

Chapter 1: Jerusalem as a Non-City

Jerusalem, like Belfast, Nicosia, Sarajevo and Beirut, can be considered one of the most conflict-ridden cities in the world.¹ As Rashid Khalidi² claims, “Jerusalem may have the most fiercely contested history of any city in the world.” And Arthur Koestler says that “No other town has caused such continuous waves of killing, rape and unholy misery over the centuries as the Holy City.”³ It is divided by ethnic barriers, as well as religious, national, socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, identity and psychological barriers. Due to a lack of any common denominator among its population, the disparity of its components, the absence of basic agreements, the absence of any sort of social fabric to unify its parts, Jerusalem should be defined not as a “city” but as a “non-city.” If the system known as “city,” as imaginary as it may be, requires some sort of coherence, social ties and common denominator, Jerusalem meets none of those requirements. On the contrary, in a relatively small area of 124 square kilometers, three mutually incompatible cultural systems are in dispute: secular-Jewish, religious Jewish, and Arab; the combination of those three chemistries, compressed in the same territory, is the infallible formula for a major explosive reaction.

Three main factors are required for a cultural system, according to Jerome Bruner: “shared meanings and shared concepts and shared modes of discourse for negotiating differences in meaning and interpretation.”⁴ None of these factors are evident in Jerusalem. On the contrary: three incompatible “truths” separate its component parts: the “holy city” to which religious Jews aspire is at odds with the “mundane city” of secular Jews, and even more incompatible with the “Islamic *medina*” desired by the Arab population. The ethics and urban aesthetics of these three spaces are completely antithetical. The issue is not whether secular Jews, religious Jews and Arabs are able to share a common territory (the answer being that of course they are). In a tolerant system it would be conceivable to reach a *modus vivendi* among the three components. However tolerance is precisely the missing ingredient in this city. The core problem is who imposes the rules, who wields power, who is the head of this territory. It is at this

¹ I recommend: John Calame and Esther Charlesworth, *Divided Cities, Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar and Nicosia*, Philadelphia Press, 2009.

² Rashid Khalidi, preface in: K. J. Asali, editor, *Jerusalem in History*, NY, 2000.

³ Arthur Koestler, quoted by Bernard Wasserstein, in: *Divided Jerusalem*, Yale University, 2001.

⁴ Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 13.

point that Jerusalem proves incapable of constituting a coherent city, since the religiously eternal and the secularly temporal contradict each other, just as Abraham and Ibrahim negate one another, despite being the same figure. This rivalry is anything but trivial: those who claim to speak in the name of Jerusalem claim authority as God's representative.

The city's municipal council is the living reflection of such an anomaly. In a city where the demographic profile of its three components is divided roughly into 60% Israelis and 40% Palestinians, the 31 members of the city council are all Jewish, while the Palestinian population is totally absent. In other words, over a third of Jerusalem's population is outside the decision-making circle, not part of the "reserved circuits of power." This state of affairs leads to an indecent situation: Jewish councillors who amongst themselves would prefer that the Arabs simply disappear, claim the right to know the needs of the Palestinian population and decide which municipal services they receive. In this way, Jerusalem works as a space of coercive interference, so that while technically democratic, it is abusive and immoral. It is illegitimate to manage a city by excluding or disempowering minorities, or by imposing costs and burdens on groups that are often already disadvantaged.⁵ Based on this belief, the study presented in the chapters to follow strongly suggests that the city should be divided into three: one part secular Israeli, another religious Israeli and a third part, Palestinian.

It is evident how illogical and dysfunctional this Jerusalem model is when one realizes that no one in Israel would suggest unifying Tel Aviv with its neighbour, the orthodox city of Bnei Brak, nor would anyone unify the Arab city of Abu Ghosh with its Israeli neighbour Mevasseret Zion. Such proposals would seem outrageous, almost ridiculous. Furthermore, the city of Nazareth, which until recently had both Arabs and Jews under the same municipality, has been divided into two parallel municipalities, one Arab and one Hebrew, since it became obvious that both people could not share the same institutional framework.

⁵ W. Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*, Queen University Press, 2001, p. 3.

So, how could anyone justify keeping secular Jerusalem or western Jerusalem (larger than Nazareth) unified with religious Jerusalem (larger than Bnei Brak)? What exception validates in Jerusalem what is unthought-of anywhere else, when there is such a high price to pay?

Due to its basic structure, Jerusalem constitutes an “urban anomaly” in which the authority, regardless of the current ruler, is invested in power, but lacks legitimacy. No matter who rules the city: secular, orthodox or Arab, they will automatically lack legitimacy in the eyes of the other two-thirds of its population, no matter what their actions. “Legitimacy” is a key concept to understanding why Jerusalem cannot be a “city.” As with trust among individuals, “legitimacy” in the public order is a constitutional factor requiring a certain extent of recognition over and above the formal legal authority granted by election results; this is a key component, since the feasibility of any social framework to constitute itself under democracy depends on it. “The efficacy of public action depends on legitimacy, and the sense of legitimacy affects the way in which citizens judge the quality of their country’s democracy.”⁶ In the face of a lack of legitimacy or recognition, the only way to rule Jerusalem is through state coercion. That is why the city lacks its own vitality: without the police, it does not exist, and disintegrates.

Ernest Renan once provided an aphorism that perfectly fits the Jerusalem case: “The essence of a nation depends on all individuals having much in common, as well as their ability to forget much.”⁷ Jerusalem is inhabited by people with very little in common and with excessive memory. Its population lacks any organizing core, referred to by Renan as “common will,” stronger than ethnic or cultural differences. It also lacks a *raison d’être* driving them towards a common goal and, to make matters worse, no one is capable of forgetting the wrongs done to them. Everyone holds tight to his or her most peevish grudges. Avishai Margalit’s sarcastic and subtle definition of what a “nation” is to him fits perfectly with the Jerusalem model: “A nation is a collection of people who hate their neighbours and share a common fantasy about their ethnic origins.”⁸ This mix of antagonisms, of centrifugal forces, renders it impossible to build

⁶ Pierre Ronsavallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 8.

⁷ Ernest Renan, *Que es una nación? (What is a nation?)* 1887, ed. Sequitur, Madrid, 2014, p. 29.

an urban epistemology, a conceptual work frame that allows us to understand Jerusalem, perceive its idiosyncrasy, grasp its essence, imagine its geography and explain its behaviour. Perhaps such pretence is no more than a decoy, since from a city composed of fragments, the most we can aspire to know are some of its fragments, particles, chunks, portions, or scattered pieces, but never all of them. With this starting point, Jerusalem can be no more than a “non-city.”

However, rather than denying the condition of a city, we should define it with an obliging, or perhaps “indulgent” view, using the plural “cities.” Each of the subcultures that form it could and should be independent urban entities. The administrative formalism that has kept it “unified” by a unilateral decree since June of 1967 grants it no more legitimacy than could a municipal regulation declaring the city “magic, enigmatic or holy,” let alone when there is no country in the world that supports such “unification.” The term “cities” in the plural not only reflects its social conformation, but also the etymological essence carried in the city’s name. The Hebrew term “Yerushalayim” as well as the Arab term “Ursalim” are both plural linguistic formations, whose exact translations should be “Jerusalems.” That word, in plural, is more fitting and better reflects the city’s idiosyncrasy rather than the word “Jerusalem” in its singular form, since the city is effectively composed of three parts, each one at the same time unique, different and specific as well as part of a whole, a puzzle in which each part has a life of its own, but which can reach its maximum expression only as a group. Jerusalem only exists in the plural.

This pluralist vision of the city, far from being the expression of a romantic, utopian or dissident fiction, reflects its daily reality and is the logical conclusion of a social mess, which even the municipal establishment acknowledges but is unwilling to admit. The most convincing proof that even the municipality acknowledges its incapacity to treat the city as an organic union is the division of the school structure, divided into three autonomous departments: secular education, orthodox education and Arab education, where each system operates according to different and independent subjects. This separation constitutes more than an administrative sub-division. It is proof of the real, concrete and objective situation of the city. If the school system has adapted to the

⁸ Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society*, Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 160.

social pressures imposed by reality and has been divided into three autonomous parts, there is no justification to maintain the rest of the municipal structure unified, except for indecent, nationalist aspirations.

Such incapacity permeates the city in all its dimensions, from the most sophisticated to the most mundane. Take for example a festive event, not precisely an important one: this is somewhat laughable, but significant, since it reflects to a certain extent the impossibility for the three communities to live together. On May 20, 2016 the municipality announced “Student’s Day” would be celebrated on the same day as “Jerusalem Day,” a date that commemorates “reunification” of Jerusalem, in other words, the occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem by Israel in 1967.⁹ The decision was no coincidence: both dates were merged in order to promote secular students’ celebrations and to counter criticism that Jerusalem Day had acquired a sectarian religious-nationalist character. The event, as trivial and superfluous as it seems, reveals the complicated nature of the situation in Jerusalem. The municipality organized a music festival, in which orthodox Jewish students refused to participate, claiming that the manner, content and style of this event, where men and women mixed and celebrated, the women dressed “indecently,” and where there was plenty of beer and alcohol (and drugs, they secretly added), went against their orthodox way of life. Arab students also protested this event, claiming that the date carried many humiliating connotations, and was therefore, for them, a national insult. But make no mistake: even if the date had not been modified, they would have found another excuse not to participate, since the tension, suspicion and mistrust between both groups keeps them from sharing a common space, not to mention their differences as to musical taste and culture. The municipality has responded to the Orthodox argument (to please the Orthodox parties participating in the municipal coalition, of course) by organizing a separate event, matching their Orthodox way of life. On the other hand, as expected, the municipality refuses to organize an alternative event for Arab students, claiming that their argument was “political.” To sum up, this event combines all the elements constituting the Jerusalem mess: the incapacity to share a common event, municipal manipulation destined to create distorted images, intricate symbolism and

⁹ Yishai Porat, *Divide and Celebrate*, Secular in Sacher Park, Religious at Teddy Stadium, Arabs on a Different Day, *Yedioth Yerushalayim*, May 20, 2016.

discrimination, when providing alternative cultural services. Attention should be paid to how a national conflict is created from a superfluous event, almost “about nothing.” Or, perhaps, the way in which the Jerusalem conflict manifests itself even in mundane circumstances. If Arabs, secular Israelis and orthodox Israelis are incapable of sharing a common moment of fun, what are the chances for the three communities to live in the same city, overcome the countless contingencies of life and reach some sort of consensus for the purpose of everyday life? In the face of this incapacity to share a music festival as a community, what possibility is there for a future vision of a city to create some sort of compatibility, some joint idea of “us” in that same space that is overloaded with the symbolism of antagonism? What is the point, then, in keeping the model of a “unified” city when that city’s three constituencies are incapable of sharing even a musical event? This trivial example reveals all the impossibility, folly, irrationality and lack of logic in this urban model. It summarizes the chronicle of an impossibility, and is the reflection, testimony and evidence of its condition as a “non-city.”¹⁰

It is not only the lack of a “common denominator/general consensus” that keeps Jerusalem from constituting a “city,” it is also its lack of a common past and future. Space is not static, wrote Omar Yousef, it condenses the past and points to the future.¹¹ A city becomes constituted by, among other things, “previous biographical moments and those places not yet inhabited, but in which their inhabitants wish to sometime be”¹² or by the confluence of what Edward Soja calls “perceived spaces, conceived spaces and lived spaces.”¹³ In order for the institution named “city” to have some basis on which to establish itself, spontaneous connections between their different dimensions must be generated, “with every here and now, with other here and there as previously lived, and even with other “here” which one plans and imagines to be.”¹⁴ In Jerusalem these three dimensions deny each other. The past flows through different channels, Israelis and Palestinians carry histories that come from two incompatible

¹⁰ Divide and Celebrate: Secular in Sacher Park, Religious at Teddy Stadium, Arabs on A Different Day. *Yedioth Yerushalayim* (p. 24) by Yishai Porat -- May 20, 2014.

¹¹ Omar Yousef, *Jerusalem: Palestinian Space, Behaviours and Attitudes. Palestine-Israel Journal*, vol. 17, no. 1&2, 2011, p. 43.

¹² Alicia Lindon, *El Habitar la Ciudad, las redes topológicas del urbanista y la figura del transeúnte*, in: Diego Sanchez González y Luis Ángel Domínguez Moreno, *Identidad y Espacio Público*, Barcelona, 2014, p. 61.

¹³ Edward W. Soja, *Postmetropolis -- Estudios Críticos sobre Ciudades y Regiones*, Madrid, 2008, p. 41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

sources. They live in two unrelated and disconnected urban memories, overlapping in the same space but hostile, with no empathy for each other. In Jerusalem, three narratives fight to impose their version or maybe rather than planting their own, to deny their neighbour's. The future in Jerusalem also flows on three different roads, aiming towards three contradictory developments, where orthodox, secular and Arab alike go through paths that lead to three different and incompatible urban models. In the same territorial space, three antagonistic projects compete, which in the name of their ethnic, national or religious purity claim exclusivity and deny their neighbour's legitimacy. Attached to their mythological pasts and tormented by an insecure present and uncertain future, the city's ghosts scrupulously operate; with a pincer movement, they close flanks and gain terrain configuring a thick and asphyxiating urban profile. "Historicized" spaces, contaminated by excessive doses of history, produce doubtful presents and uncertain futures. Therefrom consolidates the urban clash structures, the resentful, abusive, indecent and foolish space where the kingdom of the strongest prevails. That is why the present Jerusalem, "unified" under the Israeli government, beyond their omnipotent pretensions, lacks the essential attributes to justify the title of "city."

Incompatibility is also expressed in the different way in which Palestinians and Israelis approach the city. The social sciences distinguish two ways of approaching the urban complex: "habitat" and "dwelling."¹⁵ While habitat focuses on the physical-geographic space or territorial configurations, dwelling focuses on the lived experience of human beings, the residents, the subjects and their practices, experiences, daily chores. Habitat is related to the place of "residence" while dwelling is related to the place of "belonging," and a multitude of emotions. It is "belonging" that distinguishes a city and transforms a place of residence into a "city" in the broad sense of the word. A place of residence can be as comfortable as a hotel, but it will never be as meaningful as the place of belonging, in which the subject's identity is developed. And on that precise point the Jerusalem drama lies: in a habitat overloaded with antagonism, extremely politicized and excessively symbolic, where dwelling can only adopt shapes that are incompatible, defiant, exclusive and extremely aggressive.

¹⁵ Diego Sánchez González y Luis Domínguez Moreno, *Identidad y Espacio Público*, Barcelona, 2014.

Every identity is forged from its relation with its neighbour, the contrast and analogy with its fellow subject, so it relies on difference, in the distinction between an inside and an outside, an “us” and a “them.”¹⁶ While every social formation contemplates a certain degree of hostility between its components, Jerusalem exceeds those degrees of tolerable hostility. It incarnates raw alienation, tense antagonism, and de-socialization of its components, in a bio-political space of dehumanization, of segmented enclaves, excluded and discontinuous ghettos. In these conditions, identities are developed in a bipolar manner, social relations are handled according to the rules of “zero-sum” where the only ruling formula is the law of “either them or us.” Nothing good can come from this “non-city” in which every one of its components claims exclusive, hermetic and unilateral belonging, denying their neighbours, in which nonsense, no reason and no shame prevail. The best that can be created is a Middle East Sparta, overrun by physical or symbolic violence, in which life is little more comfortable than a nightmare. The eternal city of Jerusalem can only remind us of the misery of the present.

Technically speaking, the city “works.” That is: the bureaucratic device called “municipality” provides public services to its “users.” But “city” is much more than the City Hall, the officers that compose it or the municipal services it provides. A city is above all the sum of its inhabitants, its social relations, the values and identifications they hold, the solidarity, commitment, respect, participation and coexistence that develop there as well as their contingencies, bitter moments and everything Robert Park includes inside the key concept of “human ecology.” In Jerusalem none of this exists: the three communities do not even share a common urban space: invisible and impenetrable walls divide the city in Israeli and Arab neighbourhoods, which avoid each other. Any of these three communities that pretends to live in different neighbourhoods, whether a religious family trying to live in a secular neighbourhood or an Arab family wishing to live in a Jewish neighbourhood, are seen as a threat to the community order, a foreign intrusion, an imminent danger, a *casus belli*. For example, the absolutely abnormal, intercommunity movement model is marked by what Harvey calls *forced territoriality*.¹⁷ Israelis avoid going to Arab neighbourhoods, except to auto repair shops in Wadi Joz where repairs will be cheaper (apart from right-wing settlers

¹⁶ Yannis Stavrakakis, *La Izquierda Lacaniana*, Fondo Cultura Económica, Buenos Aires, 2010, p. 219.

¹⁷ David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, Blackwell Publishers, 1973, p. 35.

who provocatively invade Arab neighbourhoods with political intent). Palestinians, on the other hand, move more freely in Israeli areas (except in times of tension) despite humiliating control procedures and more than occasional offensive insinuations by passers-by. But if we look closely at their routes, we see that they only go to workplaces, public offices, medical centres and one or the other commercial area or recreation park next to the eastern part, in a model we may term “restricted mobility.” They pay attention to any strange movement that could appear around them, trying not to draw attention to themselves, “as if they could only move with an earnest anonymity.”¹⁸

The inherent dilemmas to Palestinian mobility in the western part of the city are so outrageous that they could hardly happen in any civilized city. So says the son of a friend of mine, wrapped in plasters and bandages, who was savagely beaten by a group of Israeli thugs, when returning from work in the area of Musrara that divides both parts of the city. He could see that a group of young Jewish people was following him and suddenly, when they were near him, they charged towards him shouting “Terrorist! Terrorist!” He could have run and perhaps escaped them, but 100 metres away he saw a police car and his instincts told him to stop, to stop running. When we asked why, the answer was shocking. “If I run,” he explained, “the police shoot before asking what’s happening. If I stop, the thugs break my bones. *I’d rather have my bones broken than be killed.*”

That is how, in the “unified” Israel, there are practically no shared spaces for both people; the city is a laboratory of socio-spacial urban segregation. From the educational system, in which Arabs and Jews study in separate schools, in different languages and according to different programmes, to the public transportation system, in which the Israeli bus company only covers the Israeli part of the city while in the eastern part, some private Palestinian companies operate, and including the economic system in which, despite using the same currency, there are two disconnected economies. Both peoples rotate in parallel orbits. There is some “overlap,” but very little contact, relating or interaction. Alienation invades each bend and leaves its mark on the social weaving, giving place to “practices of avoidance” and “practices of social

¹⁸ Alejandro Zambra, *Formas de Volver a Casa*, editorial Anagrama, Barcelona, 2011, p. 46.

rejection,” destined to avoid the unsettling presence of the “other,” practices that increase mistrust and strengthen stereotypes.¹⁹ Cities may be read like books, and the story that the city book of Jerusalem tells is a history of asymmetry, discrimination, oppression and urban mutilation.

Jerusalem has not always been a “non-city.” For 19 consecutive years, from the Declaration of Independence in May of 1948 until the Six-Day War in June of 1967, Jerusalem was a coherent city. Although back then there were already two dichotomous communities, the secular and the religious, there prevailed a feeling of tolerance that made joint life responsible and the common denominator among the Jewish inhabitants was greater than the differences separating them. Jerusalem used to be a homogeneous city, humble and covered with a certain veil of melancholy for the loss of the Old City and the Wailing Wall in the war of ’48, yet nevertheless a normal and functional city. Even though the Jerusalem of those days is far gone and very few remember it, we must keep in mind that Jerusalem has been a “city” and can return to being one, even when current conditions are much more complicated. Its breakdown and decadence began after the 1967 war, when Jerusalem swallowed more than it could digest and from that indigestion became the shadow of what it once was. It is essential to keep in mind the motives that generated that radical change, in order to distinguish the steps required to return Jerusalem to its previous character of City.

In this complex reality, the present study focuses on the incompatibility existing between the Israeli Jerusalem (both secular and orthodox) and the Palestinian Jerusalem. By assuming such a perspective, I do not presume that the relationship between the secular Jerusalem and the orthodox Jerusalem is less important, but it is just less urgent. The conflict between Jews and Palestinians in Jerusalem is the front where blood is constantly shed, which is why dealing with it is most urgent. Once the city has been divided between Palestinians and Israelis, the time will come to restructure it between secular and orthodox.

Poetic justice in Jerusalem

¹⁹ Rejection or practices of avoidance are terms coined by Adrian Scribano and Emilio Severo Zanin in: *La Cabeza contra el Muro, geopolítica de la Seguridad y Prácticas Policiales*, Revista de Ciencias Sociales, vol. 25, no. 30, June 2012, Universidad de la República, Uruguay.

From whatever point of view one examines it, Jerusalem does not meet the demands of a democratic city, due to its lack of a basic, inherent component of every democratic system: *representation*.

Jerusalemite Palestinians, despite representing more than a third of the city's total population, have no representation on the city council. While no formal impediment keeps them from voting or being voted for, the fact that they have opted to boycott an electoral process which they see as a farce or even worse, a symbolic way of legitimizing the occupation, makes the Jerusalem regime neither representative nor "democratic." The Palestinian minority openly refuses to collaborate with the occupier on the set of the "democratic divine comedy" and by doing so has instituted a particular situation that transforms the Jerusalem governing system into a hybrid which may not be illegal in any formal sense of the word, but is far from legitimate in its substantial meaning.²⁰ In a paradoxical, almost surreal way, the mere Palestinian abstention disqualifies the city from its pretensions of representation, and stops the government of Jerusalem from being able to define itself as democratic. Palestinian invisibility makes this democratic impossibility visible.²¹ Those whose democratic rights have been denied by the ruling majority, are those who have the power to deny that majority their democratic pretensions. In a way, the anti-democratic system that rules the city gives the Palestinians the strength of what Judith Butler defines as "the denying power" – *First they were denied, and only under the condition of their own denial do they now embody the principle of denial*.²² Slavoj Žižek writes that on certain occasions, abstention from voting is a strategy aimed to dissolve the government.²³ While this is not Jerusalem's case, since the municipality can comfortably continue without Palestinian participation, the truth is that this abstention dissolves, if not the government, at least the democratic sense of the city. This delirious situation, which could be considered a classic case of *poetic justice*, is the strongest evidence of the intertwined destiny of both peoples and proof that both parts come out equally as

²⁰ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard Press, 1971.

²¹ This idea agrees with the thesis of Mustafa Dikeç who, based on Lefebvre, claims that social outcasts play a fundamental role in a city's chances of becoming just. M. Dikeç, (2001), "Justice and the Spatial Imagination," *Environment and Planning A*, 33, pp. 1785–1805.

²² "Judith Butler, Laclau, Marx y el poder performativo de la negación" in: *Debates y Combates*, Year 5, Number 9, Vol. 1, Argentina, 2015, p.120.

²³ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, ed. Austral, Spain, 2013, p. 254.

losers. With a hint of irony, we could say that this decay is the only “democratic” thing that takes place in Jerusalem, as it affects both Israelis and Palestinians alike. Because regardless of the disconnection between both parts of the city, the Jerusalem system works like clockwork, in which if one piece stops working, the whole machinery breaks down. The city is an interconnected system; if the Palestinian population lacks democracy, it is not only their problem, it is a deficiency of the whole municipal, democratic system. From this perspective, the Palestinians’ impossibility to have responsibility for their own fate affects the urban totality. As long as they lack democracy, everyone else will.

This is why the Jerusalem system of government does not deserve the title: *democracy*. It represents a typical case of *ethnocracy*, that is to say, a democracy exclusive to Israelis, which has nothing to do with “democracy” in the broad sense of the word. The city pays an extremely high price to keep this structure “unified,” given that democracy, claims Michel Onfray, is that thing that once lost, sooner or later leads to decay.²⁴

More serious than lack of representation is the deficit in the participatory process. Jurgern Habermas holds that one of the key factors to governability of a democratic, liberal state is *process*.²⁵ More than the triumph of a fluke majority through election, more than formal procedures, the source of social legitimacy comes from the process of deliberating and then adoption of resolutions. The constitution of any democratic framework requires the development of communication methods and public debate, aimed towards *a co-operative search for the truth*. In a context constituted through intertwined public deliberations, where contributions and arguments flow from each of the community collectives, every decision will be legitimate, even in the eyes of the minority, as long as the basic rules of equality have been obeyed. This is why a regime with democratic ambitions must provide, above all else, for the free speech of those affected by the said policies. It is highly likely that not everyone will agree with a government’s decisions, and precisely for those cases the use of coercive methods may be contemplated. They would be legitimate if and only when those decisions have been

²⁴ Michel Onfray, *Politique du rebelle*, ed. Anagrama, Barcelona, 2011, p. 51.

²⁵ J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Barcelona, 2009, p. 31.

made through a process of open and equitable deliberation, when all social components have had their full rights respected to express themselves without fear or prejudice. For that to happen, explains Habermas, there must be at least the following conditions: (1) Complete inclusion of all social groups in public debate; (2) Equality for all participants' rights; and (3) Non-coercive interaction between the State and the community. In the city of Jerusalem, none of these three conditions are met. The Palestinian population is outside the deliberative process, lacks representation and does not exercise its *right to the city* in the Lefebvrian sense of the concept that contemplates not only the right to access what already exists, but also the right to change it *based on our deepest desires*, as David Harvey opines.²⁶

That is why the only way in which Jerusalem could be ruled has been through the use of force and coercion: that is the only government model possible; regardless of excessive democratic pretensions, the governance will always be authoritarian and police-like. Where justice is absent, the void becomes filled with procedures, sanctions, meticulous bureaucracy, rules destined to impose and satisfy national aspirations rather than human needs. In other words, the city does not exist for its residents, but to satisfy power struggles.²⁷

Clearly, a regime based on these characteristics is not impossible to maintain, especially when introduced under the model of *conflict management*, inside a model that makes no pretence to solve problems, just to manage or administer them. Circumstantial interests, usually of an economic order, could preserve the *status quo* for a while, even more so given the adaptability Palestinians of East Jerusalem have shown over time. Regimes of this kind can be administered through two power technologies: a “restrained” way, through mechanisms of light and subtle pressure, such as in the first period of Nir Barkat’s administration (2008-2013), (which we shall discuss further), or in a “raw” way, through the use of police force, which was an emblem of his second administration (2013 to November 2018). In practice, both

²⁶ David Harvey, *The Right to the City*, Sinpermiso, 5.10.2008, <http://www.sinpermiso.info/textos/index.php?id=2092>

²⁷ For Max Weber this situation would not be peculiar of Jerusalem, it is all based on force, or what he calls “the use of legitimate physical violence.” All states represent a “Relationship of power of some men over others, a relationship that is kept through legitimate violence (or considered as such), therefore in order to sustain it the dominated need to submit to the authority that the current dominant claim as their own.” *Politica y Ciencia*, 1919, ed. Leviatan, Buenos Aires, 2006, p. 10.

formats act together, feed each other, although from time to time one may prevail over the other. However, even if applied with silk gloves, a structure such as this is destructive, oppressive and in the long term doomed to collapse.

An endless number of conflicts, evident or hidden, and impossible to predict, turn Jerusalem into a powder keg, or perhaps a volcano, always about to burst, always one step away from the next *intifada*. Desmond Morris, in his classic study “The Human Zoo,” warns that the history of empires based on weapons has proved that *you can dominate much and many for a long time* but in the long run those empires crumble, given that *with their deformed social structure, their days are numbered*. Bar-Tal and Schnell wrote that when a society violates the fundamental principles of justice, morality, and human rights, it is condemned to deterioration, degeneration and decline.²⁸ Claus Offe writes that countries based on the systematic use of force are a threat to their own citizens and their rights.²⁹ The obstacles not only come from municipal practices, but also from turbulence or crises unleashed in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, which despite having nothing to do with the Jerusalem routine, influence the general atmosphere of the city. Each death in Nablus, Jenin or Qalqilia impacts East Jerusalem, echoes in its streets and leads to a destructive effect that trumps the efforts made by City Hall to keep peace and order. To avoid the next *intifada* is a target that exceeds the capacity of its Israeli rulers; it is impossible to predict, given the number of extraneous factors that influence or escape local control.

A “decent,” sensible, moderate municipal rule, when confirming the cost implied in keeping such a structure, should ask itself: “Why insist on perpetuating a destructive urban model?” Perhaps the only possible answer to this disturbing question was written by Jorge Luis Borges in a sad phrase that indubitably describes Jerusalem’s destiny: *Perhaps their poor rudimentary lives had nothing of value other than their hatred and that is why they accumulated it. Unknowingly, each of the two became a slave to the other.*³⁰

²⁸ Daniel Bar-Tal and Izhak Schnell (eds), *The Impacts of Lasting Occupation*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

²⁹ Claus Offe, *Modernity and the State*, Polity Press, 1996 (Preface. p. ix).

³⁰ Jorge Luis Borges, *The Other Duel*, in: The Brodie Report, 1995, p. 103.

To sum up, paraphrasing Freud, we could add that a society of this kind in which there are so many conflicting nodes cannot last throughout time and if it could, it would not deserve to!³¹

An indecent city

Following the idea developed by the philosopher Avishai Margalit in his work *The Decent Society*, we must acknowledge that Jerusalem not only suffers from a deficiency of democracy, but also from an acute lack of *decency*.³²

In a decent society, institutions do not humiliate their inhabitants, neither at a personal nor collective level. “Humiliated,” by definition, is any person whose human rights have been restricted, but we must also understand the concept as a subjective experience, covering every state attitude perceived by the citizen as a violation of his or her human rights.³³ A person may feel humiliated not just due to a certain degrading attitude of some municipal officer, but also for being ignored, excluded or for being denied access to a decent way of life, either by intended policy or by pure state negligence. Furthermore, it is insufficient for state institutions merely not to be humiliating: a society can be decent only when it fights proactively against all expressions of humiliation.³⁴ In Jerusalem, humiliation is institutionalized and expresses itself not only by what the municipality does, but also, specifically, by what it does not do. As long as the legal status of the Palestinian is inferior to the Israeli, just by being a “resident” while the Israeli is a “citizen,” Jerusalem will be indecent, no matter what the level of services the municipality provides, given that *being a second-class citizen represents not only a discriminatory situation but above all a humiliating one. Citizenship in a decent society should be equal in order to not be humiliating*.³⁵ And what ought to remain clear is that no distinction should be made in this regard between citizens and people in its orbit who are not citizens, such as Palestinians in Jerusalem. It is for this reason that I do not define Jerusalem as a decent city. Jerusalem society is structurally condemned to indecency, because it makes no effort to promote

³¹ Freud uses this idea when writing on “culture” in: *Die Zukunft einer Illusion*, 1927.

³² Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society*, Harvard University Press, 1996.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

decency. It is not about a specific attitude that may be corrected by improving the municipal services. It is about a structural and organic state that is impossible to fix as long as the occupation is in force.

It is not only the ruling political regime in the city that is humiliating, it is also the Israeli gaze, the furtive abuse. This feeling intensifies when we compare the municipal services Palestinian residents receive against those received by their “neighbours” in West Jerusalem. The differences are so different that they cannot be ignored. It is enough to walk down the streets of both parts of the city to realize they are two different planets. Through deprivation of services, the message the municipality conveys to the Palestinians is that they are second-class citizens. Anywhere we look, Jerusalem is an indecent phenomenon. The celebration of “Jerusalem Day,” for instance, the date on which the Jewish population remembers the 1967 conquest of East Jerusalem, is violently indecent, firstly for the symbolic message it carries for the Palestinians, but above all, for the provocative parade of thousands of uncontrollable young people, shouting highly offensive chants against Islam and assaulting the Arabs they find on their way. Indecency is not only the work of those thugs: the police and the municipality are also partners in this scandal. The municipality sponsors the parade referred to above, while the police escort it and even order the Palestinians to close their businesses until the parade is over. This single annual event would be more than enough to justify the definition of “indecent,” since “a decent society must not support on an institutional level any event or symbol that may explicitly or implicitly affect any of their citizens.”³⁶

The many-sided optical illusion

It is often said that Jerusalem is a “cultural mosaic.” Yet what from afar may look like a multi-faceted city, is no more than an optical illusion that does not match the general definition of a multicultural, poly-cultural or multi-ethnic society, in which each community complements and enriches contact with the other.³⁷ The Jerusalem case is different from those societies, due to its ruling asymmetry between Israeli and

³⁶ Ibid., p. 161.

³⁷ Agnes Heller, *The Many Faces of Multiculturalism*, in: Baubock, Heller and Zolberg (eds), *The Challenge of Diversity*, Vienna, 1996, p. 25.

Palestinian communities. While the Israeli collective is hegemonic, privileged, predominant and overwhelming, the Palestinian is residual, subordinated and marginal, not only by its condition as a minority, but also by lacking citizenship and being seen as a *fifth column*, a destabilizing element, a threat to Israeli sovereignty. The “multicultural model” neither invalidates nor disqualifies members of other cultural groups, no matter how small or esoteric they may be, whereas in Jerusalem, Palestinians are discriminated against *de jure* and *de facto*, both by the law and daily practice. If the basic premise of multiculturalism translates as respect for the other culture, the Jerusalem model is based on the absence of respect for The Other’s singularity. Human relations in a multicultural society are developed on a horizontal level, while in Jerusalem they are basically vertical, hierarchical, and generational.

On the Jerusalem space the three cultures -- secular Jewish, religious Jewish and the Arab -- do not co-exist; it would be appropriate to say that in Jerusalem *three antagonistic contra-cultures compete*. Where there is no political acknowledgment there can be no cultural acknowledgment. What is more, a multicultural project promotes public spaces where people from different cultural backgrounds can meet and exchange ideas and experiences, “neutral” spaces where residents may expose themselves to expressions and values that they might not meet elsewhere. There is no such space in Jerusalem. Therefore, the multicultural matrix does not fit the Jerusalem model nor is it of any use to explain its complex internal dynamics.

The combination of explosive factors

To sum up, the Jerusalem model is the local version of the long history of dominant and dominated, colonizing and colonized, which has impoverished humanity since the beginning of time. This is, indeed, not an exceptional case. From Beirut to Sarajevo, Belfast to Mumbai “the city is the historic stage of creative destruction” writes David Harvey. Indeed, no society is perfect, writes Claude Levi Strauss, and all of them are contaminated with a certain dose of injustice and cruelty.³⁸ But what makes the Jerusalem phenomenon so troublesome is the combination of conflicting factors of

³⁸ Claude Levi Strauss, *Tristes Tropicos*, ed. Paidos, 2008, p. 440.

highly explosive power. The combination of heterogeneity, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, poverty and high urban density, all within a context of occupation and oppression, makes it impossible for any social integration to take place. This is how every community tends to abide by its own hatreds, intensifying aggressive feelings against those whom they identify as the source of their grievances. Under such circumstances, the “Unified Jerusalem” model has no chance to prosper, no possibility of building a steady social frame, no chance of generating a meaningful community. Undoubtedly, Jerusalem is not a unique case, and the present work does not pretend to compete with any other city, but despite the abundance of cities in crisis, in Jerusalem all those antagonisms are multiplied at a much more alarming rate due to the symbolic weight concentrated on it. It is in this city where the *clash of civilizations* manifests itself in all its virulence. There are fragmented cities, but there are also fragments that do not make a city.³⁹

³⁹ Idea extracted from Ignacio Lewkowicz and Pablo Sztulwark, *Arquitectura Plus de Sentido*, Argentina, 2003.