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Borders, Boundaries and Frontiers: Notes on Jerusalem's Present Geopolitics

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Abstract

This article explores the relevance of geopolitics to the study of urban space in contested territories, with a specific focus on Jerusalem's colonial geographies. The main theoretical argument is that the geopolitics of cities have to do with a crossing of scales – from the neighbourhood scale to the city level and then to the colonial apparatuses of the state. This is related to the fact that the consequences and impacts of borders and territoriality are not diminishing. Instead we should pay attention to new scales of territorial affiliations and borders. At the same time as recognising that borders may be flexible, they are still selective on different geographical scales.

Introduction

Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish people, a city reunified so as never again to be divided... Our people's unparalleled affinity to Jerusalem has spanned thousands of years, and is the basis of our national renaissance. It has united our people, secular and religious alike.¹

The above citation, by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, is a common belief among Israelis, who see a “united Jerusalem” as a fixed urban space, a given subject of Israeli sovereignty and ethno-national aspirations. However, the city of Jerusalem is manufactured by geopolitical practices including not just military occupation but also planning policy, demographic engineering and the production of imagined geographies. Yet, often these fields of studies are analysed separately, overlooking the relevance of urban planning to the growing literature on geopolitics. Moreover, the critical discussion of geopolitics and ethnic conflicts tends to focus on states' borders and national territory while ignoring the relevance of analysing the urban realm. Following this, in this paper I attempt to discuss planning in Jerusalem, within the growing literature on geopolitics.

Accordingly, this paper will focus on the relevance of geopolitics to the study of planning, by which we mean not merely a discussion of international relations and conflict or of the roles of

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¹ Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, “Netanyahu: Jerusalem holy sites will remain Israeli forever,” <http://www.haaretz.com/news/netanyahu-jerusalem-holy-sites-will-remain-israeli-forever-1.276465>

military acts and wars in producing space.² Rather, geopolitics refers to the emergence of discourses and forces connected with the technologies of control, patterns of internal migrations by individuals and communities, and the flow of cultures and capital. Such an approach is presented by Yosef Jabareen³ who analyses the ways in which public planning in Israel has been utilised to dramatically influence the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to achieve geopolitical ends. Jabareen suggests that planning in Jerusalem has been based on geopolitical strategies aiming to control demography, to expand the jurisdiction of the city through confiscation of Palestinian lands and to exclude the Palestinian inhabitants of the city from any strategic planning.

In this paper I suggest a further exploration of the relationship between planning and geopolitics by suggesting that the geopolitics of cities have much to do with the crossing of scales – from the neighbourhood scale to the city level and then to the colonial apparatus of the state. This has to do with the impact of borders and territoriality, the role of which is not diminishing. Rather, as Newman⁴ argues, new scales of territorial affiliations and borders are recognizable that may be flexible but that are still dependent on different geographical scales – an argument that paves the way to reading planning geopolitically.

Planning and the Colonial Production of Jerusalem

Let us start with a short overview of Jerusalem's planning as a tool to shape the colonial geographies of the city. Such an approach is not arbitrary, as in the wider theoretical context Foucault⁵ has argued that the relations between power and planning go through a significant change which coincides with the rise of nationalism. From the eighteenth century onwards, planning became a discipline of a new political aspect, which accentuates the state as an organization that enforces territorial, social, political and cognitive order, which molds norms and rules by means of domination, exclusion and inclusion mechanisms.

With the above remark in mind, the 1948 war and the establishment of the state of Israel has dramatically changed Jerusalem's geography, demography and politics. First, the separation of the city between Israel and Jordan was marked by a wall which created a border zone. But the 1948 war and the national conflict also shifted urban development dramatically, shaping Jewish Jerusalem through two processes; during that period the city shrank back into its "safe" quarters and expanded into its western hinterland. The development of the mass housing districts for Jewish migrants such as Kiryat Yovel and Kiryat Menachem on the site of expropriated Palestinian villages are good examples.

² John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

³ Yosef Jabareen, "The politics of state planning in achieving geopolitical ends: The case of the recent master plan for Jerusalem," *IDPR* 32:1 (2010): 27-43.

⁴ David Newman, "The Lines That Continue to Separate us: Borders in Our 'Borderless' World," *Progress in Human Geography* 30:2 (2006): 1-19.

⁵ Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, Power: Interview with Paul Rabinow," in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London and New York: Routledge, 1982 [1997]), 367-380.

During this period the role of planning and architecture as part of the geopolitical “tool-box” of the state as well as means of control and discipline implemented upon the population was of central importance. Indeed, such claims coincide with Holston's⁶ argument that modern planning is a useful means to construct and shape new forms of collective belonging and daily life. Furthermore, in terms of demography, the western part of the city was settled mainly by oriental Jews in frontier neighborhoods, such as in Mammilah and Musrara; these ex-Palestinian neighborhoods were housed mainly by poor Jewish migrants who protected the city's frontier.

This process was accompanied by the massive construction of the new Jewish capital representative centre “Kiryat HaLeom” (the National Compound) that included national institutions located at the west such as the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament), an Israeli museum and a university campus in Givaat Ram. From an architectural point of view, this process adopted Modernism as a symbol and a functional response to the political situation while the Palestinian vernacular that signified the intimidating “other” was a subject of demolition.

As widely documented and discussed a significant spatial turning point of Israel's geopolitical conditions started after June 1967, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem among other territories. Following this, the Israeli government initiated legislation acts in order apply Israeli law on East Jerusalem, despite international objections. As a result, Israel annexed Palestinian land and declared the city of Jerusalem as its capital. Yet, beyond the Israeli rhetoric representing Jerusalem as a unified city its planning policies have been the paradigm of a colonial city. Both state and city pursue this policy, which has persistently promoted a project of Judaization: that is, the expansion of Jewish political, territorial, demographic, and economic control.⁷

As detailed by Yiftachel and Yacobi⁸ Israel has used its military might and economic power to relocate borders and boundaries, grant and deny rights and resources, shift populations, and reshape the occupied territories for the purpose of ensuring Jewish control. In the case of East Jerusalem, two complementary strategies have been implemented by Israel; the massive construction of an outer ring around Jewish neighbourhoods which now host over half the Jewish population of Jerusalem, and a containment of all Palestinian development, implemented through housing demolition and the prevention of immigration to the city.

Land use policy in Jerusalem encourages Jewish expansion while restraining Palestinian growth in the city. Prior to 1948 Jews owned less than 30 per cent of the property within the municipality of Jerusalem (see Fig.1). Nowadays, Jewish ownership and control of property in the city accounts for over 90 per cent of Jerusalem. This pattern created a physical obstacle on top of the already existing spatial barrier between East and West Jerusalem. Furthermore, Israelis have also

⁶ John Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁷ Scott Bollens, *On Narrow Ground: Urban Policy and Ethnic Conflict in Jerusalem and Belfast* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Wendy Pullan, Phillip Misselwitz, Rami Nasrallah, and Haim Yacobi, “Jerusalem's Road 1: An Inner City Frontier?” *City* 11:2 (2007): 176-198.

⁸ Oren Yiftachel and Haim Yacobi, “Planning a Bi-National Capital: Should Jerusalem Remain United?” *Geoforum* 33 (2002): 137-145.

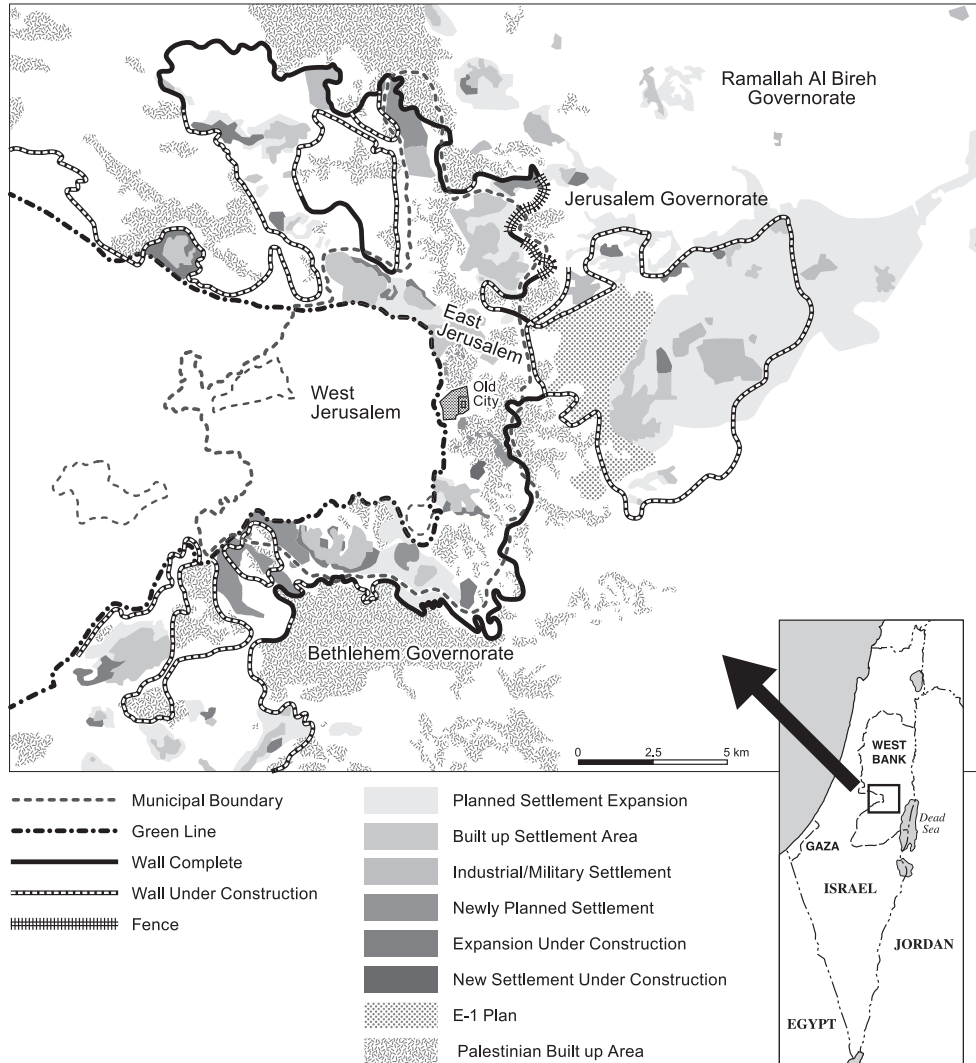


Figure 1: Map of Jerusalem

maintained control of all infrastructure, including the water and sewerage system, and access roads so that Palestinians have become isolated in their own neighbourhoods, cut off from each other.

An additional important shift in relation to the post 1967 period is the emphasis on moving back towards the Old City. The frontier neighbourhoods that were inhabited up to 1967 by poor Jewish communities were a subject of redevelopment and gentrification. Yemin Moshe is a good example of this process; this housing compound was erected out of the Old City walls in 1891 in order to house Jewish families. The inhabitants that housed this border zone from 1948 to 1967 were moved and a massive reconstruction turned the neighbourhood into a very expensive gentrified zone – known as one of Jerusalem’s “ghost neighbourhoods.”

Another planning mechanism that has shaped Jerusalem and its surroundings since 1967 is the implementation of infrastructure. Road 1 is a good illustration of this trend; it links the centre of

West Jerusalem to the outlying settlements such as the French Hill and Pisgat Zeev as well as to some of the largest settlements in the West Bank such as Maale Adumim.⁹

Importantly, beyond the unequal distribution of transportation services, roads and other infrastructure, it dramatically changed the cognitive map of the city, unifying the territory of East and West Jerusalem. From an architectural point of view, the occupation of East Jerusalem and the exposure to the Palestinian vernacular marked a significant shift in Israeli architecture discourse.¹⁰ This orientalist gaze towards the Palestinian landscape had an important role in the formation of Israeli architectural urban space which became sites for gentrification to those who “understand” and “appreciate” the “local” landscape.

The relatively peaceful colonization of East Jerusalem, as perceived by the Israeli public, was shattered during the first Intifada (1987-1991) and more dramatically following the al-Aqsa Intifada started in 2000 and which has cost nearly 4,000 lives, three-quarters of them Palestinians. This level of violence has moved Israel to unilaterally transform the area's landscape by building the barrier, also known as the “Separation Wall” and further to constrain Palestinian development, rights and movement. The barrier's route, approved by the Israeli government in October 2003, runs within Palestinian occupied territory to include the majority of Jewish settlers on “the Israeli side,” effectively annexing to Israel 16 per cent of the West Bank. When complete, it may improve Jewish security, but will have some grave consequences for Palestinians, some 210,000 of whom will be caught between the barrier and the Green Line, or cut-off from their own lands and livelihood.

In Jerusalem and its surroundings Israel will annex 160 km² of the occupied territories in addition to 70 km² annexed immediately after its occupation of East Jerusalem. This area includes Ma'ale Adumim and Giv'at Ze'ev settlements, Gush Etzion settlement Bloc, and Bitar Elite settlement, which is inhabited by Haredi Jews. The wall enforces Israel's political borders in Jerusalem and transforms it into the largest city in Israel geographically (an area of almost 300 km² with a population of more than half a million Jews). On the other hand, the geographic continuity and the functional integration of the Palestinian neighbourhoods shall be inward and completely isolated from their hinterland.

In fact, it is possible to say that the wall not only sets the borders of sovereignty and annexation of the settlements inside and around Jerusalem to form the metropolitan Jewish Jerusalem but also sets obstacles to any possibility for the evolution of the integrated urban unity of a Palestinian Jerusalem in the centre of the West Bank that is capable of serving as the capital of a future Palestinian state. The geopolitical and geo-demographic reality imposed by Israel through construction of the wall imposes a new reality on the future of Jerusalem through which Jerusalem is being redefined. The conventional division of West Jerusalem (the one occupied by Israel in 1948) and East Jerusalem (the part occupied by Israel in 1967) no longer exists in reality. Moreover, the annexation border imposed by Israel after its occupation of East Jerusalem is changing and the wall is

⁹ For a detailed discussion see: Pullan et al, “Jerusalem's Road.”

¹⁰ Alona Nitzan-Shifan, “Seizing Locality in Jerusalem,” in *The End of Tradition?*, ed. Nezar Al Sayyad (London: Routledge, 2004), 231-255.

forming another border. It is now possible to say that the future solution for Jerusalem has become imposed before any negotiations between the two adversaries.

As detailed above, the pre-1967 and the post-1967 periods are characterized by dominant state intervention in transforming Jerusalem into a capital city; this had to do with housing, development, public buildings, national institutions and infrastructure. However, from the mid 1980s with the ongoing dominance of a neo-liberal agenda in Israel,¹¹ different municipalities have witnessed a severe shortage of the state's support.¹² I would suggest that in Jerusalem's contested context this trend was significant. First, with regard to the geopolitical conditions discussed above, since 1995 Jerusalem's economic profile deteriorated from 59th to 111th place among cities and towns in Israel,¹³ while in the last three decades the out-flow of the young and affluent has grown, as the number of new immigrants choosing to settle in Jerusalem has declined.

Indeed, both geopolitical and social-economic conditions should be seen as the basis for privatizing space in Jerusalem's city centre. Towards the 1990s Jerusalem's urban planning and development is characterized by a high degree of privatization of space as well as by securitization discourse. This is due to the Palestinian uprising, especially the second Intifada, when West Jerusalem's city centre was a central target for suicide bombings. The ordinary Israeli presence is slim and there is an attempt to populate the city centre with tourists and the urban wealthy who arrive and depart in their cars but never really use the area.

As I have illustrated throughout the above overview, planning is indeed an effective apparatus for achieving geopolitical objectives. Though considered a "rational" and "scientific" discipline, the "dark side" of planning should be acknowledged, especially in a context where borders, boundaries and territoriality are inherent to the geopolitical act. As noted by Israeli geographer Elisha Efrat:

... the occupation is not the sole property of the government, the army and security establishment. In essence, everything is contaminated by the occupation: institutions of justice and law, doctors who are silent when medical treatment is denied to the population in the territories, the teachers who do not protest the closure of educational institutions... journalists who do not report, authors and artists who hold their tongue, architects and engineers who lend a hand to initiations of the occupation – settlements, roadblocks, the separation fence and bypass roads...¹⁴

In the light of this discussion, I would like to investigate in the following section two current

¹¹ Uri Ram, "The Promised Land of Business Opportunities: Liberal Post-Zionism in the Glocal Age," in *The New Israel*, eds. Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 217-40.

¹² Nurit Alfasi and Tovi Fenster, "A Tale of Two Cities: Jerusalem and Tel Aviv-Jaffa in an Age of Globalization," *Cities* 22:5 (2005): 351-63.

¹³ <http://jiis-jerusalem.blogspot.com/2011/10/blog-post.html>

¹⁴ Elisha Efrat, *The West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Geography of Occupation and Disengagement* (London: Routledge, 2008).

phenomenon in Jerusalem, which point to the relevance of examining urban planning geopolitically.

Frontier/Center Dynamics

The debate concerning the right to the city initiated discussion of urban space in regards to such matters as identity, culture, social difference, protest, and opposition.¹⁵ As far as Henri Lefebvre¹⁶ is concerned, the right to the city means being granted freedom, the right not to be excluded, the right to establish an identity as well as an individual and collective way of life, and the right to participate in decision-making. In other words, Lefebvrian thinking suggests that the right to the city is the right to “urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange... enabling the full and complete usage of...movements and places.”¹⁷

Given this, in the following paragraphs I raise the question of whether and how Palestinians who succeeded to buy property and reside in the French Hill are realizing their right to the city within the context of colonial geopolitics. I would claim the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty of access to a shelter but rather as an urban phenomenon it is a “common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization.”¹⁸

Over the last decade, a new phenomenon has appeared in Jerusalem namely the “immigration” of Palestinians, mostly Israeli citizens, into “Jewish” settlements in East Jerusalem. According to available data, more than 7,000 Palestinians lived in Jewish neighbourhoods of Jerusalem at the end of 2008, of which approximately 4,500 live in “satellite neighbourhoods,” i.e. Jerusalem's settlements that were constructed after 1967. As already noted, the planning and construction of these “satellite neighbourhoods” was initiated and realised in order to put “facts on the ground” on a landscape that has been perceived as *terra nullius*. This privileges the Jewish population and excludes the Palestinians residing in the city tangibly and symbolically as noted by one of the Jewish French Hill inhabitants:

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 [Palestinian] illegal houses in front of us.¹⁹

However, the location of the French Hill on the frontier of the city and its proximity to some Palestinian neighbourhoods made the “total control” in regards to the presence of Palestinians in the French Hill an impossibility.

¹⁵ Donald Mitchell, *The Right to the City* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003); Haim Yacobi, *The Jewish-Arab City: Spatio-Politics in a Mixed Community* (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (London: Blackwell, 1996).

¹⁷ Ibid: 179.

¹⁸ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 23.

¹⁹ Interview with Anat, an Israeli resident, January 29, 2006.



Figure 2: A general view of the French Hill neighbourhood

In more details, both geographically and symbolically the frontier location of French Hill is significant. Geographically it is surrounded by a “contested landscape” including a fraction of the Separation Wall. It watches (and indeed is watched by) the Palestinian refugee camp of Shuaafat and it marks the edge of the city as it is situated by the main road that leads to and from the Judean desert.

The internal migration of Palestinians to the French Hill is also a result of the geopolitical conditions in which Israeli surveillance and control over East Jerusalem’s Palestinian neighbourhoods causes unequal distribution of resources and infrastructure, poverty, and social and physical deterioration. A closer view of daily activities reveals that the Palestinian presence on the French Hill is attracted by the public services available there. Despite the escalating violence following the first and especially the second Intifada, and the ongoing discourses of enmity, Israeli residents in the French Hill neighbourhood found themselves facing a dilemma over whether they should sell property to Palestinians.

From the beginning of the 2000s, the frontier characteristics of the French Hill area have attracted some major Palestinian suicide bombings and other attacks. Therefore, the Palestinian presence in the French Hill area was heavily protested by the majority on the Jewish “side.” It is important to reiterate the 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. The permanent dwellings of Arabs who buy or rent property in the neighborhood is indeed a contested subject, which was not solely an institutionalized attempt to limit Arabs in Israel to own property such as land and

housing,²⁰ but rather an extensive public discourse, expressed for example, in the September 2010 “Rabbis’ Letter,” calling 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 his fellow man.

The wider geopolitical conditions can be used here as a central component in the explanation for this phenomenon. The Israeli government began the construction of a barrier separating Israel from large sections of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. One of the clear outcomes of the construction of the wall in Jerusalem has been the intensification of the housing shortage in East Jerusalem. For Palestinians who have a “Jerusalem Resident ID,” living outside Jerusalem’s new borders endangers their status as Jerusalemites, while for Palestinians with an Israeli ID this new reality complicated their mobility. Hence, after the construction of the wall began, thousands of Palestinians returned to the city in order to protect their resident status as well as their rights. As a result, there was a rapid increase in housing prices in East Jerusalem of around 50 percent (IPCC Report 2005), which created pressure on the housing market, and thus Arabs, with an Israeli ID who had the economic means, started moving into Jewish neighbourhoods. This was noted, for example, in an interview with Mustafa, a Palestinian who is an Israeli citizen that moved to the French Hill in 2005:

In the year 2000 we almost bought a “villa” in Pisgat Zeev. Then the second Intifada started, there was tension and I knew that we cannot move to Pisgat Zeev [...] So, we searched for a place we liked. We did not want to live in Shoaafat; the municipality services, schools and infrastructure are not good there. Because of the Intifada, often there is a flying checkpoint at the entrance to Shoaafat, and if they stop you, you cannot arrive to work on time in the city.²¹

The additional geopolitical layer for understanding the migration of Palestinians to the French Hill has to do with its frontier characteristics. The French Hill is close to some of the Palestinian commercial and social nodes such as Sheich Jarach, Wadi Joz, Beit Hanina and the main road to Ramallah – thus enabling Mustafa to keep contact with the Palestinian side while on the other hand his family can enjoy “[...] modern infrastructure, municipality services. Here there is security and sovereignty, it is not neglected.”

My fieldwork reveals that Palestinians, who wish to buy a property in the French Hill, can only do so from Jewish sellers willing to maximize their material gain by selling to Palestinians. This issue has been raised by Antuan, a Christian-Arab Lawyer, and an Israeli citizen who is married to a Jerusalemite Palestinian. Antuan bought his apartment in 2002, when housing prices in the French Hill descended following the Intifada and the attacks and killing of Israelis in the French Hill. Despite the relatively low housing prices at that time, Antuan mentioned that some of the Israeli sellers

²⁰ Dani Rabinowitz, *Overlooking Nazareth: The Ethnography of Exclusion in Galilee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Erez Tzfadia and Haim Yacobi, *Rethinking Israeli Space: Periphery and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2011).

²¹ Interview with Mustafa, a Palestinian inhabitant in the French Hill neighbourhood, April 13, 2010.

refused to sell their apartment to Arabs. However, as a lawyer who represents other Arab families that purchase property in the French Hill Antuan stated:

Arabs who buy here are economically stable, so they can buy any apartment they are interested in. I personally know around twenty families who bought property [...] If you look at these family – they are all in a better economic condition than the average Israeli family. They can afford “Tosefet Aravi” (additional price for Arabs).²²

The term “Tosefet Aravi,” used by Antuan, has been also repeated by other interviewees and it seems that it became a common expression, codifying the sole access of Arabs to the housing market in Jewish neighbourhoods. Literally it means an additional price for Arabs, while economically it means that Arab buyers would offer between 20 to 25 percent more for a property in the neighbourhood, an issue which was also stated in an interview with an estate agent who lives and works in the French Hill.²³

Indeed, Palestinian residents who are economically able to buy property in the French Hill are far from being backward as often presented in Israeli public discourse; they are more educated than the average Israeli resident, economically they could be defined as upper middle class, and many of them are academics searching for a better housing environment. As Mustafa states:

We were looking for an apartment [...] we wanted a neighbourhood that we like with good infrastructure. French Hill is a nice place to live; the neighbours knew we were Arabs, they were nice [...] all we want is to live peacefully.²⁴

Despite the fact that the issue of class and the “westernized” life-style of the Arab inhabitants of the French Hill is an implicit condition for their presence, from the Jewish side it is just the beginning of a rapid process of losing demographic dominance in the neighbourhood. This dilemma, as suggested by Rabinowitz²⁵ accentuates the tension between the collective ethos of Zionist territoriality and the capitalist mode of a free housing market where personal economic gain dominates:

In the French Hill, especially in HaEtzel Street. the process [of Arabization] is rapid. The Arabs in our area are upper-middle class. They come from the north – 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.²⁶

²² Interview with Antuan, a Palestinian who owns a house in French Hill, April 9, 2010.

²³ Interview with Abraham, a Jewish residence in French Hill and a property agent, January 29, 2006.

²⁴ Interview with Mustafa, a Palestinian inhabitant in the French Hill neighbourhood, April 13, 2010.

²⁵ Rabinowitz, *Overlooking Nazareth*.

²⁶ Interview with Ariella, a Jewish resident, January 29, 2006.

While the interview with Mustafa, mentioned above, might point to a “strategy of survival” among upper-middle class Arabs, some other voices, highlight the political dimension of the decision to move to a colonial neighbourhood:

[...] we broke the stereotypes against Arabs. They [our Jewish neighbours] feel that we are part of this place [...] If you measure the socio-economic ability of the Arabs in the neighbourhood, it is much higher than the average Jew [...] Our presence here has a symbolic meaning, it is even a symbolic de-colonization.²⁷

Beyond the question of whether the Palestinians in the French Hill are the agents of a political project or just middle class individuals seeking to improve their housing conditions, it seems that their right to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit, the right to participation and appropriation (to use Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city)²⁸ is limited. More specifically, according to my findings, “housing” in the French Hill is disconnected from other daily activities due to the fact that the Palestinian inhabitants in the French Hill do not send their children to the local school, and hardly socialize with their Jewish neighbours. Mustafa, for example, echoes a common daily experience among Palestinians residing in the French Hill who are not participating or appropriating public space:

We do our shopping in Shoaafat, but once a week we go to the shopping mall [in Pisgat Zeev]. We have no contact with the cultural events here, the kids are not going to after-school activities here; the piano teacher comes 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.²⁹

Referring back to the question presented in the opening of this section, it seems that the Palestinian buyers face a dilemma: there is a tension between the individual's economic ability and the collective meaning of the right to housing. To put it differently, by employing the insights of political theorist Iris Marion Young I would suggest that the right to the city is about relationships rather than things. Young suggests that rights “are institutionally defined rules specifying what people can do in relation to one another. Rights refer to doing more than to having, to social relations that enable or constrain action.”³⁰ Insofar as this is the case, then housing is spatial in the most profound sense, since “doing” – neighbouring – is a spatial practice that becomes possible or impossible through the social production of space.

Let us move now from the urban frontier to Jerusalem's city centre where significant spatial changes, also resulting from migration, are taking place due to the intensive planning, marketing and construction of luxury apartments in the form of gated communities, purchased and owned mainly by

²⁷ Interview with Antuan, a Palestinian who owns a house in French Hill, April 9, 2010.

²⁸ Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 173-174.

²⁹ Interview with Mustafa, a Palestinian inhabitant of the French Hill neighbourhood, April 13, 2010.

³⁰ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 25.

Jews who are not residing permanently in Israel. It is important to note at this stage that immigration and settling in Jerusalem has a different character than in other parts of Israel and is particularly attractive among the more religious Jewish immigrants from Western countries. The available data is telling: in 2009, of the total immigrants from the United States, 32 per cent settled in Jerusalem; while 24 per cent of the French Jewish migrants and 33 per cent of the Jewish migrants from the UK settled in Jerusalem.³¹ This migration trend is clearly expressed in the housing market which attracts foreign direct investment in residential real estate. In Jerusalem's city centre, around 10,000 housing units are owned by foreign residents.³²

Nevertheless, the ideology of the Israeli state and the history of settlement and immigration, as well as of the migrants' sense of belonging, are insufficient in explaining how this identification occurs. To fully understand this complex picture, I suggest analyzing the public policy behind the creation of these gated communities. By highlighting local policies through which the state and the private sector produce space, we can focus on how Israel has advanced "national" ideologies and interests by means of the "free market" economy, while simultaneously advancing neo-liberal economic interests in the name of nationalism.

The above should be accentuated as it has become popular to associate the process of globalization and the growth of a neo-liberal economy with the end of national hegemony and the shrinking ability of settler societies to affect spatial processes such as directing immigrants to frontier regions.³³ According to this argument, the rapid shift to a neo-liberal economy increased the role of the "free market" in determining social relations in settler societies, including in Israel.³⁴ This is to say that social relations, embedded in spatial processes, are understood to be regulated by actors in the "free market" without being affiliated with "national" interests. However, such insights are doubtful. In light of the situation in Jerusalem, I propose that the processes of globalization and privatization have not eroded state control. Rather, hegemonic structures have become more flexible with the emergence of neo-liberal discourses. A critical examination might show that this discourse only masks the role of the state behind the veil of a "free market." The state continues to hold a monopoly over certain resources – in this case planning.

It has been reported that foreign residents bought approximately 35 per cent of the apartments in Jerusalem's central neighbourhoods mentioned above (the number in the city in general reached 10 per cent).³⁵ Apparently such migration patterns could be explained *vis-à-vis* the emergence of neo-liberalism which is based on the logic of the free market, property rights and market competition.³⁶ It is a "logic" that shapes temporary spatial practices such as urban planning,

³¹ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census* (Jerusalem, 2009).

³² Yonatan Loirer, *Data concerning "ghost apartments" in Jerusalem* (Kiryata, Jerusalem 2007).

³³ Yasmeen Abu-Laban, "The Future and the Legacy Globalization and the Canadian Settler-State," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 35:4 (2001): 262-76.

³⁴ Shafir Gershon and Peled Yoav, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³⁵ Loirer, *Data Concerning*.

³⁶ Harvey, *A Brief History*.

and policies on land and housing. At the core of this approach stands the claim that priority in the allocation of urban goods and services is not given according to any affiliation to the state, but rather to the ability of the individual to compete in the free market in order to achieve these goods.

Yet, such a narrow managerial criticism is insufficient; this is especially true in the case of settler society states, where land, territory and resources are under constant competition and conflict. Let us take such an argument further by proposing that unveiling the “free-market” discourse might expose the influential role of the state and its bureaucracy apparatuses operating to achieve geopolitical objectives. An indicative example of this argument is Amendment 168 of the Ordinance – “Law for the encouragement of immigration and return to Israel” (2008). This law was designed by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption and the Tax Authority as a comprehensive plan calling for tax benefits aimed at encouraging immigrants from Western countries; needless to say this scheme is tailored to absorb Jewish migrants only. Moreover, it is also reported that foreign investors who buy apartments will receive from Israeli banks unlimited foreign currency mortgages on composition. This is contrary to Israeli apartment buyers to which the Bank of Israel’s restriction applies on mortgages linked to foreign currency, where the interest rate may change during a period of five years.³⁷

The result of such policies is that Jerusalem’s city centre is an attractive location for migrants. Nevertheless, analysing the extensive flow of Western migrants to Jerusalem’s city centre should also refer to the imagined geographies of the city. To put it differently, the luxury real estate market is only one part of understanding the scope of this phenomenon. Many of the buyers buy property in new housing projects that “sell” Jerusalem’s oriental landscape, “spirituality,” “authenticity,” and importantly security *vis-à-vis* the wider geopolitical contested context.

An illustration of this trend is visible to those who walk the streets surrounding the “Jerusalem of Gold” compound, where large framed images of “Jerusalem’s authenticity” are marketed as part of the living experience of the city.

The most significant message to potential buyers is no doubt the religious and national centrality of Jerusalem. Thus several large images of “historical Jerusalem” are presented. The first instance is an image of archaeological



Figure 3: “Jerusalem of Gold” Housing Compound

³⁷ See: http://www.calcalost.co.il/real_estate/articles/0,7340,L-3370353,00.html

ruins and the Western Wall in the background, one of the central national and religious sites in Jerusalem, located in the Old City. While this iconic image emphasizes the proximity to “spiritual Jerusalem” and the historical roots of the city, some other images sell the “authentic architecture” of the city; picturesque arches and narrow alleys built of Jerusalem’s stone.

Discussion: Urban Frontier, Borders and Boundaries

In this paper I have related analysis of planning with geopolitical practices rooted in the Israeli colonial spatio-politics towards Jerusalem. Importantly, by colonial practices I do not limit the discussion to historical practices that served empires in the remote colonies. Rather, the case study discussed shows that although the implementation of power over territory and society has changed throughout the years, the colonial logic has maintained its hegemony, thus creating new apparatuses of control through legislation, planning and design. Such technologies are usually associated with terminologies that indicate “progress,” yet, as I noted, these concepts have been manipulated in order to achieve ethno-national spatial and demographic control in the city.

As this paper shows, geopolitical concepts are highly relevant for understanding urban planning and vice versa. Specifically, I pointed to the ways in which borders boundaries and frontier sites are produced internally and externally. In more detail, colonial practices articulate empirical manifestations of ethno-national logic that refer to the nexus of state power and territorial control, mainly in “alien” areas within or outside the boundaries of the state, into which the dominant nation attempts to increase its monopoly control due to high concentrations of “enemy” people.³⁸ This process is subject to struggles over the control of land, power and resources – such “alien” areas are known as frontier regions. In this sense, frontiers are “spread” into the whole of the dominant nation and become symbols of the sovereignty of the state, emphasizing the moral right of the dominant nation to possess the territory.

Additionally, this paper reveals that the sites of colonial practices are not limited solely to remote regions beyond the geographical core. Rather, as the cases indicate, there are a variety of sites, beyond frontier regions, in which colonial practices can be implemented, among them ethno-nationally contested cities and even neoliberal “free-market” oriented urban spaces – all sites which have the potential to threaten the hegemony of those in power.

In a wider theoretical level, I have emphasized the ways in which the spatio-politics of urbanism in settler societies are based on a project of settling newcomers in a contested region and on urban “frontiers” in order to achieve political control and access to key resources. Importantly, settler societies may be “external” or “internal” – the former relates to the organized movement of people across borders, and often into other continents, as in the period of European colonialism. The latter, with a greater relevance to this paper, refers to the planned ethnicization of “internal frontiers,” in which the state manipulates the local ethnic geography to further the interests of a dominant ethnic

³⁸ John McGarry, “Demographic Engineering: The State Directed Movement of Ethnic Groups as a Technique of Conflict Regulation,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21:4 (1998): 613-38.

group.³⁹ Furthermore, this process reflects the social construction of the Jewish immigrants as “state agents,” i.e. a group which is determined “to perform a function on behalf of the state.” This is done through the state’s provision of resources and incentives, and as rightly suggested by John McGarry, “they are normally moved to peripheral parts of the state occupied by minorities.”⁴⁰

While the discussion of frontier geographies is focused on state frontier zones and borders, the case of Jerusalem as suggested by Wendy Pullan⁴¹ brings to the fore the necessity of discussing this matter in relation to cities. Pullan suggests that the studies of contested frontiers zones tend to focus on states or regions rather than cities and, according to James Ron⁴² the colonial frontier is conceived as a remote region, a resource of *terra nullius*. Looking at the urban frontier it seems that despite strict attempts to be in command of it through practices of control such as planning and housing regulations, cities do not normally have the apparatuses which are available to states in order to control frontiers. In an attempt to take such an argument forward the question is whether we can theoretically distinguish between “core” and “frontier” in contested cities where colonial logic dominates. Following the cases presented in this article the “frontier logic” of space operates on both urban edges and at the very core of the city.

³⁹ Oren Yiftachel and Haim Yacobi, “Urban Ethnocracy: Ethnicization and the Production of Space in an Israeli Mixed City,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21:6 (2004): 673–693.

⁴⁰ McGarry, “Demographic Engineering,” 614.

⁴¹ Wendy Pullan, “Frontier urbanism: The periphery at the centre of contested cities,” *The Journal of Architecture* 16:1 (2011): 15–35.

⁴² James Ron, *Frontiers and Ghettos. State Violence in Serbia and Israel* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2003).