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Enclaves, borders, and everyday movements: Palestinian marginal mobility in East Jerusalem

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ABSTRACT

Jerusalem might be considered an enclave city *par excellence*: Israeli settlements in the Palestinian east of the city enjoy higher levels of services and are connected through infrastructures that immobilise those in Palestinian neighbourhoods. At the same time, Palestinian neighbourhoods have become enclaves of the city since the construction of the Separation Barrier. Beyond the top-down view of ethnically-based residential segregation, however, attention to quotidian movements reveals the practices through which the borders of enclaves are undermined and reinforced. Palestinians move through and into exclusively Jewish spaces, strategically making use of their amenities, while utilising the spatial autonomy of marginalised Palestinian areas. As borders are reinforced from above and below in times of political tension, they also attempt to disrupt Israeli intrusions into their enclaves. By showing how the quotidian practices of marginalised residents continually undermine and re-make intra-urban borders, the mobility-based perspective adds valuable nuances to the understanding of Jerusalem as an enclave city.

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1. Introduction

In Jerusalem, where most neighbourhoods are divided along ethno-national lines, Palestinian neighbourhoods are underserved by the municipality, while Israeli settlements in their midst enjoy a much higher level of amenities. Segregated infrastructures fragment urban space and entrench socio-spatial divisions. From this perspective, the city appears to fit neatly into prevalent understandings of processes of exclusion in enclave cities, according to which dominant groups construct gated enclaves to shield themselves from the marginalised. This paper argues, however, that if urban segregation is examined through the lens of people's movements rather than merely static residential patterns, new perspectives open up which permit the agency of marginalised residents to become visible and allow us to understand how enclaves are both undermined and reinforced through quotidian practices.

In this article I seek to answer the following questions in the context of Palestinian everyday mobility in Jerusalem: How does movement across segregated urban space affect the borders of enclaves, in the short and long term? When and how are enclave borders reinforced? And how does paying attention to mobility alter the picture presented by an analysis solely based on residential segregation? Jerusalem presents an excellent case study for examining these issues, as it constitutes an extreme example of urban segregation due to its clearly defined residential enclaves reinforced by a history of ethnic division and ongoing institutionalised exclusion. The Jerusalem light rail (JLR), which began

operating in 2011, serves as a particularly salient case study as it is the first mode of public transportation to connect Israeli settlements and Palestinian neighbourhoods, thus de-segregating public transport in some areas. I focus here on the enclaves of Israeli-occupied East Jerusalem and its immediate hinterland, forgoing a discussion of enclaves within the west of the city (cf. Hasson, 2001).

A short description of the methods and theoretical approach used is followed by a review of the literature and an outline of the local manifestations of 'enclave urbanism'. The argument of the empirical section consists of two main parts. In the first, I show how Palestinians cross Israeli-imposed boundaries to maintain severed urban linkages, how embodied practices can contribute to a sense of freedom of movement despite these restrictions, and how Palestinians move through (and into) Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem to gain access to resources denied to Palestinian neighbourhoods. In the second section, I argue that Palestinians make use of the relative autonomy afforded by exclusionary enclaves created by the Separation Barrier.¹ I examine Palestinian reactions to what is perceived as Israeli infringement on Palestinian space by way of the light rail, reading their restriction of Israeli mobility as part of a broader struggle over the control of space. Finally, I show how borders are reinforced by both voluntary and enforced limitation of movement across enclaves in times of heightened tension. I conclude that enclaves are not static, but are consistently undermined and re-made through quotidian practices. The mobility-based perspective thus adds valuable nuances to the understanding of Jerusalem as an

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¹ As the Barrier takes the form of a concrete wall of up to 9 m in height in the urban areas discussed, I use the terms 'Wall' and 'Barrier' interchangeably here.

enclave city, and may help us rethink internal divisions in less conflict-prone cities as well.

1.1. Methodological and theoretical approach

This article relies primarily on data collected in 146 semi-structured interviews and follow-up conversations, the majority of which were conducted between July and September 2013, and between June and September 2014 and 2015 – periods during which the prevailing levels of tension in Jerusalem fluctuated strongly. Of the Palestinian respondents, residents of and commuters to East Jerusalem were the primary target group (31% of the total, 56% of them female); in interviewing them, I frequently employed a ‘go-along’ approach (Kusenbach, 2003). Other respondents included transport company managers and employees, including drivers (15%), NGO representatives and researchers (13%), community leaders and local officials (5%) as well as national government officials and planners (3%). Israeli respondents included NGO representatives and researchers (12%), municipal officials and planners (8%), officials and consultants of the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan (JTMT) and light rail project (8%) as well as residents of West Jerusalem (3%). I carried out extensive on-site visits, participant observation on various forms of public transport and visual research in the form of photographing, filming and mapping sites and movements. Due to the sensitive nature of Palestinians’ status in East Jerusalem, I use pseudonyms for these respondents.

While the role of infrastructures in enforcing the division of Jerusalem has been explored taking the top-down view of planning, the politics of Palestinian mobility within East Jerusalem have not been sufficiently examined from a bottom-up perspective. This approach may permit us to nuance the picture of urban enclave life. Accordingly, the ‘people-based’ approach (Kwan, 2009) taken here, insists on the political importance of the everyday in shaping urban space through routine activities, including tactics that subtly resist power by seizing opportunities (de Certeau, 1984). Rather than only through policy, cities are also shaped by the activities of their residents, even the most marginalised. Such reshaping, achieved through incremental changes to the usage of spaces, has been called the ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’ (Bayat, 2009). The need for attention to mobility across borders is grounded in the understanding that space is not static or frozen in time, but is made up of a multiplicity of trajectories (Massey, 2005), which are in themselves worth exploring. As much as by static enclaves, the lives and identities of city dwellers are shaped by circulations which enable encounters between different groups (Jensen, 2009). Following from Simmel’s notion that a border ‘is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially’ (1997: 143), I conceptualise intra-urban borders not as a given, but as products of ongoing processes of reinforcement and subversion through everyday actions which co-constitute the physical reality of the border. In a contested space such as Jerusalem, both top-down interventions and everyday acts are often based on the attempt to create or maintain ethnically homogenous enclaves, what Sibley (1995) terms the ‘purification of space’. As conflict in Jerusalem (as well as its potential resolution) is often conceived of from a bird’s-eye view (Geneva Accord, 2009: 111), understanding socio-spatial dynamics through everyday interactions at street level is important for gaining an understanding of the lived city.

1.2. Urban enclaves and the mobility gap underpinning them

While ethnically-based segregation is by no means a new phenomenon in cities (Nightingale, 2012), the urban studies literature in recent decades has paid particular attention to class-based segregation in line with the worldwide neoliberal turn (Castells, 1996; Davis, 2007). As privatised service provision has replaced the integrated ‘modern infrastructural ideal’ of public urban amenities, homogenous and securitised quarters emerged at the expense of shared public spaces (Graham & Marvin, 2001). Enclaves are often subject to special governance regimes

and access restrictions – their etymological root in the Latin word *clavis* (‘key’) points to the fact that their closed-off perimeter is a defining aspect. Thus, the emergence of affluent gated communities alongside marginal areas is understood to have created new forms of inclusion and exclusion in the postindustrial city (Douglass, Wissink, & van Kempen, 2012). Enclave urbanism is not merely an expression of inequality, but also reproduces it – for instance, when securitised gated communities cause a decrease in security for those living outside the enclaves (Kaker, 2014). The overarching narrative of this new form of ‘enclave urbanism’ is thus often ‘alarmist’ in that it links enclaves to the decline of both the public realm and the socially diverse yet coherent city (Wissink, 2013).

Despite the recent ‘mobilities turn’ (Urry, 2007; Sheller, 2004), the literature on urban segregation and enclaves has not paid sufficient attention to activities and mobilities, focusing its analysis mainly on residential patterns (Kwan, 2009, 2013). The role of mobility is mainly understood in the context of unequal access to infrastructures, which creates ‘premium networked spaces’ at the expense of those living in ‘spaces of immobility and fear’ outside the elite enclaves (Graham & Marvin, 2001). This analysis is in line with the wider mobilities literature, which has highlighted the importance of immobilisations (Adey, 2006): while the movement of ‘kinetic elites’ is facilitated (Cresswell, 2010), the mobility of less desirable subjects is curtailed (Shamir, 2005), resulting in a ‘mobility gap’ (Turner, 2007). Research on mobilities has examined the subversive and transgressive potential of embodied leisure practices in the city, such as walking (Pinder, 2011), cycling (Spinney, 2010), and parkour (Saville, 2008; Mould, 2009), but has primarily done so in localities where conflicts over urban spaces do not have repercussions as severe as in a contested city such as Jerusalem.

According to Caldeira (1996), the spatial segregation produced by fortified urban enclaves limits everyday interactions with other groups and thereby magnifies perceptions of social difference; the interactions that do take place as borders are crossed are marked by ‘suspicion and danger’. The picture painted, then, is one of spatial isolation and inequality, both in terms of residential service provision – what has been termed ‘infrastructural violence’ (Rodgers & O’Neill, 2012) – and in the means of mobility. Physical proximity in the city is no longer seen as a key determinant of social interaction (Coutard, 2008) and since cross-enclave or chance encounters are limited, inequalities are exacerbated and the potential (physical and political) space for forging solidarities is undermined (Young, 2000; Sennett, 2007). An examination of the literature on enclaves and mobility in the Jerusalem context would, at first glance, seem to support these notions, even to an extreme degree.

1.3. Enclave urbanism in East Jerusalem from the top down

In Jerusalem, which is routinely referred to as ‘divided’ (Klein, 2005), ‘segregated’ (Thawaba & Al-Rimmawi, 2013), ‘fragmented’ (Pullan, 2011), or even ‘many bordered’ (Dumper, 2014), enclaves have a long history. While communal borders in Jerusalem were defined by *Mahallat* neighbourhood units during Ottoman times (Tamari, 2009), the clear segmentation of the old city into four confessional quarters was only implemented during the British Mandate, when Jerusalem was rebuilt as a ‘divided city’ on the basis of the principle of the ‘unmixing of peoples’ (Roberts, 2013). However, despite the Mandate authorities’ insistence on ethnic segregation, there were significant zones of mixing, in particular in commercial areas (Abowd, 2014). Between 1948 and 1967, the West of the city became part of the newly established State of Israel, while East Jerusalem was under Jordanian control. The armistice line of 1949 running through Jerusalem, referred to as the ‘Green Line’, remains internationally recognised despite the fact that Israel has occupied East Jerusalem since 1967 (Lustick, 1997), effectively annexing it (Basic Law, 1980), without, however, granting citizenship rights to the city’s Palestinian residents, who have the status of ‘permanent residents’.

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