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Beyond Incommensurability:
Jerusalem and Stockholm from an Unordinary Cities Perspective

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

Introduction

Spatial and social divisions have been taking place in cities for centuries (Nightingale 2012). *Social inequality,* and its consequences in various forms, is one of the central causes of contemporary urban conflicts (Sevilla-Buitrago 2013: 367). In the past two decades, however, a fast evolving strand within urban studies has focused on urban conflicts within ethno-nationally contested cities, especially in relation to the role of planning (see for example: Anderson 2010; Gaffikin and Morrisey, 2011; Bollens, 2012). Jerusalem is characterised as one of the *extremely contested cities* in this regard (see: Bollens 1998, 2000; Klien 2001; Dumper 1997, 2014; Shlay and Rosen 2015).

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

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

Comparing incommensurable cities.

Until recently, few voices within the field of urban studies called for the expansion of comparative approaches from their narrow geographical foundations and much of what passed for universal theory was in fact parochial (Robinson 2011: 3-4). Robinson (2006) proposes a new *cosmopolitan* theoretical framework, moving away from the narrow Euro-American dominance to a wider look at cities and their differences and similarities. With an interest in empirically testing these theories, the places chosen for this research contain far more differences then similarities. The case study selection aims to move away from the all too fashionable comparison of urban segregation in Euro-American cities and urban conflicts in ethno national contested urban spaces. In the former, cities are compared that may or may not display similar spatial trends towards peripheral segregation of minorities, for example see Wacquant's (2008) discussion of urban marginality in Paris and Chicago. In the later the there is an ongoing research agenda to compare an exclusive group of cities with extreme ethno-national conflicts (Pullan and Baillie 2013). This article choses to focus on urban conflicts in Jerusalem and Stockholm questioning their incommensurability with the aim of shedding light on what we can learn from comparing urban contestations across radically contrastive political and historical settings.

Ward (2010: 3) notes that "new empirical findings have led to the creation of new ideal types", such as the *extremely contested city* label in the current study. Much of the literature on urban comparison focuses on the abstract city level with marginal attention given to particular local urban context (Gough 2012: 866). Peck (2015) notes that "[t]he ongoing work of the remaking of urban theory must occur across cases […], in addition to documenting difference, in a 'contrastive' manner, between cities" (ibid: 162-163). This all points to a growing interest in building knowledge from a particular context attached to specific cities and to the use of *difference* as a focal point within comparative urban research (McFarlane and Robinson 2012). In this sense, moving away from *ideal types* or *urban models* is the backbone of the comparison. My aim is to understand urban place-based context by granting a voice to urban dwellers, understanding their way of life, and its political significance (Gough 2012: 874). My intention is to identify specific causes of spatial division and to analyse how they

operate and interact in each specific urban case (Allegra, Casiglala, Rokem 2012) and across different cases.

To capture the local contextual patterns we need to expose the more elusive planning discourses, typically unattainable from official documents and statements. This is achieved via an analysis of what local cultural and political beliefs are attributed and attached to the segregation formation process from the perspective of those Jensen (1997: 49) describes as *privileged speakers*, (in this case, Israeli and Swedish planners and policy makers), and those who I call *unprivileged speakers* (local communities especially immigrants and minorities in the current study).

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

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

in the everyday planning and development of the city, as well as local community leaders and civil society activists.

Jerusalem's urban context in brief

West Jerusalem has been the capital of Israel since 1948 when the Palestinian areas of West Jerusalem fell in the war and the entire city has served as such since its reunification/annexation in 1967. At the end of 2013 the population of the Jerusalem municipality numbered 829,900. The Jewish and other (non-Palestinian) population totalled 522,300 (63%) and the Palestinian (Muslim and Christian) population 307,600 (37%). Several factors differentiate Jerusalem from other cities. First, it is an important religious centre for three of the world's monotheistic religions; second, it is claimed as the national capital by two nations, placing it in the vortex of the Israeli Palestinian conflict; and, third it is not acknowledged as the official capital of Israel by the UN and most of the world's nation-states. One of the basic aims of Israel's policies since 1967 has been to spatially enhance the dominance of the Israeli Municipality control over East Jerusalem (Rokem 2013). Furthermore, the Israeli Ministry of Interior and the Jerusalem Municipality have placed a strict development ban on almost any new construction in Palestinian neighbourhoods which has had a profound impact on their local development (Braier 2013). Although Palestinians living in Jerusalem are permitted to vote in the municipal elections, most of them refuse as they believe that voting would afford legitimacy to what they feel to be Israel's illegal annexation of the city, and are consequently not electorally represented in the Israeli governed Jerusalem Municipality.

The *separation wall* (also known as the "security barrier" by Israeli media and policy makers) is a mega project constructed by the Israeli state. Since 2002 the wall has annexed 160 km^2 of the West Bank in addition to the 70 km^2 annexed after the annexation of East Jerusalem in the 1967 War. The wall enforces Israel's *de facto* political borders in Jerusalem and transforms it into geographically the largest city in Israel. The wall, and the attempt to create an Israeli geographic continuity, has resulted in a situation where the Palestinian Jerusalem neighbourhoods are damaged and completely isolated from their West Bank hinterland (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2002). The

unequal funding of urban planning and construction projects between the Eastern and the Western parts of Jerusalem has resulted in a segregated city split into two distinct growth poles, with crossover parts and old border areas remaining neglected between the two sides, (For further reading about planning policy in contemporary Jerusalem, see: Klein 2001; Dumper 2014).

Local Palestinian Jerusalem Neighbourhood

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

To fill this growing gap in planning, and to resolve the problems caused by deteriorating housing conditions, the Israeli NGO *Bimkom - Planners for Planning Rights*[1] launched a joint collaborative planning process in 2003 which actively engaged with the local community to develop a master-plan catering for future local needs and incorporating the illegal / informal housing to avoid demolition. The Jerusalem Municipality refused to approve the Al-Isawiyyah master-plan explaining that it did not cater for the local needs (Bimkom 2013). In addition, the last available vacant land which formed a central component of the future master-plan as space for new housing was converted to a national park by the Israeli National Parks Authority with the support of the Municipality. This latest development diminishes the future prospects of

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bimkom.org/eng/   [1]

implementing the Al-Isawiyyah Bimkom master-plan. The deteriorating conditions were described by a local community leader:

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

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

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

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

Stockholm's urban context

Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, had a population of 897,700 inhabitants at the end of 2013 and a total foreign-born population of 30.7 percent[2] (Stockholm Statistical Yearbook 2015). One central aspect of Stockholm's urban development has been the Swedish social welfare system, and its national goal of making housing and social services accessible (Cars & Harsman 2001: 87). Despite this, the issue of residential segregation has been on the Swedish political agenda since the early 1970s. Its appearance can be linked to the emergence and critique of the Million Homes Program (Andersson et al 2010: 237). The program was part of the Swedish government's decision to build a million new dwellings in the period 1965 to 1974 (Hall & Vidén 2005: 301). The construction of large numbers of new houses mainly in *outer suburbs* meant it was convenient for the authorities to place waves of new immigrants there.

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

Stockholm outer immigrant suburb

Fittja, an outer suburb located on the southern fringes of metropolitan Stockholm in Botkyrka Municipality, had a population of 7,781 in 2012 of of whom 90.1 percent were immigrants (Botkyrka Statistics 2013). It is one of the more notorious Million Homes Program areas and has struggled since the 1980s with a high level of unemployment and delinquency compared with other parts of Stockholm and Sweden. Fittja is used numerous times in the media as a negative example, usually linking immigrants with urban criminality, poverty and violence (Valsquaze 2011: 175). The

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

area has been the subject of various government policies and planning initiatives tackling social and spatial segregation. It has, nonetheless, become a place of mounting segregation dividing it from the wider Swedish society and culture. The newest local urban development program *Framtid Fittja* (Future Fittja) had its final consultation stages in August 2012:

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

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

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

In both Stockholm and Jerusalem, minority activists living in the excluded areas and planners overseeing their long-term management collectively illustrate the on-going failure in dealing with the long-term alienation and segregation. The concentration of Palestinians in certain parts of East Jerusalem and immigrants or *ethnic others* (as they are described in official Swedish policy) in specific spatial zones on the outer rims of Stockholm has created neighbourhoods that are officially part of the metropolis but in practice spatially and socially segregated from the majority population.

Contrastive and Relational Patterns across Jerusalem and Stockholm

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

Institutional segregation

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

In Sweden, the national Migration Agency[3] places refuges and asylum seekers mainly from African and Middle Eastern countries in outer edge suburbs. They are placed

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[3] www.migrationsverket.se/English

where municipalities are willing to accept them: in vacant, mostly poorly maintained, remote *Million Homes Program* housing. This is in contrast to the treatment of Palestinian areas in East Jerusalem since the 1967 War. The neighbourhoods closer to the Old City and urban core were annexed to Israel as part of the overall aim to *re-unify* Jerusalem under Israeli rule (see: Rokem 2013). This process has overlooked the local Palestinian population's basic planning and housing development needs.

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

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

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

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

Urban violence

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

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

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

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

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

This is further reproduced in *everyday violence* with expressions of fear on a micro-interactional level: interpersonal, domestic and delinquent (Bourgois 2001). This can be seen in both the explicit oppressive views towards minorities converted into restrictive and exclusionary planning policy in Jerusalem, as well as in the municipal housing policy in Stockholm which aspires to assist immigrants but actually sustains increased urban segregation.

NGO involvement in planning

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

In the Jerusalem case the NGO Bimkom took the mediating role in a process that was replete with complications due to a lack of cooperation by the *privileged speakers* in the Jerusalem Municipality. This was, in part, demonstrated above in the interview with the Municipality senior planning official who expressed his views of the severe

conditions and challenges of planning in Palestinian East Jerusalem. In Sweden, the founder of Megafonen[4] (a local grassroots led organization) expressed his discontent with the Swedish authorities

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

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

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

Conclusion

As far as the relation between planning and politics is concerned, Jerusalem represents a rather exceptional case study, in part because of its unique partisan urban planning policies developed by Israel and the extensive annexation of East Jerusalem.

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[4] www.megafonen.com.

Still, as I maintain, the observation of planning in Jerusalem can be useful in advancing our understanding of the relation between planning, conflicts, and power in a growing number of cities worldwide. The article by no means suggests that urban segregation is identical in the two cities, but rather that we need more flexibility and porosity among different urban theoretical *categories* and *labels*. As the article notes, Palestinians in Jerusalem have uncertain and partial rights and live in an annexed and deprived Jerusalem territory. In Stockholm, planning and housing policies are oriented towards creating a more just society, but in reality they create spatial and social segregation. The article has attempted to question the reasons for the parity of these urban phenomena, particularly since planning policies and political conditions in Stockholm are more favourable than in Jerusalem.

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

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

In this sense they are not directly associated to the dominant urbanization under capitalism debate (see: Brenner and Schmidt: 2015) but more closely interlinked to continuing *institutional segregation* and NGO involvement in planning, which can be silent (in Stockholm) or much more apparent and one sided (in Jerusalem). The local cases shed a partial yet critical light on a much bigger story of increasing and deepening urban segregation stemming from different causal factors (Pickvance 1986, 2005).

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

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

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