

## **"JERUSALEM UNBOUND: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, AND THE FUTURE OF THE HOLY CITY"**

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For any researcher acquainted with East Jerusalem's cultural and political reality, Michael Dumper's contribution to the field constitutes, undoubtedly, an obvious and mandatory reading. In this case, I will briefly examine one his latest books on the issue, *Jerusalem Unbound*, which synthesizes much of Dumper's previous publications by updating them and, more importantly, sufficiently adding new layers of complexity to the matter.

It is relevant to observe that the present publication comprises an array of results developed throughout the course of an interdisciplinary research group's field work, led by Dumper himself, a project called "Conflict in Cities and the Contested State: Everyday Life and the Possibilities for Transformation in Belfast, Jerusalem and Other Divided Cities", funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (United Kingdom). In addition to this, the author acknowledges his colleagues' endeavours and praises the richness and variety within his team (urbanists, architects, sociologists, political scientists), finding it crucial to develop the notion of the "many-bordered" character of Jerusalem.

Dumper explores the methodological benefits of the "many-bordered" concept and structures his book in order to thoroughly examine three main themes: on the one hand, the sovereignty issue and the paradoxical question of Jerusalem as a contested city by Israelis and Palestinians, then, the religious contestation of the city and, finally, the ethnical and political dimensions of the conflict analysed from a comparative perspective.

But what does exactly this "many-bordered" category means? To begin with, the author recalls the germ of this idea to have sprouted while writing his very first book on Jerusalem in 1996; nevertheless, he recently came to realise the importance of how "fluidity and imprecision of the borders in Jerusalem create opportunities for political agreement over the future of the city" (p. 16). Such a perspective allows him to distinguish between "softer" and "harder" borders, introducing an in-depth look into how the residential and educational systems work, how security devices and infrastructure as the separation barrier and checkpoints complement each other with less apparent cultural and religious boundaries (the Jewish eruv, the holy places, disputes between churches, ten-

sions between secular and orthodox Jews) and the political and diplomatic discussions regarding sovereignty. Interesting as it is, the complementarity and overlapping coexistence of “softer” and “harder” borders shows us how fluidity characterizes much of the city’s dwellers lives.

For instance, Dumper describes how the barrier and the checkpoint (identified as “hard” borders) have led to reconfigurations of traffic, roads, and supplementary devices that aim to facilitate or complicate the flux of commuters from East Jerusalem to its western side, but also throughout the extended Metropolitan area. This means that hard borders tend to draw new and different frontiers from those recognized internationally but also, different from the Israeli official ones. Furthermore, while englobing far-off Israeli settlements to the Metropolitan area and connecting them to the city centre, the winding trajectory of hard borders are also responsible for a multitude of contexts of living in the city: the creation of a Seam Zone and enclaves that seem to be totally disconnected to the West Bank as well as to Jerusalem, while still being part of its jurisdiction as well as its social and political life.

Nonetheless, Dumper emphasises that while producing segregation, some of these policies have had unintended consequences such as demographic dynamics like migration flows from, to and throughout the city, both of Jewish Israelis (secular generations that deserted the city by moving to residential satellite neighbourhoods, as well as orthodox families that settle in Palestinian ones) and Palestinians (moving back-and-forth from neighbourhoods in terms of their economic possibilities and due to their location, whether they have been comprised by the Seam Zone’s border or not). Moreover, this harder borders complement themselves with “softer” ones, like the regulations imposed by an increasing presence of orthodox Jews who observe the symbolic jurisdiction of the eruv. In this way, their private lives merge with the public coexistence with secular Jews and Palestinians who find themselves compelled to act upon the authorities’ endorsement of this religious imposition. Briefly, these softer borders denote how different processes of segregation and gentrification allow registers of cultural diversity to emerge, to come alive in the act of moving through the city, and the “many-bordered” notion accounts for this, by helping tracing the moment in which it becomes evident that a transition between a “Jewish” neighbourhood from or to a “Palestinian” one has been made.

These kind of transitions are perceivable through indicators such as the presence or absence and the amount and quality of public services, institutions and infrastructure, means of transport, shops, markets and malls, among others. In addition, these changes from one region to another are noticeable by the rhythm and celerity of transit: how people exercise the act of getting from one place to another. Also, the presence of police and law enforcement agencies are related to a sense of being more safety, for instance, in a Jewish settlement than a Palestinian village.

All of this is consistently shown along the text, for the author provides illustrating empirical data that strengthens the efficiency of these notions by exposing cases related to Palestinians and Israelis daily lives, plus, examining a particular complexity of a city such as Jerusalem, plenty of places of a huge religious significance: nothing less than being the Holy City.

Indeed, it is worth mentioning that Dumper stresses out the relevance of his study on Jerusalem as a case that brings up as many categories as a divided, contested or conflict city, but emphasising that Jerusalem is particularly a Holy City, where its holy places draw attention and are object of interest for different social and political actors, as well as are objects of public policies as much as to being affected by these policies. Jerusalem can provide a unique case of study that can, nonetheless, be also taken into consideration in a comparative perspective regarding other "many-bordered" cities. What is more, the author indicates that the "many-bordered" character is nothing but exclusive to Jerusalem: it can be applied to the study of many other contexts. This stands out as a valuable epistemological and methodological contribution to a sociological analysis, to urban and mobility studies as well as to conflict, security and international affairs, among other issues and subdisciplines.

To conclude, the following quote tends to synthetize the experience of having read the book, for it efficiently matches the expectations of the author: My hope is that the observer can now see how the city is one of many fragments and more than just of two parts; how visible and invisible lines crisscross its face creating myriad different social, economic, and political groupings; how its streets change from Friday to Saturday to Sunday, from Christmas to Pesach to 'Eid al Adha. I also hope the observer would realize that these fragments and changing facades cumulatively reveal a complex political dynamic concerning the future of the city (p. 235).

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