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## **Towards Urban Geopolitics of Encounter: Spatial Mixing in Contested Jerusalem**

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### **Abstract**

The extent to which 'geographies of encounter' facilitate tolerance of diversity and difference has long been a source of debate in urban studies and human geography scholarship. However, to date this contestation has focused primarily on hyper-diverse cities in the global north-west. Adapting this debate to the volatile conditions of the nationally-contested city, this paper explores intergroup encounters between Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem. The paper suggests that in the context of hyper-polarisation of the nationally-contested urban space, the study of encounter should focus on macro-scale structural forces. In Jerusalem, we stress the role of ethnonationality and neoliberalism as key producers of its asymmetric and volatile yet highly resilient geography of

intergroup encounters. In broader sense, as many cities worldwide experience a resurgence of ethnonationalism, illuminating the structural production of encounter may demarcate a broader function for reading contemporary urban geopolitics.

## **Introduction**

In the last two decades, human geographers have examined urban spaces as sites of encounter between majority and minority groups (Piekut and Valentine 2017; Valentine 2008; Wilson 2011, 2017). Major cities in the global north-west that drew immigration from developing countries stood out as a live laboratory for the quest for cosmopolitanism (Valentine 2013), multiculturalism (Amin and Parkinson 2004), and super-diversity (Vertovec 2007). The extent to which the growing number of everyday urban ‘geographies of encounter’ can facilitate tolerance of difference has been a source of ongoing debate (Valentine 2008; Wilson 2017). At the same time, this significant scholarship has had a more limited systematic application to cities marked by national conflicts, such as Belfast, Beirut, Mostar or Jerusalem, in which religious and/or national modes of contestation are spatialised in sanctified notions of urban boundaries and frontiers (Benvenisti 1995; Bollens 2000; Calame and Charlesworth 2011; Dumper 2014; Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011). Recent studies illuminate the ways in which—in the current era of global nativism and right-wing populism—less-violent, ‘ordinary’ cities contain growing similarities with the nationally-contested city (Rokem and Boano 2018). Jerusalem represents an extreme case from which to learn, with its diverse modalities of urban conflict stemming from an ethnonational macro-geopolitical dispute and a multicultural urban politics of difference and disparities, thus bridging the ‘ordinary’ and the contested city (Amin and Parkinson 2002; Rokem 2016b; Avni 2020).

As Wilson (2017) points out, the existing scholarship on geographies of encounter has focused on questions of value, potential, spatio-temporality, and politics in order to understand ‘how people negotiate difference in their everyday lives’ (454). We suggest refocusing attention from the effect of intergroup encounters on individual prejudice and stereotypes (Valentine 2008), violent hotspots (Rokem et al. 2018), and convivial public spaces toward a more systematic scrutiny of the underlying urban geopolitical structures that enable them (Shtern 2019; Rokem et al. 2017). In other words, before trying to assess the local social and spatial dynamics and their everyday manifestations, we should investigate what political conditions and structural terms produce geographies of encounter. Jerusalem, as one of the most violent, polarised, and politically asymmetric contested cities worldwide (Rokem 2016a), in which segregation is reinforced institutionally by both local and central government (Shtern 2016), serves as a radical case study from which we can extrapolate to the larger world of cities with different internal and external conflicts impacting their intergroup relations. We can assume that the structural geopolitical forces that produce desegregation in Jerusalem (in some cases, as we discuss below, this is unintentional and negates the official policy context and political agenda) function comparably to those in other locations and can therefore hold relevant lessons for more ordinary ethnically-segregated and polarised cities.

This paper offers a contrastive evaluation of three cases, representing central domains of encounter in contemporary Jerusalem. Our main aim is to depict, analyse, and conceptualise the structural forces that produce and sustain multiple variants and dimensions of cross-group interaction within the overlapping logics of ethnonationality and neoliberalism in urban space. Nationally-contested cities differ in their levels of conflict intensity (amidst conflict or post-conflict) and their political structures (division, unification, occupation, or somewhere in between),

In all of them, however, histories of war and ongoing enforced and voluntary segregation leave legacies of highly resilient, sustainable forms of spatial polarisation (Bollens 2018) and volatile inter-community relations (Calame and Charlesworth 2011) which are constantly subjected to the changing macro and micro geopolitical contexts (Gusic 2020). These basic conditions would in most cases create a much thinner, more unstable space for everyday intergroup encounters and interactions. As we observe further below, in Jerusalem this can also have quite unpredicted consequences. Despite an active ethnonational conflict, the structural forces shaping the urban geopolitics of encounter from above, and spatial conditions on the ground, can push the rival communities into unplanned, asymmetric yet ongoing daily intergroup interactions. Beyond Jerusalem, we suggest that such structural analysis can serve to ground the scholarship of urban encounters in the deeper, broader geopolitical realities that enable them.

This paper joins a larger trend in recent scholarship on the novel urban geopolitics of Jerusalem in the aftermath of the failure of the Oslo peace accords (1993–1999), the eruption of second intifada (2000–2004), and the subsequent construction of the separation wall around and through East Jerusalem (2004–2007). Increasing Israeli Judaization of East Jerusalem, lack of future alternatives, and growing disconnection from the Palestinian West bank has challenged long-standing Palestinians practices of socio-spatial separation from Israeli society (Avni et al. 2021). This has led to increased usage of services, facilities, and urban infrastructures in Jewish areas of the city (Shtern 2019). In light of these developments, several recent scholars have examined the effect of boundary transgression and spatial desegregation through diverse theoretical prisms. These include a critical reading of the post-colonial analysis of evolving mixed middle-class residential spaces (Shtern and Yacobi 2019; Yacobi and Pullan 2014), studying the role of neoliberal restructuring such as creating mixed shopping malls (Shtern 2016), an

examination of gendered rights to the city manifested in women's spatial boundary crossings (Greenberg-Raanan and Avni 2020), and the politics of mobility infrastructure (Feitelson 2021). Building on the above scholarship, this paper aims to contextualise this urban historical transformation within the theoretical framework of geographies of encounter.

### ***Methodology***

By offering a snapshot of three fundamental realms of daily life in the city—economic (the labour market), cultural (shopping malls), and mobility (the light rail)—we illustrate some of the main structural forces shaping Jerusalem's current geographies of encounter. These case studies present distinct socio-political spaces, levels of intensity in intergroup exchange, and types of urban activities. Each of these studies employed a mixed-method approach (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner 2007) that integrated ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and spatial analysis. The combination of methods within each study, and the comparison across studies offered in this paper, leverages their relative strengths, avoids holistic fallacies, and triangulates the results of each analysis (Sieber 1973; Zohrabi 2013). Qualitative data analysis was undertaken within an 'urban ethnographic' framework (Jackson 1985) in which interviews and other texts are viewed as drawing local practices into broader structures of social relations—structures which create and enforce standardised codes of behaviour—illustrating 'cultural and socio-political manifestations of urban lives and everyday practices' (Low 1999, 2).

In the case studies of the shopping malls and the light rail, the authors conducted 52 in-depth interviews with Israeli and Palestinian interviewees illustrating intergroup interactions in Jerusalem from personal and professional points of view. The interviews took place between 2008 and 2017, and included 15 Palestinians and 37 Israelis, among them urban planners, community

activists, managers of professional unions in Jerusalem (such as industry magnates and union representatives), contractors, managers, shop owners, and chiefs of mall security. Interviewees included both professionals and ‘ordinary’ Jerusalemites with experiences of intergroup encounters in residential, employment, and/or commercial spaces.

In the case study of mixed workplaces, the qualitative work included four focus groups of Israeli and Palestinian workers who had been employed in mixed workplaces. Focus groups were ethnationally homogenous and were conducted during 2016, in either East or West Jerusalem, to facilitate the creation of safe, comfortable environments for the participants. The two Palestinian focus groups were convened in the office of an NGO in the Shuaffat neighbourhood of East Jerusalem with a total of 27 Palestinian participants. The two Israeli focus groups convened in a research institute office in the Rehavia neighbourhood of West Jerusalem with a total of 18 Jewish-Israeli participants. The spatial analysis used in this study considers the extent to which different parts of the city are connected when different ethnonational and socio-economic groups are considered. By adding a structural dimension to the mixed methods analysis of the social and spatial understanding of urban public space and using space syntax methods, we account for measurable dimensions of urban transport mobility and its impact on spatial encounters in Jerusalem.

The structure of this paper is as follows: The first part is a theoretical discussion of the study of geographies of encounter and divided cities, followed by a presentation of the two main structural forces that produce the geographies of encounter in Jerusalem: Ethnonationality and Neoliberalism. The second part presents a brief historical overview of intergroup relations in contemporary Jerusalem. This then serves as background for the main section, in which we describe our findings in the three case studies: the economic intergroup encounter embodied in the

labour market, the cultural intergroup encounter taking place in West Jerusalem's shopping malls, and the functional intergroup encounter of passengers on the light rail. In the last section, we discuss how the ethnonational and neoliberal logics overlap and contest each other, creating a space of inherent, volatile yet resilient interactions, stemming from the tensions between the forces of separation and desegregation in Jerusalem.

### **Toward an Urban Geopolitics of Encounter**

Building on Allport's contact hypothesis (1954), human geographers of contemporary Western cities theorised the potential of everyday interactions to foster a recognition of diversity as *geographies of encounter* (Valentine 2008; Wilson 2011). Considering the accelerated globalisation of economies, conflict and human mobility, globalising cities have been described as sites of 'super-diversity' (Vertovec 2007). Marking a 'cosmopolitan turn' in geographical thinking (Valentine 2013), cities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been re-imagined as sites of connection and celebration of 'the potential for [...] new hybrid cultures and ways of living with difference' (Valentine 2013, 5). Amin and Parkinson (2004), for example, argued that micro-geographies of encounter can provide opportunities for majority groups to come into contact with differences, which may later be translated into mutual recognition and respect. Even 'banal' exchanges in public spaces may give rise, according to Wilson (2011), to the 'formation of a collective culture and temporary community' (647). The literature on daily encounters in public space (normally referring to streets, squares, and the public realm) in general tends to be divided on whether this translates into meaningful face-to-face interaction (Valentine 2008) or if it remains superficially at the level of familiarity (Hewstone 2015). As such, public space without public presence is self-



evidently dysfunctional and becomes most meaningful when it encourages encounters with difference (Sennett 1990).

Geographers such as Gill Valentine (2008, 2013), however, have criticised the rise of cosmopolitanism, characterising its base assumption that contact with ‘others’ translates into respect for difference as careless romanticising. As Holland et al. (2007) argue, the spatial mixing of diverse peoples does not necessarily indicate meaningful intergroup contact. City streets may serve as mere transit spaces that produce minimal interactions between strangers (Amin and Parkinson 2004). Despite their potential for diversity, Laurence (2014) observes that intergroup encounters generally reinforce previously-held attitudes—whether positive or negative—toward inter-ethnic ties. Thus, although contemporary cities facilitate greater levels of intergroup encounter, the extent to which these circumstantial geographies of encounter bear the potential for positive impact remains unresolved.

As noted by Wilson (2017), the scholarship on urban encounters raises ‘questions regarding the value of encounters, what potential they might hold for catalysing change and what might be said about their politics and spatio-temporality’ (451). As shown above, social effect and transformative potential constitute central themes in this scholarship, yet the *politics*—and more significantly the *geopolitics*—of urban encounters have not been systematically explored. In the context of increasing modes of urban segregation and socio-economic disparities worldwide (Nightingale 2012), we should analyse the structural conditions that produce them before addressing the impact of the intergroup encounters. This will enable us to assess important questions of will and intention, and to what extent boundary-crossing transgressions are voluntary or enforced on one or each of the parties? In other words, the value of the encounter—which is always between two asymmetric parties—can be determined through evaluating the structural

forces that grounds it and whether the encounter reproduces or challenges existing power dynamics.

When discussing intergroup encounters in a city like Jerusalem, it is important to differentiate between several overlapping sources and scales of urban division. The first is the multicultural conflict—a socio-economic or ethnic urban dispute which—even when violent—is negotiated within an acknowledged political framework enabling mediation and coalition-building for local-level conflict resolution (Bollens 2000). The second source of division arises when the urban conflict involves a national dimension, as in Jerusalem, Nicosia, and Belfast, which cannot be bridged at the municipal level. Gaffikin and Morrissey (2011) defined the core difference between these two types of urban dispute as conflicts over pluralism (i.e., disputes predominantly concerned with issues related to pluralism, such as ‘social class, status, power and equity’) versus conflicts over sovereignty (i.e., wherein major cities become a microcosm of ‘macro disputes about state sovereignty’) (21). Urban national divisions are reflected in rigid and dichotomic structures of group segregation (Boal 1999) that can last even after the macro-conflict is resolved (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011). In cities like Jerusalem or Belfast, segregation becomes embedded deeply within individual and collective urban mental maps and structural planning schemes (Bollens 2018; Greenberg-Raanan & Shoal 2014). In the contested city, more than religion, gender, socio-economic status and even race, nationality is the key determiner of political status, accessibility to resources, and urban identity.

As stated above, our discussion focuses on the structural geopolitical forces that produce the geographies of encounter in Jerusalem and maintain them, in order to frame it within the larger context of everyday urban geopolitical environments. To capture some of the recent dynamics undermining Jerusalem’s overlapping divisions, and with the aim of producing a more nuanced

examination of its changing patterns of encounter, we present two logics that contextualise some of the major underlying structural forces: ethnonationality and neoliberalism.

Ethnonationalism is a collective identity based on loyalty to a “nation” in the sense of a human grouping predicated upon a myth of common ancestry (Connor 2007). The ethnonational logic demands national sovereignty and domination in the ‘homeland’ territory. In Israel\Palestine the dominant ethnonational force is Zionism, which strives Judaize the land between the Mediterranean and Jordan river (Yiftachel 2006). This land in general, and Jerusalem in particular, were shaped by the ‘material, territorial, political and cultural aspect of the Judaization dynamic and by the various forms of resistance to that project’ (ibid, 3). In nationally-contested cities, ethnonationality is a major force in governance, planning policies, housing developments, and resource allocation (Bollens 2000), as well as in protesting for the opposing sovereignties, civic liberties, and claiming the right to the city (Rosen and Shlay 2014).

We suggest using the term “urban neoliberalism” to describe the ways in which globalisation and the spread of the free market economy reconstructed the social and economic structure of urban centers since the 1980s. Across the developing world, neoliberalism is reshaping urban spaces by privatising municipal services and public spaces, leading to social polarisation and inequality (Harvey 2007; Sassen 1999). Neoliberal policies have ‘been directly ‘interiorised’ into urban policy regimes as newly formed territorial alliances attempt to rejuvenate local economies through a ‘shock treatment’ of deregulation, privatisation, liberalisation and enhanced fiscal austerity’ (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2009, 58). Increasing neoliberal exclusion in urban centres has led to new frontiers of social protest and contestation (Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard 2007). Recent studies have also emphasised the dynamic nature of neoliberal reconstruction and its localised manifestations in different urban localities (Peck, Theodore and Brenner 2013; Shmaryahu-Yeshurun & Ben-Porat 2020).

Before we engage with our three selected cases, we outline a brief historical review of Jerusalem's recent political geography, emphasising the role of the logics of ethnonationality and neoliberalism and the impact they have on the structural forces of encounter in the city.

### **Post-Oslo Jerusalem**

Since its occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, Israel has employed two main strategies in Jerusalem to maintain Jewish dominance: Judaization and De-Arabization (Yiftachel 2006). Demographic policies aimed at preserving the city's Jewish majority led to decades of institutional discrimination in budget allocation and investments in East Jerusalem, resulting in an acute gap between Palestinian and Jewish populations in almost all spheres of life, but particularly in access to physical infrastructure, housing, and education (Ir Amim 2014). The gap grew considerably following the introduction of the closure and check-point regime in the 1990s, and then again following the construction of the separation wall starting in 2004. The resulting disconnect between East Jerusalem businesses and their main market in the West Bank led to an economic crisis in East Jerusalem (Shtern 2019): In 2017, 75% of the Palestinian population lived below the Israeli poverty line, compared to 22% of the Jewish population (Choshen 2019, table VI/2). The fundamental disparities between the two populations stem from their different civic status. While all Jews in Jerusalem are Israeli citizens, most of the local Palestinians possess only permanent residency, creating a two-tiered citizenship system within Jerusalem (Shtern 2019). Inequality in resources and political status makes the Palestinian population dependent on the improved urban and commercial services in West Jerusalem (Avni et al. 2021).

The city adapted to shifting yet ever-present political violence: The First Intifada (1987–1993) was followed by a Second Intifada (2000–2004) and the latest Jerusalemite

Intifada (2014–2015). The ubiquity of political violence in Jerusalem (Hazam and Felsenstein 2007; Rokem et al. 2018; Savitch 2005) contributed to an asymmetric geography of fear, in which many Jewish residents avoid entering Palestinian neighborhoods and commercial centers, and the Palestinian residents reduce their presence in the Jewish parts of the city during violent periods to a minimum (Jabareen, Eizenberg, and Hirsch 2019). Unlike Jewish Jerusalemites, Palestinians cannot afford to avoid the territories of the ‘other’ as they are economically and functionally dependent on the Jewish-dominated Western city (Romann and Weingrod 2014).

Residential segregation between Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem has been structured through planning policies since 1967. While new neighborhoods in Jerusalem (including East Jerusalem) were planned and constructed for the Jewish population,<sup>1</sup> the Arab neighborhoods’ growth was limited through various restrictive planning regulations (Bollens 2000). In fact, the ‘united’ city was planned as two separate functional units, with separate neighborhoods, urban services, and commercial centers. The justification for this segregation reproduces planning practices in other ‘mixed cities’ in Israel (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003). As reflected in the latest municipal master plan—‘Jerusalem 2000’—segregation is surprisingly justified by multicultural values:

In a multicultural city such as Jerusalem, spatial segregation of the various population groups in the city is a real advantage. Each group has its own cultural space and can live its own way of life. Segregation limits the potential sources of conflict between and among the various populations.

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<sup>1</sup> Although non-Jews could theoretically rent or buy an apartment in these neighborhoods, the neighborhoods were planned, marketed, and institutionalized for the Jewish population.

It is appropriate, therefore, to direct a planning policy that encourages continuing spatial segregation with substantial amounts of tolerance and consideration. (Jerusalem Municipality 2004, chapter 7.2.2).

Jerusalem's residential and social segregation limits the socio-economic growth of Palestinian residents by confining them to the point of spatial immobility (Massey and Denton 1993) in enclaves of neglect and poverty in East Jerusalem. However, this segregation is not only imposed by the Israeli regime but is also, in many ways, enacted by Palestinian political leadership and activists as part of a struggle against the normalisation of the Israeli occupation (Salem 2005). Groups suffering from economic and political inferiority have been found to self-segregate for the sake of preserving political-cultural identity and of economic independence (Boal 2002). In nationally-contested cities, the self-segregated enclaves of disempowered communities also serve as safe havens from the dominant group's attacks and from police violence, or as zones of political empowerment and demonstration (Gaffikin and Morrisey 2011). Thus, Jerusalem's segregated landscape is the result of both Israeli and Palestinian ethnonational logics (see: Figure 1, see online version for colour figures). As Boal suggests, once segregation modes are in place, these patterns tend to self-reproduce through inertia (Boal 1999). However, as we will demonstrate further in the paper, spatial segregation in Jerusalem seems to have reached a limit in the last two decades, undermining both national logics of space partition.

Beyond the ever-present weight of ethnonationality in Jerusalem, neoliberalism has an important and understudied role in producing spatial relations between Jews and Arabs in contemporary Jerusalem. As neoliberalism continuously shapes many of Israel's urban and social spaces (Rosen and Razin 2009), in Jerusalem, these transformations include the privatisation of

urban infrastructure, the relocation of retail centres from public streets to 12 inner-city and suburban shopping malls (Shtern 2016), and the proliferation of luxurious private residential compounds in the Western central business district (Blander, Moser, and Avni 2018; Yacobi 2012; Zaban 2015, 2020). In addition, encouraged by neoliberal urban ‘gurus’ such as Richard Florida and Michael Porter, Jerusalem’s former mayor Nir Barkat (2008–2018) promoted investments in urban renewal facilities appealing to Jerusalem’s Jewish creative class, such as the Olympic Basketball Arena and the Railroad Park (Keidar 2018). Almost all projects and strategies eventually, if not explicitly, focused on revitalising the Jewish sections of Jerusalem, deepening the already existing socio-economic polarisation between the two parts of the city.

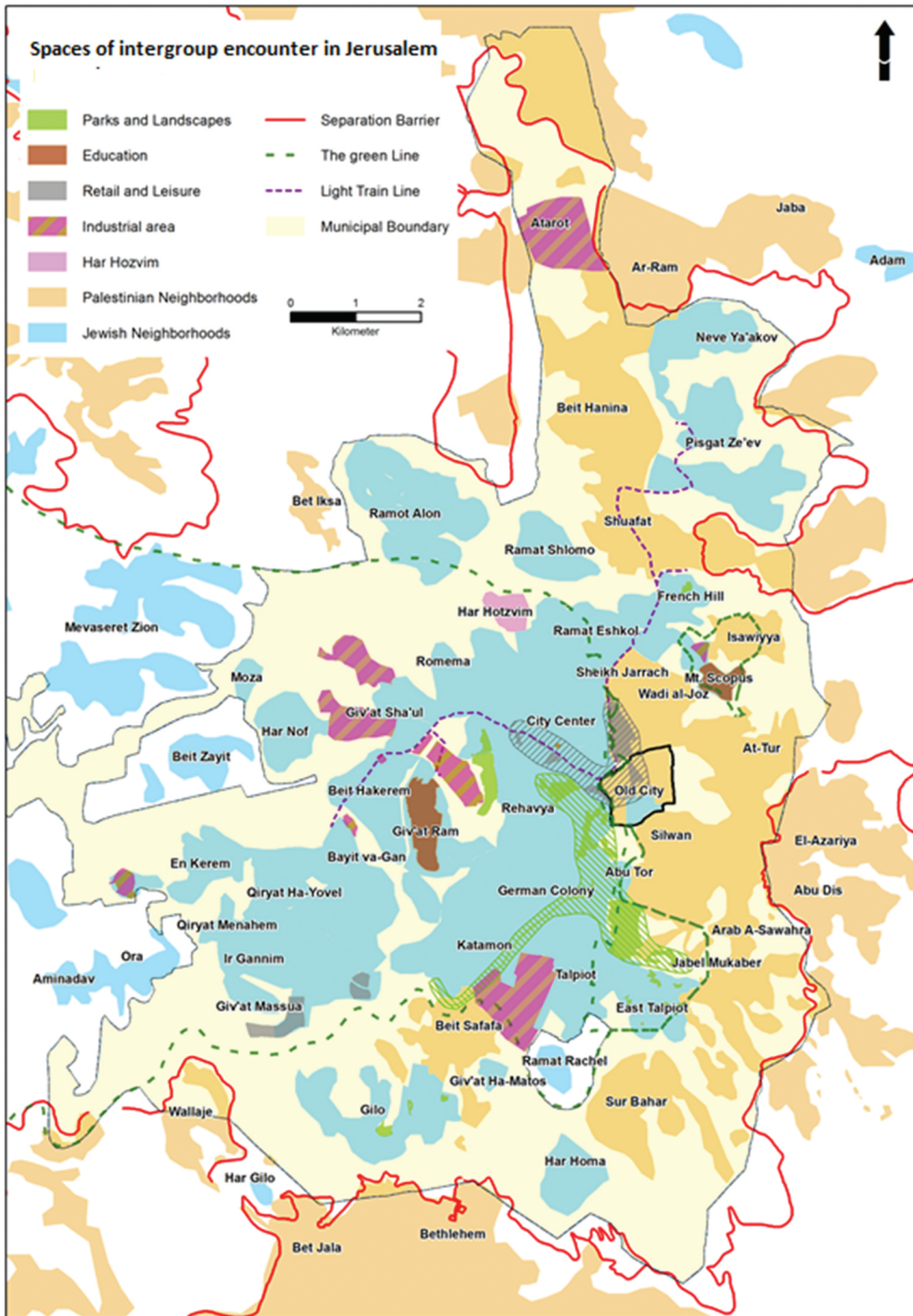


Figure 1. Spaces of intergroup encounter in Jerusalem.



On the other hand, in East Jerusalem, neoliberalism has been embedded and utilised within the mechanism of the occupation, as a range of Israeli colonial practices of control and governmentalisation have been sub-contracted and franchised to private entrepreneurs. For instance, Israeli public social services such as public transportation, medical amenities, and education have been outsourced to private Palestinian contractors (Shlomo 2017), reinforcing Israel's soft power in the region. However, as we will show further on, in the context of Jerusalem's intergroup spatial relations, urban neoliberalism has challenged the predominant national praxis of spatial segregation in the city, creating the conditions for novel geographies of encounter.

### **The Workplace, the Shopping Mall, and the Light Rail: Three Readings of Jerusalem's Urban Geopolitics of Encounter**

In the next three sections we investigate the economic, cultural, and public transportation spaces, which represent some of the central structural conditions which produce geographies of encounter in ordinary cities globally. In observing these three case studies of cross-group encounter: (1) the labour market, (2) commercial hubs, and (3) public transport, our main objective is to move beyond the local conditions and their everyday manifestations. By addressing this gap, we offer a contrastive evaluation of three structural domains of encounter in contemporary Jerusalem. Evaluating the underlying structural forces within ethnonationalism and neoliberalism in order to depict, analyse, and conceptualise the underlying patterns that produce and sustain multiple variants and dimensions of cross-group interaction in the nationally-contested city and their relevance to contrastive dynamics in the wider world of cities.

***The Workplace: Stratified Integration of Labour in West Jerusalem.***

To understand the profound forces that produce geographies of encounter in West Jerusalem, we must inspect the supply and demand cycle of Jerusalem's labour market. As Romann and Weingrod (1991) argued, the strong—if uneven—economic interdependency that has evolved between East and West Jerusalem since 1967 forged material ties that are the last to be severed when violence erupts and the first to be re-established thereafter. A study of mixed workplaces explored structural, spatial, and interpersonal intergroup relations as reflected in West Jerusalem's urban labour market.

The important context for this investigation is the asymmetric exchange between Israeli employment and Palestinian labour that has characterised the local labour market since 1967. In 2010–2011, 37% of East Jerusalem Palestinians were employed in the Jewish parts of the city and only 2% of Israeli Jews were employed in Palestinian neighbourhoods (Shtern 2017, 26–27). Moreover, Palestinians are overrepresented in the city's low-paying economic sectors and occupations whereas Israeli Jews dominate white-collar sectors and occupations (Shtern 2017). In West Jerusalem, this ethnonational stratification is even more striking (Shtern 2019). Consequently, in most shared workplaces in Jerusalem, Palestinians are located at the bottom or middle of the professional hierarchy, and Jews are located in middle or higher managerial positions. Some East Jerusalem Palestinian workers have gradually entered skilled employment in the Jewish sector. The number of Arab academics, managers and other skilled professionals working in West Jerusalem increased from 8% in 1980 to 27% in 2010.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the influx in Palestinian professional employment in West Jerusalem can be attributed to an increase in the number of Palestinian citizens of Israel immigrating to Jerusalem from Arab localities (Masry-Herzalla and Razin 2014)

Amidst ongoing political violence and socio-economic polarisation, the division of labour in Jerusalem's shared workplaces was reflected in the divergent perceptions and experiences that Palestinian and Israeli employees expressed towards their workplaces, associates, and intergroup encounters. As a Palestinian employee in a Jewish owned factory in Atarot, an industrial area in East Jerusalem, describes:

Our conditions are not good, we work 6 days a week, eight hours a day, and even the break is at the expense of the workers. At the end we receive minimum wage 4,650 NIS (\$1,200). We are 32 Arab workers and there are no Arab managers, only Jewish managers. [...] The factory is divided to two floors, the lower floor is for the Arab workers, and the upper floor is for the Jewish clerks. If we want to go upstairs, we need the approval of the security guard.

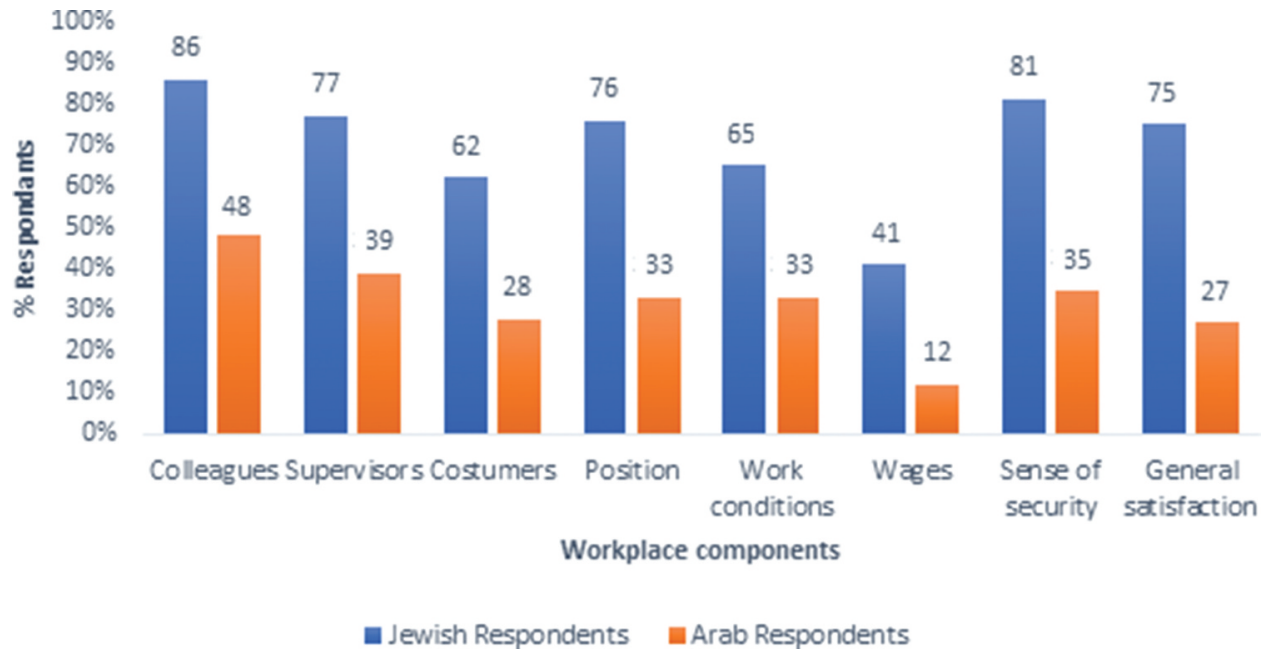
The mirror-image of the above quote is portrayed in the description of H., a Jewish municipal social worker:

I don't know the name of our cleaner, I might have heard it but no... I apologise [...] I don't communicate with him much besides "Thank you" and "Hello" and such, I am drowning in work and also, I feel he only comes to do his job and go home.

It is worth mentioning that in some cases, where Palestinian employees worked as white-collar workers in positions that offered prospects for mobility and development, the shared working space was described using more positive language. This is how Rania, a Palestinian worker at an Israeli government office described her first experience with a Jewish boss:

They treat everyone the same way, Jews and Arabs. My manager sends me texts: “Keep up the good job! You’re amazing.” When I first started, she yelled at me, because we had a 20 minutes break, and I took another extra minute. I told her it can’t work that way, surprisingly she accepted it, and praised me for saying that.

A shared workspace survey conducted in 2017 supports these findings. In the survey, 75% of the Jewish respondents were satisfied with their workplace, compared to 27% of the Palestinian respondents. Similar gaps were found in other elements of the work environment, such as wages, supervisors, position, and customers (Figure 2). However, highly-educated and less-religious Palestinian employees reported more positive attitudes toward their line of work, their Israeli colleagues and managers, and Israeli society at large. For example, while 76% of white-collar Palestinians workers described their relations with Jewish colleagues as positive, while only 48% of service providers and 34% of manual workers said the same (Shtern and Asmar 2017, 95). Thus, it seems that higher socio-economic class and a subsequently higher position in shared workspaces create less antagonistic conditions.



**Figure 2.** workers satisfaction rates in mixed work environments in Jerusalem

Investigating workspace encounters in Jerusalem reveals the dialectical forces underlying shared work environments. On the one hand, forces of political exclusion and economic deprivation push Palestinians to work within the Jewish labour market, in which most of them are subjected to a subordinate position and status. Such a stratified spatial mixing creates a fertile ground for antagonistic relations. On the other hand, when both groups find themselves (by profession or position) in similar cultural contexts or in equivalent or inverted power relations, the possibility for improved relations emerges.

### ***The Shopping Mall: The Neoliberal and Transnational Encounter***

The place is like a floating balloon, it's not connected to anything, there are many tourists, and it feels like abroad...

(Interview in Alrov-Mamilla avenue, June 3, 2009).

The Jerusalem Mall, more commonly known as Malha Mall, was the first enclosed compound mall in the Jerusalem metropolitan area. Its launch in 1993 heralded the restructuring of the city's retail industry. Mass terror attacks during the 1990s and 2000s led many of West Jerusalem's retail shops and restaurants to relocate from Jerusalem's business district to 12 new neighbourhood and regional malls around the city, all owned and operated by Israeli corporations.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the city's business district saw a sharp decline in revenue (Yalink 2011). The regions' volatile geopolitics has thus reinforced the 'mallification' of West Jerusalem's retail industry. However, Israeli shopping malls also became popular destinations for middle-class Palestinian customers from East Jerusalem, which lacked shopping malls. As the number of Palestinian customers in West Jerusalem's shopping malls grew, many businesses recruited Arabic-speaking personnel. According to managerial estimations, the share of Palestinian customers in Alrov-Mamilla avenue (Figure 3) in 2014 was 30%, and Palestinian employees was 66% (Interview, November 14, 2014). In Malha mall, they were 10% of customers and 20% of employees (Interview, December 28, 2014). Thus, West Jerusalem's shopping malls emerged as a new spatial platform of complex and multi-layered intergroup encounters between Israeli and Palestinian customers, employees, and business owners/managers. Moreover, the shopping malls represented a novel arena of encounter in Jerusalem—the privatised and controlled environment of global consumption.

The field study in Jerusalem Malha mall and Alrov-Mamilla avenue revealed central factors that articulated different atmospheres for intergroup engagement within each mall. For example, the political geography of the surrounding area—whether within homogenous Jewish space in West Jerusalem (Malha mall) or on the seam between homogenous spaces (Mamilla

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<sup>3</sup> Among them: Azrielli group, Alrov, Sela Capital, and JTLV.

mall)—informed the accessibility and comfort of the Palestinians customers, as well as the degree to which the Jewish customers were accepting of diversity. The security mechanisms imposed by the mall’s management—the physical checkpoints in Malha and their absence in Mamilla—emerged as a crucial factor in constructing a sense of exclusion for Palestinian visitors (feeling targeted and humiliated by the security guards). Finally, questions of architectural design—the enclosed compound structure of Malha Mall vs. the open-air street mall of Mamilla Avenue—illuminated questions of visual exposure and privacy, feelings of being trapped, etc. The importance of such micro-level geographic factors reveals the dynamics between local-particular political environments (which can differ in relation to location, design, and security policy) and the macro-level power relations (which are dominant throughout space in Jerusalem).



**Figure 3.** Alrov Mamilla Avenue, Jerusalem.

Beyond the particular features of each micro-geography of encounter, two themes dominated the two malls function as spaces of encounter: neoliberalism and ethnonationality. Fundamentally, both spaces were produced by private, for-profit corporations that sought to maximise all possible revenue in a largely very poor and unstable urban environment. The analysis of shopping malls in Jerusalem as spaces of encounter reveals the role that free-market agents, such as mall managers and business owners, play in promoting spatial mixing. In an interview, Shmuel Ben Moshe, CEO of the Alrov Israel company which owns the Mamilla Quarter, asserted:

I have many Arab workers in the shops. It's intentional. I want the Arab shoppers to feel at ease by being served by one of their own. The tremendous success of this strategy is reflected not only in sales, but also in the fact that there is no vandalism or destruction of any kind, or anything like that. (Interview, November 14, 2014).

Ben Moshe's statement suggests that the rise of privatized commercial spaces in Jerusalem has fostered marketing strategies that run against sectarian and governmental policies of segregation. In Malha, the mall's management similarly invested resources in catering to a Palestinian clientele, by launching targeted campaigns in East Jerusalem advertising the mall, and coaching security personnel not to mistreat Palestinian customers (Interview, December 28, 2014). Ultimately, both malls appealed to shoppers based on their consumerist culture and engaged in various tactics in order to create a politically decontextualised space. In the neoliberal city, class is increasingly defined by the shopping habits of ordinary people (Davila, 2016). It is this cultural-economic context of urban neoliberalism in Jerusalem that enables



the novel production of perhaps banal, but also sustainable and non-violent, intergroup spatial cohabitation.

***The Light Rail: Public Transportation Infrastructures and New Spaces of Mobility and Encounter***

The red line Jerusalem Light Rail (JLR) mass transit system, connecting East Jerusalem's Northern Palestinian and Jewish areas to the centre, represents a major shift increasing urban commuting in Jerusalem. The present geographical layout of Jerusalem constitutes a predominantly one-sided connected urban fabric with the city centre developing westward, linked to its peripheral Jewish western and eastern neighbourhoods via a network of expanding ring-roads. Urban development and transportation infrastructure have been largely neglected in the Palestinian parts of the city (Dumper 2014) apart from the light rail project which has reinforced the potential encounter of opposing ethnonational groups (Rokem and Vaughan 2017).

The potential that public transport infrastructure has for overcoming residential segregation by increasing individual commutability as well as the mixing of different ethnonational groups can be measured using spatial mobility analysis. As discussed above in the previous two sections, academic contested cities literature has shown broad interest in the social and economic urban policy dimensions of Jerusalem. However, it has shown relatively limited interest specifically in taking account of the mobility context in quantitative spatial research of contested cities (Rokem and Vaughan 2017). By adding a mobility dimension to the analysis of the cultural and economic understanding of urban public space, using space syntax methods, it's possible to account for measurable dimensions of public transport accessibility in Jerusalem.

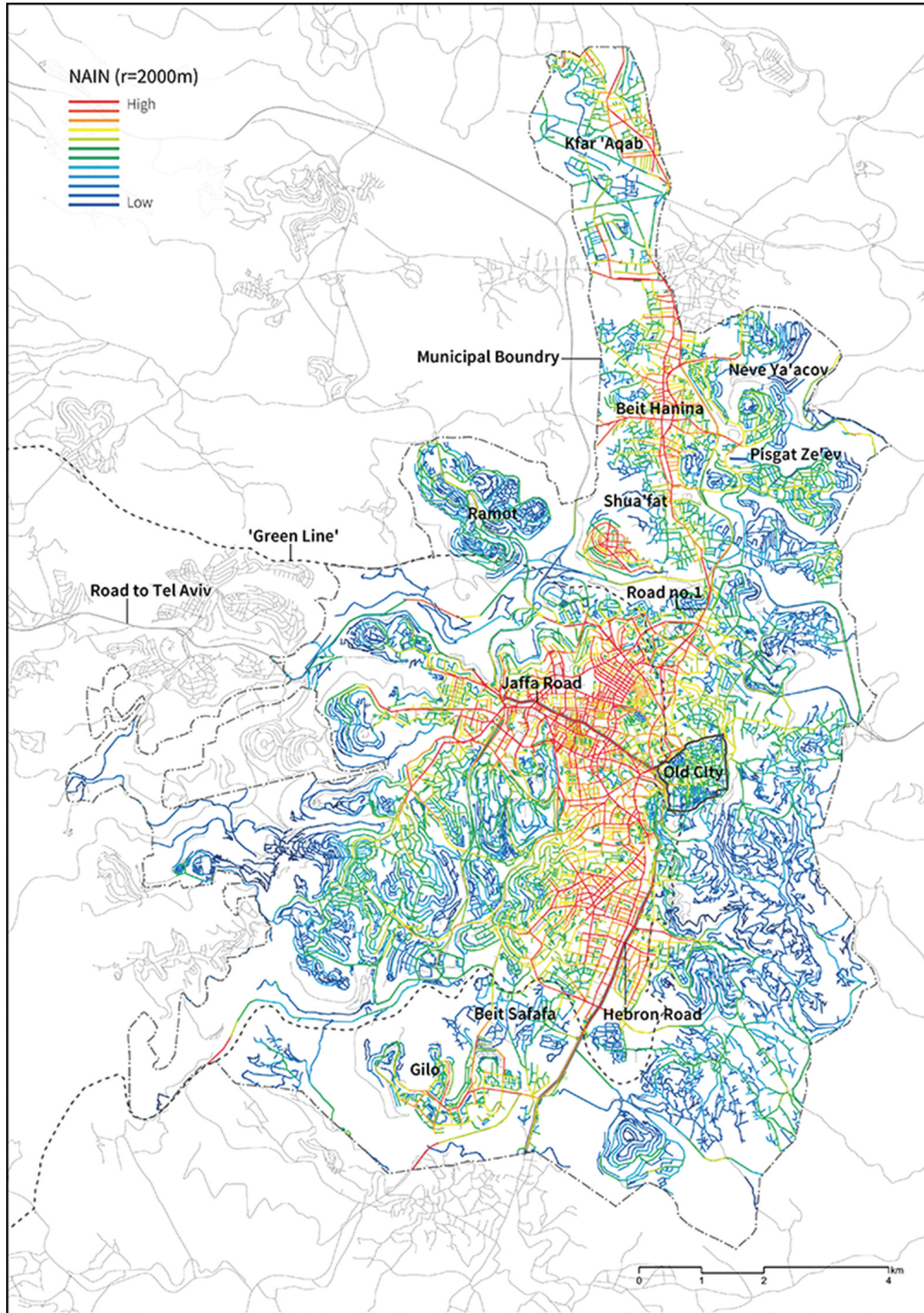
Space syntax analysis of street network configurations has been at the forefront of quantitative urban research for several decades (Hillier and Hanson 1984). Space syntax theories

propose that urban spaces shape flows of movement, providing opportunities for social and cultural exchange (Hillier 1996; Hillier and Vaughan 2007). Space syntax research has tested these theories by developing methods for calculating the relative centrality of the spatial network.

The extent to which key meeting points between Jerusalem's Palestinian and Israeli populations are accessible can be modelled by considering where the different groups and flows of movement through the city are most likely to intersect. The premise of the spatial analysis is that routes for people commuting to and through the area will increasingly converge as a public space becomes increasingly permeable.

For the Jerusalem study, the city's pedestrian routes through the urban grid were modelled as a network of street segments based on a road centreline map (data obtained from [openstreetmap.org](http://openstreetmap.org), an open-source user-generated online platform of geospatial data). As with all space syntax analysis, the streets are coloured in a scale from red to blue, indicating high to low accessibility (Figure 4, which shows the measure of normalised choice at 2000 metres, see online version for colour figures).

The model was analysed using two space syntax measures. The first measure was *choice*, which measures potential flow of movement through public space (streets, squares, pathways, and so on) and which is calculated by counting the number of shortest paths connecting all road segments to all other road segments within a specified radius along the pathways. The second measure was *integration*, which measures the proximity of one street segment to all other street segments within a specified search radius. In other words, the measures of choice or integration at different distances are representative of different levels of movement (Rokem and Vaughan 2017).



**Figure 4.** Space syntax analysis of Jerusalem's spatial structure, showing Normalised Choice (NACH) 2000 m (the colour range from red to blue indicates high to low connectivity values, please see online paper for colour version).

Recent research suggests that the light rail is seen by the Palestinian population as a politically negative infrastructure (Baumann 2016) and a source of continued violent friction (Nolte 2016). During the most recent periods of heightened political tensions (2014-2015), it has been a target of violent attacks, especially in Palestinian areas where the stations were closed to passengers due to ethnonationally-infused violence and hostility (Rokem et al. 2018). However, during longer periods of calm the light rail has had the opposite effect, increasing everyday cross-group encounters (Rokem and Vaughan 2017). This is indicated by the increase in light rail passenger numbers on weekdays, with 151,600 passengers in 2017, 162,400 passengers in 2018 and an increase to 171,431 passengers in 2019 (JIIS 2020).

The JLR provides access to key points of intersection within the city relatively well for the Jewish population, with 44% of Jewish-Israeli areas situated within a 10-minute walk (800m walking distance) from strategic streets near a JLR station. While only around 22% of the Arab-Palestinian population is brought within reach of such streets, this is still a significant proportion given their isolation within the city. Almost a quarter of the two main groups in the city have opportunities for encounter created by the JLR (see: Rokem and Vaughan 2017, for a detailed analysis). Evidence indicates that individual encounters in strategically connected locations can facilitate further similar events, resulting in the creation of shared public spaces leading to further reinforcement of economic and cultural spatial encounters. This adds a mobility perspective to the Malha mall and Alrov-Mamilla avenue case studies and the labor market analysis discussed above. This finds further support in a transportation and labour market survey of Palestinian residents in East Jerusalem, conducted by the Jerusalem Transport Master Plan (JTMT) team in 2016 with a total of 9,861 participants (4.6% of the total residents over the age of fifteen). The results indicate that 41% of the Arab-Palestinian males and 15% of the females within employment age (25–64)

commute daily from East to West Jerusalem, 40% use busses, 30% private cars and 15%20% use the light rail (JTMT Survey 2016).

The survey results give a high level of probability for daily encounters between the different groups who commute daily across the urban divide. This intergroup connectivity is further emphasised in the space syntax mobility analysis in Figure 4, which shows the connective aspects of Jerusalem urban grid. This mixing is likely to create opportunities for encounter across groups which is significantly correlated with the expansion of the light rail public transport network and its new stations located across the old 1967 border connecting Israeli and Palestinian neighbourhoods.

### **Discussion: The Role of Structural Forces in the Analysis of Urban Encounters**

As a nationally-contested city with decisive Jewish-Israeli dominance, the most striking feature of Jerusalem's geographies of encounter is its asymmetry (Figure 1). Whether in commercial spaces or workplaces, encounter most often takes place under Jewish-Israeli patronage, with Palestinians cast in the role of guests, foreigners, and aliens. In a context of extreme intergroup polarisation and violent conflict in which both groups are educated for (and in many cases also experience) mutual hate and distrust (Gaffikin and Morissey 2011), stratified spatial mixing tends to reflect and reinforce dominant power relations. It encounters what Watson termed as a 'Deep Difference' which in 'growing inequalities, and identity differences and hybridity, open the way for the destructive operation of power' (Watson 2006, 46).

Against these asymmetric and in many cases antagonistic contexts, the endurance and resilience (Bollens 2018) of the spaces of encounter in Jerusalem is remarkable. The Palestinian presence in West Jerusalem, which has been growing and intensifying in the past two decades, has

not led inexorably to violent collision. Notwithstanding periodic flare-ups of intergroup political violence, especially during periods of heightened tension within the broader national conflict, Israelis and Palestinians continue to cohabitate in parks, malls, public transport, and workspaces on a daily basis. The dual economic dependency has a major role in forcing Palestinians to transgress boundaries and venture out into West Jerusalem, even during volatile periods (Romann and Weingrod 1991). The resilience of Jerusalem's geographies of encounter may be explained by mutual conditions of enforced encounter based on necessity (and sometimes shared interest). Jerusalemite Jews and Palestinians do not choose to cohabitate, yet they apply and adapt themselves to this reality. Indeed, as Valentine (2008) argues, proximity alone does not necessarily equate to a change in values or behaviour. Yet this study of encounters in Jerusalem revealed surprising levels of adaptation among research participants to the circumstance of living with deep difference. These patterns shed light on the paradoxical nature of contested cities. Such cities are neither multicultural (in normative terms) nor homogeneous. While rival ethnonational communities share an integrated urban space, they experience a rigid geography of fear dominated by 'the imperative of communal difference, segregation and exclusion' (Shirlow 2001, 68). At the same time, they grow accustomed to the reality of the possible daily encounter with the 'other.'

The (partial) restructuring of Jerusalem's urban economy and its expansion of a semi-privatized public transportation has transformed its landscape, culture, and intergroup spatial and economic relations. As discussed in the shopping malls case studies, the neoliberal economy has positioned East Jerusalem Palestinians as a vital urban consumer market, thus granting them economic power in sharp contrast to their political weakness. This phenomenon is not limited to Jerusalem—Marantz, Kalev, and Lewin-Epstein (2014) argued that, since the 2000's, Palestinian citizens of Israel have become increasingly prevalent as customers and employees in shopping

malls in many Israeli cities. Similar trends can be seen in private colleges (Shtern 2019), manpower agencies, and real estate agencies (Yacobi and Pullan 2014)—all drawing Palestinians into Jewish-Israeli spaces for the sake of revenue. Neoliberal stakeholders in West Jerusalem have thus become key agents of stratified spatial mixing.

In post-Oslo Jerusalem, the neoliberal cultural identity emerged as an important factor in facilitating intergroup encounters between ‘westernised’ elements of both societies. Neoliberal ideals such as individualism, self-fulfilment, and material progress undermine long-predominant community boundaries and loyalties (Leach 2011), creating space for complex hybrid identities. However, one should not conclude that the sharing of neoliberal values simply did away with structural discrimination against Palestinians in Jerusalem. This socio-spatial category is not neutral, and in each encounter presented in this work, the established political order and hierarchy remained intact.

The juxtaposition between neoliberalism and ethnonationalism produces and reproduces ongoing dialectics between spatial desegregation and inter-culturalism, on the one hand, and reinforced political hierarchies, violence, and oppression, on the other. These tensions construct the geographies of encounter in contemporary Jerusalem. They design and even condition the way in which each party perceives, experiences, and processes the encounter. As the ethnonational geopolitical asymmetry conditions the territorial imposition of each group (Jewish-Israeli ‘hosts’ vs. Palestinian ‘visitors’), the neoliberal economy reframes the local exchange in capital-driven, material terms (service providers, customers, employees). These are a good example of the ordinary geopolitical exchanges of intergroup encounters in contested cities.

This paper contributes to the scholarship on urban geographies of encounter by illuminating the need to adapt theorisation around western ‘multicultural cities’ to the urban

geopolitics of nationally-contested spaces (Rokem and Boano 2018). It suggests that focusing on the structural dynamics that produce the encounter is vital for analysing questions of value and impact on prejudice, racism and discrimination. As presented here, uneven political power relations, fear, and territorial claims are important factors that structure contested encounters. Nationally-contested spaces also emphasise the roles of location and boundaries in the construction of belonging, as well as the roles of cultural and political representations in the material, legal, and cognitive spheres. We live in an era in which Jerusalem has become a ‘paradigm for urban studies [and] signifier of future urbanisms’ (Boano 2016:457). Learning from Jerusalem’s geopolitics of encounter can illuminate obscure and evolving contested complexities in contemporary urban spaces worldwide (Rokem 2016a).

Moreover, studies on intergroup interaction in urban spaces should address both the wider structural forces of ethnonationalism and neoliberalism and the particularities of micro-geographies of encounter. In contested spaces such as Jerusalem, wherein issues of security, fear, and territoriality are acute, even small variations in geographic location or architectural design can destabilise the daily functions of place. Collaborative efforts to establish spaces of meaningful encounter must therefore address the core forces that produce asymmetric encounters and micro-scale opportunities for interaction if they are to foster wider conditions of mutual security, belonging, and equality.



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