Jerusalem

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Abstract

Jerusalem represents a rather exceptional urban case study because of its unique position as the global center of the three largest monotheistic religions since biblical times. Jerusalem is both a symbolic and tangible focal point in the Israeli Palestinian conflict and competing religious and political narratives have affected the city's development. In this brief text we attempt to capture some of the main themes in Jerusalem's planning history over the past century, navigating through the city towards its contemporary urban reality.

Key words: contested cities, urban politics, planning history, Palestinian-Israeli conflict

Introduction

With its unique position as the global center of the three largest monotheistic religions Jerusalem's history stretches back over three thousand years to biblical times. Jerusalem is a symbolic and tangible focal point in the Israeli Palestinian conflict, earning its place in urban studies and planning literature as a self-explanatory category of an ethnonational divided and contested city (Shlay and Rosen 2015).

Competing religious and political narratives have affected Jerusalem's development and Israeli national principles have held a significant role in planning the contemporary city (Rokem 2013). In this brief text we focus on Jerusalem's modern planning over the past century that has led to its contemporary urban reality.

Jerusalem has always been a city of migration – as well as pilgrimage. Since the late nineteenth century Jerusalem has been at the epicenter of the Jewish people's modern-day struggle to build its homeland. Since the late nineteenth century in particular, waves of Jewish migration, especially from Europe and the Arab world have served to transform the city's character to becoming a bustling metropolis. From the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948 Jerusalem has been the nation's capital. Despite its administrative as well as symbolic importance, whilst it is the largest, it is also the poorest city in the country. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, at the end of 2013 the population of Jerusalem numbered 816,000. The Jewish population totalled 515,000 (63%), the Arab (Muslim and Christian) and "other" (non-Jewish) population totalled 301,000 (37%).

In ethnonationally contested cities such as Jerusalem, urban planning policy can take a major role in reinforcing spatial and social division. The Israeli dominant urban planning policy has been to "reunify" East and West Jerusalem while the Palestinian population sees such integration as illegal "annexation". Urban planning has had a substantial effect on material and psychological conditions related to inter-group Israeli-Palestinian volatility (Bollens 1998). The Israeli management of the city has also meant that economic development and services tend to be geared towards the needs and aspirations of the city's Jewish population. To comprehend the complexity of Jerusalem's spatial and social fabric, the following sections will briefly outline its twentieth century history.

Urban Planning in Jerusalem -Twentieth Century Overview

The post World War One Accords of 1917 led to a radical alteration of the city's position: from a remote provincial town at the edge of the Ottoman Empire to the capital of the British Mandate in Palestine. During the Mandate period (1920-48) Jerusalem was physically divided into two separate parts: the east (Jordanian side) and the west (Israeli side).

The British Mandate planning policy was to strengthen the position of the Old City with its religious sites, whilst developing new neighborhoods around the historic centre. British architecture and planning left a longstanding legacy in the city. Alongside several important buildings, some of the most gifted planners of the time

have influenced the city's long-term development, including the Ashbee and Geddes Scheme (1922) the Holliday Scheme (1934) and the Kendall Scheme (1944).

The Mandate ended with the 1948 war[1], physically dividing Jerusalem between two new states: Jordan in the east and Israel to the west separated by the 'Green Line' militarised border running through the historical heart of the city (see Figure 1). The divided city was to become a fixed reality in the minds of the city's inhabitants on either side of the line (Schwied 1986: 109). The 1950 and 1959 Jerusalem masterplans reflect the the planners' expectation that the city would remain divided, with a focus on "local municipal issues", rather than larger schemes for growth, for example (Schwied 1986: 112). During the subsequent nineteen years the two sides of the city developed individually as entirely separate entities either side of the Green Line. In parallel, the Jordanians concentrated mainly on expanding their suburbs beyond the Old City walls (Sharon 1973: 132).

The 1967 Six Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbours ended with a significant turning point in Israel's geopolitical existence with the conquering (also termed as "occupation" and "annexation" depending on political narrative) of the Golan Heights, the Gaza strip and the West Bank as well as East Jerusalem itself, culminating in Jerusalem being declared as Israel's united capital soon after the end of the war.

Urban Planning in Jerusalem since 1967

Within days of it being declared the Israeli capital, the Jerusalem Municipality started integrating services and infrastructure to connect the two sides of the city. Mayor Teddy Kollek, who would become the central figure in Jerusalem for the next quarter century, established an international panel of planning experts in the early 1970s to take part in the building of "reunified Jerusalem" (Wasserstein 2001: 217).

The Israeli government expanded the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem to include 71 km^2 of the West Bank, which were chosen to follow key strategic and political considerations. This approach would allow the city to expand on a metropolitan scale, through the annexation of vast tracts of empty land beyond the narrow (6.5 km^2) limits of the Jordanian municipality of Jerusalem (see Figure 1). Territorial and demographic concerns over the status of Jerusalem remain at the heart of Israeli national politics to this day and have been paramount in determining planning decisions in what has been described as "the battle over demography" (Fenster, 2004: 96).

---[Place Figure 1 about here]---

Caption: Figure 1: Jerusalem Municipal Boundary Changes Pre and Post 1967. Source: the authors

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[1]"War of Independence" (Israeli name) or "Naqba" - The disaster (Palestinian name); to simplify, the common term "1948 War" is used.

The same underlying principle – to establish a large, unified city with a dominant Jewish majority – continued to guide Israel's planning policy in subsequent years and resulted in a marked gap between the two dominant communities in terms of housing, services provision and infrastructure investment. No comprehensive plan for the city of Jerusalem has been statutorily approved since 1959, although the latest, "Outline Plan 2000", is currently awaiting determination. Neighborhood design over the years has equally been lacking in an overarching scheme. Going back to the earliest years of building outside of the city walls, one can trace a series of planning ideas in the layout of the city's many neighborhoods: from the courtyard neighborhoods of Mea Shearim (1870s) to the Garden Suburbs of Beit Hakerem and Rehavia (1920s) to the Neighborhood Unit style outer suburbs (1970s).

The "dispersed" model has led to some significant planning challenges, with the original heart of West Jerusalem losing some of its commercial viability as growth has shifted to the more peripheral neighborhoods. One of the most recent changes to the city's infrastructure is the security barrier (also known as "separation wall") running along the eastern edges of the city. The official intention of the barrier is to prevent suicide bombers from entering the city from the West Bank, but it has had a significant impact on the city's geographic continuity, to the detriment of the functional integration of the Palestinian neighborhoods, which have become physically separated from Jerusalem's economic heartland. The Camp David peace talks of early 2000 recognised that in a "final status solution", there would need to be a compromise over Israel's control over Jerusalem. Since the failure of the Camp David talks and the outbreak of the second Intifada[2] later that year, the status quo of holding Jerusalem as a 'united' city under Israeli sovereignty has been maintained.

The past decade has seen several major new transport links providing faster connections through the city to its outlying neighbourhoods, with 'Road No. One' built along the ancient route to Jerusalem from its neighboring cities, running north-south following the alignment of the former 1948-1967 Green Line. Whilst the road tends to mark the division of the city between east and west, the Jerusalem light rail (completed 2011) is another major piece of public transport infrastructure potentially connecting the two populations. The ramifications of the light rail's role to serve as a bridge between the two populations is yet to be fully understood. Whilst it may have provided increased accessibility between Palestinian and Jewish-Israeli communities, and for both groups with the heart of the city, whether this infrastructure will foster co-presence or become a source of continued friction depends on future political conditions and remains to be seen (Rokem and Vaughan forthcoming).

A concluding comment

Any review of a city's planning history is bound to be partial. Centuries of sporadic violent conflict have left scars on the ground that a history of the past century of modern planning can only begin to capture. Whilst as far as the relation between planning and politics is concerned, Jerusalem represents an exceptional case study (Rokem & Allegra 2016), it is equally a city that functions relatively well on an everyday basis. One of the lessons from urban planning and policy in Jerusalem is its

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[2] Palestinian Civilian Uprising (the first Intifada was in 1987 and second in 2000)

impact on community segregation, especially in the absence of national policy solutions (Bollens 2000). This everyday reality is relevant to other contested cities, demonstrating the importance of understanding the relation between planning, conflict, and urban space.

Jerusalem is a city that demands a long historical perspective. Any such view reveals that along with its periods of violence and turmoil were times of prosperity and living Jewish and Arab lives in common (Klein 2014). Nevertheless, current trends suggest that it is likely that if the status quo remains, Jerusalem will continue to fragment along the ethno-religious lines etched in its ancient pathways. Existing imbalances of political power are likely to intensify with the population trajectories of the Jewish ultra-orthodox population on the one hand and the Palestinian on the other. Under current circumstances the city's history of deprivation is likely to prevail. Nevertheless, it is hoped that given the abiding international interest in the city a shift in local political motivations will allow it to move on to new, more positive tracks that build on its long history of coexistence.

Cross References
EURS0026
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Mini-biography

Jonathan Rokem PhD FRGS is an Urban Planner and Political Geographer. He holds a Marie Curie Research Fellowship at the Space Syntax Laboratory, The Bartlett School of Architecture University College London. His research interests and publications focus on critical multidisciplinary analysis of contested cities and regions; forthcoming book; *Rethinking Urban Geopolitics in Contested Cities,* Routledge.

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