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TOWARDS COMPARING DIFFERENT CONTESTED

CITIES

LEARNING FROM STOCKHOLM AND JERUSALEM

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Learning from Stockholm and Jeruaslem

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ABSTRACT

Founded on a critical reading of the new comparative turn in urban geography and planning studies, this paper seeks to complicate our understandings of theoretical labels attributed to different cities. The research explores how, in an era of growing neo-liberalization, ethno nationalism and international migration, cities are mixing and dividing in unpredicted and unordinary development patterns. In Jerusalem, despite an active ethno-national conflict, a lack of development in Palestinian areas is generating market led mixing of opposing ethno-national groups. In Stockholm, exclusionary housing policies, failure of government led anti-segregation schemes and mass privatisation of the housing market has generated ethnic polarisation of the inner city separating it from its diverse minority peripheries. Placing Stockholm and Jerusalem's with their starkly contrasting histories and social and spatial regional and national politics allows us to learn across what have been considered in urban studies as incommensurable cases. The findings suggest that it is timely to start moving beyond neo-liberalism and ethno-nationalism as discrete global forces determining urban segrigation patterns in different cities, to better adapt planning policy and practice to ethnic minorities and migrants in a fractured and complex un-ordinary urban reality.

KEYWORDS: Comparative Urbanism, Contested Cities, Urban Segregation, Jerusalem, Stockholm.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper joins the topical debate within urban geography and planning studies concerning the Global North's declining dominance in the production of urban theory and the need to move beyond methodological regionalism and incommensurability in urban studies and planning research. (Robinson 2011; Parnell & Robinson 2012; Sheppard et al 2013; Watson 2013, 2014; Peck 2015). Within this discussion, a related process is the tightening gap between neo-liberal infused socio-economic segregation and more extreme ethno-national division in a growing number of contested cities worldwide. In this research the main aim is to engage with the complexities of urban inequality and ethnic mixing and how it is shaped in contrastive and ambiguous ways; demonstrating the processes within state led planning policies and in interviews with local urban planners in Jerusalem and Stockholm. The proposition put forward is that through analyzing spatial politics and planning within two defined case studies, we can establish a comparative investigation of urban difference (McFarlane and Robinson 2012).

Methodology the paper engages with two cities, selected to illustrate contrastive patterns within the "planning politics nexus" - the local relationship between planning and politics (Rokem & Allegra forthcoming). Jerusalem and Stockholm is an unusual pair of cities to compare, demanding a short explanation because they do not hold the same history or social and spatial politics. I am conscious there are moral and concrete difficulties in investigating them together, perhaps running the grave risk of diminishing the different realities they convey. This is of course not my purpose, for as I aim to show in this paper, there is a larger spectrum of state led planning apparatuses producing urban segregation involved in both, and as Porter (2014: 388-389) suggests it is significant for critical urban theory to clench this more generally by looking at the specific national and local manifestations of this world wide process. While in no way denying or condoning the role of the nation state in imposing partisan segregation and inequality characterizing Jerusalem, it can be instructive to place it in a comparative context beyond the processes of ethno-national led segregation, allowing us to see that there are also other forces such as neo-liberalism and socio economic statues at play.

Jerusalem is an extreme case positioned in the vortex of the ethno-national violent Arab-Israeli conflict with urban segregation imposed by the state. The city is often included in studies comparing extreme divided cities such as for example (Nicosia, Beirut, Belfast and Sarajevo among others) - claimed to be differentiated from other contested cities owing to an ongoing ethno-national conflict and a questioning of legitimacy of the nation state (Anderson 2010). Stockholm on the other hand, is a world leader of urban sustainability and the capital of the Sweden, well known for its inclusive socialist policies providing housing and public services. Over the last few decades Sweden's cities are receiving growing numbers of immigrants and asylum seekers mainly from conflict zones in the Balkans, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. With this in mind I propose socio economic statues and its relation to ethnicity, as the two main defining sequential segregation causes in both cities.

The empirical materials were gathered through a synthesis of the author's fieldwork and over 60 interviews conducted with municipal planners and community activists in Jerusalem and Stockholm (2011-2013) combined with a rich range of secondary materials. The article starts with a brief critical overview of the scope and limits of comparative urban theory and urban segregation research. Next a description of the two selected case studies is portrayed examining some of local planning and housing conditions constructing a comparative conversation across Jerusalem and Stockholm. The Conclusion ties all of these

together suggesting it is timely to start learning from, and compare across radically different contested cities.

2. COMPARING URBAN DIFFERENCE

In recent years a new wave of comparative research has emerged putting urban comparisons' back on the agenda (Nijman 2007; Ward 2008, 2010; Robinson 2006, 2011, 2014, McFarlane and Robinson 2012; Peck 2015). However, most usual forms of comparison conventionally depend on associating between cities with similar geo-historical and regional settings (McFarlane and Robinson 2012) and are commonly based on a few selected cities in North America and Europe (Roy 2009, 2014; Peck 2015) all too often focusing on the abstract city level with marginal attention given to particular local contexts (Gough 2012) some recent critics maintain that this runs the grave risk of producing yet another wave of armchair research agenda setting lacking substantial empirical inquiry (Peck 2015; Nijman 2015).

With the aim of moving away from comparing similar cases in abstract settings, the paper responds to McFarlane and Robinson's (2012: 766) call to place more emphasis on difference in comparative urban research. As such, this paper questions urban studies enduring Euro-centric academic knowledge production, methodological regionalism and incommensurability. To start establishing such a comparative conversation of what we can learn from different urban contexts following Robinson (2011: 5), I suggest that there is a need to re-think current theoretical categories and labels, based on empirical research in two specific cities representing radically different visions and division patterns. Such a step could contribute to one of the long-standing question at the core of urban theoretical inquiry concerning the validity of singular cases (cities) in the creation of a general urban theory?

> "[…] can [we] group all cities together as a common class of phenomena? Or must we divide them into several different and incommensurable classes, and, in the extreme case, into as many classes as there are individual cities?" (Scott and Stroper 2015: 4).

This highlights a theoretical and methodological risk; first, of collapsing into a deterministic proposition trap that all or most of today's cities are undergoing similar changes, or, second, that they are all unique and incommensurable. It is important to clarify that neither extremes are the aim of the current paper. Rather, the aim follows Peck's (2015) observation

> The ongoing work of remaking of urban theory must occur across cases, which means confronting and problematizing substantive connectivity, recurrent processes and relational power relations, in addition to documenting difference, in a 'contrastive' manner, between cities. It must also occur across scales, positioning the urban scale itself, and working to locate cities not just within lateral grids of difference, in the 'planar' dimension, but in relational and conjunctural terms as well (Peck 2015: 162-163).

In other words, this paper suggests we need to find a middle ground between particularity and powerful existing theories of *total generalisation* such as dominant globalization discourses (Sassen 2001), urban age theories (Burdett and Sudjic 2006) and more recently far-reaching neo-liberal explanation of the the *urban land nexus* (Scott and Stroper 2015) and *planetary urbanisation* - declaring that under capitalism the urban has no outside (Brenner

2013; Brenner and Schmid 2015) all the aforementioned do not explain the new forces behind the spatial and social partitioning (Rokem 2016a: 406). Instead, by carefully mapping and defining urban segregation in two different cities can uncover some preliminary observations of what we can learn from cities previously deemed to be fundamentally incommensurable in urban comparative research.

In any comparative work defining the case study is arguably the most important step (Pierre 2005: 457). Both cities represent what Flyvbjerg (2006) defines as *extreme* and *critical* cases. They are *extreme* cases in the sense that they make a point in "an especially dramatic way" (229); In Jerusalem, this is with respect to fundamental issues at the center of the debate, e.g. the dynamics of inclusion or exclusion among stakeholders the severe segregation of urban space with the *security wall/separation barrier* being the extreme example. In parallel the mixing of opposing ethno-national groups negating the assumption that under extreme urban ethnic conflict opposing ethno national groups continue to cluster rather than mix. Stockholm is an *extreme case* in its planning policies oriented towards equality set against its growing social and spatial cleavages and clear ethnic division manifested in the segregation of minority immigrant communities.

3. JERUASLEM – MIXED ETHNO NATIONALLY CONTESTED SPACE

Jerusalem is the largest and poorest city in Israel today. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, (ICBS 2015), at the end of 2013 the population of Jerusalem numbered 816,000. The Jewish population totalled 515,000 (63%), the Arab (Muslim and Christian) and other (non Jewish) population totalled 301,000 (37%). Several factors distinguish Jerusalem from other cities. Firstly, it is an important religious centre for three of the world's monotheistic religions. Secondly, it is claimed as the national capital by two nations, placing it in the vortex of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, and, thirdly it is not acknowledged as the official capital of Israel by the UN and most of the world's nation states.

One of the main reasons for the tight control of planning in Israel and especially in Jerusalem is the ongoing Palestinian Israeli conflict. The 1948 war[1] ended with the city physically divided between two states, Jordan in the east and Israel to the west. The 1967 War[2] between Israel and its Arab neighbours was a significant spatial turning point in Israel's geopolitical condition with the annexation of the Golan Heights, the Gaza strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem, with the Israeli state declaring the city as its united capital (Bollens, 2000; Rokem 2013; Dumper 2014). Despite international opposition, the Israeli government legally reinforced this claim with the Municipalities Ordinance (Amendment No. 6) Law, 5727–1967 applying Israeli rule to the entire city (Lapidoth 2006).

The Palestinian inhabitants of East Jerusalem are since 1967 not recognized as Israeli citizens and receive limited residency rights, which have been constantly eroded over time (UNCTAD 2013). Israel's planning policies have been consistently aimed at strengthening Israel's control of East Jerusalem while weakening the rights of Palestinians (Khamaisi 2002, 2010). Furthermore, the Israeli Ministry of Interior and the Jerusalem Municipality placed a strict development ban, forbidding almost any new construction in Palestinian

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

[2] The 1967 Six Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbors ended in the occupation by Israel of the Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights.

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neighborhoods (Rokem 2013). Moreover, plans for developments over a certain size have to receive the Ministry of interior controlled regional planning committee's approval, thus placing the political power to approve large-scale plans in state hands (Rokem 2016b).

The underlying principle of Israeli planning policy in Jerusalem is to establish a large, unified city with a dominant Jewish majority. The *Jerusalem MasterPlan 2000* is the newest plan for the entire city and was adopted in 2007 by the municipality. Although the *MasterPlan* remains the main planning guidance policy document it has not received statutory approval by the Israeli government enabling its selective use by the authorities. The plan proposes a population ratio of 60% Jewish to 40% Palestinian, maintaining this demographic balance in the future. This is an alteration of the former 70% to 30% ratio and reveals the failure of attempts to control the demographic balance through planning. This is further indicated by the patchwork of Palestinian and Jewish areas inside the municipal boundaries especially to the east and in the fringe areas where, over the last decade, neighborhoods such as Pisgat Zeev and French Hill have experienced in migration of Palestinians into Jewish areas (Yacobi 2012: 61, Yacobi & Pullan 2014). This can be perceived as a market led gentrification, overturning the national political objective of demographic balance by mixing Israeli's and Palestinian populations rather than strengthening ethno-national segregation.

For the first time since 1967, the current *Jerusalem MasterPlan 2000* relates to the development and planning needs of the entire cities population. The Director of the Jerusalem Municipality Planning Department expressed in his interview the satisfaction with the MasterPlan improving the transparency of planning policy in Jerusalem:

> Since the Master-plan 2000 was approved for authorization by the local planning committee […] planning policy has been much clearer […] even though it has not received statuary approval from the district committee it makes it much easier to decide where and how to develop […] (Jerusalem Municipality Planning Department Director, Interview May 2013).

Notwithstanding the planning transparency affirmed in the statement above, the *Jerusalem MasterPlan 2000* lack of neither statuary approval nor determining detailed land uses means that in reality it is selectively implemented mainly targeting Jewish areas. For the majority of the Palestinian areas in East Jerusalem, there are no valid outline plans and consequently these areas remain neglected, this fact is rarely mentioned in official municipal planning policy was confirmed in an interview with a senior Jerusalem Municipal Planner

> No larger scale plans for Palestinian neighborhoods have been approved by the municipality; they are all frozen at the moment […] the reason is political and has nothing to do with planning (Jerusalem Municipality, Senior Planner, Interview, March 2013).

The unequal funding of urban planning and construction projects between the Palestinian and Jewish parts of Jerusalem has resulted in a segregated city split into two distinct growth poles. However underneath this polarized reality there are other contradictory local processes taking place. One such example is the case of East Jerusalem where the state is actively restricting native Palestinians to build houses in their own areas. In reality this has resulted in a movement of upper and middle class Palestinians into Jewish areas where housing conditions are more favorable. Spatially mixing rather than dividing opposing ethno-national communities. In Sweden on the other hand as described in the next section, one of the main issues is that the welfare state was conceived in the first half of the twentieth century, at a time when there was a relatively hegemonic population. It is

currently struggling to cope with its growing national diversity. Subsequent the well intended immigration and social housing policies placing immigrants and asylum seekers in remote outer suburbs is leading to growing divisions between the latter and the native Swedish population.

4. STOCKHOLM - ETHNIC SEGREGATION IN A DECLINING WELFARE STATE

Stockholm, founded in 1252, is the capital of Sweden. It is a rapidly expanding urban area located around Lake Mälaren, with 897,700 inhabitants at the end of 2013 and a total foreign-born population of 30.7 percent (Stockholm Statistical Yearbook 2015). Since the 1980s Stockholm has experienced growing segregation and division emerging from the large number of migrant labourers and asylum seekers, coming mainly from Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East (Musterd 2005: 333). Spatial segregation in Stockholm has a clear geographical pattern (Andersson 2007: 66). The central areas and inner-city suburbs have the least poverty and fewest immigrants. The concentration of immigrants in small areas has created neighbourhoods where non-immigrant Swedish citizens choose not to live or visit.

In the Swedish government's *Divided Cities Report* (1997); five areas from the larger Stockholm region were identified as suffering from extremely low income: Fittja, Vårby, Rinkeby, Tensta and Hovsjö. All five areas populated by over 85 precent immigrants located in *Million Homes Program* areas were in 2013 still at the top of the most deprived areas list (SCBS[3] 2015). They are all part of a grand project instated by the post WW2 Swedish government to build one million new homes within a decade. Constructed between (1965-1974) mainly in new self-contained modernist urban developments in the outer periphery of Sweden's larger cities (Hall and Vidén 2005: 301). The growing segregation of Stockholm's *Million Homes Program* outer suburbs was described during an interview with an urban planner working in Botkyrka a Municipality located in the Southern fringe of Greater Stockholm

> Immigrant neighbourhoods in Botkyrka and elsewhere in Greater Stockholm have a negative connotation for the Swedish public and media. […] It is a wider issue and needs to be changed by strengthening the local identity and connection to Swedish society (Botkyrka Municipality Urban Planner, Interview, August 2012).

The Swedish government's immigration policies automatically classify all newcomers to Sweden as *immigrants* or *ethnic others*. This unified classification fails to recognise the different cultural and ethnic background and does not grant individual representation or voice. Placing the *ethnic others* in isolated outer suburbs creates an even stronger feeling of estrangement from the Swedish majority society(Petersson 2011: 19). Botkyrka was chosen as the focus for the Swedish case study since it is an extreme illustration of ethnic segregation having the second highest concentration of immigrants in Sweden. In my fieldwork, the main focus was the denser, more urban part of 'North Botkyrka', consisting of three *Million Homes Program* areas (Fittja, Alby and Hallunda-Norsborg). At the end of 2013 Botkyrka's total population was 87,600, with 41,000 in the much smaller urban northern area and 46,600 living the more rural south. North Botkyrka's immigrant population was 91.6 percent in 2013 (Botkyrka Statistics 2014) and the Swedish foreign-born national average was 7.2 percent (SCBS 2015) illuminating the urban dimension of the problem.

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[3] Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics

One of the current planning objectives is to establish a better transport connection between Northern and Southern Botkyrka (Fittja MasterPlan 2012). During an interview with a Senior Botkyrka Strategic Planner leading the new Municipal MasterPlan drafting process it was described why this was not happening in practice:

> There is no good connection between North and South Botkyrka. […] This issue has been raised several times by residents and especially school children having to travel from North Botkyrka to Tumba where one of the main high schools is located. […] The new master plan suggests a better public transport link. […] At the moment there is no clear sign of change and this is mainly a political decision at the regional level […] for some reason the decision makers at the regional level are not interested in changing it (Botkyrka Municipality Senior Srategic Planner, March 2012).

The Strategic Planner's observations reveal the limits of the MasterPlan. The concrete reasons for the lack of a transport connection between North and South Botkyrka are less clear exposing a continued incongruity between the Municipality's official objectives in its own MasterPlan and what is actually implemented. The clustering of immigrants in specific parts of the municipality and lack of local and regional political decision-making to connect these areas alludes to a set of policies and political structures reinforcing ethnic segregation disconnecting North Botkyrka spatially and socially.

In Sweden contradicting the official political agenda of tackling segregation there is a growing division of ethnic minority populations. In Jeruaslem as reviwed above there is a mixing process led by a neo-liberal housing market and lack of development in Palestinian areas. These contradictory forces challenge, on the one hand, the continued segregation of communities in ethno-national contested cities, while, on the other hand, suggesting cities absent of overt ethno-national conflict are experiencing growing contestation and division holding prominent comparative value.

5. CONCLUSION

The research uncovers how, in an era of growing neo-liberalization, ethno nationalism and international migration, cities are connecting and dividing in **un-ordinary development patterns**. Placing Jerusalem and Stockholm in a contrastive and relational comparative conversation demonstrates the value of learning across different processes of contemporary urban segregation. These are especially present in the outcomes of urban planning policies in both cities. The dominant Israeli management of Jerusalem has meant that economic development and services are geared towards the needs and aspirations of the city's Jewish population. In consequence the lack of development in Palestinian areas has generated a market led movement of well-established Palestinian into better-planned urban environments forming new ethno-nationaly mixed neighborhoods. This mixing process will persist as long as the fast growing Palestinian population suffers from an extreme lack of housing.

In Stockholm the Swedish state and local municipalities aim at integrating new immigrants and asylum seekers providing housing and inclusive public services, however, exclusionary housing policies place them in remote outer suburbs where there is vacant public accommodation. At the same time an on-going housing shortage and mass privatization of the inner city housing market has generated ethnic segregation separating the affluent center from its deprived minority peripheries. One explanations for the lack of incorporation of minority groups in both cases is an international political system that

holds an ideal of hegemonic nation-states. In reality we know that there are few cases where *nation* and *state* are congruent, a situation which might suggest that cities not currently affected by overt ethno-national conflict, but rather extreme ethnic segregation from diverse national origins (Stockholm in the current study), may sometime in the future turn to a more radical form of ethno-national conflict with its socio economic induced mixing of population (such as in Jerusalem).

The findings suggest extreme ethnic segregation in cities is a complex reality imbedded in the local "planning politics nexus" (Rokem & Allegra forthcoming), in both cases producing the opposite result to the planned political agenda; In Jerusalem labeled as one of the more extreme *ethno-national divided cities* the asymmetric relationship between planning and politics is causing opposing populations to mix. The integration of rival populations negates the assumption that under extreme urban ethnic conflict opposing national groups continue to cluster along ethnic lines. In the Stockholm case; the Swedish states good intentions providing housing and welfare assistance has resulted in a growing division of divers ethnic minorities and lack of integration with the majority Swedish society. The ethno-national *mixing* of Jerusalem (Inside the Separation Wall/Security barrier) and Stockholm's growing *division* along ethinc lines blurs our pre-proposed understanding of urban labels and concepts and is critical to grasp within the recent wider debate about the re-positioning of global urban theory from few dominant cases in the North-West (Parnell and Robinson 2012; Watson 2014; Sheppard et al 2013; Peck 2015) to a wider assessment of the "world of cities" (Robinson 2011). In conclusion we need to find a middle ground between urban *particularity* and the powerful existing theories of *total urban generalisation* such as the far-reaching *urban land nexus* (Scott and Stroper 2015) and *planetary urbanisation* (Brenner 2013; Brenner and Schmid 2015) that do not explain the complex and contradictory forces behind Jerusalem and Stockholm's spatial and social partitioning and mixing.

The research suggests rather than theoretically limiting our understanding of *contested urbanism* to a selected number of cases we need to re-think the category itself. Constructing more nuanced comparative examinations of different social, spatial and political patterns in cities, currently considered as incommensurable cases. It is timely to start critically comparing across *different contested cities* to better adapt planning policy and practice to ethnic minorities and migrants in an ever more fractured un-ordinary urban present.

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