

## Jerusalem's colonial space as paradox<sup>1</sup>

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The settlements around Jerusalem are, arguably, the place where one finds the deepest fissures between Jewish and Palestinian attitudes to the occupation. Approximately half of all settlers live in large bedroom suburbs adjacent to Jerusalem. For most Jewish Israelis these are satellites or simply neighbourhoods of the capital, a reality of ‘facts on the ground’ and now well-absorbed into the everyday urban fabric. Israelis distinguish them from the settlements in the West Bank. Their Jewish-only populations tend not to be radical and many consider themselves apolitical; these residents live in the settlements because they can enjoy good housing stock at favourable prices, resulting in larger houses, often with gardens, than would be available inside the city’s greenline. For Palestinians, the settlements are built on stolen land, their land. For them, these neighbourhoods are colonies and the result of a long occupation that cements its processes of domination through planning and building.

Yet, despite the above characterisations, this bilateral opposition is not as well defined as might seem. Some Palestinians, either Israeli citizens or those holding Jerusalem Residency Certificates, have moved into the Jewish settlements. According to the available data at the end of 2008 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008; Hasson, July 15 2015), approximately 4500 Palestinians live in the settlements. They too wish to avail themselves of the superior facilities available in the settlements. Abowd (2007: 1025) suggests that these areas offer urban services and goods that make them

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attractive for many Palestinians 'whose options in Arab neighbourhoods are not uncommonly more expensive and difficult to access'. Good quality housing in Palestinian East Jerusalem is in short supply. Poor services and a housing shortage are a result of both Israeli policy and practice that has left the Palestinian parts of the city underdeveloped since 1967. This has resulted in anomalies in the segregated housing profile of the city. Although quantitatively the data we noted above might be considered a marginal phenomenon,<sup>2</sup> qualitatively, we suggest it is significant for a highly divided city like Jerusalem, and more generally, for the study of the dynamics of Israel's occupation. Moreover, the "normalization" of the occupation and colonization of East Jerusalem is described in the literature as a static phenomenon, overlooking micro-scale analysis of everyday life in the city, and its effect on urban praxis.

In this chapter we highlight the paradox of Jerusalem's colonial space; on one hand the Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem were planned, designed and marketed as part of the attempt to Judaize the city, while on the other hand Palestinians who move to these enclaves cross an invisible boundary to become one with the "settlers." In other words, although the settlements are usually considered as the place of ethnic separation, the long term effects of Israeli policy has caused some infiltration of Palestinians into these segregated areas. Whether this phenomenon has created the possibility for greater integration is slim and will be something that this chapter interrogates. A parallel situation applies to the academic literature on the settlements, where the analysis is often separated. In this article we offer a different, complementary view, pointing on a more nuanced understanding of the urban

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<sup>2</sup> The figures given in the introduction are confirmed by other sources. Out of approximately 7000 inhabitants in French Hill there are around 50 Palestinian Arab families, mainly from Israel's northern region. Also, according to media reports there are 400 Palestinian families that moved to Jewish

dynamics of occupation and conflict while looking at set of inversions (Palestinian settlers in a Jewish settlement). As we will illustrate throughout this article, it is the very particular urban condition of a neighborhood/settlement, and the various legal statuses of its inhabitants, that open possibilities for the Palestinian population. Paradoxically, the attempt to politically and territorially annex East Jerusalem makes it harder to fully Judaize it.

Our focus on neighbourhood scale as a means of understanding the very extensive colonial settlements around Jerusalem is far from arbitrary. Rather, the concept of neighbourhood, as a social and spatial entity, is discursively linked to modernity, modern planning and certainly nationalism (Gilette, 2010). Since the end of the nineteenth century, the design of modern neighbourhoods was at the core of urban planning; its vision was not only the physical improvement of housing conditions but extended to *civitas*, i.e. the shared community of citizens (Gilette 2010, 2). Yet, Western planning ideologies in colonial contexts inherently embody cultural imperialism, and thus present a utopian idiom of neighbourhood which is based on a homogenous social entity; against such a background, a community where its dwellers are strangers to each other is thus rendered problematic. In other words, there is a hegemonic assumption behind colonial planning, and a sense of community is taken to refer to the same ethnic, national, racial or class group.

Based on extensive fieldwork carried out from January 2006 to July 2013 which included documentation, quantitative data collection, archival research as well as in-depth interviews, this article focuses on French Hill, the neighbourhood that was the first settlement of the Israeli Judaization of East Jerusalem. Israelis consider it to be politically and culturally part of unified Jerusalem. Established according to

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neighbourhoods – mainly in French Hill, Pisgat Zeev and Neev Yaakov. For details see: Hasson, July

modern planning episteme, this neighbourhood is inhabited by Jewish residents, but as noted, it is undergoing a process of demographic transformation as Palestinians, both with Israeli citizenship and Jerusalem Resident Certificates, have been moving there in recent years.

Indeed, as we will detail, despite the escalating violence following the First and especially the Second Intifada,<sup>3</sup> and the ongoing discourses of enmity, Israeli residents in French Hill found themselves facing a dilemma: 'to sell or not to sell', using Rabinowitz's words (Rabinowitz, 1994), property to Palestinians. While such a dilemma has been explored by several studies in relation to Jewish-Arab mixed cities (Yacobi, 2009), we suggest that the case of French Hill may exhibit some differences to areas inside Israel. For if we consider the matter in terms of Palestinian sensibilities, the question of 'to buy or not to buy' property becomes one of existential concern, as French Hill is one of the first settlements built on occupied Palestinian land in East Jerusalem, as well as a neighbourhood ostensibly built for, and offering public services to, Jewish residents only. For Palestinians who consider buying into French Hill, the fear of being branded a collaborator will always lie just below the surface of everyday life.

### **New colonialism: the establishment of a modern neighbourhood**

Despite the fact that the colonisation of East Jerusalem was declared in a 1968 government decision taken at national level, it is the professional knowledge of experts that contributed to the implementation of such policy. The first step was the use of the legal system; in January 1968 the Land Ordinance for expropriating land through the Planning and Construction Law 1965 was invoked. This allowed the

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24, 2009

expropriation of land for public use without any specified use, whether for housing, parks or infrastructure. As a result of this act, 3345 dunams were expropriated in the first instance, including the area to become French Hill, in the northern part of 'unified Jerusalem'.

**Figure 1: North East Jerusalem area a general view from North East**

French Hill stands at a critical topographical point for the newly expanded Israeli Jerusalem. From it, there is a visual axis to the Old City, while at the same time, the neighbourhood pivots between the main road to the northern West Bank and to the south, East Jerusalem. It is also on the road that connects Mount Scopus, and its Hebrew University campus, with Israeli West Jerusalem. The connections help to reinforce an Israeli weak spot from the divided topography of 1948-67 and point towards future settlement. Certainly, the location of Jerusalem's new neighbourhoods, including French Hill, did not depend upon the availability of land or planning logic, but rather as noted by former Israeli City Engineer (1992-4), Elinoar Barzaki, 'it was a clear political agenda to re-shape the city's boundaries' (Barzaki 1989, 30).

The initial demographic objective for French Hill was designed to house 2400 Jewish families. This number increased later due to a decision to allocate 37 dunams to the expansion of the Hebrew University Campus (Yacobi, 2008). Public buildings such as schools and kindergartens were located on the East slope of the hill, protected from the western wind, and the housing zones were designed around the hilltop. In the spirit of modern neighbourhood planning at the time, the design scheme proposed the separation of cars from pedestrians, while most of the housing blocks were planned as four storey buildings. At the time, many of the planning decision reflected a cutting edge approach to modern housing.

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Palestinian uprisings; the First began in 1987 and the Second (or, al-Aqsa Intifada) in 2000.<sup>3</sup>

In December 1969, the Rogers' Plan (after US Secretary of State William Rogers) was published, calling for a shared administration of the city by representatives of the three main religions. Such a recommendation was rejected by the Israeli authorities and as a result the aspirations for low-rise housing in French Hill were pushed aside and three to four additional floors were added to each building in order to intensify the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem. Here the inclusion of architecture and planning as part of the geopolitical tool-box is essential; even more than most other cultural representations, buildings are the manifestation of the political power of the state. In the case of French Hill, housing was a key player, and the geopolitical effect of modern architecture and planning has had to do with the ability to produce not only a tangible manifestation in territory, but also 'new forms of collective association, personal habit and daily life' (Holston 1989, 31). This is noticeable in the planning outline of French Hill where the south-west side of the neighbourhood was left vacant in order to enable a gaze towards the Old City and the Temple Mount.

The attempt to create a visual axis between the frontier new settlement and the historical centre of Jerusalem's Old City contributed to the symbolic construction of the settlement being part of 'united Jerusalem'. Such techniques formed components of wider discourse and practices that characterised Israeli architecture and planning after 1967. The unilateral reunification of Jerusalem challenged Israeli architects and planners who immediately after the 1967 war, were asked 'to cover the recently occupied land with built facts on the ground in order to foster the desired unity of the city under Israeli rule' (Nitzan-Shiftan 2004, 231).

The architectural response to this challenge was expressed in designing the new neighbourhoods not so much as unadulterated modern buildings but within a

Middle Eastern stylistic vernacular of arched windows, rusticated stone and stepped houses. Significantly, such an orientalist interpretation uses its architectural scale and forms as a means of symbolically appropriating the Palestinian built landscape. A telling illustration of this trend is expressed in the design outline of Tzameret Habira (Figure 2: Tzameret Habira selling brochure. Source: Jerusalem Municipality archive), a housing compound built on the eastern slope of French Hill, facing the Judean Desert and the Palestinian village of Issawiya. This part of French Hill was designed to form low terraces that hug the hillside in a way that is emulates the architecture of Palestinian villages. The project houses mainly Jewish immigrants from the US, Canada and Western Europe and was considered the most luxurious zone of the neighbourhood:

All housing will be built in one or two storey units. These are designed so that all houses have uninterrupted views [...] The general architecture will be Mediterranean in character and the overall effect should be that given from afar by the typical Arab village which is built inconspicuously into the hills (French Hill Housing Brochure undated, The Jerusalem Municipality Archive).

The so-called Arab village in the above description is portrayed as natural; it becomes a de-politicised and a-historical object that responds to the local topography in good taste, and is seen only from a distance. Nevertheless, this discursive appropriation is no other than a purification process based on mimicry which occurs in the colonial arena of those in power, the professionals, who desire to create an

oriental landscape as a mechanism of symbolic indigenisation of the settlers. This approach, we suggest, has been a mechanism of normalizing the Jewish inhabitants' sense of place, as noted in one of the interviews:

When we came to live here, the view from the window was empty – there was no one there -- maybe a house or two. The kids used to play in the valley. Today, you see, there are all these illegal [Palestinian] houses in front of us (Interview with Ariella, an Israeli resident January 29, 2006)

As mentioned, the attempt to colonise East Jerusalem was not just territorial, but rather to create a new sense of belonging and superiority among the Jerusalem (Jewish) inhabitants in their new neighbourhoods. Thus, for example, special attention was given to the new street names that were named after military events understood by Israelis to be heroic, such as: Mavo Hamaavak (the Struggle Alley), the Partizan Alley, Mavo Hahitnadvut (the Volunteering Alley, commemorating Jewish volunteers during World War II), and HaEtzel and HaLehi Streets, recognising Jewish militant groups who fought the British for independence in the late 1940s (Report from the Committee of names and streets, No. 47, 14.5.1973, Jerusalem Municipality Archive).

To sum up this section, locating French Hill as the first settlement after the 1967 war to link West Jerusalem and the Hebrew University Campus on Mount Scopus had a fundamental role in the process of the Israeli territorialisation of the city. It marked the edges of the 'unification' of the city post 1967, and through the planning apparatus produced a seemingly natural and historically based frontier, which enabled the extensive development of Jewish neighbourhoods on Palestinian



expropriated land. By so doing, an ongoing process of normalizing the occupation of East Jerusalem was taking place, producing a new cognitive map of, a unified Jerusalem as the Jewish Capital.

[Map 1: about here](#)

### **The urban frontier**

The location of French Hill with its proximity to a number of Palestinian areas, such as Issawiya and Shuafat, meant that total control or removal of Palestinians in the Jewish neighbourhood would be difficult or impossible. Both geographically and symbolically the frontier location of French Hill is significant; it is geographically surrounded by contested landscapes, today including a portion of the separation wall.<sup>4</sup> It watches (and is indeed watched by) Shuafat, the nearby Palestinian refugee camp, and it marks the edge of the city as it is situated by the main road that leads to the Judean desert. Indeed, as argued by Pullan (2011), studies of contested frontier zones tend to focus on states or regions rather than cities, where, according to Ron (2003) the colonial frontier is conceived as a remote and radicalised region, a resource of Terra Nullius. On the other hand, despite strict attempts to command urban frontiers through controlling practices such as planning, housing regulations, etc, cities do not normally have the apparatus available to states to control frontiers (Pullan, 2011). The situation of French Hill is an example of such an urban frontier. There, the increasing

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<sup>4</sup> Within the scope of this paper, we are not able to discuss the political dimension of this structure. However, it is important to note that the construction of the wall in Jerusalem/al-Quds represents a special case; it creates a tangible delineation of greater Israeli Jerusalem, including many of its settlements (that is, the area 'annexed' by Israel in 1967 – illegally, according to international law). It also includes some Palestinian areas that have been 'cherry-picked' by Israel. The immediate effect of the wall is to annex 'de-facto' the settlements/neighbourhoods within the municipal boundaries (in total more than 4,000 dunams). The Palestinian neighbourhoods, constituting 3,200 dunams within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, are excluded; that is, they are on the other side of the wall. Thus their inhabitants unilaterally are deprived of their status as Jerusalemites. Around 40,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites are separated from the city and its services, and an additional 60,000-90,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites living in the areas surrounding Jerusalem are isolated from the city.

movement of Palestinians into the neighbourhood is a result of the geopolitical conditions where Israeli surveillance and control over East Jerusalem's Palestinian neighbourhoods cause unequal distribution of resources and infrastructure, poverty, social and physical deterioration.

A closer view of daily activities reveals that Palestinian presence in the neighbourhood is due to public services that are located there. For example, the local commercial centre in HaEtzel Street serves not just Jewish inhabitants but also Palestinians from nearby neighbourhoods such as Issawiya, Shuafat, Beit Hanina and Beit La'hiya as customers. The local branch of HaPoalim Bank, in HaHagana Street serves both the Jewish and Arab population, as does the post office in HaHail Street, and a car insurance agency that is owned by a Palestinian. The unequal distribution of infrastructure and services between West and East Jerusalem is indeed one of the main reasons why Palestinians cross the border (Conflict in Cities interviews archive, Northern Site, file 14, 2005).

The proximity of the French Hill neighbourhood to the Hebrew University Campus attracts Palestinian students (the majority are Israeli citizens) who rent accommodation in the neighbourhood. Sharing apartments is very common, and there are some cases of mixed Palestinians and Israelis. HaEtzel and Bar-Kochva streets are the most common areas for students, due to their proximity to the University and because they are relatively cheap. No formal Palestinian residency statistics exist, but from a survey of names on mailboxes in these streets, we learned that the number of Palestinians living in this area is stable. For example: in HaEtzel Street 17, from 24 apartments 5 of them had Arabic names written in Hebrew characters on their mailboxes in 2005, with 6 Arabic names in 2010. In HaEtzel Street 16, from 21

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This spatial distortion is aimed at officially reducing the percentage of the city's Palestinian

apartments, 4 of them Arabic names written in Hebrew characters in 2005 and 2 in 2010. In Bar-Kochva Street, 16 from 12 apartments, 1 of them with an Arabic name written in Hebrew letters on their mailbox and the same in 2010. The Palestinian students use all the facilities in the area, including the bank, post office, supermarket and some coffee shops (Interview with Saja Kilani, August 8, 2006). This is perceived as a threat by some Jewish residents:

I went to the café in the commercial centre; it was full of Arabs. I didn't feel comfortable and thus I asked for a take a way coffee... We don't [want to] drink coffee in Ramallah. There is an economic interest for the shops in the commercial centre and thus Arabs are there (Interview with Bracha, an Israeli resident, January 29, 2006).

Like other colonial cities, despite the spatio-political divisions along ethno-national and racial lines (Robinson, 1997), there is an ongoing flow of labour (in the Jerusalem case, Palestinian workers) to the white neighbourhoods (in Jerusalem, to French Hill and many other Jewish neighbourhoods). This was observed as early as the beginning of the 1970s (Giva'aton, the French Hill local newspaper, March 1975, The Jerusalem Municipality Archive).

From the early 2000s, during the escalating violence and tension between Israel and the Palestinians, the frontier characteristics of the French Hill area attracted some major Palestinian bombings and other attacks.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the Palestinian presence in French Hill was heavily contested and feared by many Israelis. One of these

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population.

conflicts was around the presence of Palestinian children and youth in a playground situated at the edge of the neighbourhood, that faced east towards their own village of Issawiya and was far superior to any play area in their own vicinity. As a result of continued protests by the Jewish residents of French Hill, the Jerusalem Municipality removed most of the playground furniture in order to stop the Issawiya children from coming to this playground. The displeasure of some of the Jewish population in the neighbourhood to the use and/or appropriation of space by Palestinians is expressed in the words of Uri Michaeli, the head of the local municipality of the French Hill neighbourhood at that time:

Gan Hashlosha was built as a memorial for three soldiers who were killed in Lebanon. No one has ever forbid Issawiya's children from entering the playground and they were welcomed at first, but in the last two years the place has become a real bother. Issawiya's children took over the playground, drove out the Jewish children with threats and knives, teased the adults and harass the girls. Whole families started coming to the playground, although it has no sanitary facilities for so many visitors. The children of French Hill stopped coming. The activity in the garden lasted till late at night, with shouting and screaming, until many of the neighbours seriously considered moving from their houses (Interview with Uri Michaeli, the head of the local council of French Hill neighbourhood at that time, September, 29 2000).

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<sup>5</sup> A number of these were concentrated at French Hill bus stops for Israeli buses going to the

Indeed, below the surface of the arguments presented above, there is an additional layer, elusive but also significant, that is linked to the fear and anxiety associated with the presence of the Other. As the works of Sandercock (2000) and Bauman (2003) reveal, the fear of the Other is a central component in the discourse of urban politics. Furthermore, the presence of fear in urban space is not a simple reflection of social reality but rather itself a mechanism that produces 'reality', one that is mediated through discourses of fear and order. This is illustrated in the words of the head of the communal administration French Hill:

Tomorrow I will be asked to open an Arab school, and the day after to build a mosque. Each person should live in his neighbourhood – as I do not want to have Haredim [Orthodox Jews] here neither do I want Arabs... I am afraid that French Hill will be occupied by Issawiya (Gideon Yeger, the head of the local council of French Hill neighbourhood at that time, cited in Hasson July 24, 2009).

Fear in its political dimension is intensified when the city undergoes significant transformations that produce political discourse that is, in turn, shaped by those that fear. To some extent, the presence of Palestinians coming from the neighbouring Palestinian districts, as well as Palestinian students renting apartments and using public space in French Hill is a good example of the way in which the discourse of fear focuses on the 'what and whom' we should be afraid of. For Israelis

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settlements north and east of the city; see: Pullan 2007, 63-64

fear is mostly intermittent, sometimes suppressed through their culture of occupation, but occasionally made immediate and visible through challenges like the situation in French Hill. Because they are under occupation, the fear of Palestinians could be seen as more consistent and unbroken, but for them as well, French Hill makes it clear and visible as they venture into 'enemy' territory with only limited means of escape or relief. Important to both groups, and to our discussion here is the spatial dimension of fear, which '...does not just involve a relationship between the individual and a variety of societal structures; it is embedded in a network of moral and political geographies' (Pain and Smith, 2003).

### **Strategies for survival**

It is important to reiterate the primary reason why most Palestinians have moved to French Hill: they desire a better place to live. Homes and neighbourhoods, with a good level of housing stock and neighbourhood services, are generally denied to them in their own communities. But although French Hill offers better physical accommodation, is it a better place to live? This may be considered from two points of view, Israeli and Palestinians in French Hill and the Israeli reaction to their inroads. With respect to the latter, opposition has become more entrenched and more vocal. While the presence of Palestinians in public spaces such as the French Hill commercial centre and playground might be perceived by Jewish residents as a relatively minor phenomenon that can be controlled, the permanent presence of Palestinians who buy and rent property in the neighbourhood is a much more contested subject. There has been not only an institutionalised attempt to severely

limit Palestinians from living in property in areas designated for Israeli habitation,<sup>6</sup> but also an extensive public discourse intended to reinforce the ban; for example, in September 2010, a public ‘Rabbis’ Letter’, called for Jews not to let Arabs rent apartments in their communities. This declaration states that anyone renting his apartment to an Arab is doing harm – both in the eyes of God and for his fellow man.

As far as Palestinians are concerned, the advantages and disadvantages of living in French Hill are far more complex. The wider geopolitical conditions with respect to the city of Jerusalem should also be noted here as a central component in the explanation of this phenomenon. For many years, the Israeli authorities have pursued a policy of limiting new housing in Palestinian areas of Jerusalem, and more recently, the demolition of homes built without permits. For Palestinians who have the blue Jerusalem residency ID card, living outside Jerusalem’s new borders endangers their status as Jerusalemites,<sup>7</sup> while for Palestinians with Israeli citizenship this new reality complicates their mobility.<sup>8</sup> Hence, after the construction of the wall began, thousands of Palestinians returned to the city in order to protect their residency status as well as some of their rights. As a result, there has been an intensification of the housing shortage in East Jerusalem, with an accompanying rapid increase in housing prices in of about 50 percent (International Peace Cooperation Report, 2005) that created pressure on the housing market. All of these factors have resulted in some

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<sup>6</sup> For example, many mortgages have been available only to people who have served in the Israel Defence Forces. All Jewish Israelis are routinely conscripted but Arab Israelis are exempted.

<sup>7</sup> ID cards are issued by the Israeli authorities on their own terms. Residency in Jerusalem is based upon an Israeli census carried out in 1967; Palestinians who spend time outside of Jerusalem may lose their status, and those who marry West Bank residents may not obtain Jerusalem status for them. Besides the right to live in the city, they enjoy Israeli social welfare programmes. They are not citizens of Israel.

<sup>8</sup> This refers to the approximately 20 percent of Israel’s population that is Palestinian, who became citizens in 1948; they are subject to Israeli laws and like Israeli Jews, are not supposed to pass into the Palestinian areas of the West Bank.

Palestinians with Jerusalem ID or Israeli citizenship, who have the economic ability, moving into Jewish neighbourhoods.

This phenomenon reveals further complexities: Israeli Palestinians who have a longer history of living near or next to Israelis and usually speak fluent Hebrew tend to be more comfortable with such a move. Jerusalem Palestinians, who may or may not speak good Hebrew and live under more recent and harsh occupation, with pressure from their fellow Palestinians to avoid fraternising with Israelis, are not. At the same time, it should be noted that this is an upper middle class practice; mortgages are generally not available for such purchases by Palestinians, and cash payments are the norm. Yet, although economic means makes the endeavour possible, the potential for political pitfalls are evident in an interview with Mustafa, a Palestinian who is an Israeli citizen, who moved to the French Hill in 2005:

In the year 2000 we almost bought a 'villa' in [Israeli] Pisgat Zeev. Then the Second Intifada started, there was a tension and I knew that we could not move to Pisgat Zeev [...] So, we searched for a place we liked. We did not want to live in [Palestinian] Shuafat; the municipal services, schools and infrastructure are not good there. Because of the Intifada, there is often a flying checkpoint at the entrance to Shuafat, and if they stop you, you cannot get to work on time in the city (Interview with Mustafa, April 13, 2010).

Mustafa notes that French Hill is close to some of the Palestinian commercial and social centres such as Sheikh Jarrah, Wadi Joz, Beit Hanina and the main road to



Ramallah, thus enabling contact with the Palestinian side, while on the other hand his family can enjoy '...modern infrastructure, municipal services. Here there is security and sovereignty, it is not abandoned' (Interview with Mustafa, April 13, 2010). These, as well as nearby Shuafat, are mostly middle class Palestinian neighbourhoods supplying shops and services appropriate to their residents. The geopolitics of the situation is tempered by specific needs and familiar practices.

Palestinians who wish to buy a property in the French Hill must negotiate with Jewish estate agents or deal directly with individual Jewish vendors who will often maximize their material gain in selling property to Palestinians. In some cases they are very reluctant to sell to Palestinians. This issue was raised by Antuan, a Christian-Palestinian lawyer, and an Israeli citizen who is married to a Jerusalem Palestinian. Antuan bought his apartment in 2002; it was during the Second Intifada and a spate of attacks and the killing of Israelis in the French Hill area brought house process down. Despite the relatively low housing prices at that time, Antuan mentioned that some of the Israeli sellers refused to sell their apartments to Palestinians (Interview with Antuan, a Palestinian who owns a house in French Hill, April 9, 2010).

Indeed, the discussion of the politics of “free market” dynamic vis a vis ethnic and racial exclusion is well-known in the literature, such as the case of American racial neighbourhood covenants excluding African-Americans from buying or renting housing in “white” neighbourhoods (Massey and Denton 1993). It compares closely to Jerusalem where the “fear of Arabness”, a term coined by Dahan-Kalev (2010), is a central mechanism of racializing the Other, i.e representing and defining Palestinians on the basis of racial categories that are used to justify social biases and discrimination. With great significance for our case, Balibar (1991) points to the new patterns of racism that are formed and organized around sociological signifiers to

replace biological markings. In other words, the predominant factor in this form of racism is not the biological difference between ethno-racial groups but rather the presence of minorities in urban space, their movement through social and territorial boundaries, and the perceptions, especially by the dominant majority groups, of these conditions.

However, beyond the social obstacles, as a lawyer who represents other Palestinian families that purchase property in the French Hill, Antuan stated:

Arabs who buy here are economically stable, so they can buy every apartment they are interested in. I personally know around twenty families who bought property [...] If you look at these families – they are each in a better economic situation than the average Israeli family. They can afford *'tosefet Aravi'* (Interview with Antuan, a Palestinian who owns a house in French Hill, April 9, 2010).

The Hebrew term *'tosefet Aravi'*, used by Antuan, has also been repeated by other interviewees. Literally meaning 'an additional price for Arabs', charged by Israeli vendors, it has become a common expression, codifying the sole access of Palestinians to the housing market in Jewish neighbourhoods, while financially ensuring that Palestinian buyers offer 20 to 25 percent more for property in the neighbourhood. An estate agent who lives and works in French Hill states:

The Arab buyers are offering better prices than the Israelis... it creates a dilemma for the vendor. Some Jews will never sell

their flats to Arabs, they say 'Ill never do it to my neighbours'  
but some others will. As a property agent I will never do it  
(Interview with Abraham, January 29, 2006).

Indeed, contrary to the image of a backward or less worldly social group as often presented in Israeli public discourse, Palestinian residents who are economically able to buy property in French Hill are upper middle class and often better educated than the average Israeli residents; many of them are professionals or academics searching for a better housing environment, as stated by Mustafa:

We were looking for an apartment... We wanted a neighbourhood that we liked, with good infrastructure. French Hill is a nice place to live; the neighbours knew we are Arabs, they were nice... All we want is to live peacefully (Interview with Mustafa, April 13, 2010).

But despite the fact that class and the modern western life-style of the Palestinian inhabitants of French Hill is an implicit condition for their presence there, from the Jewish side it is just the beginning of a rapid slide to losing demographic dominance in the neighbourhood. This dilemma, as suggested by Rabinowitz (1994) accentuates the tension between the collective ethos of Zionist territoriality and, what has become central to the Israel's economy, a capitalist mode of free housing market dynamics where personal economic gain dominates. In the words of a Jewish resident,

In French Hill, especially in Ha-Etzel Street, the process [of Arabization] is rapid. The Arabs in our area are upper middle class. They come from the North [of Israel] – one of them is a lawyer and following his arrival another member of his family joined... It starts with the arrival of good people but I am afraid that during the years some negative elements will also live here (Interview with Ariella, an Israeli resident January 29, 2006).

In the end, housing does not necessarily make up all of the key features of neighbourhood, and this is where hope for some further integration meets a stumbling block. According to our findings, Palestinians in French Hill do not partake of many local activities. They do not send their children to the local, Hebrew-language school:

Initially we did not want to live in a neighbourhood which is entirely Jewish since there is a problem with the education of our children... when we decided to move to the French Hill we decided to send our children to the Anglican School, though it is expensive and far away (Interview with Antuan, a Palestinian who owns a house in French Hill, April 9, 2010).

Beyond that, Antuan echoes a common experience among Palestinians residing in French Hill who do not socialise with Jewish Israelis, and their use of neighbourhood shops and services is minimal and curtailed. Mustafa notes:

We do our shopping in Shuafat, but once a week we go to the shopping mall [in Pisgat Zeev]. We have no contact with the cultural events here, the kids do not go to after-school activities here; the piano teacher is coming to teach them here, at home; we take them to visit their [non-Israeli] friends in other neighbourhoods. They have no reason to play outside (Interview with Mustafa, April 13, 2010).

Palestinians may have moved to French Hill for better housing. But at any meaningful level, they are not recognised as welcome residents of their neighbourhood, cannot participate, through both their own reluctance and Israeli distrust. This leaves them isolated, even caged, as a small minority in an often unfriendly, sometimes hostile, environment.

### **The possibilities for participation**

In French Hill, both rights and participation are key issues, and the Palestinians fall short in both. Much has been said of the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996) in relation to the situation of Palestinian citizens in Israel (Yacobi, 2009) and here we would like to focus instead on the question of participation. This can take a variety of forms; an extensive discussion of the pros and cons of participation is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is worth saying that we consider it here primarily in terms of an urban culture with the necessary overtones of political life that the situation in Jerusalem dictates.

Seyla Benhabib (2002) makes the important points that participation in a culture exists from within that culture, and although by nature it is shared, it may also

be contested. While clearly there is more than one culture living in French Hill, we might question to what extent the place itself offers some cultural parameters that, for Palestinians and Israelis, are in some ways shared and certainly contested. To this, we might add that participation requires some level of corporate activity or public life; it is not an individual act.

To understand how place may play a role in public participation, it is worthwhile to see French Hill as a modern westernised neighbourhood in the context of an older urban tradition of Middle Eastern cities. These cities had quarters where different ethnic groups were not necessarily rigidly divided but nonetheless recognisable as such; the cities also had areas where people mixed, mostly in market areas, including coffeehouses, baths, water sources. They saw a variety of faces, heard different languages and accents, and to some extent they discussed or argued about the matters of the day; markets were political places. In the late Ottoman period, Jerusalem was a more mixed city, and more nuanced in its ethnic strata (Tamari, 2011).

To good extent a local and customary order persisted in the city although this was rarely comprehended by foreign (mostly Western) travellers who, from the nineteenth century, describe the city as having four quarters based upon religious divisions; Tamari (2011: 66) argues that the confessional city was primarily reinforced by the British after 1917. Whilst it would be difficult to say that people had any more trust in or regard for the ethnically other than they do today, the possibilities of participating in city life were probably more institutionalised and embedded in the urban structures. We can talk about a spectrum of space from segregation, as in mosques, churches and synagogues, to integration, as in markets. In between, people (men) frequented favourite cafes, where they met friends and acquaintances and

where they knew they were welcome, and avoided ones where they felt uncomfortable. On the whole, they maintained neighbourly relations that formed the basis of trade, patronage and more generally, everyday life. In modern terminology, we could say that the city centre provided places for mediating difference.

As we noted above, Israel has for the most part embraced modern planning and architecture which, as disciplines, have mostly neglected such a mediative environment; at best, they have organised cities and neighbourhoods in terms of functional typologies with little reflection of the nuanced social structures that are common in the Middle East. At worst, they have extended and reinforced the planning policies that separated peoples on the basis of ethnic affiliation. Following in the footsteps of British planning (Kendall, 1948) the Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem have been designed as autonomous enclaves, divided from Palestinian areas by valleys and bypass roads rather than by urban places in which social and economic activity might develop. If we look today at where there is some interaction between Palestinians and Israelis, it often happens in the most mundane areas of life – markets, petrol stations, some restaurants, or in French Hill, in the supermarket, post office and bank (Conflict in Cities fieldwork archive, Northern Site, files 4, 13, 23, 24). However these places are relatively few and encounters tend to be fleeting.

With respect to the geopolitics of neighbourhoods, there is a clash of scales, between everyday life and the big political picture. French Hill can be said to some extent to be a microcosm of the Palestine-Israel conflict and rather than the slow and undramatic ‘murmur of urban political discourse’ that Appadurai (1996) claims to commonly characterise the confluence of local and global, Jerusalem’s high profile means that even the most innocuous of actions are quickly thrust onto the world stage. At the same time, the lack of balance between the everyday acts of Israelis and

Palestinians reflects the asymmetry of the larger political situation, and people who are caught up in these circumstances are forced to live in a big but skewed picture. In short, daily acts regularly become issues of sovereignty and, as Hannah Arendt (1958, repr. 1989, 234-235) has made clear, plurality and sovereignty do not mix.

One might ask to what extent living in French Hill is for its Palestinian minority an act of resistance, in itself, a form of participation as a member of one's nation. For example, whilst many of the middle class Palestinian residents of French Hill see their residency as a 'strategy of survival', some underline the political dimension of their decision to move to a colonial neighbourhood:

...we broke the stereotypes against Arabs. They [the Jewish neighbours] feel that we are part of this place... If you will measure the socio-economic ability of the Arabs in the neighbourhood, it is much higher than the average Jewish people... Our presence here has a symbolic meaning, it is even a symbolic de-colonization (Interview with Antuan, a Palestinian who owns a house in French Hill, April 9, 2010).

Whilst this may offer some satisfaction as an act of ongoing subversion, at least at a symbolic level, the problem of everyday participation in one's neighbourhood and community is not solved. Rather, there is the question to what extent Palestinians need to relinquish parts of their own culture in order to achieve even a minimal level of integration. How compromised are they? To buy or not to buy becomes an existential question. This seems to be most important in the question of Palestinian polity; not only how much can they participate in Israeli culture and



institutions in French Hill, but to what extent are they participant in their own culture and politics if they live in such a neighbourhood? While they may enjoy some small level of acceptance within Israeli circles in French Hill, this is fundamentally opposed to the wishes of the larger Palestinian entity that desires the end of the occupation and their own liberation. Arendt's basic description of the polity of the polis as 'speaking and acting together' (Arendt 1958, repr. 1989: 183) is mostly removed from the French Hill Palestinians who live apart from the wider Palestinian collective. It is at this fundamental level – not in the with-holding of integration with Israelis, but in their separation from Palestinian society - that participation is primarily denied to them.

## **Conclusion**

Ideally, the urban sphere, in its density and diversity, could serve as a space that is "open to flows of people" (Katznelson 1995, 57). Such a liberal perspective relies heavily on the belief that the city has the potential for the production of an "enabling space" that might disrupt the existing hierarchies and boundaries of ethnic and class structures. Yet, as we have detailed, such a view is only partial in the context of Jerusalem's settlements, which is divided not only along the Jewish/Arab partition but also according to other ethnic divisions that stem from the nature of the Israeli settler society.

The most significant contribution of this article is that it looks not solely at macro processes namely occupation, colonization and bordering but rather its analysis refers to facts on the ground from the point of view of the ground. This complementary view of geopolitical processes reveals the paradoxical situation of colonial territories such as French Hill. As we have detailed, French Hill is both a

well-established settlement, “normalized” by different practices such as architecture and infrastructure planning, while at the same time its frontier location on the old border makes it a space of negotiation, unexpected migration and habitation. The paradox of contested frontier and work-a-day suburb is typical of many Israeli settlements, but French Hill is particularly vulnerable to such a strained dichotomy because of the challenge to the homogeneous Jewish population by its Palestinian residents.

Palestinians are a small minority in French Hill and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, their presence carries with it larger implications and even some concrete benefits. The Palestinians do enjoy better housing and municipal services; for some there is the sense of beating the system, and for others, a form of resistance. The Israeli interests and concerns are more difficult to pinpoint and many would argue that the phenomenon is wholly negative; but at the risk of sounding patronising, it would be fair to say that the Palestinian residents of French Hill are a small chink in the stone of a politics-driven colonial planning system that is one-sided, unjust and needing of reform; also important is that Israelis see Palestinians and hear Arabic in a city where many segments of the population never encounter it.

But more to the point would be to look at the Palestinian residents in the neighbourhood as it pertains to both groups: can we talk about shared space under occupation in any way? After all, although multicultural cities today in the West are seen as dealing with the other, particularly where destinies may exist in tandem. To a small extent, public and commercial spaces in French Hill are shared and at a minimal level, some experiences of the neighbourhood become applicable to all. This is typical of many middle class Western cities where, in Bauman’s words, ‘strangers meet, remain in each other’s proximity, and interact for a long time without stopping being

strangers to each other' (Bauman 2006, 6). At the same time, Jerusalem is a highly contested city and normal comments on, and aspirations for, multiculturalism seems feeble here. The immigration of ethnic and racial minorities to 'white' middle-class neighbourhoods is not a peculiar Israeli phenomenon and has been covered widely in the literature; however, the discourses of inclusion and exclusion, borders and boundaries, demographic control, security and separation attached to it 'resonates with a long-standing discourse among the public as well as among scholars and politicians who frame Israel as a regional 'ghetto' — which is both 'refuge' and 'island' (Monterescu, 2009).

Two interrelated possibilities of sharing may be cited in the French Hill example, possibilities which in themselves are powerful, although it is too soon to understand their impact. Firstly, both groups share the problem of having their private lives regularly catapulted into the public realm and world stage. Yet, both groups are middle class, educated and living relatively conventional lives in this suburb of Jerusalem. This raises the second point: in many ways these two groups are remarkably similar economically and professionally if not politically. Ultimately, will such profound similarities help to form a quiet if not friendly sharing of the neighbourhood? And, would not a middle-class initiative, like establishing a joint Palestinian-Israeli school with instruction in Hebrew and Arabic, going a long way to easing tensions and preparing the next generation for a certain amount of shared space? It is in a neighbourhood like French Hill, with its middle class populations, that such schemes might bear fruit.

Although this research raises many questions at this point, it does make clear that geopolitics in contested cities is happening at the minute and everyday level. As we have discussed in this article, the geopolitics of cities and the shaping of their

territorial borders and social boundaries - both externally (the city in relation to its region) and internally (between the city's neighbourhoods) - are determined not solely through military acts but rather, as we suggested throughout this paper, urban geopolitics refers to the emergence of discourses and forces attached to technologies of control, in our case, planning. At the same time, patterns of migration such as the case of Palestinians moving to French Hill and the flow capital in the housing free market are much more loosely related to formal structures, and sometimes act as a controlling or unjust policy that has backfired.

As we have shown, geopolitical perspective is a useful analytical framework for studying planning and the production of urban space that subverts the traditional distinction between domestic and international affairs habitually taken for granted in political geography. We would also conclude that the emergence of Palestinian inhabitants in Jerusalem's colonial neighbourhoods that were established after the 1967 war, mark new forms of urban dynamics that form inclusion and exclusion as well as some new spatio-political possibilities.

Following Holston (1989) we can conclude that the city is a space in which residents oppose and undermine dominant narratives of the state and capital. Simultaneously, communities in the city create alternative local narratives that do not necessarily reflect the rationale of the nation or of capital; nor do they reflect the social hierarchy or the power relations that create it. As this article shows, the production of urban space in colonial neighbourhoods cannot be understood solely through the binary analysis of top-down processes and policies. Rather, a deeper understanding demands acknowledging the bottom-up initiatives and their role, as Lefebvre suggests that one can see how a counter-space can insert itself into spatial

reality “against the Eye and the Gaze, against quantity and homogeneity, against power and the arrogance of power” (Lefebvre 1991, 382).

At the contested boundaries of Jerusalem, it is not surprising to find radical urban frontiers manufactured by planning apparatus that as we detailed, have dominated the city since 1967. But the frontier neighbourhood, because of its ‘front line’ geographical location enables, to some extent, negotiation between Palestinian buyers and Jewish vendors, which in turn cracks the demographic homogeneity dictated by the colonial project.

This is the paradox of current colonial urbanism in Jerusalem: on one hand, the forceful effect of the normalization of occupation was orchestrated by Israeli law, planning and state regulations that privilege Jewish citizens. On the other, the opening of the market – to all intents and purposes a normalization process – countered these policies and practices when it started attracting Palestinian population. Indeed, normalization has the potential to not only help the course of Judaization, but also may threaten it by breaking ethno-national dichotomies. To some extent this may be expected and it is worth considering the French Hill situation in a broader context: except in the most rigidly authoritarian cases, cities accommodate, at least to some extent, the flow of different urban populations. Even in heavily contested situations, like Jerusalem, there are at certain times and places some level of integration of ethnic groups. French Hill appears to reflect a version of this, despite the peculiarities of its own conditions. At the same time, it would be wrong to attempt to idealise such instability or to over-estimate the possibilities of interaction achieved from it, especially under conditions of duress such as the Palestinians experience. Relying on the possibilities offered by free-market housing through the 'Tosefet Aravi' as a vehicle for achieving the right to the city is problematic, primarily because it

overlooks the promise of the city to be a space for neighbouring. In this context we further conclude that neighbouring in its modern sense, with the full possibilities and demands of participation in a neighbourhood, demands equality, on both a legal and a practical level, which cannot be achieved in present colonial conditions on one hand and in the context of growing reliance on individuals' socio-economic mobility on the other.

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