The Three Jerusalems: Planning and Colonial Control

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Whether in negotiations or in the public mind, the issue of Jerusalem is usually framed as a contest for control of the holy places in and around the Old City and in the context of the Palestinian demand to establish their capital in the eastern part of the city. Although these are important and difficult issues, they mask another vital element of Jerusalem's role in perpetuating the Israeli Occupation: its ongoing transformation from an Israeli-controlled city into a region that occupies and controls the entire central portion of the West Bank. Quietly and without attracting much public attention, Jerusalem-the-region has become a central element in preventing the emergence of a viable Palestinian state.

To understand Jerusalem's role in
perpetuating the Occupation, we must look at three concentric Jerusalems: "municipal Jerusalem," as defined by the city's boundaries unilaterally imposed by Israel in 1967; "Greater Jerusalem," which seeks to incorporate the "outer ring" of West Bank settlements surrounding Jerusalem into an expanded municipality; and "Metropolitan Jerusalem," a regional conception that seeks not the annexation of large areas of the West Bank to Jerusalem (including Bethlehem and Ramallah), but their transformation into hinterlands dependent upon an Israeli-controlled urban area.

In addition to its importance as a "fact on the ground" for future negotiations, the case of Jerusalem highlights the use of planning, administration, and construction as means of both perpetuating the Occupation (de facto, if not de jure) and foreclosing the emergence of a viable Palestinian state.

Municipal Jerusalem

In purely urban terms, "municipal" Jerusalem is easy to define: it is a city of some 630,000 people (430,000 Jews and 200,000 Palestinians) living within the municipal boundaries drawn by Israel following the 1967 war. But "municipal" Jerusalem is an artificial entity that embodies less a real urban entity than Israel's desire to assert its claim over the historic Old City and the "Holy Basin" surrounding it. There is little connection between contemporary municipal form of Jerusalem and its organic growth as a city. (An example of this can be found in a comparison of the Old City in the 19th century and its expansion until 1948.)

In fact, the very consolidation of "West Jerusalem" as an exclusively Jewish part of the city (with the exception of part of Beit Safafa) was the product of the 1948 war - not urban development. Before the war, around 40 percent of the land of West Jerusalem belonged to Palestinians, including residential, commercial, and village areas, and almost half of the city's 65,000 Christians and Muslims lived there (Habash and Rempel 1999:184-185; Davis 1999:52). Furthermore, while Israel goes to great pains to stress the centrality of the Old City to Jewish life and identity, by 1948, 98 percent of the 100,000 Jews lived in the western part of the city. To strengthen its territorial control of tiny Arab "East Jerusalem" (6 sq. km., compared to the 38 sq. km. of West Jerusalem), Israel appended another 64 sq. km. of West Bank land to the city in order to embed it in a thick ring of Israeli settlements. In other words, almost 93 percent of East Jerusalem was added to the city after 1967 for purposes of domination. Overall, 60 percent of municipal Jerusalem was appended in order to encircle Palestinian parts of the city and isolate them from the wider Palestinian society of the West Bank.

Political considerations based on Israel's demographic and geo-political concerns have thus determined the form and nature of municipal Jerusalem far more than urban processes. Israel seeks to bolster its claim to exclusive "ownership" of Jerusalem by attempting to maintain the 72 percent/28 percent majority of Jews over Palestinians that it found in the "reunited" city of 1967. (It has only been moderately successful: the Israeli majority in Jerusalem currently stands at about 68 percent.)

One method for achieving this is gerrymandering: in 1967, the new borders of "municipal" Jerusalem were drawn by
 Israeli generals (Shlomo Lahat and the notorious late Rechavam Ze'evi) in accordance with two principles:

- The incorporation of the maximum amount of undeveloped Palestinian land for Israeli construction (thereby foreclosing the urgently needed construction of 30,000 housing units and new industrial areas of Arab Jerusalem), and

- The exclusion of large concentrations of Palestinians from the municipal area (al-Azariyyeh, Abu Dis, and al-Ram in particular) in order to reduce the number of Palestinian residents (Campbell 1998).

Israel then adopted a policy of "partisan" (or "hostile") planning in order to ensure its demographic domination. In the period following 1967, it expropriated a third of the land of East Jerusalem for the construction of its massive settlements and their required infrastructure. On 80 percent of the remaining land (39 of 46 sq. km.), Palestinians were denied the right to build, either because the land fell outside the restricted "master plans" of Arab East Jerusalem (where there were master plans) or because the land was designated for "public use" or zoned as "open landscape areas." The public purposes for which "green space" was intended - parks, playgrounds, schools, community centers and the like - were, of course, never actualized. (Ironically, East Jerusalem possesses more "open green space" per person than any city in the world, suggesting a Garden of Eden - at least on paper.)

According to Amir Cheshin, the long-serving Advisor on Arab Affairs for the Jerusalem municipality under Kollek and, for a time, Olmert:

Planners with the city engineer's office, when drawing the zoning boundaries for the Arab neighborhoods, limited them to already built-up areas. Adjoining open areas were either zoned "green," to signify they were off-limits to development, or left unzoned until they were needed for the construction of Jewish housing projects. The 1970 Kollek plan contains the principles upon which Israeli housing policy is based to this day - expropriation of Arab-owned land, development of large Jewish neighborhoods in east Jerusalem, and limitations on development in Arab neighborhoods." (Cheshin 1999:37)

Palestinians remaining within the gerrymandered borders of Jerusalem were thereby confined to small, disconnected islands, each accessible only through Israeli neighborhoods. Although they comprise a third of the Jerusalem population today, Palestinians have access to less than 10 percent of the urban land for residential use - and most of that has already been built upon.

Even where they are permitted to build, it is important to note that Palestinians are restricted to far lower densities than Israelis are. For instance, while the residents of the Palestinian village of Issawiyyeh cannot build houses higher than two stories, the Israeli residents of nearby French Hill, which is built on land expropriated from Issawiyyeh, live in eight-story buildings. Discriminatory zoning also prevents the development of commercial and industrial areas common to the Israeli sector, as well as accessible,
well-maintained roads and infrastructure. The Palestinian areas of Jerusalem receive only eight percent of the annual municipal budget (Meir Margalit, personal communication). Cheshin summarizes the municipality’s approach as follows:

[In 1967], Israel’s leaders adopted two basic principles in their rule of east Jerusalem. The first was to rapidly increase the Jewish population in east Jerusalem. The second was to hinder growth of the Arab population and to force Arab residents to make their homes elsewhere. It is a policy that has translated into a miserable life for the majority of east Jerusalem Arabs....

In Jerusalem, Israel turned urban planning into a tool of the government, to be used to help prevent the expansion of the city’s non-Jewish population. It was a ruthless policy, if only for the fact that the needs (to say nothing of the rights) of Palestinian residents were ignored. Israel saw the adoption of strict zoning plans as a way of limiting the number of new homes built in Arab neighborhoods, and thereby ensuring that the Arab percentage of the city’s population - 28.8 percent in 1967 - did not grow beyond this level. Allowing "too many" new homes in Arab neighborhoods would mean "too many" Arab residents in the city. The idea was to move as many Jews as possible into east Jerusalem, and move as many Arabs as possible out of the city entirely. Israeli

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housing policy in east Jerusalem was all about this numbers game (Cheshin et al. 10, 31-32)

While Palestinian construction has been severely restricted, Israel has built an "inner ring" of new suburban settlements -- Ramot, Ramat Shlomo, Neveh Ya'akov, Pisgat Ze'ev, French Hill, Ramat Eshkol, East Talpiot, Har Homa, and Gilo, as well as the nuclei of settlements in the Muslim Quarter and around the Old City -- that both defines the expanded municipal borders and preserves Israeli domination. The effects are stark and far-reaching. Since 1967, while only 9,000 housing units have been approved for Palestinians, 85,000 housing units have been built for Jews in East Jerusalem alone. And while Palestinians must build with their own private funds (the cost of merely securing a building permit and connecting to the municipal services can cost a Palestinian family $20,000-60,000), Israeli construction enjoys a wide range of incentives - subsidies, tax breaks, low-interest loans, and other economic incentives - intended to attract large numbers of Israelis into the affordable but high-quality settlements. (The settlements are called "neighborhoods" to sanitize them of political connotations and minimize their size.) Today, around 200,000 Israelis live in the eastern part of Jerusalem that was annexed in 1967, surpassing the Palestinian population.

Israel also employs a number of administrative policies to keep the Palestinian population artificially low. Its restrictions on Palestinian building have created an induced housing shortage of some 25,000 units in that sector of Jerusalem society (Kaminker 1995). Although an estimated 5,000-7,000
housing units have been built "illegally" out of simple necessity, the government's and municipality's aggressive policies of fining Palestinians for building without permits and demolishing their "illegal" houses (see Table 1) have worsened the housing shortage. In turn, this has caused a steep rise in housing prices. Since 70 percent of the Palestinian population in Jerusalem lives below the poverty line (Israeli National Insurance Report, 1998), many residents are forced to seek cheaper accommodations beyond the municipal borders. In so doing, however, they also move their "center of life" from Jerusalem, thus losing both their Jerusalem residency and their National Insurance payments, an important part of their income. In the words of a recent B'tselem report (1998):

The Jerusalem municipality expropriates land, prevents preparation of a town planning scheme for Palestinian neighborhoods, and refuses to grant building permits causing a severe housing shortage, forcing residents to build without a permit, after which the Ministry of Interior and the municipality demolish the houses. Thus the residents move into homes outside the city, following which the Ministry of Interior revokes their residency and banishes them from the city forever.

Known as the "Quiet Transfer," this administrative policy has resulted in thousands of Palestinians losing their Jerusalem residency since 1967.

Partisan planning is an ideal mechanism for control, since it is couched in neutral, technical jargon, and professional plans that conceal its political agenda. Thus, occupation becomes "proper administration." Israel argues that it is following a master plan for the city that addresses the needs of all its inhabitants, and that it demolishes illegally built houses of Palestinians just as any other municipality anywhere in the world would do. Being unfamiliar with the arcane details and procedures of municipal planning in Jerusalem, outsiders find this argument persuasive. But "master plans" that severely restrict Palestinian construction while allowing massive Israeli construction only present a legal facade for what is essentially politically-motivated discrimination.

Such is also the case of road building, usually presented (and perceived) as positive steps toward urban development and more efficient transportation. Thus, there has been virtually no discussion of Road 80, which is called the "Eastern Ring Road" when it enters Jerusalem (Brubaker 2001). This highway plays a key role in controlling Palestinian movement in the West Bank: with the north-south West Bank corridor closed by "E-1" (the planners' term for the 13,000 dunums of land expropriated from Palestinians that link Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem and), Palestinians traveling the length of the West Bank will be forced to enter into the municipal borders of Jerusalem, thus leaving their movement to the mercy of Israeli security. Since the "Eastern Ring Road" (Road 80) also opens up the hitherto isolated settlement of Ras el-Amud and the projected settlement of Kidmat Zion (the "Front Line of Zion") in Abu Dis for Israeli development, it will strengthen a weak link in the inner ring and block any connection between Abu Dis (proposed as the Palestinian capital) and Jerusalem.
Presenting Jerusalem as a "unified," integrated city also helps Israel press its claims to exclusivity. Claims based on Jerusalem's ancient holiness and political significance to the Jews are applied to the entire city, despite the fact that most of it is of recent origin and that most of that, as we have seen, is connected to a Palestinian rather than a Jewish presence. People unfamiliar with the modern gerrymandered borders thus assume that Wallejeh, Sawahreh, Talbieh, Lifta, and Kufr Aqab - all Palestinian parts of municipal Jerusalem - have the same religious and historical significance to Israel as the Western Wall and, therefore, are led to support Israel's exclusive claims. This notion of "expandable exclusivity" is as obviously specious as it is self-serving.

"Greater Jerusalem"

With the election of the Begin government in 1977, settlement growth outside Jerusalem proceeded apace, with Ma'aleh Adumim becoming a full-fledged city as early as 1979. Despite the Oslo negotiations that dealt, in part, with the future status of Jerusalem, the Israeli government in 1995 adopted the "Greater Jerusalem" Master Plan that includes an outer ring of Israeli settlements - Har Adar, Givat Ze'ev, New Givon, Kiryat Sefer, Tel Zion, the settlements to the east of Ramallah, Ma'aleh Adumim, Israeli building in Ras al-Amud, Efrat, the Etzion Bloc, and Beitar Illit - extending over more than 300 sq. km. of the West Bank (de Jong 2000). The goals of such a Greater Jerusalem were obvious: the construction of a Greater Jerusalem extending far into the West Bank could strengthen the settlement presence, secure Israeli domination over the entire central portion of the West Bank, and prevent the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.

But the planning and construction of Greater Jerusalem was done quietly and never became a major issue of political debate. It took on new meaning, however, at Camp David. Faced with Palestinian demands for a presence in East Jerusalem, and realizing that acceding to these demands would make Israel appear forthcoming, Barak came to the conclusion that a Greater [Israeli] Jerusalem would permit such flexibility - and indeed, allow Israel to "rid itself" of up to 150,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites - while strengthening Jerusalem as a Jewish city. Why would we want to "keep" the Palestinian population of Jerusalem, Barak asked? We have no desire to offer them urban services or financial supports (such as National Insurance payments) and certainly not Israeli citizenship. He agreed that "dividing" Jerusalem would be extremely problematic for Israel within the confines of the municipal borders.

But expanding Jerusalem outward to include the outer settlement ring would make the division of the city not only possible but also advantageous to Israel: expanding Israel's territorial control and boosting its demographic majority in order to neutralize the demographic and political costs of "conceding" parts of East Jerusalem. The outer ring would envelop a Greater Jerusalem in a thickly settled layer of suburban cities, isolating Arab East Jerusalem from the wider Palestinian society of the West Bank. With its current population of 80,000 settlers, it would also contribute measurably to the "Judaization" of the city. When the settlements reach their projected population of 250,000 by the year 2010, the Jewish majority of the Greater Jerusalem area will rise from the
present 68 percent to about 85 percent. Meanwhile, the inner ring would ensure that Palestinians within the city would be isolated into small and disconnected enclaves.

Transforming Greater Jerusalem from a city into a region would create an effective wedge between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank, breaking the territorial contiguity of any Palestinian state and controlling Palestinian movement - thereby rendering a state non-viable and sovereignty a hollow fabrication. A Greater Jerusalem region would also deal a devastating blow to the prospects of an economically viable Palestinian state. While Palestinians may be granted a certain access to the city, a highly fortified Greater Jerusalem - thickly-settled by Israelis with transportation patterns and security measures planned to control rather than integrate the Palestinians - would neutralize Jerusalem as a locus of Palestinian social, cultural, and economic life. With around 40 percent of the Palestinian economy revolving around Jerusalem in the form of tourism, commercial life, and industry, the removal of Jerusalem from the Palestinian realm would fatally compromise the viability of a prospective Palestinian state.

Barak attached so much importance to Greater Jerusalem in his scheme of "peace" that he cited it as the main reason for the breakdown of the Camp David negotiations. In a July 25, 2000 press conference called after the collapse of the talks, Barak laid out the issue clearly and candidly:

Arafat's position on the issue of Jerusalem is what prevented the reaching of an agreement....Ideas were raised more than once during the course of the negotiations over the definition and growth of Jerusalem to dimensions that it never had at any stage of Jewish history, with an extremely significant strengthening of its Jewish majority and a guarantee of a solid [Jewish] majority for generations. [This would be accomplished] through taking some of the cities surrounding Jerusalem - Ma'aleh Adumim, Givat Ze'ev, the Etzion Bloc - attaching them to Jerusalem and placing them under Israeli sovereignty, thus creating a situation in which the whole world recognizes this expanded and Greater Jerusalem as Israel's capital, at a price of transferring a few [Palestinian] villages and neighborhoods situated within the municipal boundaries to Palestinian sovereignty.

If Israel is able to implement its "Greater Jerusalem" plan and persuade (or force) the Palestinians to accept it, then, as Barak points out, the entire world would not only recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital but would do so within significantly expanded boundaries and with an overwhelming Jewish majority.

Metropolitan Jerusalem

The least known of the "Three Jerusalems" is "Metropolitan Jerusalem:" a huge area of 950 sq. km. with boundaries that stretch from Beit Shemesh in the west up through Kiryat Sefer until and including Ramallah, then southeast through Ma'aleh Adumim almost to the Jordan River, then turning southwest to
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Map: Metropolitan and Greater Jerusalem - 1997

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encompass Beit Sahour, Bethlehem, Efrat and the Etzion Bloc, and then west again through Beitar Illit and Tsur Hadassah back to Beit Shemesh. It also provides a crucial link to the Kiryat Arba and the settlements in and around Hebron. (See Map)

Adopted by the Rabin government in 1995, the "Metropolitan Jerusalem Plan" is designed as a regional infrastructure of control rather than a region to be annexed to Israel. In many ways, Metropolitan Jerusalem is the Occupation. As part of an extensive matrix of control extending throughout the Occupied Territories, Metropolitan Jerusalem illustrates Israeli intentions to maintain control even if conceding territory, thereby foreclosing the emergence of any viable Palestinian state. Seventy-five percent of the West Bank settlers and the major centers of Israeli settlement and infrastructure construction are found within the limits of Metropolitan Jerusalem. Once again, the planning and the creation of infrastructure "facts on the ground" prove to be effective means of determining the parameters of negotiations and prejudicing their outcome. A regional approach creates an Israeli-controlled metropolis that determines de facto the nature of urban activity, employment, and transportation. It renders political boundaries, such as those between Jerusalem and Ramallah or Jerusalem and Bethlehem, absolutely irrelevant.

A graphic example of how this is already happening is the new industrial park, Sha'ar Binyamin, now being built southeast of Ramallah at the "Eastern Gate" to Metropolitan Jerusalem. Sha'ar Binyamin provides an economic anchor to the small and scattered settlements - Kokhav Ya'akov, Tel Zion, Ma'aleh Mikhmas, Almon, Psagot, Adam, and others stretching all the way to Beit El and Ofra - that otherwise would be isolated from the Israeli and Jerusalem economy. Importantly, Sha'ar Binyamin also robs Ramallah of its economic vitality by providing jobs in Israeli industries that operate in direct competition with those located in or around Ramallah. By turning Ramallah, Bethlehem, and other Palestinian cities and towns into satellites dependent on Israeli-controlled Jerusalem and introducing transport patterns that connect Tel Aviv to Amman but marginalize Palestinian areas, Metropolitan Jerusalem serves to extend Israeli economic, demographic and geographic control directly over some 40 percent of the West Bank. Once again, the issue is one of control and viability, not simply how much territory the Palestinians can wean away from Israel.

Conclusion:
Planning in the Service of Occupation

Every occupation, colonization, or oppressive regime uses planning, demolition, and construction to assert its presence on the ground. However, the Israeli occupation has employed "partisan planning" to a much greater extent - more systematically and more effectively - than any other dominating power.

"Partisan planning," then, contributes to Israel's attempts to maintain its occupation is two major ways. Firstly, it provides a legal, administrative, and professional facade to the political purposes of occupation and control. Couched in the neutral, technical, and professional jargon of planners, buried in the offices of government bureaucrats and inaccessible to the wider public (including its victims),
"partisan planning" renders much of occupation and oppression invisible. By embedding Palestinians in a thick web of plans, procedures, permits, legal processes, and fees, the administrative matrix of control constrains them in every aspect of their everyday life, permitting the military (ideally) to retire into the background. It is no accident that Israel's military government in the Occupied Territories is called the "Civil Administration."

Just how far this obfuscation extends is graphically illustrated by this remarkable passage by Uri Savir, Israel's chief negotiator in the Oslo process and the head of the Foreign Office under Rabin and Peres, in his book The Process:

The negotiations [with the Palestinians at Oslo, in 1995] over the powersIsrael has exercised over a whole generation, opened an entire world before me. Over the years Israelis has cultivated a self-serving myth that ours was an 'enlightened occupation.' I knew this was a contradiction in terms, but I did not know -- and I think few other Israelis did - how thoroughly we had invaded the lives of our Palestinian neighbors. We repressed this knowledge as we may have been the first conquerors in history who felt themselves conquered. Our self-image as a humane society and history's eternal victim, as well as Arab antagonism, blinded us to what was going on in the territories. What I discovered [in Oslo] was that a Palestinian could not build, work, study, purchase land, grow produce, start a business, take a walk at night, enter Israel, go abroad, or visit his family in Gaza or Jordan without a permit from us. The apparatus for managing this octopus was huge.

Some of these restrictions stemmed from legitimate security concerns. But many were the products of inertia and a burgeoning bureaucratic monster with a bottomless budget to feed on...

During the twenty-eight years of occupation [until 1995], about a third of the Palestinian population in the territories had, at one time or another, been detained or imprisoned by Israel. And the whole of the population had, at some time, been grossly humiliated by us....

The personification of the occupation, according to many Palestinians, was an officer in the Civil Administration named Moskovitch. If Moskovitch approved, you could build. If Moskovitch didn't approve, you could not, and until Moskovitch approved you could tear your hair out. Moskovitch had become an institution in himself. When I finally met him - a thin, religiously-observant, amiable man - he in no way impressed me as tyrannical. 'Moskovitch is a good man,' one of his superior officers told me. And this was just the problem - a good man carrying out the orders of an unfeeling bureaucracy makes an impossible situation, for there is no...
way under such conditions for goodwill or common sense to function (Savir 1998:207-208).

If, in fact, a person in Savir’s position was unaware of the controlling aspects of Israeli planning and administration in the Occupied Territories several years into the negotiating process, imagine how little the average person perceives of this subtle means of control.

Partisan planning also "creates facts on the ground" that, in the end, determine the parameters of negotiations to the degree that the political agenda does and effectively prejudices the outcome of negotiations. Ma'aleh Adumim is a perfect example of this: a settlement located in "Greater Jerusalem" that - perhaps more than any other - disrupts Palestinian territorial contiguity and calls into question whether a viable Palestinian state is possible at all. Yet, Ma'aleh Adumim was conceived, is presented, and is perceived by all Israelis as a "non-political" suburban city - in fact, not a settlement at all. Because it is a "non-ideological" community (as opposed to the ideological settlements of the Gush Emunim movement), it falls into what Barak termed "the Israeli national consensus" - and was therefore a "non-issue" not even to be negotiated. The acceptance of this "non-settlement settlement" - indeed, its very internalization as a "normal" part of the landscape - can be seen in the reaction of the Palestinian negotiators at Taba, who indicated a willingness to see Ma'aleh Adumim (and much of the rest of Greater Jerusalem) remain. Thus, new urban entities are established, populations are moved, new communications patterns established, prejudicial economic conditions are created, and discriminatory land-use policies are followed that play a decisive role in determining the contours and viability of a peace agreement and yet are only dimly perceived and understood.

Only by grasping the nature - indeed, the existence - of the "Three Jerusalems" and the effective use of planning and construction as tools of occupation will it be possible to dismantle the "matrix of control" that prevents a just and viable peace. It is not enough to follow the political process of negotiation or even campaigns of military repression. One must understand the realities "on the ground" in order to evaluate the nature of the "peace" that is emerging.

### House Demolitions in East Jerusalem*

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*About 1,000 demolition orders are outstanding in Jerusalem, affecting up to 6,000 families.
(Source: B'tselem; LAW, Jerusalem Municipality)

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Bibliography


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