



# The governmentalities of infrastructure and services amid urban conflict: East Jerusalem in the post Oslo era



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## ABSTRACT

Urban conflict in Jerusalem has mainly been studied through the lens of spatial and functional segregation and discriminative fragmentation between Israeli and Palestinian localities. This article adopts a governmentality approach to the study of the politics of urban infrastructure and services in urban conflict, and argues that a governmentalization process of East Jerusalem by Israel has evolved in the last two decades that has been enacted mainly through the control and management of Palestinian urban infrastructure and services. Since, as manifestations of resistance to Israeli occupation, many of the Palestinian urban functionalities historically operated separately from Israeli state apparatuses, this new development and its consequences indicate an increasing dependency and forced adaptation of Palestinians in Jerusalem to Israeli rule. Based on analysis of Palestinian public transport and education systems, the article demonstrates how the “soft” power of governmentality – mediated through the control and management of urban infrastructure and services – diffuses among the Palestinian population and in space, restructuring them as objects and subjects of Israeli administration and governmental order. In this light, urban infrastructure and services appear in the course of urban conflict as an arena of governmentality and counter-governmentality. On the one hand they serve as a site where identities are practiced and defended; on the other, they may mediate and facilitate the restructuring of political subjectivities and normalization of political structures and hierarchies.

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## Introduction

The outbreak of violent clashes along the seam lines between Palestinian and Israeli localities in North-East Jerusalem in the summer of 2014, confirmed the city's reputation as a paradigmatic example of an ethno-nationally divided city where deep spatial and functional segregation coincides with contestation over the legitimacy of Israeli rule. Indeed, in the last two decades, the 'divided city' notion has been usefully applied to Jerusalem, as well as to other ethno-nationally divided cities, such as Belfast, Mostar and Beirut, to explain ethno-national lines of segregation as prime manifestations of urban conflict, and how they construct and are constructed by the social and political dimensions of the conflict (Bollens, 2000; Calame & Charlesworth, 2011; Dumper, 2014; Klein, 2005; Pullan, Misselwitz, Nasrallah, & Yacobi, 2007).

However, while in the last two decades the 'divided city' approach has dominated critical research about Jerusalem, an essential process of Israeli intervention in the management and control of Palestinian urban infrastructure and services (UIS) has

taken place – evading the scrutinizing gaze of the 'divided city' approach. The important political significance of this development lies in the fact that since the Israeli occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem (EJ) in 1967, Palestinian UIS, such as religious courts, schooling, transportation, the power company, health, and other infrastructure services, have operated, partially or fully, as manifestation of resistance to Israeli rule and assuring Palestinian urban identity, in disassociation from the Israeli state mechanisms (Dumper, 1997; Shlomo, 2016a).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unlike the rest of the West Bank, which since the 1967 Israeli occupation has remained under a military regime, the Jordanian city of Jerusalem and an additional 64 sq. km of the West Bank were annexed by Israel (today called EJ) and controlled by the Israeli state civil apparatuses (see Fig. 1). Annexation was executed mainly by the application of Israeli law over the annexed space and giving the 68,000 (today more than 300,000) Palestinian inhabitants a permanent but conditional resident status. Residency status enables Palestinians free movement in Israel and participation in the state's labor market and welfare system. However, the Palestinian Jerusalemites cannot participate in national elections, and they boycott municipal elections as an expression of resistance to Israeli rule. Israeli forced control over Palestinians in EJ is characterized as a type of local colonial urban regime in which Israeli spatial and demographic expansion into annexed areas is accompanied by political oppression and multilayered discrimination against Palestinians, aimed at securing Israel control over its “unified” capital.

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Noticeable evidence for this process can be seen, for example, in the educational system. While during the 1990s more than 50% of EJ students attended private schools that were completely independent from the Israeli education authorities, in 2014 this percentage had shrunk to only 17% and the majority of students (83%) were attending Israeli affiliated schools. In addition to this development, the last decade also saw a dramatic growth in the numbers of Palestinian students being taught the Israeli curriculum, as opposed to what had been the historic standard Palestinian curriculum in EJ.<sup>2</sup> Another example is the Palestinian public transport system: in the late 1990s more than 80% of daily trips were operated by informal unauthorized drivers; today informality is estimated at only 16% while a reorganized, Israeli-affiliated transport system serves more than 85% of passengers. In the health care services, while in the late 1980s only 50% of Jerusalemite Palestinians were insured by Israeli national health services, today almost 100% of the Palestinians are insured by one of the four Israeli health care providers.

In this article I analyze these new developments and argue that, roughly since the turn of the millennium, a *governmentalization* process has been taking place in EJ manifested in the increasing managerial, budgetary, and functional affiliations between the Israeli state apparatuses and Palestinian UIS. As I further argue, this process has strengthened Israeli control over EJ by fostering in the Palestinian population and key actors dependency on, and adaptation to, Israeli rule and state mechanisms. In light of this process, urban conflict in Jerusalem is undergoing a transformation in which the “soft” power of governmentality – mediated through the control and management of UIS – diffuses among the population and across space, restructuring them as objects and subjects of Israeli administration and governmental order.

This article has two main objectives: first, it seeks to describe and analyze the new modes of control that have recently evolved in the half-century of Israeli urban occupation and Palestinian resistance in Jerusalem; and secondly, it points to some of the limitations of inner-city borders and segregation approaches to divided cities.

In terms of the emergence of new modes of control, while taking into account the effects of geopolitical events and processes on the restructuring of urban environments and political relations (Fregonese, 2012; Rokem et al., 2017; Yacobi, 2009), I seek to explain how the final collapse of the Oslo process as manifested in the dead-end of the Camp David Israeli-Palestinian talks in July 2000, the subsequent eruption of the mutual violence of second Intifada in September 2001, and the construction of the separation wall which started in June 2002 produced the urban-geopolitical rupture that stimulated the “governmentalization era” of Palestinian EJ by Israel.

Second, and in terms of urban conflict research methodology, I seek to point to some of the lacunae in the more conventional segregation methodologies (i.e. the ‘divided city’ approach) that has dominated research on the city in the last two decades or so. While the majority of these studies view the separate infrastructural service systems in Jerusalem as manifestations of functional and spatial segregation, in this article I demonstrate how these very same systems have served as vehicles for Israeli state agencies to further dominate Palestinian urban order and functionality, and the resultant restructuring of urban politics and relations.

The governmentality approach to UIS I present here draws on a growing body of literature which emphasizes types and forms of

infrastructure agency. Rather than seeing UIS as mere technical or administrative systems designated to distribute mobility, services and public goods, more critical perspectives on urban infrastructure conceive of UIS as a key site in which the state penetrates society, and through which power relations and forms of violence and fragmentation are mediated and materialized (Graham & Marvin, 2001; McFarlane & Rutherford, 2008; Rodgers & O'Neill, 2012; Smith et al., 2015). Within this framework, authors have analyzed how configurations of governance and practices of access and supply of UIS operate as technologies of government. That is, they are material and discursive means of fostering different subjectivities in space, and class or race based identities (Hellberg, 2014; Höhne, 2015; Kooy & Bakker, 2008; Legg, 2007).

In this article I seek to expand upon these perspectives to explain urban conflict dynamics through analysis of the relations between governmentality (Foucault, 1978, 2007) and the politics of UIS. By looking at the case of EJ, I demonstrate how UIS embody governmentalities and how these governmentalities come at play in the course of the conflict. The governmentalities of UIS refer here to the ways in which UIS embody and mediate the operation of power that “seeks to act on the actions of others to bring about particular comportments, behaviors and subjectivities” (Huxley, 2008, p. 1635). From this perspective, UIS may be situated among market mechanisms and other state and non-state apparatuses of governmentality, such as spatial planning, welfare, health and religious institutions, that have the capacity to influence discourse, practices, and the relation of people to things (Rose, Pat, & Mariana, 2006).

In the context of urban conflict the governmentality aspect of UIS is revealed not only as a manifestation of state power designated to manage society and subjects (Guldi, 2012; Mann, 1984), but as an ongoing everyday operation through which groups manifest their identity and their will and capacity for self government. In the case of EJ for instance, the well-known fact that Israel rules EJ via judicial annexation but does not really govern the Palestinian areas is mostly apparent in the domain of UIS (Benvenisti, 1976; Dumper, 1997; Klein, 2001; Romann & Weingord, 1991). The historical disassociation of Palestinian UIS from the Israeli administration may therefore be understood as a ‘counter-governmentality’. That is, as a form of resistance aiming to protect norms and rationales for the conduct of everyday life according to Palestinian identity in the face of Israeli administrative and societal order.<sup>3</sup> The contribution of this approach to the study of urban conflict is in seeing separated UIS systems as manifestations not only of political rivalry and segregation, but also as dynamic arenas of contesting governmentalities over the control and restructuring of political stances and subjectivities (see also: Shlomo, 2016a).

I ground these arguments in analyses of the urban political history of the 50 years of Israeli occupation of EJ, focusing on the contestation over the control and management of the Palestinian public transportation and education systems. These two domains represent two prominent UIS in EJ through which governmentalization is enacted – both in respect to the control of mobility systems and the use of space (public transportation), and the regulation of populations (education).<sup>4</sup>

Before I begin, it is important to note that EJ's

<sup>2</sup> In 1993, the Palestinian curriculum replaced the Jordanian curriculum which had been taught in EJ since the Israeli occupation.

<sup>3</sup> I use the notion of “counter-governmentality” in a rather different manner from Appadurai (2001). While Appadurai refers to discourses and political practices animated by the social relations of shared poverty that confront governmentality from “below”, I use this notion to describe the production of opposing knowledge and governmental technics by institutions, organization, and socio-political networks in order to compete with an existing governmental order.

<sup>4</sup> For the expansion of the concept of governmentality to the spatial domain, see: Huxley, 2008.

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