politicians, it is rather having a detrimental trickle-effect as it drives up housing prices, increases gentrification and displacement, damages communities, and enables money laundering, with the overall impact of decreased affordability and access to housing for the average Londoner. Glucksberg adds to the mounting evidence that leaving house-building in the hands of private developers works to channel investment down routes most profitable for them, rather than to construct the secure and affordable homes so desperately needed by people who live and work in London.

Using other European countries as models, Glucksberg stressed the need for government intervention to turn this situation around. A welcome first step would be the repeal of the Housing and Planning Act that, despite mass public protest and opposition by the Lords, received Royal Assent on 12th May 2016. This was an issue passionately debated in the Kill the Housing Bill workshop run by Katya Nasim and Eileen Short (Radical Housing Network and Defend Council Housing) (Kill the Housing Bill 2016), in which both residents affected by the Bill and those simply outraged at its iniquitous destruction of social housing vowed to fight on (Figure 12).

Bob Catterall (Editor-in-Chief, *CITY*), drawing on twenty years of London-based and international research and action, referred to the significant cross-over in *CITY*'s pages from colleague Hyin Shin's (2014) use of the term 'domicide' with reference to Shanghai and its application to the destruction in London (Catterall 2016) and beyond of homes and communities (Figure 13). This captured the extremity of the current housing crisis, including a sense



Figure 9 Aditya Chakraborty, Senior Economics Commentator from *The Guardian* is the keynote speaker. Photo by Debbie Humphry.

of its devastating human impact. In the spirit of CITY he lauded the inclusion the conference offered for other voices to invigorate a standard academic conversation. He pointed

to a new spirit of thoughtful and well-informed action amongst younger activists who were gathering their own knowledge and research, thus crucially contributing to



Figure 10 Stuart Hodkinson on 'Vulture Capitalists'. Photo by Debbie Humphry.



Figure 11 Luna Glucksberg (right) explains foreign investment, with Dawn Foster (left) chairing the plenary. Photo by Debbie Humphry.

the making of a fresh type of social movement and alternative kind of information society. He urged the conference audience not to

allow ‘radical’, ‘radicalism’ and ‘radicalised’ to be redefined as marks of extremism, but return to their true meaning, which lies in



Figure 12 Eileen Short (left) from the Kill the Housing Bill campaign (now Act the Housing Act) in conversation with a workshop participant. Photo by Debbie Humphry.



Figure 13 Bob Catterall, Editor-in-Chief, CITY. Photo by Debbie Humphry.

getting to the *roots* of the problem at the same time as engaging in bottom-up action from the *grassroots*. In doing so, he urged a move beyond the idea of a *right* to the city into a more active position of *reclaiming* the city. Catterall is effectively urging academics and writers to engage with an investigation/action/praxis into living, as formulated in CITY's pages for almost a decade.

Following up Watt's concept of the nomad, Catterall linked housing nomads with other precarious or alternative 'nomadic' groups, such as occupational nomads who are suffering from the draining and murder of jobs, suggesting possibilities for a mass social movement. He emphasised the importance of reiterating key terms across different discursive fields in the overall 'war' against capital to reclaim the homes, lives and livelihoods of the city.

In the final plenary four members of the Focus E15 campaign group took to the floor. Tom Antebi discussed the impact worldwide that mega international sporting events had on displacing and socially cleansing local residents (Figure 14). The London Olympic and Paralympic Games based in Newham had a commitment to Legacy in

the form of benefiting the existing local community, but Antebi pointed to promises broken. He went on to make the link between the London housing crisis and further afield, not only because other UK cities and towns are suffering from unaffordable housing and displacement, but also because London housing profits shift elsewhere with the effect of raising prices and pricing out locals. Saskia O' Hara also made connections between London and further afield as she discussed the campaign's 'Social Housing not Social Cleansing' slogan, generated from a Newham housing office as they witnessed dozens of residents being decanted out of London. She explained how the slogan rang true across international borders with so many people being displaced worldwide.

Ellie Bradbury discussed Newham Council's finances in the context of its rehousing of households into temporary accommodation out of the borough. Jasmin Stone elaborated on what Focus E15 regarded as Labour Newham Council's economic, social and emotional failures. Stone gave examples of local politicians' lack of understanding and compassion towards residents, which was vividly captured when she asked Guy

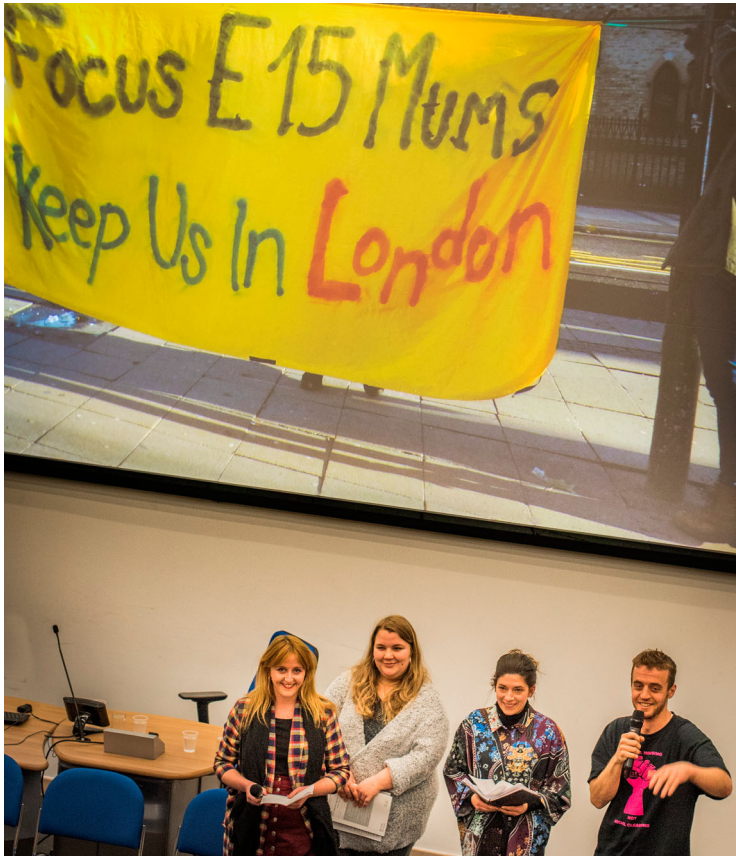


Figure 14 Tom Antebi (right) of Focus E15 speaks alongside fellow campaigners. Photo by Debbie Humphry.



Figure 15 Jasmin Stone of Focus E15 calls on the audience to represent themselves in fighting housing inequalities. Photo by Debbie Humphry.

Nicholson, 'Where's the Labour Party been when people are being forced out of London? When people are crying? When people are being threatened to have their children taken off of them? I haven't seen anyone supporting these people when they're in tears.' But true to the spirit of Focus E15's inspiring and inclusive campaign, Stone's final words were a call for us to empower ourselves: 'no-one will represent you but yourself—fight!' (Figure 15)

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

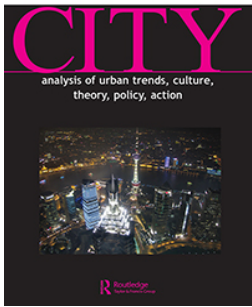
Note

- 1 Since the Housing and Planning Bill became law on 12 May 2016, the campaign is now called 'Axe the Housing Act'.

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Occupation from below: squatting within, against and beyond

David M. Bell

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Review

Occupation from below: squatting within, against and beyond

David M. Bell

Metropolitan preoccupations: the spatial politics of squatting in Berlin, Alexander Vasudevan. Wiley Blackwell, Chichester, 2015, 242 pp., ISBN 9781118750605, US\$39.95 (pbk).

M*etropolitan Preoccupations* begins its study of squatting in Berlin with an account of the ‘Free Republic of Barackia’, a short-lived squatter settlement in the south of the city in 1872. From here it traverses the autonomous, ‘collective world-making’ (15) processes of squatting, arriving half a mile or so north at the ‘Kotti & Co’ occupation of Kottbusser Tor some 140 years later, although the majority of the book deals with the city’s more recent history (from 1960 onwards). The book’s temporalities are nowhere near so linear as this might suggest, however—it possesses a vital utopian charge, demonstrating how squatting works within, against and beyond the city; producing Berlin both as it is today and as it might be. This is history not simply as something to be ‘learned from’, but as a form that can—at any moment—burst into our present and illuminate possible futures.

This ‘uncanny’ historical model is informed by Vasudevan’s reading of Walter Benjamin, whose argument that historical writing should demonstrate how radical praxis creates ‘constellations’ of actions and ideas that connect across time and space (16) is deftly applied throughout this excellent book. Such lightness of theoretical touch is a consistent strength of the book, with references to—for example—Henri

Lefebvre’s theorization of the production of space (18), David Featherstone’s ‘spatial relations of solidarity’ (57) and Deborah Gould’s politics of emotion (203–204) foregrounding rather than abstracting pertinent aspects of squatting. In this, the book succeeds in meeting Vasudevan’s desire ‘not to impose a new theory of spatial politics *onto* the actions of squatters’, but rather to record ‘the various actions and words of Berlin’s squatter community’ (24).

This task is further met through the book’s extensive engagement with archival materials: maps, pamphlets, eyewitness accounts, photographs and letters are amongst the sources consulted and reproduced; and it is worth noting the acknowledgement Vasudevan pays to the archives he draws from (xii), many of which lack formal institutional support. These materials lend a thick detail to the analysis and produce this sense of history-as-possibility, estranging the reader from any notion of an end of history in the city whose ‘unification’ is so often held to have symbolized precisely this. Their charge is amplified by the lack of romance or nostalgia in their deployment: the archive is opened up to (and opens up) the future rather than being a tool for the fetishization of the past through remembrance (Magagnoli 2015). In this, it provides spatial history with the kind of utopian charge that Moylan (2014)

associates with particular forms of science fiction: estranging us from the status quo whilst showing us that the status quo always contains the seeds of its transformation within it.

At times these seeds begin to take root and Vasudevan shows how they began to emerge from the ‘cracks’ inserted into city space after the Second World War through squats in West Berlin during the 1960s and 1970s (50). The rise of the student movement and the extra-parliamentary left created new subjectivities, feeding into the creation of communes and the establishment of squatting as a practice of considerable importance. The years 1979–84 are when the movement really blossomed, however—Vasudevan identifies 265 active squats in the period, largely in the districts of Kreuzberg and Schöneberg (4–5). These emerged in a climate of autonomist and anarchist activity in the city—the photograph of a tightly packed lecture theatre at the 1978 TUNIX (‘Do Nothing’) conference is particularly striking in this regard (89). A further wave followed the fall of the Berlin Wall, the resultant power vacuum temporarily opening up new opportunities for squatting in the city, with 183 new occupations—largely in Friedrichshain, Mitte and Prenzlauer-Berg in the former East—in 1989–90 (4–5).

In analysing the spatial politics of these waves, Vasudevan utilizes emotional labour as a central concern, referring to it as a process through which ‘the boundaries of “activism” and “the political” were constantly made, unmade and remade’ (90). Squatting is here shown to possess the potential to challenge gendered divisions of physical and affective labour (113–114); and squats are presented as sites where the family form might be ‘queered’ and patriarchal norms challenged (117, 177). Such shifts were, of course, not always implemented, with patriarchy proving a particularly stubborn structure to shift (73). The inclusion of archival testimony from those involved in the movement provides analysis here with an urgency so often lost

when debates are reduced to (or belittled as) ‘identity politics’.

This analysis of emotional labour opens onto a potentially productive direction that thought might take in order to generate new lifeworlds. In a fascinating passage Vasudevan notes that emotional labour’s centrality to squatting is furthered by the German word for occupy—‘*besetzen*’—which ‘also carries a psychoanalytic meaning, describing the process of investing mental or emotional energy in a person, object or idea’ (119). While there is no further explication of this term—understandable given the desire not to overcode practice with theory—its potential for naming the incorporation of emotional investment into this form of politics is considerable. With criticisms of the Occupy movement (and contemporary activism more broadly) for not engaging sufficiently with questions of emotional labour (Feigenbaum, Frenzel, and McCurdy 2013, 58) pertinent, it is a term that could have much to contribute well beyond Berlin (and, indeed, Germany, issues of translation notwithstanding).

It might be developed further through engagement with its extension into ‘*Instands(be)setzung*’—a term developed by West Berlin squatters in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which combines *besetzung* with *instandsetzung* (maintenance). It was used to describe practices of maintenance, repair and knowledge sharing in the squatting movement; and facilitated alternative relationships with the built form (103). These alternatives rejected the hylomorphic understanding of space as a passive formlessness capable only of inertia or chaos (an understanding central to settler colonialism and gentrification), suggesting that the ‘built form was never simply the container or the context for the creation of new experimental geographies’. Rather, ‘many if not most squatters took as axiomatic the active materiality of a building as a necessary condition for experimenting with “new forms of collective living”’ (110). Indeed, one is quoted as saying that ‘you develop a kind of relation to

[a building] which you could call responsibility. You know where the cables run, as much as you know the sounds of the environment, the people, *it is all interconnected*' (Härlin 1981 quoted 111; emphasis added by Vasudevan). Such an understanding of spatial agency resonates strongly with contemporary and indigenous relational thought (Coulthard 2010; Barad 2007), providing potential points of affinity across seemingly disparate struggles (although great care must be taken not to flatten the differences between these struggles). Again, this is particularly pertinent given criticisms of Occupy and contemporary forms of activism for insufficient engagement with decolonization (Barker 2012; Sium, Desai, and Ritskes 2012).

Such self-organized interconnection is, of course, intolerable to capital and the state when coupled with the occupation and control of space; and Vasudevan details increasing levels of police brutality against squatters in West Berlin in the 1980s, with—unsurprisingly—surveillance, questionable arrests, harassment and violence common (there are 31 separate entries for 'police and policing' in the index, some of them covering several pages). Yet this is not the only manner in which the West German state responded: the book describes alternating (and overlapping) modes of repression and pacification, as well as tensions over the manner in which squatters should respond.

Squatting was not confined to West Berlin, and Chapter 5 sheds light on the hitherto little-known history of 'illegal living' (*schwarzwohnen*) in the East of the city, which saw those who the state failed to (adequately) house, inhabit—and often repair—empty, dilapidated housing stock. As in the West, this produced an 'alternative vision of the city' (135), but in the GDR context of bureaucracy, surveillance and intrusion, this 'alternative' was primarily concerned with domesticity and the private sphere rather than the creation of new social forms: 'an expression of individual self-help in the face of the State's inability to fulfill its own promises on adequate housing for all' (139). What

is striking here is how similar this sounds to the neo-liberal imperative for certain populations to exhibit 'resilience' to overcome hardship (cf. Diprose 2014 on how the term has been wrested from critical action); and though the East German state did not explicitly encourage this it often responded pragmatically, issuing minimal fines and sometimes allowing squatters to remain in these properties. Amidst this rather bodged solution one can perhaps glimpse the faint light of a more satisfactory bottom-up approach to housing commons, and Vasudevan notes that East Berlin did have sporadic pockets where more explicitly political forms of squatting emerged (140).

Whilst the power vacuum following the fall of the Berlin Wall created temporary opportunities for squatters, it also opened space for the neo-liberalization of the city. As this took increasing hold through the 1990s and 2000s it began to subsume the practices and aesthetics of squatting: the temporary use of empty spaces for art projects, for example, has come to play an important role in capitalist accumulation, centred around the promotion of Berlin as a 'creative' city (173). Just as the utopian 'demands' that fed into and radiated from '1968' have been inverted and turned back against those who made them, so too have many of the practices. In this their radical content—the 'against' and 'beyond'—is frequently (although not always) stripped out: Vasudevan quotes Philipp Misselwitz's description of 'a new species of urban players, for whom urban spaces, untamed territory at best, is something to be discovered, squatted, conquered' (174): a decidedly hylomorphic approach, which recalls Smith's (1996) observation that the spatial language of gentrification is remarkably similar to the language of colonialism. Thankfully, however, Vasudevan avoids the quasi-Leninist 'gotcha' politics in which capital's capture and (ab)use of practices of squatting are a logical consequence of its self-organized form. Indeed, the book's uncanny temporality ensures that the reader cannot leave with any sense of an

‘end point’: what appears now as failure may be integral to victories in the future, and vice versa (cf. Ross 2015).

This partial capture of squatting’s energies poses a question about the relationship between the ‘alternative’ and the ‘oppositional’: terms used frequently and often interchangeably throughout *Metropolitan Preoccupations*, with the former sometimes referring more to the internal operation of squats and the latter to its relationship with the city. If Marxism has tended to privilege the negative moment of the latter (Williams 1977) and anarchism the positivity of the former (Ince 2012), might squatting suggest that both moments are of equal importance? Can such a neat theoretical separation between the alternative and the oppositional be sustained? Does the more explicitly spatiotemporal phrase ‘within, against and beyond’ perhaps offer a framework that might overcome this binary? Squatting, after all, produces alternatives *within* the present, but these produce spatial forms that point to how we might go *beyond* it. Yet it also needs to oppose this status quo by working *against* it in order that the beyond might be (partially) reached. Furthermore, as the persistence of misogyny in the movement shows, squatting (like any form of radical praxis) also needs to operate against and beyond itself. My point is not to criticize *Metropolitan Preoccupations* for not addressing these theoretical issues (although *perhaps* a moderately shifted conceptual framework might have helped in engaging with them), however, and it is to the book’s credit that it opens up such lines of thinking.

Whilst pursuing these lines *might* provide benefit to those seeking a world beyond capitalism in the long term, our present has more urgent practical matters of solidarity to attend to. Race and migration are areas of extreme importance and have a clear impact on the spatial politics of squatting in Berlin. In 2014, for example, non-EU migrants squatted a former school in Kreuzberg. The police were called to clear them by Green district councillor Hans Panhoff, leading to a

tense standoff in which around 40 squatters threatened to jump from the roof. This led many to question ‘why former squatters would call in the cops to evict people’, as *Der Spiegel* put it (Deggerich and Middelhoff 2014). Vasudevan covers this episode in the book’s conclusion, drawing on Judith Butler to suggest that ‘illegal’ migrants occupy ‘states of exclusion that are ... *spatially generative*’; and suggesting that ‘solidarities and connections ... developed between refugees, former squatters [although clearly only some] and other housing activists point to the enduring significance of occupation as a set of tactics for how we might still come to know and live the city differently’ (198–199). Now is perhaps not the time for academic reflection on this task, but it is clear that histories of squatting must continue to illuminate the task in hand and its potential futures; and that any movement claiming the right to be in and reproduce space must take into account the politics of race and migration.

In so doing some unsettling of the concept of the ‘city’ that informs *Metropolitan Preoccupations* (and contemporary work on the ‘right to the city’ more broadly) will no doubt occur, with attention paid to Berlin’s relationship with borders and migration. Whilst it is perfectly understandable that ‘the city’ is understood here as having ‘enduring significance ... as a site of radical transformation’ (11), I would like to see this complicated somewhat, with squatting and ‘the city’ (Berlin the city and ‘the city’ as conceptual image) positioned in relation to that which lies beyond (cf. Elden and Morton 2016; Massey 1994). Increasing numbers of squatters, after all, face not just a battle to realize their right to (be in and make) the city as the right to (be in and make) Europe, or even the world.

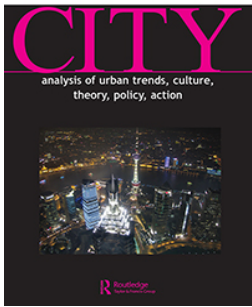
This remains, however, an excellent work about the struggle to ‘be in and make’. In an oft-quoted definition Élisée Reclus defined geography as ‘history in space’ (quoted in Ross 2008, 19). What *Metropolitan Preoccupations* presents, however, is a history that does not so much occur *in* space as *reproduce*

it (and, indeed, is reproduced by it). The (pre)occupations of its title do not simply claim space—they transform it through hope, resistance, conflict and solidarity; and name this transformation as a right. This is not a new claim, of course, but in telling the stories of how this right has been struggled for, fought against and co-opted in such an engaging, critically aware manner, Alexander Vasudevan has produced a book that deserves to be widely read not just by those with an interest in squatting or Berlin, but in the potentials and problems of prefigurative spatial praxis within, against and beyond more broadly.

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Rethinking the urban crisis in Flint, Michigan

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Review

Rethinking the urban crisis in Flint, Michigan

Benjamin J. Pauli

Demolition means progress: Flint, Michigan, and the fate of the American metropolis, Andrew Highsmith. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2015, xx + 378 pp., ISBN 9780226050058, US\$45.00 (cloth).

Flint, Michigan is better known as a subject for satire than as a subject for scholarship. The story of its rise and fall—immortalized, to the chagrin of many Flint residents, in Michael Moore’s *Roger & Me*—has become an almost cartoonish archetype for a broader narrative about urban crisis and misguided urban renewal in the USA.¹ While the decline of Flint’s southeasterly neighbor Detroit has epic qualities, encapsulated in the ghostly grandeur of abandoned skyscrapers, Flint’s own tale of woe is more picaresque, leavened by quirky missteps like the infamous Autoworld, a charmingly disastrous attempt to turn nostalgia for the city’s industrial past into a source of amusement and tourism in the present. Flint’s current struggles are, of course, anything but amusing: a murder rate that hovers near the top of the national rankings, a fiscal crisis that has only recently seen the city emerge from state-appointed emergency management and a water crisis that has produced dangerous levels of lead in the bloodstreams of the city’s children. But while these issues have occasionally attracted attention and even outrage, their deeper historical underpinning has rarely been treated with the *gravitas* it deserves.

Thankfully, the serious, scholarly and thorough historical study that Flint has long merited has arrived in Andrew Highsmith’s *Demolition Means Progress: Flint, Michigan,*

and the Fate of the American Metropolis. It does for Flint what Thomas Sugrue’s seminal *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* did for Detroit, transforming our understanding of the city’s evolution while spelling out its significance for what Highsmith describes as ‘the interlocking histories of racial and economic inequality, mass suburbanization, and deindustrialization in modern America’ (5). As such, the book is not only an invaluable resource in making sense of the city’s contemporary condition but also a major contribution to urban studies (Figure 1).

One way of telling Flint’s story would be to treat it as the consummate illustration of what it means for a city to be caught in the vice of economic globalization and neoliberalism, hollowed out by disinvestment and pressured into austerity by seemingly insurmountable deficits. But the story Highsmith tells is different. His focus throughout is on the personal rather than the impersonal factors that have shaped Flint’s trajectory, on conscious decisions made by local elites and everyday people, decisions informed not by unshakeable economic logic but by a mixture of motivations, including—as the titular theme of the book indicates—warped but often well-intentioned conceptions of progress. This approach yields a number of insights that not only fill in missing pieces of Flint’s history but point to the need for new frameworks and emphases in the study



Figure 1 A sign posted at the site of GM's demolished Buick City facility offers a dubious reassurance to Flint residents (Photograph: Andrew Highsmith, 2005).

of similar cities. Two insights in particular deserve mention here.

The first has to do with the relationship between Flint and General Motors (GM), alternately the city's biggest corporate benefactor and its most treacherous bogeyman. The conventional wisdom about urban decline, established by Sugrue and others, is that the process of corporate disinvestment in Rust Belt cities like Flint began in the early postwar era, setting these cities on a slippery slope towards economic collapse that culminated in the crises of the 1980s and 1990s. In contrast to this narrative, one of the revelations of Highsmith's book is just how slow and reluctant GM was to give up on Flint. The closing of GM factories in the inner city and the opening of new factories within the growing ring of settlements on the outskirts of the city—which did indeed begin in the 1940s and 1950s—was not the usual tale of urban abandonment

(a tale exemplified in Detroit's case by Ford's pursuit of suburban autonomy in Highland Park and Dearborn). Instead, GM was unusually committed to remaining in Flint for the long haul. The company was the main sponsor of an ambitious plan for a 'New Flint' that would have involved the incorporation of the city's peripheral suburbs into a much larger municipality, 'a single Sunbelt-style "super government" for the entire metropolitan region' (122). Political consolidation would ensure that Flint's urban core and its industrial extremities coexisted in a symbiotic economic relationship, shoring up the city's tax base while facilitating GM's efforts to build up a transportation infrastructure linking its decentralized network of plants. The plan hinged, however, upon the assumption that GM would be able to exercise its traditional hegemony over local government, which had long conflated public and private interests by

dutifully enacting the company's agenda in the name of Flint's continuing prosperity. What thwarted GM's broader objectives, and what ultimately led to its fateful decision to give up on the city, was not simply capitalist imperatives but the organized efforts of suburban residents, motivated by economic, political and racial considerations, to prevent the establishment of the inclusive metropolitan unit called for by the New Flint plan. It was only when this metropolitan vision fell apart that GM's long-term orientation towards Flint began to change.

Rather than redeeming GM (which comes in for plenty of criticism over the course of the book), what Highsmith's retelling of the Flint-GM saga does is to put conscious decisions made by political and economic actors on a metropolitan scale at the center of the story. By bringing out the complex interplay of city and suburb, Highsmith sheds light on the context in which these decisions took shape, stressing the importance of a perspective that zooms out beyond the geographical limits of the city but not so far that particularities start to look like mere footnotes buried under otherwise homogeneous waves of regional and global economic change. As Highsmith puts it, pithily, the story he tells of Flint's economic transformation 'confirms that it is wisest to investigate the origins of America's urban-industrial crisis from a metropolitan vantage point' (16).

Highsmith's second major insight, and another illustration of his focus on the role of conscious agency in shaping Flint's history, concerns the way in which educational redistricting helped to perpetuate the city's deep-seated racial segregation. As Highsmith points out, accounts of urban segregation have typically centered on racial discrimination in hiring (referred to in Flint as 'GM Crow') and the construction of segregated housing developments. The latter is sometimes held to have produced 'de facto' educational segregation as a byproduct, with racially uniform residential blocs incidentally generating racially uniform schools. Here,

again, Highsmith is determined to lay the blame at the feet of specific historical actors—in this case, public officials working in conjunction with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to pioneer 'a system of community education and "neighborhood schools" that hundreds of cities across the country copied during the postwar period' (54). The idea was to turn community schoolhouses into civic centers with recreational and educational offerings for adults as well as children, a proposal envisioned as a kind of urban renewal of 'people rather than physical spaces' (55). The effect of the community education initiative, however, was not just to reproduce Flint's racial geography within the educational sphere but to further entrench it. As Highsmith writes,

'Mott Foundation officials and members of the Flint Board of Education repeatedly manipulated student transfer policies, built new facilities in segregated neighborhoods, and gerrymandered attendance boundaries—all in an attempt to maintain the color line. The board's policies left schools as segregated, or even more so, than the highly segregated neighborhoods they served.' (65–66)

When a combination of popular mobilization and federal pressure forced the city to confront the shocking degree of segregation in its school system in the 1970s, the Mott Foundation 'announced the end of its community education initiative' (235) and withdrew its support from the public schools, leaving the district in dire financial straits and as segregated as ever (Figure 2).

Having exploded the myth of 'de facto' segregation in education, Highsmith offers a new typology of segregation that distinguishes between *legal*, *administrative* and *popular* forms. After the end of legally sanctioned segregation, he argues, administrative and popular segregation became the principal means by which the color line was created and enforced. The story of Flint's public schools reveals the importance of administrative segregation in particular in reinforcing and deepening urban racial divisions—not



Figure 2 A Flint resident finds an inventive way to keep her crumbling roof safe from the elements (Photograph: Joel Rash, 2012).

only, as Highsmith demonstrates, in the more familiar areas of racially biased public housing schemes and federal mortgage insurance policies, but in school district gerrymandering as well.

If the first half of Highsmith's book is occupied chiefly with the intentions and machinations of the economically and racially privileged, the second half of the book foregrounds popular struggles over issues like open housing, urban renewal and school desegregation. Once again, the implication is that people, not impersonal forces, make the history of cities. But this section of the book is important not only for making this point in the language of grassroots activism, but for usefully complicating the overarching theme that Highsmith uses to tie his richly detailed and multifaceted argument together. The slogan that forms the title of the book, 'Demolition Means Progress', comes from a banner that once hung in front of a shuttered GM plant. It is an apt insignia not just because it encapsulates the questionable conception of 'progress' that has pockmarked the city's history with ill-advised attempts at revitalization and renewal, but because it reflects the undue influence that corporate and political elites have had in shaping and promulgating a particular understanding of progress to the city's

residents. Weighting the tail end of the book with chronicles of popular resistance encourages the reader to consider not only how the notion of progress has been poorly defined and misappropriated, but how it can be contested and *redefined*.

In bringing attention to the ways in which 'ordinary citizens and local policy makers have...played key roles in driving the spatial reorganization of capital, work, and poverty' (305f.), Highsmith is by no means implying that solving Flint's problems is solely a matter of stocking the cast of metropolitan actors with people who have the city's best interests at heart. He is quick to acknowledge the importance of larger-scale factors like globalization and neoliberalization in explaining the city's predicament, suggesting that it is not in contradistinction to but in *addition* to these factors that local dynamics are worthy of serious consideration. Ultimately, Highsmith's framework is validated not only by its ability to illuminate, however, but by its ability to empower. By spotlighting the significance and efficacy of conscious agency—including concerted popular struggle—at the local level, Highsmith gives those fighting for Flint and for other similarly positioned cities reason to believe that their efforts may prove fruitful. And even more profitably, by placing

progress at the heart of his book, Highsmith uses the history of Flint to turn our attention to the city's future, shifting the discourse around urban crisis from 'decline and abandonment' to competing visions of 'renewal and reinvention' (6). This is a useful counter-narrative to the dire predictions of Flint's demise that have featured so prominently in popular representations of the city's plight. Highsmith leaves us with an image of Flint not as the incipient 'ghost town' that it is often made out to be, but as a site of resilience and hope for the nearly

100,000 souls who continue to call it their home.

Note

- 1 For a literally cartoonish rendering of Flint's story, see the children's film *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*.

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