



ARCHITECTURE AND WAYS OF LIVING: TRADITIONAL AND MODERN PALESTINIAN VILLAGES AND CITIES

Romeo Carabelli

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ARCHITECTURE AND WAYS OF LIVING: TRADITIONAL AND MODERN PALESTINIAN VILLAGES AND CITIES

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About the EU Funded Project “My Heritage! My Identity!”

In 2018, the European Union provided a grant to fund a project titled, “My Heritage! My Identity!”¹ in Palestine. The project is being jointly implemented by four partners: AFRAT - France (www.afrat.com), Bethlehem University / Institute for Community Partnership - Palestine (www.bethlehem.edu), Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between People - Palestine (www.pcr.ps) and TÉTRAKTYS - France (www.tetraktys-association.org).

It aims to contribute to preserving and promoting cultural heritage located along the community-based walking Masār Ibrāhīm (trail) in Palestine, in an effort to enhance Palestinian citizenship and identity.

What’s more, the project offers activities that will contribute to the cohesiveness of the Palestinian people. It promotes inclusion and trust and aims to create a sense of belonging in order to positively influence relations among the diverse groups in Palestinian society.

For more information on the project, please visit the project website at the following link: www.myheritage.ps and the Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/myheritagemyidentity

¹ The original title of the EU project was “Promoting Governance and Citizenship in Palestine”. EU project reference: ENI/2017/390-692.

About the research process

The present research project has been developed within the framework of the EU funded project “My Heritage! My Identity!”.

The four project partners collaborated with academic experts from Palestine and France to identify six topics related to Palestinian cultural heritage. A scientific committee was established at the beginning of 2018 to select relevant topics.

The scientific committee is composed of the following scholars:

Palestinian researchers :



Omar Abed Rabo
Research fellow and lecturer of History & archaeology at Bethlehem University



Nazmi Amin Jubeh
Department of History and Archaeology, Birzeit University. Expert of Cultural Heritage

Jamil Khader, Ph.D.
Dean of Research at Bethlehem University

Zahraa Zawawi
Assistant Professor at An-Najah National University, Head, Urban Planning Engineering Department

Wael Hamareh
Scientific Committee Director – MOTA

French researchers:



Manoël Pénicaud
Research fellow and lecturer of Anthropology (Institute of mediterranean, european and comparative ethnology)



NajlaNakhlé- Cerruti
Research fellow in Arts &Litterature (French Institute for the Near East)



Pauline Bosredon
Research fellow and lecturer of Geography & Urban planning (Lille University)



Kevin Trehuedic
Research fellow and lecturer of History & Archaeology (Paris Est- Créteil University)



Jacques Barou
Research fellow and lecturer in Ethnology & sociology (Political Sciences Institute of Grenoble)

The scientific committee identified six topics, five of which were finally approved and selected for completion:

- The Maqām as a place of popular practices: evolution and diversity
- From terraces to settlements: the testimony of Masār Ibrāhīm landscapes
- “The one who has olive oil will never be poor”: Material and political aspects of a Palestinian symbol.
- Architecture and ways of living: traditional and modern Palestinian villages and cities
- Hikāyāt Palestine through the Masār Ibrāhīm: dialects, oral memories and histories

Furthermore, members of the committee have been involved throughout the research process in supporting the researchers.

Finally, three Palestinian members of the committee, Dr. Al Jubeh, Dr. Abed Rabo and Dr. Khader, were in charge of the final proof reading and copy editing of the research projects.

To discover the five researches, please visit the project website: www.myheritage.ps²

About the Author

Romeo Carabelli is an architect who holds a PhD in Geography works as a research engineer at the mixed research unit CITERES (CNRS and University of Tours – France), and teaches geography at the School of Landscape Design and heritage issues at the School of Architecture of Marrakech. A member of Icomos, he focuses his activities on (re)territorialization processes of colonial legacies, mainly over contemporary configurations of scattered and multinational heritage. He designs and manages research and cooperation projects dealing with cultural heritage (architecture and landscape) in the Mediterranean area and in the “global south”.

² To quote this report: Carabelli R., 2018. “Architecture and ways of living: traditional and modern Palestinian villages and cities”, EU funded project “My Heritage! My Identity!” (ENI/2017/390-692), available at: www.myheritage.ps

Foreword

“Architecture and ways of living” is a research that deals with the tangible structure of living, with the material results of human wills to adapt spaces in order to propose an appropriate spatial configuration to their societies. This vision has some characters that we would highlight; this approach could include a kind of deformation lenses shaping.

Watching the complexity of reality and starting from tangible presences, we introduce a “way of reading” the reality and we should be aware of this. Analyzing tangible structures as buildings, villages or urban spaces, we are spreading our understanding along a long term and a large space. Reading material persistence, we are dealing with elements of complexity that developed during long periods, avoiding strong social, economic or military discontinuities (e.g. the 1927 earthquake in Nablus was a really important one but it does not really modify the global lecture and interpretation of buildings, urban spaces and social structures).

This kind of reading reality privileges the tangible legacy although it has, of course, some limits. Limits include the difficulty of commenting on short but significant elements of history (wars, for examples) and eventually the resilience of social groups to a material transformation. On the other hand, advantages include smoothing the frequent minor incidents in order to keep a proper interpretation of the long historic time.

Prioritizing tangible objects as the main evidence used in the analysis, we have also another advantage: buildings and settlements generally have a persistence largely longer than human life. Therefore, it is possible to introduce an archaeological analysis of the still existing objects; buildings and settlements have something that looks like a physic moment of inertia.

The text focus on the spatial structure of cultural and social issue in Palestine, explains – where and if possible – the contemporary condition and places the historical situations in their proper context. We are producing an analytic perspective on architecture (traditional, transitional and contemporary) and settlements’ structure (the core cluster, the historical area and the recent sprawl); it tries also to inquire about the relationship – if any – between townscape and landscape (including the imposed Israeli’s presence).

The text starts with a compulsory introduction (**Background**) in which the text is placed in its geographical and historical context. Then, we propose a chapter on the contemporary

transformation in Palestinian heritage (**1 - After “generic city”, the “generic village”**). What looks like compulsive in heritage valorization is the adaptation toward the new generation’s built environment. What happened during the last three decades (after the so-called Oslo agreements) is unique and Palestine came out completely modified. If we abstract from the occupation, modifications in Palestine seem to be totally connected to global trends. The Rem Koolhaas’ concept (the generic city), proposed to describe world cities, is evident in Palestine too.

The second chapter (**2 – Complex elements in urban and rural frameworks**) presents the complex elements composing the Palestinian villages and towns. These composite material structures show the history and the social configuration of local inhabitants. They show also the trend of transformation. Often, we tend to imagine as historic and traditional something that is already an “far away past”; therefore, the perception or heritageneess looks like something coming from a very old past while ... frequently the traditional historic past is not so old. We propose here, in this second chapter, to show the structure of settlements, in their persistence and in their transformation. The third chapter (**3 – A fast passage through town ...**) is quickly opening to a town-oriented vision.

The following chapter (**4 – Tangible fragments linking to the past: the tangible part of identity and a way to modify the space perception**) starts from observations about the tangible elements of the “traditional heritage”, since the way houses and settlements are built reflects social and technical issues. In order to develop a sensitive vision of heritage, we suggest a collection of samples able to help in interpretation. We propose information and images to show up the issue including the main metamorphoses. Images are here shown together with a description that would be able to locate the item into the global framework. Obviously, most of the samples came from villages and sites along Masār Ibrāhīm.

The fifth chapter (**5 – Special but significant cases**) is about sites not directly linked to the Masār area or issues, but they are significant for the tangible heritage issue in Palestine. The first one is Birzeit’s revitalization experience. A long-term activity carried out over the last 10 years allows us to have an idea about technical issues and social ones; we can now have the distance to observe a revitalization strategy without being absorbed by the ongoing action. The second one is Ramallah, a “new town” where a large part of Palestinian economical action is being concentrated. Like all capitals (this one is waiting and dreaming to move to Jerusalem) Ramallah materializes

many construction dreams, its transformation occupies a significant part of the Palestinian's mental image.

Two sub-chapters focus on some elements of the relationship between Palestine and its own built inheritance: the Israeli occupation structures and the historic buildings used in tourism. The Israeli presence in the Territories is huge and impressive; the military part of it is shaping the living experience of the whole population. This presence is a part of the inheritance we receive from the past and it will be a part of the next generation inheritance. The last paragraph comes from a very personal experience.

A special guest in this text is Jerusalem, because its heritage and its contemporary political and social relevance are crucial for the Middle East. We spent some time in Jerusalem in order to check again the situation. Reality is so complex that it may seem impossible to trace a meaningful text on Jerusalem, it is a too strong topic but, at the same time, we cannot forget Jerusalem. Therefore, we include a fragment of the town, in order to suggest one of the other significant topics we should develop.

A small appendix proposes a non-exhaustive genealogy, an ongoing collection of dates, just to facilitate the token of a simple chronological sequence. It is a way to stock information and to place together some episodes and events in a chronology that would help in understanding the general situation. A second appendix relate about a personal experience, it lie outside the text but it could be interesting, as a point of view. During our 2018 fieldwork, we decided to stay mainly in heritage hotels while travelling. At first, we preferred those kind of hotels instead the brand corporate ones but, and not least, we had the chance to “live” inside and observe them for some days. We report in this appendix, the direct experience on heritage hosts sites, without the will of completeness.

Obviously, the whole text has a conclusion and a bibliography. Because of the importance of the “way of life”, we combine the normal bibliography with a slightly larger one, including the not directly used references; which can be useful for readers.

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Background

It is a fact that Palestine is under occupation; it is a fact that our cities and villages are an archipelago of geography, and it is a fact that our national resources are minimal, but are these the justifications for the program and projects this book is presenting? I would like to think that although all of these factors pushing us to come up with solutions to the state we live in, that at the core of it, this program exists because simply, it is the right thing to do.

(Touma, 2015, p. 15)

Yes, we think that working on the links between spaces and social structures, between architecture and ways of living, is the right thing to do. It is the main thing to do because even if the contemporary situation is problematic, at both the local and the regional levels, is to go on staying alive and developing knowledge and cultural awareness.

Palestine survives in the first part of the 21st century and, like the rest of the world, is facing the powerful development of singularity against plurality; we know that the sum of individuality does not produce the global value.

Actually, with evidence of heritage, we are watching the common legacies; because of our way of analyzing, we are probably under-evaluating the effective level of singularities in past societies and we are highlighting past common values. From a historical point of view, we should increase knowledge of the past. From a patrimonial point of view, we should increase the protection and valorization of the heritage we can manage nowadays, ready to integrate new knowledge in an inclusive approach to tangible and intangible inheritance.

Finally, work on heritage issues is something that allows stitching pre-existing materials and existing societies together.

Some general references

The link among architecture, heritage and identity is largely clear, no doubt about its existence. From this point of view, Palestine is not really different from other areas of the world. Nevertheless, there are some points to highlight before writing (and reading).

At first the geographical names. In this text, Palestine is the land located between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean sea; something that looks like the area of the British mandate on Palestine (of course, not the Transjordan area). Israel is the State of Israel, up to the Green Line, the border of 1967. The West Bank is a synonymous of Occupied Territories, the area between the Green line and the Jordan River that is currently (not officially) occupied by Israel. Antonomasia makes those Occupied Territories “the Territories”. Unfortunately, the Gaza strip is totally out of the range of this work.

Second, we have to highlight here that it is impossible to work without references to the Israeli occupation, a strong way to colonize the whole West Bank, stressing non-Jewish inhabitants. This presence has seriously been widespread throughout the whole area since 1967 and it informs everything and every mind.

Just to have an idea of the Israeli presence – for those who are not familiar with the local situation – it is enough to provide statistics about the presence of the Israeli army inside (even without referring to the number of colonies and their infrastructures):

As of mid-December 2016, the restrictions consist of 572 checkpoints, roadblocks and barriers and a closure of much of Palestinian territory and limited access to crossings.
(Negotiations Affairs Department, 2017)

Most of the West Bank is in direct connection with tangible occupation infrastructure such as “bypass” roads, Jewish settlements, watch towers, check points and, of course, the “separation wall.” The presence of the occupying army (but also the occupying civilians, the settlers) is connected to all Palestinian activities, and as such to the heritage issues, too.

It is not possible to include references to Israeli presence in every phrase, even if everything is permeated by the occupation. Therefore, we decided to avoid excessive references to the Israeli presence in the text, with the aim of eliminating redundant repetitions and stating the obvious. Nevertheless, both writer and readers should keep in mind this oppressive situation.

From a historical point of view, we refer to 5 periods. Palestine's history can be divided into several periods, but it is really difficult to impose restrictions; but we need some limits in order to situate the text in a common general timeline.

1 – Late Ottoman – The Ottoman presence in Palestine started in the 16th century, so we define the late Ottoman period as the one starting from mid of the 19th century to 1917 (after the Egyptian period and before the British one). The Ottoman period organized Palestine into a system, including towns, throne villages and simple settlements. The Ottoman reforms (Tanzimat) led to the transformation of the society, traditions and buildings (an interesting reference could be the Amin Maalouf's novel *The Rock of Tanios*).

After the end of the Egyptian invasion of Palestine in 1840, the Ottoman Empire implemented a string of major changes to rebuilt the state institution, later known as the Ottoman Reforms (Ju'beh, 2012 - p. 21)

2 – British administration – from 1917 until 1948 (From December 1917 until June 1920, Palestine was under British Military administration. From June 1920-1948 it was under British Civil administration) – The British administration marked the transformation of the old society into a new one. Some modifications in building and in settlements structure started to show up. These modifications were connected to the global transformation that were sweeping the Eastern Mediterranean area.

3 – From 1948 until 1967, a part of Palestine became Israel; the notion of West Bank (of Jordan River) started to be used in order to show the part of Kingdom of Jordan in the western side of the Jordan River. During this period in the West Bank – the contemporary Occupied Territories – new kind of buildings such as cinemas and modern villas appeared. Social structure withdrew with the traditional way of living and organized the spaces both inside houses and in public spaces. Some Palestinian residents of the newcomer state of Israel became refugees and some refugee's camps were prepared for an imagined temporary shelter. Some Palestinian residents of the new state of Israel became refugees and some refugee camps were conceived as an imagined temporary shelter.

4 – From 1967 to 1994 – the official Israeli occupation of West Bank.

5 – From 1994 to the present, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) controls parts of Palestine with a partial occupation by Israel. This last period witnessed a massive urban transformation: the PNA can authorize building construction inside Zone A, which make up only 17% of the Territories. In Zones B and C building authorization is (not) enforced by Israeli services as it was before 1994. Therefore, all Palestinian needs and investments converge in the limited Zones A areas which overloads them.

The global result is the transformation of the Palestinian people from a mainly rural society to a mainly urban one, not only because of the forced management of possible spaces, but also because this is a somehow normal process in this geographical area. Here in Palestine, the management of spaces has become extremely special and difficult since 1948.

This text does not aim to represent and explain how the powers in contemporary Palestine are producing the configuration of living areas in the Territories, but, whenever possible, it tries to provide an explanation of the relationship between governance and constructive methods. This research tries to present a global understanding of the relationship between contemporary Palestinian ways of living and the tangible legacy coming from the past(s).

The questioning is passing from the historic relationship to heritage to the contemporary one, through the several stages of transformation that unfolded throughout the centuries. Architectural issues – aesthetical and technical ones – are of course fundamental in this matter and here we are proposing a study focusing on the general commons, spaces open to the interaction among people. In general, public spaces are the places where people can meet and interact.

The importance of references to heritage valorization and identity is clear and ineradicable; it is a vision for a future of all communities and something even more important for Palestinians.

This vision is based not just on restoring historic buildings but also on spreading the spirit and revitalizing the life within them. [...] especially now that “the house” has become a symbol for every Palestinian. [...] Preserving historic centres is a political, national and cultural struggle. (Leila Shahid Palestinian Ambassador to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg in Bishārah et al., 2013 p.11)



Image 1 A "key" monument in a roundabout, north of Nablus (photo RC)

The house key is a symbolic object; it is the portable item recalling the lost home. With the possession and the showing of the former house key, the will to return to the earlier living place stays alive. These symbolic objects are frequently displayed to tourists and travelers (just like the British mandate passport), playing the role of a medium among identity, culture and land (actually a lost land).

Protecting heritage, inventories and registers

In order to protect and valorize heritage, we need an administrative structure capable of supporting positive actions. Unfortunately, contemporary economies frequently consider heritage as a problem to solve in order to maximize investments in the construction sector. Therefore, the legal framework is an essential tool to manage real estate speculation.

During the 1920s, the Department of Antiquities was established and in 1929, the British mandate institutions promulgate the:

Palestinian Law of Antiquity (1929 British mandate) *Antiquities/Archaeological law, which focused on the protection of archaeological sites with little mention of other cultural assets.*
(Ju'beh, 2012 – p. 22)

This law formed the basis for dealing with heritage throughout the whole 20th century, even if it was modified and adapted by British, later by Jordanians and then by the Israelis:

The Palestinian Antiquities Law of 1929 was amended in 1934, 1937, and 1946 (during the British mandate) and again in 1966 by a decision of the Jordanian cabinet. The law was amended further through a series of nine Israeli military orders (decisions) ... (Bshara, 2011 – p. 14)

After the transition and the Oslo agreements, Palestinian National Authority adopted this law and its amendments. The law aspired, globally, to protect the heritage sites built before 1700 or inscribed by the Department of Antiquity but it was amended to reflect a more inclusive vision of heritage.

The Ministry of Local Governance is concerned for the preservation of this cultural heritage because architectural and natural heritage is a major resource that constitutes a vital developmental sector for local communities [...] and seek means to create a practical balance between developmental and rehabilitation activities and the preservation of agricultural lands, forests, and landscapes. [...]

The Ministry is therefore committed to preserving the Palestinian national identity and

historical value of these cities and cores...

[...] Resolution 39 for the year 1997, which calls for the protection of the traditional fabric of these [old] cores, limits the possibility of intervention within them, and calls for preparation of detailed plans of these [old] cores. [...]

The Ministry made substantial progress when it issued the,

[...] Resolution 54 for the year 2006, which includes “General Provision for the Protection of Historical Locations and Historical Individual Buildings” and which it includes as part of Regulation No. 30 (al- Bandak, 2007, Pp. 28-29)

Despite the several amendments, the law protecting antiquities excludes most of the architectural heritage that prospered in the last three centuries. Corrections modified and updated the first edition of the law but the global vision of heritage was still focusing on the idea of “pure” protection and did not really reflect an interest in the dynamic interaction with the changing society. In order to by-pass some of the limits of this old law, some municipalities acted in order to provide local by-laws that extend the protection to other existing buildings.

This kind of protection is quite normal for juridical systems coming from that historic period. They reflect the widespread idea of heritage at their time and they still influence thinking about heritage. It is the case, e.g., for the heritage charts such as the ones in Athens and in Venice. A dynamic vision of heritage in the living spaces is something much more recent and can be considered a milestone of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2011).

After some years of serious concerning (taking four and half years of work in order to write this law), a new law for heritage was passed and became official on June 3, 2018. This law is the first full Palestinian law on this issue. Now we are waiting for the by-laws that make the law operational to be put in place.

Within the law, another instrument is essential for heritage management: **the heritage register** and the Ministry – with the support of UNESCO Ramallah office – is planning a new and official register of heritage “items” (buildings, sites ...), starting with a test run in the Gaza strip. (Personal communication. Ramallah UNESCO Office, August 13, 2018).

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities already produced a list of heritage sites and buildings and some NGOs did the same in their areas (a special note for the towns of Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem). Focusing on the overall area of the Occupied Territories, the NGO Riwaq completed the Riwaq Register of Historic Buildings in Palestine between 1994 and 2003. It tries to cover the entire Palestinian territory; it includes data on 50,320 historic buildings located inside and outside the historic centers of 422 towns and villages.

The post-Oslo era and the creation of a quasi autonomous Palestinian government allowed for new expressions of Palestinian national identity and collective narrative. Inventories, oral history projects, collections, museums, revival of folk traditions, the compiling of scholarly volumes as well as the restoration of historic buildings are some of the manifestations of the era. These manifest a rich and diverse culture of the pre-Nakba (1948) Palestine. [...] In special effort, Palestinian officials (particularly the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities – MOTA) and experts were involved in the compilation of a list of twenty sites to be nominated to the World Heritage List as sites of universal value. (Bishārah et al., 2013 - p. 23)

After the ratification of the 1972 UNESCO convention by the State of Palestine on December 8, 2011, the Ministry of Culture presented 3 dossiers for the World Heritage List and 13 other sites were placed on the UNESCO Tentative list for Palestine. These sites represent the diversity of the heritage in Palestine; they also contribute to the new Palestinian identity shared narrative.

Below, we can find the two lists:

List of Properties that appear on the World Heritage List

- [Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem](#) (2012)
- [Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town](#) (2017)
- [Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir](#) (2014)

Tentative list

1. [Ancient Jericho: Tell es-Sultan \(2012\)](#)
2. [Mount Gerizim and the Samaritans \(2012\)](#)
3. [QUMRAN: Caves and Monastery of the Dead Sea Scrolls \(2012\)](#)
4. [El-Bariyah: wilderness with monasteries \(2012\)](#)
5. [Wadi Natuf and Shuqba Cave \(2013\)](#)
6. [Old Town of Nablus and its environs \(2012\)](#)
7. [Tell Umm Amer \(2012\)](#)
8. [Throne Villages \(2013\)](#)
9. [Sebastia \(2012\)](#)
10. [Anthedon Harbour \(2012\)](#)
11. [Umm Al-Rihan forest \(2012\)](#)
12. [Wadi Gaza Coastal Wetlands \(2012\)](#)
13. [Baptism Site “Eshria’a” \(Al-Maghtas\) \(2015\)](#)

(UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2018)

The production of a new juridical major instrument to protect, valorize and enhance heritage issues is essential. At the same time, we should remember – even if it looks banal and ordinary – that laws are not the only effective means in territorial issues; the link between local actors and the population is fundamental.

Protection and rehabilitation cannot be achieved through legislation alone but through the empowerment of local government and communities and the involvement of the private sector. (Rabah and Carol, 2007 – p. 39).

Probably, the best idea is the vision of heritage integration that raises consciousness about cultural heritage and local identities and integrates heritage sites into living spaces and societies. Actually, dominant classes are already used to integrating (and manipulating) cultural heritage in order to develop themselves and confirm their dominant roles (and rules). At the same time, heritage without social integration is ineffective; it is not a ground for constructing a stable and strong society. We can find a reference about this need for integration between heritage and living society in the Bethlehem Atlas:

This strategy is based on innovative and coordinated projects where the “materials” of the landscape and the “languages” of the historic city are guiding elements for the recovering of the collective spaces and the restoring of the antique systems of relationship. (Serrini and Zagaglia, 2012, p. 11).

Contemporary and wide world connected

On December 8, 2017, we were in the Habib Bourguiba Avenue – the downtown’s main road – in Tunis where there was a demonstration against the USA decision to move their Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. A well-known common slogan was on site, like in several towns: “I love Tunis”. Surprisingly, the empty space of “o of love” had an image of a Palestinian throwing something, a direct invocation of the Intifadas and Palestinians condition.



Image 2 Tunis: Habib Bourguiba Avenue: I love Tunis ... and I think Palestine (photo RC)

We were thinking that it was quite normal that a Northern Africa country was protesting the USA decision (in a town that hosted the OLP/PLO in the past) but - at the same time -, we were thinking about the circulation of global images and global messages.

We were quite surprised when, in August 2018 in Jerusalem, we saw people taking photos together with the image of “I love JLM”, clearly an Israeli message in a “Jewish zone” with Jewish people around, taking photos showing them with the monumental text “I love JLM”. Actually, some of the messages have a worldwide appeal. Ramallah uses a different slogan “WeRamallah”, but the corporate identity is the same one. When we saw the “I love Beit Sahour”, in a square with Christian religious symbols we realized how powerful is the global branding image.



Image 3 Jerusalem: I love JLM, (photo RC)



Image 4 Ramallah: WeRamallah (photo RC)



Image 5 Beit Sahour: I love Beit Sahour (photo RC)

All of us know that we are living in this globalized world, all of us know that even with the strict control implemented by Israel, images and messages pass the border and live with Palestinians too. At the same time, we are not so sure that this is clear to everybody. These global cultural issues (represented here by a simple text “I love ...”) impact cultural heritage structures, both in the way that we deal with tangible and intangible cultural heritage and in the way we manage the new spaces we are producing in our contemporary society.

Those few and small images serve as a *memento mori* in our work on cultural heritage, which has become a local and a global issue, a local and a global influenced topic.

The spatial limits of Palestine (the West Bank for us, now) do not only constitute the immediate and tangible limits of the Israeli border but also the larger worldwide ones that compose them. Thus, on a different scale, in the past e.g., during the so-called Jordanian rule, three daily buses linked the town of Nablus to Beirut, Damascus and Amman ... ('Arafat, 2012 – p. 79).

1 - After “generic city,” the “generic village”

The contemporary Occupied Territories were a part of Ottoman Empire; they have shared a traditional way of living and built spaces with other Middle Eastern areas. Some historic towns scattered on a wide territory existed alongside several smaller rural settlements linked to their immediate neighborhood. They depended on this close land and its agricultural production.

Under those conditions, there was a society based on small groups lead by a proximity-motivated leader, responsible both for administrative and economic issues. Local (sub)societies were discreet and animated by a strong religious, social and kinship feeling. The anthropic spaces of those societies were permeated by the social structure inputs, and they answered to the social needs and were cooperating in safeguarding the social structures.

Consistent with a society of relative social stability, autarky and prevalence of traditional behavioural patterns, the rules determining the boundaries of these levels of the spatial order were closely associated with existing social forms. (Amiry, 2017 – p. 205).

With modernity, both the local society and the technical issues changed. Starting from the end of the Egyptian control in the area and the return of the Ottomans, we can start to observe a relentless transformation towards new economic and social structures.

As many other Ottoman provinces, Palestine underwent a slow process of modernization that began in the mid-nineteenth century. It was increasingly exposed to western culture and technology. The living image of Palestinian society and culture experienced fundamental changes that reflected new needs, desire, living habits, and types of interaction between the human being and his or her environment.

Historically [...] several historians assume to be an indicator of the beginning of a new era in Palestine and that can be characterized as follows:

- Changes in land tenure due to the Ottoman land reforms (Tanzimat)
- The creation of modern state institutions, mainly in large cities
- Internal large-scale migration
- Changes in the occupational structure of the local population and the gradual aggravation

of social contradictions

- *The growing integration of the local economy into the world trade market due to an increase in European influence*
- *The formation and dissemination of a new culture in addition to the prevailing Islamic culture*
- *External migration, both outward (Palestinian youth generation) and inward (Jewish migration)*

(Ghadban, 2007 – Pp. 32-33)

Those transformations produced a new society, starting from the 19th century but later on, even more strongly, during the 20th century with the British mandate, the creation of Israel and the occupation. This new society – characterized by a different way of living – completely modified the way of living spaces were produced. Something similar happened in the whole Mediterranean area and all over the world: the mainstream way of thinking has produced this kind of transformation, but probably because of the special war condition in Palestine, it looks stronger than anywhere else.

Today, it is not easy to distinguish rural Palestine from urban Palestine because of the rapid changes that continuously shape the built and unbuilt environments. This is not unique to Palestine; it is a modern dilemma that occurs at vastly different scales in the universe; peasants are being “urbanized” and moved off of their lands.

Present-day rural areas are an alienating landscape; inhabitants exchange their labor for wages in Jewish Israeli settlements or in the emerging urban centers of Palestine (such as Ramallah), weakening their relationships with their land. (Bshara, 2015 – p. 95).

Furthermore, defensive walls did not surround most of the Palestinian villages, which made it easier to move out from the centripetal social, economic and tangible center towards a linear development of settlements along the roads and later towards the contemporary residential-sprawl.

Actually, the real problem is not modernity and the way it is modifying Palestinian spaces and communities. Transformation is normal; the real issue is the change and loss of the rich world of “before” and the acceptance of a trivial present lacking in social complexity and cultural contents. Common spaces lost a lot of their mythical power; the spaces of human exchanges, or the places where societies used to be fulfilled lost their frame of reference.

In the 1990s, Rem Koolhaas (Koolhaas, 2006; Koolhaas et al., 1995) addressed the themes of contemporary town development able to illustrate the 21st century's world built areas (we do not totally agree with his position). The idea of the “generic city” took roots and it gave an idea about the link to the artificial spaces that humanity is building nowadays. Drawing on this concept, we propose a new term, the “**generic village**”, in order to represent the major results of Palestinian habitat transformation.

There is no negative approach in this term, since most of the most of the villages' expansion is something looks like an explosion. This can be due to the population needs that were compressed for long time; they found an answer in a fast and epic building action. The difficulty of public management in Palestine helped this kind of development: a kind of euphoria for construction hit the 1990s and it is happening again. Actually, in Palestine, the only way to invest is in construction ... investments in other economic opportunities, in other sectors, is too risky because of the global political conditions.

Why do we focus mainly on villages and not on towns? Not because towns are not transforming but because of the old town's strength. Historic towns are so powerful that the development of new living configurations is diluted in the physical space; the growth of urban historic centers looks like effective expansions of the old structure that still includes the hearth of the site. In villages, the transformation is so strong that it suggests a very new spatial and territorial experience, a new dimension for cultural reference.

Following the UNESCO HUL recommendation of 2011 (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2011), we should imagine ways to apply those rules to the non-monumental ancient part of the inhabited West Bank. This approach would stay up-to-date with the more significant and global heritage trends.

We propose a multiple approach along a diverse time frame, using four adjectives: *traditional*, *modern*, *recent* and *contemporary*. Of course, there are no ways – and no reasons – to “cut” the past in full partitioned segments. Nevertheless, in order to be operative, we propose to consider four chronological stages in this research, which proffer different uses of common spaces. We need these four stages to help in placing built objects into their historic timeframes.

We propose ***traditional*** as the “former” past, the quite mythical time when the landscape was featured along the centuries, something that makes people dream about the building of

contemporary nations and identities. It is the time of settlements' cores, the "old town" and "old village" areas. It is the fabulous time of tradition; when; architecture and space planning meant respecting environmental issues and they were using local raw material in slow transformation.

Modern is used for the changing time of "the modernity" (new building materials coming from the Industrial Revolution, a melting population due to fast transportation, modern colonization time...). We propose a lapse of time, including the British and Jordanian periods (from 1917 to 1967). New kind of buildings started to be built and nowadays they are considered heritage sites but not "traditional heritage". Because of the changes in economic and social structures, in this period, the relationship between villages and their outskirts started to keep distance from the so-called traditional configuration.

Recent and modern ... from the etymological point of view, *modern* should not have restriction dates but local Palestinian history has some clustering dates in his recent past, and 1967 would be the line to separate a kind of social, economic and territorial development from another different one. We use *modern* to refer to the era before 1967 and *recent* to the time after it. It is an arbitrary choice but we need this distinction to reflect reality. Of course, building houses and public spaces changed seriously, including the way settlements were placed in a relationship with outside landscape, urban areas with rural ones.

We use **Contemporary** here to indicate the way spaces are actually and effectively built and used in the present time. This historic framework is still open and changing one; it is, nevertheless, really important not only because of the real effect on buildings but also because this one is the "time of heritage". It is nowadays that we are producing the most contemporary buildings and, at the same time, nowadays we are also producing arguments for heritage protection policies.



Image 6 'Arraba: Late Ottoman- early 20th century house and a recent one in concrete beams and dressed stones with wide openings on the front (photo RC)

Sunset of the so-called traditional way of living

We are focusing more on villages than towns; in small settlements the transformation is more immediate to observe and – hopefully – to understand, than in large towns. The general modification pattern follows the same kind of development in villages and in towns but in villages the material and tangible result is easier to recognize.

In the old time, the traditional time, the whole village was viewed as a “unit”, a part of the ensemble that was acting effectively as a whole. Traditional social structures had a high level of cohesion and solidarity at the village level, but the loss of the common relationship with the land created the conditions for the disappearance of this relationship and the move towards nuclear families and individualism. From the architectural point of view, Palestinians started to build independent houses separated from hoshes.

The village as a whole and not the individual was considered the unit of taxation by the state [at the Ottoman period]. The community had patriarchal households: the extended family acted as the main unit of production and consumption. Labour was divided along clear gender lines. (Amiry, 2017 – p. 212).

The global-village social structure was interdependent and it exists as an active system. Palestine then was exposed to the general “modern ideas”, a new way to conceive human, social, and spatial configuration.

Ottoman land reforms [Tanzimat – started as early as 1858 – introduced the private ownership of land, ending with the commons lands – put into effect fully during the British Mandate – end of the village taxation/collective taxation], British colonial policies and later Zionist colonization – these foreign forces challenged the traditional patterns of the community. (Amiry, 2017 – p. 212).

At the same time, there was a decline in the village autarky and self-sufficiency – that produced migration to urban centres. Wage labour, markets, urban jobs and cash linked in the village to a network of forces; making the nation and not the village the frame of reference. Not even one single town.

The Ottoman government, and later the British Mandate, started to shift their alliance from the village sheikh to powerful urban notables. The sheikhs' private armies were slowly dissolved and their judicial powers passed from them to newly appointed village headmen, the makhatir. These makhatir (sing. mukhtar) were appointed by British government to represent the village, more specifically the different clans within the village. Now, the village may have two or three makhatir representing it, all lacking the political and economic power that the village sheikh once had (Amiry, 2017 - p. 213).

New actors were making up the new configuration of the social pyramid and local forces began to lose their power over the people and the land. Military and protection needs decreased, and therefore, the influence of local army chiefs decreased too. Started a new way to produce richness, that was disconnected from the local and it was a money-oriented transformation.

Traditional architecture and settlement patterns were tremendously transformed in Palestine at the turn of the 20th century. This change was determined by many socioeconomic factors. Migration [...] brought an influx of money from relatives who emigrated. [...] The British rule provided security and job opportunities under its administration. As a result, local people started to leave the historic core to live in larger unattached buildings surrounded by a relatively large plot of land planted with vegetables and trees, which overlooked the surrounding fields. [...].

New building technologies, mainly reinforced concrete and steel I-beams, were lighter materials which made it easier to build houses with multiple storeys. [...] The availability of new building technologies did not eliminate the use of traditional techniques in building, mainly the cross vault. In most cases, the lower floor was built with cross vaults whereas the upper floor's ceilings were built with concrete and steel I-beams. Opening increased in number and size, reflecting a more secure environment, offering better surveillance of surrounding fields, and enhancing the aesthetics of the house. Doors with a protruding stone frame became taller, topped with a one-piece lintel and an arched window. Written and/or ornamental inscriptions also became common in lintels, often identifying the date of construction (Farhat Muhawi and Qawasmi, 2012 – p. 50).

At the same time of social and economic transformations, there was the importation of new techniques and new material elements that modify the building technologies. Flat glasses allowed for larger windows, iron (and before it, the cast iron) allowed for larger openings while the arrival of Portland concrete allowed for a total transformation of the building system, stone free, something totally new in the area. The arrival of western (European and North-American) inhabitants in the area was frequently the trigger of transformation, a vector of technical modernity in building. They bring with them new materials and new ways of building, including open courts, large windows that were absent from the local way of building and the interest in independent residence houses outside of the historical settlement precincts.

Technical transformations took more than a century to develop themselves. In between, a huge number of transitional buildings appeared in Palestine. Modernity did not arrive in a flash, but it was a long transitional process. Even in Israel, we should also consider the significance of the intervention of the Modern Movement in this period, as evident in the “new town” of Tel Aviv, born as a Jaffa suburb in 1906 which was characterized by typical modern architecture (cf. Bauhaus German experience) during the British Mandate in Palestine.

We would like to highlight this path to modernity because it is largely underestimated in Middle East heritage issues. We did not pass immediately from “traditional” to “modern”, from “historic” to “contemporary”. The intermediate experiences are significant because they show us the path for modifying an old structure toward a contemporary one. Even if it is easier to pigeonhole human experience into rigid cases, we should remember that, as the transformation from historic to modern Palestine was not done in a flash, the historic structure was not as simple as we used to think.

Although the traditional village structure was based on hierarchical spatial order - including the segmentation between male and female domains –the hierarchy in Palestine was never as rigid as the European feudal system was and the social division among the population was never based on a system as rigid as the Indian caste system. The recent scientific publication *Peasant Architecture in Palestine. Space, Kinship and Gender* (Amiry, 2017, which is based on a 1980's doctoral dissertation that was updated for this publication), in addition to the older novel *The rock of Tanios* (Maalouf, 1994), gives quite a complete image of the complexity of the passage from the so-called traditional way of life to so-called modernity.

Nevertheless,

[...] and hundreds of villages, [...], are rich with popular heritage and vernacular architecture, which reflect the richness of Palestinian civilization and its authenticity. (al- Bandak, 2007 – p. 28).

The widest transformation, from the point of view of society's way of living, is the structure of the ancient settlements that modified itself from a centripetal shape to an axial one, from a social and spatial concept of settlement based on unity to a scattered one.

Since the beginning of the British Mandate in 1922, the built environment in Deir Ghassaneh [the village that was the case study of the PhD that led to this publication], as in other villages, was drastically transformed. There were two phases of construction: the first occurred between the 1920s and the mid-fifties. New building constructed in this period bore a great resemblance to traditional building pattern and were, in general, accommodated within the old structure. In the second period after 1955, the new structures brought with them the embryonic formation of a new spatial organization that reflected the reorganization of the community on a new basis. (Amiry, 2017 – p. 215).

The village centre, containing the plaza, guest house, the mosque and the sheikh's dwellings, has gradually lost its important function as the focus of village unity. (Amiry, 2017 - p. 220).

As it happened in the villages under study, the centripetal patterns all over Palestine – including clustered communities – slowly became network settlements, developing them along linear patterns alongside motorways. Simple centrality left the space to multiple grid structures. Sometimes the new grid system was not established in the former center, which is nowadays obsolete, leaving free spaces to slums implementation.

Starting from the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the Palestinian condition became even more complex and difficult. Wars, colonization and occupation produced something that looks like an unplanned situation. The 1990s Oslo-agreements led to the contemporary reality, including not only problems – of course – but also heritage issues.

Our cities [Palestinian cities] are in crisis. We are all aware of this fact, and many of us – specialists in conservation and urban development, aesthetes, aficionados of the arts – find it hard to accept. Many of the reasons for the crisis are directly linked to the Israeli occupation. (Daibes, 2007 – p. 26)

The global Palestinian issue in term of development is a sequence of crises and Palestinian cities are a part of this sequence. The situation is complicate, but from an architectural and planning point of view, we should invest inheritance issues, focusing on the best management for tangible and intangible heritage that can save the deep cultural spirit.

Heritage management can help transform Palestinian settlements into pleasant and attractive spaces, areas that work toward saving and developing community life, societal peace and social harmony.

The most difficult task is trying to understand legacies and their importance in this unstable area, where the management authorities see themselves so “special.” Within the Oslo agreements, Palestinians gained control over 17% of historical Palestine, “A” one. Areas B and C are under the control of Israel. This arrangement puts the old towns in danger, because Palestinians can build only on the land they control, which is less than a fifth of the Territories, which makes the real estate pressure on land and heritage really strong.

This is an important heritage issue; forcing municipalities to deal with tangible cultural legacies in order to keep alive Palestinian identity and roots and, at the same time, to boost the ongoing local development. Municipalities have to manage the difficult relationship between tangible foundation of Palestinian identity and the need for space for a population “locked” in a decreasing rate of land availability because of the rising of Jewish occupation colonies.

Contemporaneous to this high rise of estate pressure on the “possible islands” (Davis, 2014), the traditional link with the land as a production place, with nature as an essential cultural reference,

lost its prestige, and became an image of a lost past (probably a “wasted” past ...). Landmarks as haunted springs, holy trees, threshing floors and water wells disappeared; rural life linked to the seasons is vanishing and the affective pacific use of landscape is limited.



Image 7 The Palestine archipelago - Image by Julien Bousac via Imaginary Atlas.
<https://brilliantmaps.com/palestine-archipelago/>

Globally, we can say that Palestine “lost” a global tool to imagine and describe its traditional spaces, both rural and urban ones. Historic towns (old towns and walled parts of contemporary towns) conserve the traditional tangible space, but the act of living there is “costly” from the symbolic point of view. These areas have a lower class image, and therefore, high- and middle-class inhabitants

A photograph showing a section of a stone building with several arched openings. The building is constructed from light-colored, irregular stones. In the foreground, there is a large, messy pile of rubble, including large stones and debris. To the left of the rubble, there is some dry vegetation and a small, dark, rectangular opening in the ground. The background shows a clear blue sky and some distant trees.

36

Building location and density

The last two centuries process of transformation led to a very different configuration both in social and spatial issues. Concerning the building structures, we can observe a shift from the agglomeration of several interconnected buildings towards independent ones. Nowadays there is a convergence between the number of blocks and the number of buildings; in old settlements, imbricated buildings composed the housing blocks. The conception of space, as that which supports the social structures, forced communities to foster singular proposals.



Image 9 'Arab ar-Rashayida – quite random independent building location (photo RC)

Where are the contemporary public meeting points?

With the decline of structured settlements a new issue appeared: within addition to the community-spaces the public meeting points were vanishing. Where are the contemporary public meeting points? These circumstances often lead to a crisis of identity, economic hardship and cultural breaks, which often create false nostalgia or utopian dreams.

Contemporary settlement structures do not really suggest widespread public spaces capable of promoting simple and daily social interaction; common spaces are disappearing.

Should we consider a round-about as a social meeting point?



Image 10 'Arraba: A round-about; possible meeting point? (see the young people sitting in the shadow). (photo RC)

The will and skills for living: social and political development within heritage background

In the first quarter of the 21st century, Palestinian situation is a difficult one; for there were several issues with the way of living that might serve as a catalyst for a convenient development. Far from taking a pessimistic position on this, we notice at least three active realities working towards heritage connected development. There are several others, this is not the place for an in depth description of these realities. Nevertheless, they are substantial both for heritage and for social issues. Therefore, we cannot ignore them.

Palestine is continuously reshaping its environment; several not synchronized actors are working in this long-term mechanism. Places and sites, objects of rehabilitation strategies, are building a territorial narrative that is fundamental for empowering Palestinian Identity. Tangible rehabilitation is mixed with the empowerment of intangible traditions. This last work looks even more complicated than tangible rehabilitation.

*While the physical interventions (infrastructure, conservation of single buildings, the preventive conservation of whole neighborhoods, and upgrading of public spaces and alleys) have been relatively easily attainable, the **non-physical interventions**, which were necessary in attracting users to the newly renovated areas, remained one of our biggest challenges. [bold in the original text] (Amiry and Bshara, 2015 – p. 21)*

Three kinds of action demonstrate the Palestinian skills and competence in heritage issue (this is not an exhaustive list; we are just proposing three examples that seem pertinent and strong). We are referring to these examples because we consider their strategies to be different and to be positively affecting heritage and inhabitants, leading Palestine (at least a part of Palestine) away from a generic oriented development.

The Bethlehem situation is including the presence of special tangible heritage and the heavy presence of the Israeli occupation forces cannot be left out. The Bethlehem's Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP) was established by Presidential mandate on April 14, 2001. The Centre is entrusted with the mission of continuing the rehabilitation efforts initiated by the Bethlehem 2000 Project. This is the case of a "spot-enhanced" action (the Bethlehem 2000 Project)

that was transformed into a long-term elaborate one (CCHP). Heavily involving international and UN actors (mainly UNESCO), it deals with the complexity of the real situation through a complex structure, including operational and knowledge skills (e.g. Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan - BACMP production). Their official structure shows the complex approach as the CCHP has three operational units: The Rehabilitation Unit, The Public Awareness and Community Development Unit, and the Research and Training Unit.

The really difficult situation in Hebron, including the existence of a pressing Jewish colony inside the Old Town, created an active institution capable of managing building renovation and legal affairs for protecting heritage and inhabitants. The Hebron Rehabilitation Committee acts in cooperation with the Hebron Municipality, in order to deal with the Old City revitalization, campaigning against poverty and occupation and for cultural preservation.

HRC Vision

Preserving the Old City of Hebron as an Arab Islamic city. HRC Mission

The Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC) seeks to rehabilitate and renovate the historic buildings in the Old City of Hebron in order to encircle the settlement outposts, limit their expansion, preserve these ancient historic buildings, ensure social and economic revival, and maintain continuity of the Old City with the other parts of the city. In addition, HRC seeks to improve the standards of living of marginalized groups by planning and implementing vital programs to allow for economic, social and cultural rebirth of the marginalized groups.

HRC Values

Equal and equitable access to public services, authenticity, excellence, respect for human rights, transparency, professionalism, building local and international partnerships, and sincerity. (Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, 2017a – p. 5).

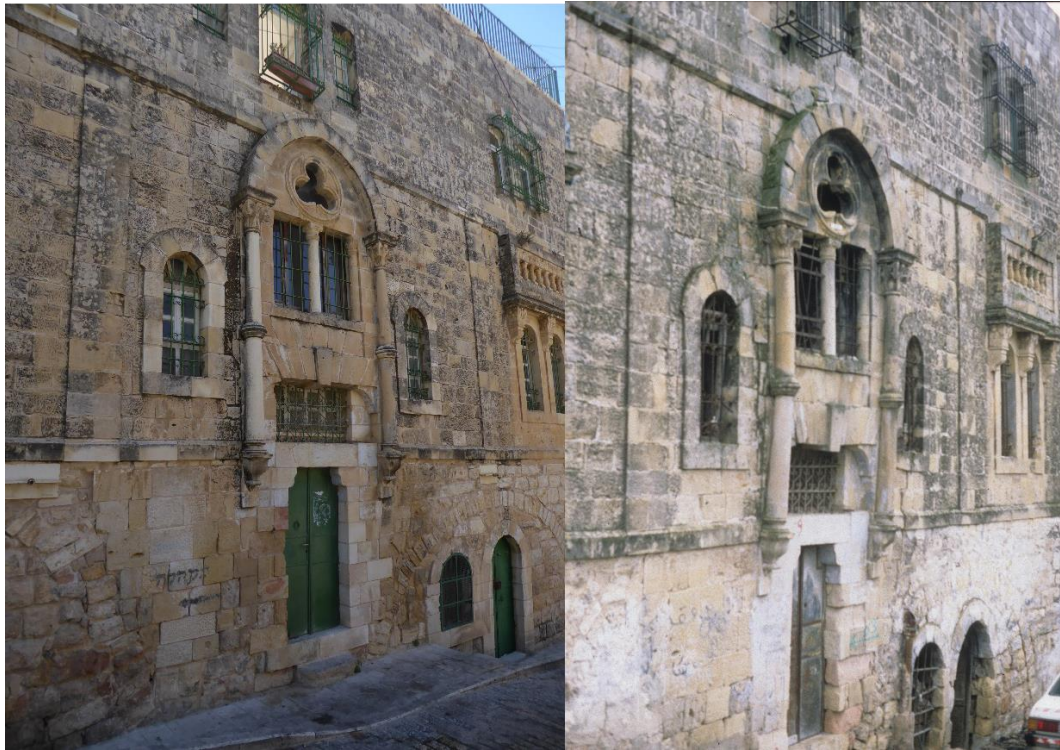


Image 11 Hebron: Facade of Hebron Rehabilitation Committee Headquarters before and after rehabilitation (1999 right and 2018 left) (photos RC), note that the façade of this building including three different periods.

Last, but not least, in this extra-short set of heritage actors, we should mention the “50x50x50” project by Riwaq (a heritage preservation oriented NGO based in el Bireh/Ramallah). Some years ago, in order to propose an affordable plan to save Palestinian built heritage, Riwaq proposed the 50 historic centers project (considering the Riwaq register of heritage: 50% of the built Palestinian heritage is concentrated in 50 villages; therefore, focusing the safeguard work on those sites makes the conservation as effective as possible). According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2005), 546 urban and rural agglomerations exist in the West Bank area.

This all-inclusive project tries to cover the whole Palestinian territories because the NGO in charge does not have a specific target town like is the case of HRC or CCHP (actually, both Hebron and Bethlehem territorial issues are so big that largely justify one actor). Riwaq’s project focuses the activity on municipalities that reflect the main concentration of heritage issues (outside of historic towns) and that are more affordable for a small and private institution.

*While the traditional village's spatial structure, which once reflected **kinship** and **gender**, satisfied the needs of an autarkic agrarian community, today's same village structure has to stretch its limits and possibilities to satisfy different contemporary needs and uses. [bold in the text] (Amiry and Bshara, 2015 - page 23).*

The interest in the 50x50x50 project lies in the dispersal issue that provides the global objective of Palestinian heritage, acting on several small heritage fragments (while the two other actors are acting on larger fragments of Palestinian heritage). Riwaq is able to deal with technical issues and with theoretical ones, making the NGO an “accessible partner” for foreigner actors, who are interested both in rehabilitation and in knowledge development.

These three examples of active heritage actors allow positive thinking about heritage issues in the Territories and we hope for a large-scale implementation of heritage promotion in order to enhance acknowledge about Palestinian identity.

2 – Complex elements in urban and rural frameworks

In order to approach the issue of Palestinian heritage, we propose to analyze some of its components. We consider those to be key components, which are significant for understanding and acting. First, we suggest reading complex tangible elements and then more simple ones. The matter is developing an investigation starting from some catalyst sets of elements composing some “squads” of building. The analysis is based on a kind of modular composition of simple components that make up the wealth of the global tangible heritage. Of course, cultural heritage is not the simple assembly of basic items; nevertheless, technical decomposition can help in cultural (re)composition. This procedure is to allow comparing and integrating different sites in a similar study processes capable to developing an effective global understanding of the links between spaces and ways of living.

Hoshes - Ahwash – central courtyards

We start the description of tangible heritage and living realities with the “hoshes” because they are the most symbolically built structure for living spaces. Their physical organization is directly connected to a traditional social structure that we can find both in urban and rural areas. The “hosh structure” in Palestine has been documented to have existed in Roman and Byzantine periods, which shows the effective continuity of the way of housing – and living – for more than a millennium, up to the mid of the last century.

As it happens frequently, the word has different spellings. We decided to use the simplest one “hosh/hoshes” because it is the one used by Suad Amiry in her PhD dissertation, which she defended in the UK and which was recently published in Palestine (Amiry, 2017). We suppose it is the closest to the English spelling of this word.

Naseer Arafat, in his *Nablus: city of civilizations* (’Arafat, 2012) describes the hoshes and, in addition to a language sense, he writes about their physical and social dimensions (using a different spelling).

The word hawsh in Arabic means protection. The verb hash means to surround and to protect. [...] The hawsh is, therefore, a group of more than two residential houses, sharing a single entrance that leads to a shared open square – an urban form giving a strong characteristic framework to these parts of the city. Most of the ahwash have no other means of access, only the entrance itself. (’Arafat, 2012 – P. 88).

The hosh is a semi-public common space surrounded by a group of buildings. Hosh is usually translated as “courtyard”, but this term does not contain the social value that hosh includes. Several semi-private areas directly surrounding it compose the hosh space. Those semi-private areas are traditionally used as passages to private homes; in urban hoshes the semi-private areas frequently disappear and the transition towards private space is a role of simple door. In the past, the different status of areas - public, semi-public, semi-private and private – were defining their function of use, with substantial differences between male and female rules.

Those architectural structures were built as convivial courtyards where large families were living together. This social structure has vanished nowadays and this aspect of tangible heritage does not fulfill its role anymore.

Kinship played a determining role in dividing up the village area into clan-based domains and the division of the village fields into clan-based blocks. Segregation of men and women resulted in the creation of separate male and female domains. Spaces such as the house, the courtyard, the spring, the holy shrines and the tawabin (baking ovens) were all associated with women, while others such as the village fields, the plaza, the village guesthouse and the village mosque were associated with men. (Amiry, 2017 – p. 3).

Several hoshes compose an historic village (or a quarter in an urban area) and most of the buildings are inward-looking ones, facing the central empty area of the hosh.

Examination of the village layout reveals a spatial structure determined by two countervailing principles: separation and unity. On one level, the peasants organized their spaces so as to maintain a hierarchical order or differentiation based on: 1) separation along kinship lines; 2) separation according to gradation of privacy; and 3) gender

separation and gender division of labour. The village layout also reflected the village-wide inter-kin network of solidarity, which superseded separation based on kinship, privacy and gender.

The separation of different kinship groups was marked by the ordering of certain elements: spaces, buildings, alleys and landscape features. [...] Each quarter (harah) was composed of a number of courtyards housing the different patriarchal families with individual houses separating the different domestic units. (Amiry, 2017 – p. 66).

The hosh structure reflects the traditional social structure and rules; hoshes are – therefore – have not adapted to the contemporary social-structure configuration. Security and safety – mainly for children and women – are claimed as hosh value and the restoration of several hoshes in towns proposes to open them more to public spaces, keeping out from hoshes the feeling of protection they provide.

The traditional courtyard dwelling, which once housed a number of extended families, has been replaced by the individual house. These individual houses no longer form a boundary, including the central introverted courtyard (housh) that protected this semi-private domain of the sub-clan from the rest of the village. (Amiry, 2017 – p. 224).

Even in Middle East more insulated societies, modern houses are losing the relationship with the semi-public home surrounding area; the social meaning of hoshes and their tangible role is weakening.

With the advance of modern housing and new living standards emerging in the British colonial era in the early 20th century, many courtyards were abandoned and left to deteriorate. With the absence of protection laws or investment, the Hosh [Hosh el-'Etem, Birzeit] went into darkness. Bu the end of 20th century the Hosh was turned into a dump place where trees and pushes found a fertile environment to flourish. (Bishārah et al., 2013 – p. 46).



Image 12 Nablus Old town: Hosh al-'At'out open courtyard, recently rehabilitated by Welfare Association (photo RC)



Image 13 Nablus Old town: Hosh Al-'At'out passageway, rehabilitation including some benches (photo RC)

Finally, hoshes have structured the traditional housing compounds in town and at the core of rural villages. Obviously, there were not only hoshes in urban and rural areas, but also in isolated buildings. In towns, there were commercial and production compounds, in addition to palaces and religious sites.

Peasant (Fellaheen) Houses

Organized around a hosh or as single buildings, the traditional peasant house is significant because of its peculiarity. Cubes shaped and built with the traditional local stone, covered by a tiled hip roof or a groin vault, the peasant house is the basic element of housing in Palestine. As Amiry writes, the peasant house:

[...] constituted a single socio-spatial whole, and when the village was a relatively autarkic, subsistence based agrarian community in which traditional modes, including architecture, still prevailed (Amiry, 2017 – p. VII).

Of course the social and political structure – like kinship – was important in housing and settlement planning but,

However, kinship was almost certainly not the determining factor in shaping the built environment at the settlement level, where a concentration of ecological and putative factors had the upper hand. (Amiry, 2017 – p. 1)

Wary about external intrusion, those who build these the traditional houses are circumspect. Small windows and small doors protect the inside from weather conditions – filtering the hot summer or the cold winters – they produce the same effect on the social structure by shielding family privacy and properties from unexpected events.

[...] the traditional peasant houses are characterized with the minimal number of windows and doors (usually one door and one window) to keep the privacy in a rather conservative community. The minimum number of and elevated windows not only functioned as a protection and defensive system against looters or intruders (of the late Ottoman era) but also served as an environmental solution by controlling the loss of energy in extreme summers and winters. (Bishārah et al., 2013 – p. 47)

And Tawfiq Canaan recorded an ambiance for those peasant/fellaheen houses.

The stones of the outer courses of a peasant's house are usually not dressed, they are only cut square with right angles. Undressed stones are usually used for the inner courses. The stones surrounding doors and windows are dressed more finely than the other stones of the building” (Canaan, 1933, p. 25).



Image 14 Kafr Malek: Traditional independent Peasant/Fallāḥ house “end of the 19th– beginning of the 20th century “. Note the dome instead of flat surface (photo RC).



Image 15 Birzeit: an old traditional peasant house note the dome instead of flat roof in the recent one.
(photo RC)

Inside peasant/fallāḥ traditional houses

Doors pay a part in the life of the Palestinians. They enjoy a peculiar sanctity and importance, and the difference between the inside and the outside is that of different worlds. If a guest speaks to a fallah while he is outside the threshold, he is invited to the house, the kingdom of the peasant. To refuse to enter except for some serious reason is to refuse hospitality and friendship. Canaan, T. 1933, "The Palestinian Arab House: Its Architecture Folklore" in (Amiry, 2017 – p. 95)



Image 16 Birzeit compound: Cross vaults ending with pointed vault interior traditional hall

Housing also means the way of hosting the “other”, not only family members. We should work on this figurative threshold in order to integrate tangible heritage into the contemporary social and economic situation. For example, we should consider the relationship of diasporic Palestinians to

heritage issues: the second generation can be located inside of the local kinship and, at the same time, is located outside of it and when this generation returns it brings with it another way of living, another way of using social spaces. Integrating fragments of the previous narration into the actual one could be a way to implement identity issues and cultural soft power.

Inside the simple traditional peasant houses, we can find two or three levels: storage of farming equipment and domestic pets and cattle on a lower level (qa'a al- bayt); an intermediate living area (mastaba) where we can find a fireplace, and an upper level for sleeping rooms or storage space. This last level is the first to disappear in case of a two-level house. This kind of house is a simple one, very few pieces of furniture use up the inside space and several storage niches are there to stock water jars, clothes and other objects.

The interior walls were often whit washed and the floors frequently paved with coloured tiles or marble mosaic. In the walls were recesses for ornamental wooden cupboards with delicately carved door panels. (Amiry, 2017 – p. 97)



Image 17 Kafr Malek: a traditional house interior (photo RC).



Image 18 Kafr Malek: Inside a rehabilitated traditional house (photo RC).

Nowadays, cattle and other animals are not present inside houses any more and the lower level was turned into kitchen, laundry room and storage area. Obviously, the low ceiling height of this level make these spaces uncomfortable. The former unique space of *mastaba* tend to have some separation walls inside, in order to offer a modern sense of personal privacy inside home; it is a tangible transformation coming from the different way of living inside families.

Slowly leaving the old housing traditions

Usually, the feeling of moving from a “traditional” housing towards a contemporary one, looks like a fast transformation achievement but it is not real. Actually, this accomplished conversion happened through several small and partial transformations that occurred over the last two centuries ... it was a long-term process of transformation!

What we can consider to be the arrival of modernity – an epoch that started with some modifications in the social economical structure during the “Egyptian rule” in the first part of the 19th century and that reached full maturity by the end of the “Jordanian period” in 1967 – includes the transformation of construction practices. New construction technics allowed for the opening of bigger windows; isolated houses could integrate the new condition that allowed for having more internal light (and industrial flat glasses allowed for climatic protection, leaving sunlight to pass through). Along with the new concentration of wealth of the “new intermediate notables”, the new way of building, introduced new house dimensions, including the vulgarization of intermediate spaces as halls and lit corridors.

It is argued that architectural systems, i.e. new methods of construction, the use of new building materials and the adoption of new building forms, would not be accepted by traditional peasant society unless this society was exposed to external forces that operated to undermine the conditions of its existence at both symbolic-cultural and material levels. In the case of Deir Ghassaneh [a Palestinian village located in the central highlands – the today West Bank], changes in the architectural forms and the spatial organization reflected changes that took place first in the socio-economic structure, and

were then reflected either in the partial continuity or in the complete disruption of traditional architectural processes. (Amiry, 2017 – p. VII)

Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, the Liwan (a central hall) started to appear in the Palestinian houses, and the traditional peasant house model became outdated as well as some of the town-developed houses' schemes started to be built in rural villages, too. This was the sign of the social, political and economic transformation that ushered modernity, which was introduced both by the Ottoman “tanzimat” and by the Western migration into Palestine.



Image 19 Kafr Malek: the Mukhtar house, built during the British Mandate (photo RC)



Image 20 A British Mandate Passport, shown as a symbol of the last unified Palestine (photo RC)

Starting from the 1920s and the 1930s, social identity was increasingly being redefined by occupation, and the wealth, but not by lineage. Houses began to be located in the middle of an individually owned land plot, modified both in their structure and the way in which they were to be used. In this case, tangible transformations in construction followed: at first, it began as a modification flow rather than a technical revolution. The first transformations in construction were intended to apply technical solutions to social innovations, but later it changed towards a time of material innovations following technical innovations.

While critical changes in cultural conditions started to take place in the early twenties, critical changes in the built form happened much later in the mid-fifties. (Amiry, 2017 – p.230).

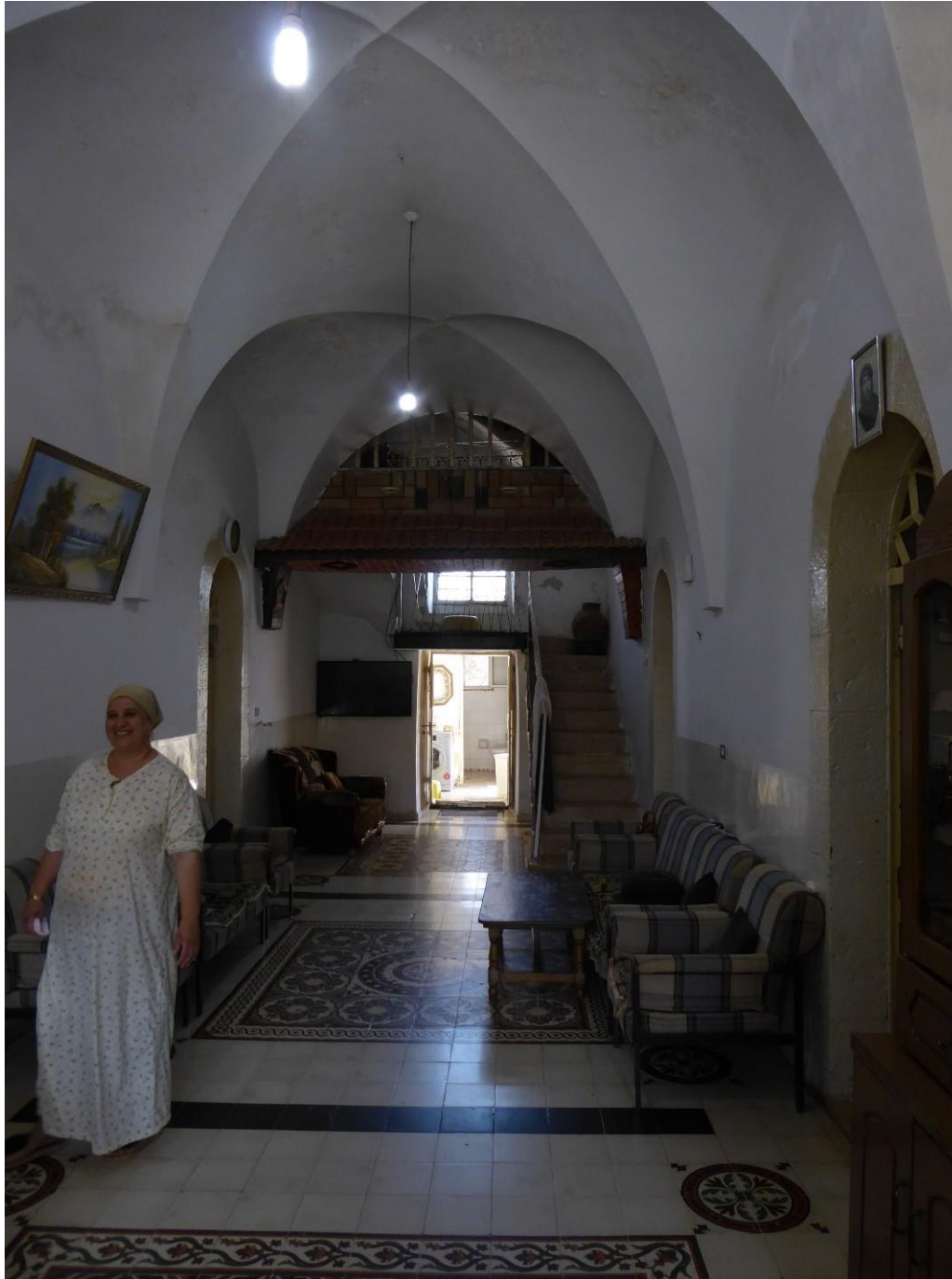


Image 21 Kafr Malek: Liwan Inside a British mandate house Note the colored tiles and the compound cross ending with pointed vault (photo RC).



Image 22 Kafr Malek: British mandate house: a reception room with Colored tiles. The “mastaba level” does not exist anymore and was replaced by a ground floor (photo RC).

Not all the social and technical innovations have been automatically positive. At least one of them has caused problems in the housing situation for several families:

While the great majority of the villagers could afford to build a stone house at the turn of the century [from the 19th to the 20th century], only a minority can afford that today. (Amiry, 2017 – p. 231).

When the time of a totally interconnected society ended, also the time of adjacent and overlapping buildings driving to an architectural, organic and unified framework was definitely over. That kind of buildings became an inheritance from the past generations.



Image 23 'Arab ar-Rashayida: today's independent and autonomous house ... (photo RC).

Bedouin settlements



Image 24 al-'Auja: Bedouin pride (photo RC).

Contemporary Bedouins are the descendants of proud nomadic populations who have lived in this area since the dawn of time. Historic development and the victory of sedentary ways of living put them in a dramatic position. For them, it is hard to find places to live and it is also hard to find a way to earn their livelihood in the correct way; in addition, there is precariousness in housing and school education for children.

Moreover, the relative withdrawal of Bedouin society that was part of the defensive character of a culture capable of making them survive without weakening the social structure and Bedouin identity is becoming a major complication in the increasingly open and expanding world of the 21st century.

In a society that is colonizing the entire world space, keeping Bedouin identity alive is a very pressing issue.

Historically, Bedouins were travelling mainly in the areas of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea; they are not any more a large component of the Palestinian population.

Even though the Bedouin in Palestine have always been a relatively small proportion of the total population: 7% in 1922, 6.4% in 1931, and 1% in 1961, one should not underestimate their influence on the history of sedentary settlements up to the turn of the 20th century.
(Amiry, 2017 – p. 18)

However, they are a significant part of the population. From the cultural heritage point of view, Bedouins have certainly a role in the nowadays Palestine. Their way to produce living spaces was – and it still is – different from the other Palestinians, both in the material they prefer and the way they arrange their settlements and the space in between the living and social units.

Bedouin encampments of beit ish-sha'ar (goat-hair tents) were usually expansive, with each tent or group of tents set 200 to 300 meters apart. Unlike the fallah villages, they were never on hill but always concealed in the mountain foothills to protect themselves from wind and the raids of other Bedouin tribe. (Amiry, 2017 – p.18)

Nowadays, the different administrations use to propose them to move from their Bedouins villages (not based on goat-hair tents any more) towards some inexpressive generic buildings or directly to insignificant grids of box-houses.

Because the Bedouins are not used to build with permanent building material, they do not have significant tangible inheritance. The introduction of modern material has produced a rough image of structures that were not well-established.



Image 25 al 'Auja: Traditional Bedouin settlement (photo RC).

The al 'Auja Bedouin settlement is far from the municipality development area; in order to arrive there, people should climb down to the Dead Sea depression and look for the Masār Ibrāhīm arrival path. The settlement can be found there, offering an augmented landscape reality (towards an open landscape or from the open landscape towards the settlement).



Image 26 al-'Auja: towards Bedouin settlement (photo RC).



Image 27 Arab ar-Rashayida: Forecast settlement for Bedouins, grid of box-houses (photo RC).



Image 28 Arab ar-Rashayida: Forecast settlement for Bedouins, grid of box-houses bis (photo RC).



Image 29 al-Sawahira alsharkiyya: Container Check point: Box-houses settlement for Bedouins looking west (photo RC).



Image 30 al-'Auja: the arrival path of the Masār Ibrāhīm to the Bedouin settlement (photo RC).



Image 31 al-'Auja Bedouin settlement (photo RC).



Image 32 al-'Auja: the new sheet metal mosque (photo RC).



Image 33 al-'Auja: mixed building material: stone, tent and sheet metal (photo RC).



Image 34 al-'Auja: spartan kitchen environment (photo RC).



Image 35 al-'Auja: spartan environment with photovoltaic panels for electricity supply and parabolic tv antenna (photo RC).



Image 36 al-'Auja: spartan environment with refrigerators (photo RC).



Image 37 'Arab ar-Rashayida: an "authentic and mimetic" Bedouin settlement (photo RC).

3 – A fast passage through town ...

Towns demonstrate the transformation of Palestinian traditional living spaces into contemporary one. They do it by enhancing the contrasts between the heavy modification of buildings and the total transformation of the social structure. Old town quarters, where we can find the remnants of the old way of construction and living, are the target of population transformation, even before the transformation of tangible spaces. This topic exists even in old historical towns.

The city of Nablus is more than five thousand years old. Its story is not only that of a city, but also of the people who lived in and around it, a story that spans changes of belief, religion and custom, leaving behind a wealth of archaeological evidences that speak to us even today. ('Arafat, 2012 – p. 14)

We have clear data from the old town of Nablus, but the situation has general implications. The old city is not an appealing space for urban upper and middle class inhabitants any more. They are moving outside the historic area, leaving there the lower classes and the new inhabitants, usually migrating from rural areas. For Nablus, the global number of residences building fell down between the last decade of the 20th century and the first one of the 21st century (of course, here we should consider also the effect of the 2nd Intifada, including the Israeli army actions inside the old town).

The decrease in population in old towns is a problem that becomes dramatic in small places because it leads to the total desertion of some former living quarters.

Buildings in Nablus Old City	1996	2010
Residence	55,6 %	35,99 %
Commerce	29,1 %	36,11 %
Miscellaneous	7,3 %	19,9 %
Deserted or Unused	8,0 %	8,0 %

('Arafat, 2012 - page 80)

A 360 vision of Hebron, from Hebron Rehabilitation Committee



Image 38 Hebron: a 360 vision of Hebron taken from the HRC headquarters roof. We can see the old town's core and the al Khalil mosque (al-haram Ibrāhimi - photo RC).

All Palestinian major towns are special cases, and each one deserves a thorough and qualified work to enhance knowledge and analysis, of both tangible and intangible heritage. We propose here a flash overlook of the old town of Hebron. We have chosen this old quarter because it looks like the place where the link between the old and contemporary ways of life are “more special”. Furthermore, the difficulties encountered in the management of modernity are here enhanced by the Jewish settlers' colonies inside the old town, a dramatic complication that the Hebron Municipality has to deal with.

The medieval core of Hebron is uniquely beautiful, its buildings strangely angled and organically entwined, harmonic with cultural tradition. They climb up a hillside, four-, five-, and six-stories high, often finely crafted, with narrow twisting alleys and surprising anatomic turns. Hebron's rehabilitation has been carried out by the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC), a local Palestinian semi-governmental organization, formed by a presidential decree in 1995 to protect Hebron's historic town from Jewish settlers. Nowadays, Hebron's Old City is a living inhabited city, with its residential structures linked to the benefits of modern infrastructure set beneath its renewed paths. How have the Gordian laws of ownership been unknotted? Given the encroachment of an Israeli settlement, the elders of Hebron leased their historic buildings to HRC, Who will in return rehabilitate them and find suitable users. In so doing, property rights are protected, the crumbling buildings stabilized, and Jewish settlers confined. Everyone understands-untie the knots, or suffer the cooping of an historic architectural jewel. (Tung, 2015 – p. 81)

Hebron's old town has the same problem of other southern and eastern Mediterranean towns: finding the area inadequate for an immediate answer to the modern way of life, the upper-class inhabitants left the old quarters in order to settle into modern and new ones. The lower class and poor rural immigrants became the majority of the old town dwellers and a lot of buildings were abandoned.

The situation is more intense in Hebron because of the pressure generated by the presence of Jewish colonies. Co-existence here means only the tangible contiguity of two religiously characterized societies. There are no exchanges between them, nothing other than a permanent power-directed relationship and the use of demographic presence in order to make the pressure as high as possible.

In order to organize the Palestinian development of the old town, an administrative order by President Yasser Arafat created the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC), the institution in charge of the old town's management.

The HRC looks at the Old City with a holistic view. Its works are not limited to architectural and cultural aspects, but also include the social, economic, health, education and infrastructure aspects. HRC seeks to provide these services in an appropriate manner to improve the living conditions of the Old City's residents and to strengthen their steadfastness during these difficult situations. (Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, 2017a - p. 6)

The strategic public objective is the revival of the Old City by renovating its buildings, reusing abandoned buildings, rehabilitating its infrastructure, and preserving its cultural heritage and urban fabric. The "historical cultural identity of the buildings" is recalled here to shed the light on the cultural and social mission of the Municipality, which is implemented by the HRC, the technical agency indirectly in charge of social issues. In 2016 HCR received 34 requests for housing in the Old City and 28 families were settled there. The HCR was formed within a legal unit that aimed to support the old town's inhabitants and the Municipality in the legal conflict against the Jewish colonial acts.

Since its establishment, HRC started to restore the historical buildings and authentic archaeological sites of the Old City of Hebron with a view to protect this Palestinian heritage against the Israeli occupation army and settlers violations. It defies their colonial plans through its Legal Unit which was able to stop several colonial assaults. (Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, 2017b – p. 5)

The HRC's hard and highly qualified work has been largely recognized. It won the World Habitat Award for 2013 (for combatting unemployment and poverty in the world). In 2008 the HRC won the Yasser Arafat Award for Innovation and Achievement (for the development and advancement of society), and in 1998 it won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (in recognition of its achievements in the field of reconstruction of the Old City of Hebron).



Image 39 Hebron old town: a HRC rehabilitated Sūk “market in the old City” (photo RC).

The Israeli presence in Hebron’s old town is really substantial and visible; it shapes a significant part of the townscape. Here we can show the settlements on the hills around the old town; not there in 1999, the colonies are occupying the top of the hill nowadays.



Image 40 Hebron's old town: Ottoman buildings with domes roofs and the hilly landscape (1999, photo RC)



Image 41 Hebron's old town: Ottoman buildings with the Israeli colony on the hilly landscape (2018, photo RC).

The colonies inside the old town include an impressive propaganda system, some modern constructions and a complex “security” system encompassing the complete interruption of the communication in the old town, something that is very different from the traditional permeability of ancient quarters.



Image 42 Hebron's old town: Modern Jewish symbolic Menorah overhanging a traditional building (photo RC).



Image 43 Hebron's old town: entrance to al-Shuhadā' Street, closed by concrete cubes and an Israeli military checkpoint (photo RC).

The Palestinian commercial area in the old town has to be protected from the objects that are hurled from the colonies. These conditions are not conducive to the local development and a social re-appropriation of heritage spaces



Image 44 Hebron's old town: covering the Sūq to protect people from settlers' attacks (photo RC)



Image 45 Hebron's old town: HRC rehabilitation of the old "market" including the protective cover (photo RC)



Image 46 Hebron's old town: Interior of the "Turkish bath" rehabilitated with the international cooperation funding. A former hammam, nowadays a Tourist Visitor Centre (photo RC).

Nevertheless, the old town has different artefacts that are considered monumental heritage buildings – such as the Turkish bath – which still shows some references to the former way of living in this old and traditional space.



Image 47 Hebron: Historic-modern town-house and commerce, a mandate period building (photo RC).

We can also find the same transitional buildings, like this mixed commerce and housing unit built in the first part of the 20th century (we hazard to date it into the British Mandate, but we do not have any credibly confirmed sources about it).



Image 48 Hebron (Yatta?): independent recent building (a school) in the former immediate outskirts of Hebron historic center (photo RC).

Outside the core of the Hebron's old town, we can also find suburbs independent houses, with windows opening on the four sides. It was probably built in the same transitional period of the former building.

4 - Tangible fragments linking to the past: the tangible part of identity and a way to modify the space perception

“Simple” tangible objects compose buildings: walls, roofs, openings. Human being living experience is full of deals with those simple built objects. Humans manage passages through doors, a roof frequently covers us and we open windows. Consequently, we can propose to concentrate our attention on those items in order to facilitate the relationship link between the heritage and us, living humans. Normal items can open up a heritage oriented overview.

As can be seen, the Palestinian way of living has changed over the last two centuries. What we call globalization arrived here, too, and produced the social and economic transformation leading to the modern way of living.

We can observe some steps in the modification process: the late Ottoman modernization led to the decreasing of the Ottoman and eastern influence and the openness to western culture that was materialized at first by religious migration and consular presence and then – after the fall of the Ottoman empire – by the British mandate.

The contemporary world is deeply rooted in this transitional period; therefore, we can find the signs of transition in several ways of construction, too. This short chapter proposes an overlook of the major material axes of transformation, as they appear today in the inherited buildings.

In addition to social change, the introduction of industrial ways of construction have modified the objects. The industrial revolution introduced – together with new economic ways to increase wealth – some industrial products that were capable of revolutionizing the construction processes. Cast iron and then iron beams allowed enlargements in openings while flat industrial glass allowed lit interiors saving the insulation from extreme weather conditions. Finally, the arrival of reinforced concrete (actually, the “Portland cement” combined with a steel frame) modified the whole process of house production. We show some few images of the old and new walls, mainly because their difference produces a different appreciation of living spaces, both private and public ones. The

presentation of some building items is here a *medium* to the comprehension of link between ways of living and material legacies.

Ancient stones and new concrete walls

Going back to antiquity, and probably because of the kind of soil in this hilly area, the Palestinian way of construction have used limestone walls, and brick masonry did not mark the way of construction as stones did. Stone walls do not need external plastering because the protection from the weather is assumed directly by the structural material.

Therefore, the “traditional” texture of the anthropic landscape of Palestine is composed of stone walls. Even if contemporary-Palestinian walls are used to maintain the “stone pattern,” the situation has drastically changed. In modern and contemporary towns, the multi storey buildings manifest several kinds of walls, but in the rural area, the stone pattern is still used, even if structural stone houses are not the normal way of building anymore.

Without having a statistical objective reference, we notice that - mainly in the northern West Bank - we can see some plastered houses even in rural areas. New buildings are made by reinforced concrete structure; pillars and beams bear unloaded brickworks with external plastering protection.

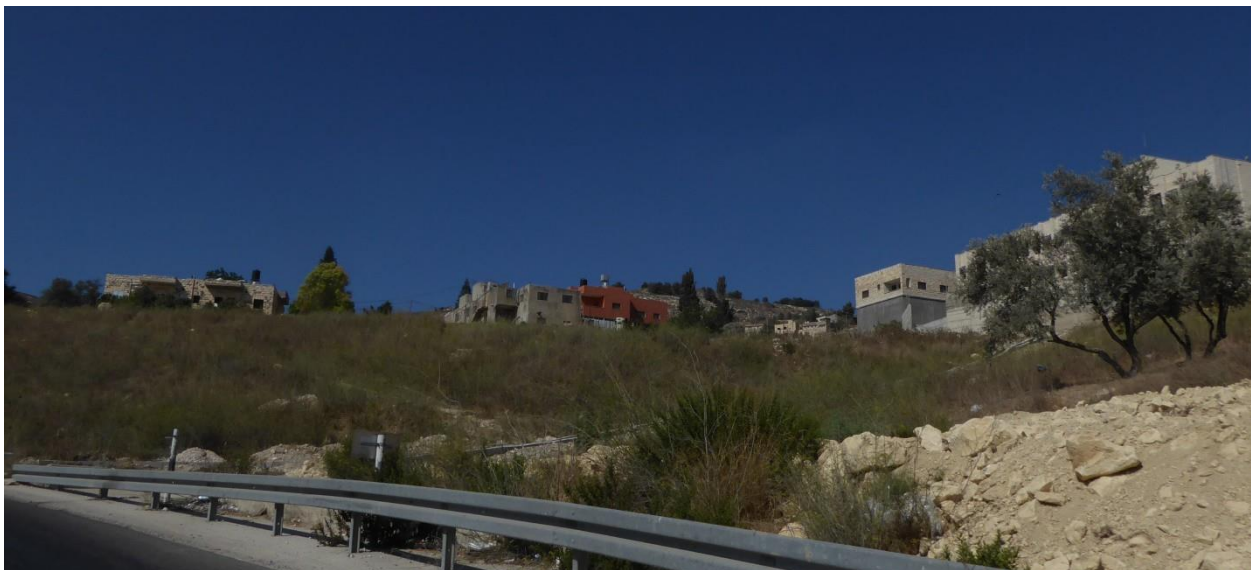


Image 49 Outskirts of 'Arraba: Stone walls and plastered walls houses. (photo RC)

Contemporary walls into ancient ones

City walls and ramparts are not frequently seen in rural Palestine; even urban Palestine has lost most of its former protective walls. If our information is correct, only Sanur village along the Masār Ibrāhīm has a walled quarter until now.

This characteristic emphasizes the mixed texture we can frequently find: some new buildings – including new walls, of course – find themselves inside old quarters. New or modern stone-clad walls stand alongside historic load bearing stone walls. The result is a complex aesthetics that characterizes the contemporary-Palestinian townscapes where new and old buildings make up the living urban fabric.



Image 50 Sanur: Street inside old quarter; we can see old structural stone walls and contemporary concrete plastered walls (photo RC)



Image 51 Sanur: arched passageway inside old quarter, structural stone walls, cladded walls and plastered ones are composing the nowadays townscape (photo RC)

The landscape in the immediate outskirts of town

The abundance of stone walls is something that is present all over Palestine, and without leaving Sanur village, we can observe that the landscape is framed by different kinds of stonewalls. We remark the natural color palette: stone for walls are the same that we can find in the immediate outskirts of towns and villages, the aesthetic unity was complete and it is a part of the global cultural and tangible landscape of Palestine.



Image 52 Sanur: Olive tree orchards in the immediate outskirts (photo RC).



Image 53 Sanur: a peaceful northern landscape, from the ancient walled area (photo RC)



Image 54 Battir: Magnificent landscape - (photo RC)

When we are thinking about stone walls and the landscape, we cannot forget the magnificent fertile landscape of Battir and its dry stone walls terraces that were recognized as World Heritage Site (UNESCO list). It recognizes and makes evident the link between the way of producing material spaces and the way of living and producing.

Ancient walls and modern ones: dealing with stones and concrete.

As we have seen, the traditional way of construction in Palestine mainly includes thick stone structures. Sometime, local stone structures were doubled in a “sandwich”, the space in between the boundary stone lines were filled by mud.

Although wall's construction has changed over the last two centuries, the presence of cladding stone is still frequent. The difference between the different kinds of walls is significant and travel around in Palestine we can see how many different kinds of walls exist.

In the first part of the 20th century, some buildings, which were usually large and public ones, started to have reinforced concrete skeleton systems. The concrete skeleton (a pillars and beams structure) became later the main way of construction; by which some slices of stone are frequently “attached” on the external part of the walls. Traditional stone walls, were left without protection on the outside but mortar plastered inside, in the new system, cladding or plastering compose the external protection.

Unfortunately, ancient walls are frequently becoming monuments of themselves inside abandoned areas. it is not that simple, or perhaps it is impossible, to find a way to save those; society has changed and those kind of spaces in it are not adequate anymore to the contemporary needs, but the aesthetic power of those assembled stones should be considered a significant unmissable inheritance.

When we confront population to the heritage issue, we face to the contemporary-possible use of ancient buildings and stone walls. The commonly accepted issue is the opportunity to live today in old fashion buildings. Nowadays we cannot imagine building and living in the same “old time” way, but we should be able to improve the awareness about it. Heritage issues are not pushing people back to the past but encourage them to move towards a new future, including utilizing the interesting elements of the past.



Image 55 Sebastia: ruins of an ancient traditional vault hall [usually the roof of such kind of these halls called djamalon] (photo RC).



Image 56 Hebron: A restored building. Several kinds of stones in this building; undressed stones seen in the wall with arched window and new dressed stones (hadjar imsams) facing the street. At the upper level, we can see some concrete blocks (photo RC)

Technical issues and multiple dynamics are producing different type of walls. This ancient house in Hebron was restored by the HRC and we can now see a cladding wall (an industrial thin cutting work on stones, probably the ancient structural stone wall needed a new external protection). Building using the ancient technics of stone blocks is extremely expensive today and may not be appropriate (we do not have any information about this rehabilitation project). On the top of the building, a new concrete storey has been added, probably waiting for a future cladding.

New buildings are using new technics; the “stone aesthetic” is still there, even if the architectural language changed seriously. New industrial products (mainly reinforced concrete walls and industrial cutting stones, quite slicing stones ...) push towards large openings while new family needs ask for multiple storey houses, even in small villages as Kafr Malek.



Image 57 Kafr Malek: Concrete and iron reinforced masonry (photo RC).

Openings: doors and windows

One of the big architectural issues in buildings is dealing with interface spaces. How to deal with wall openings? A wall, ultimately, makes a separation between spaces; it is a line materializing a difference between sides: one side of the line (of the wall) versus the other side.

Doors and windows, or more generically “openings,” are the places where the border (the line, the wall) is mediating between one side and the other one; it is mediating between inside and outside. Finally, it is the place where the wall is “not working”. Technically, openings pose major problems of a building but they are also the places where we can find the highest concentration of cultural signs and symbols because it is there that builders mark the transitional cultural function. That is why doors and windows require the highest technical knowledge and use the best material.

In the following image, we can see some of the “traditional” way of negotiating and managing of openings; the house in the foreground, we can see small windows with a strong thick stone lintel and small doors – with a simple arch in this case – which were typical of ancient houses. In the background, we can see a system of three openings used in the upper room, where the wall does not have to bear a great load. That room could be the host room in a large hosh or an addition for a new nuclear family into a large multi-generational house.

Stone arches allow larger spans; elongated with slightly arched windows and other openings could be larger and reflect a “more important” status. The combination of a simple and rectangular door with a pointed arch opening above it, makes the passage from the outside balcony to the inside room “important”. What’s more, a high positioned opening allows it to stay open and go on protecting the entrance with the closed door. The air can pass through, something refreshing during hot summers ...



Image 58 'Arraba, traditional openings in a deserted quarter (photo RC).



Image 59 Ramallah: modern openings in an independent house (photo RC)

The first industrial modernity introduced new paradigms in openings, too. In this case, an independent house that was located in the immediate outskirt of the Ramallah and el Bireh area, deals with the theme of light up the staircase, which shows how an early 20th century aesthetic solution was proposed something that is not old and traditional, but it is considered already part of heritage.



Image 60 Ramallah: building under construction in the old village; contemporary opening, far from the stone wall esthetic (photo RC)

This building under construction (August 2018) shows contemporary issues in building and openings. It is located near the core of the ancient rural village of Ramallah, an area under a heavy real estate pressure. Beams and pillars multi-storey building uses the reinforced concrete capacity in terms of span to make space for large openings for commerce on the ground level and large windows at the upper levels. On the corner, one can see the trace of historical memory: some arch- windows that invoke an ancient aesthetic, even though the totally different context and the technical realization have no links with those forms.

Vaults and hipped or gable roofs

Together with walls and openings, the “coverage” issues suggest the basic items of construction. In addition, technical and cultural themes produced and are producing different tangible results. In order to amplify the covered space and allow for bigger rooms, humanity much older generation discovered a way to build arches and, developing them, barrel and later groin vaults (the first laying on two walls and the latter on columns or pillars).

Groin vaults are aesthetic products and for centuries, they were use both for “simple” home vaults, the elegant vaults in public areas and the most sophisticated vaults for religious high society spaces. The arrival of cheap iron and concrete beams brought an end to vaults, to the extent that it made them disappear from new buildings.

Once upon a time vaults were made of light stone shaped and assembled in cross vaults. Masses offload to the walls and mainly to the corners. Inside, vaults were frequently plastered like walls and outside the weather protection was made by compact waterproof mortar.



Image 61 Hebron's old town: cross vault in an abandoned building. We can see the importance of corners in load bearing issue.



Image 62 Nablus Old City: plaster decoration. Cross vaults in “Arafat Soap Factory”.

The trivial traditional image of Mediterranean roofs shows flat models. Nevertheless, the most of ancient buildings in Palestine have vaults or hipped roofs. Nowadays, we can find an increasing number of contemporary hipped roofs. Observing this characteristic, we are asking ourselves if the cultural reference to those hipped roofs has more relevance in terms of heritage to the ancient

peasant house that is covered by a pyramidal hip roof or to the Israeli colonies, proudly showing hipped roofs and remembering European aesthetic.

We are questioning cultural need because the aesthetics of contemporary-red tiled hip roofs is frequently used in a different way from the standard traditional Palestinian red tile roofs. Sometimes the cultural references for those contemporary tiled roofs could be found in Hollywood style architectural dreams and not into the local traditional way of building.



Image 63 Israeli's colony, near al-'Auja – red hip-roofs (photo RC).



Image 64 'Aab ar-Rashayida: Isolated red hip-roof at (photo RC).



Image 65 'Arraba: modern houses with roof tiles (photo RC).



Image 66 'Arraba: modern houses with roof tiles surrounded by flat ones (photo RC).

5 - Special but significant cases

This is a special section, in which we are proposing some complex references that could help us understand some aspects of development trends in the new 21st century. Those examples are certainly linked the contemporary way of living in the Occupied Territories.

Birzeit: a long-term rehabilitation process of a village

Birzeit is an historic village in a hilly area around 800 meters above sea level located ten kilometers north of Ramallah, where approximately five thousand inhabitants (4625 inhabitants at the 2010's census) live. It is discussed here because of the huge amount of work done in the old village focusing on heritage issues and because it was one of the oldest places of urban rehabilitation in Palestine.

We can observe the case of rehabilitation in Birzeit and the impact of transformation over a long period of time; it is a good reference point for the implementation of a development strategy attentive to tangible heritage. This rehabilitation project is significant because it is probably the first one that involves a global process of rehabilitation, including not only architectural restoration but also economic renovation and the installation of “new traditional” activities. Projects here try to propose reinterpretation of traditional way of use the space: it exists an accommodating space for travellers hosted by a community as it was in the case of some traditional hoshes; but the community it is the university and not a family while and travelers are students. There are also rehabilitated places for artisan workers but they are IT and not traditional artisans ...

Name: The present name of Birzeit means “oil well” for its extensive production of olive oil, which was historically preserved in dug-up, finely plastered underground wells. (Bishārah et al., 2013 – p. 35).

Located along the Roman road network connecting the mid-mountains with the coastal areas, particularly the Jifna to Ras el-'Ein route, Birzeit attained a special significance. The

road passed through Birzeit archaeological site of al Khirbeh and the historic centre.
(Bishārah et al., 2013 – p.37).



Image 67 Birzeit: The main street of the historic area, (photo RC).

The historic living core of Birzeit (not the archeologic one) is located on the eastern hilltop, near the new town. According to Riwaq's Register of Historic Buildings (2006), there are 108 historic buildings, most of which are composed of only one storey. There are some legacies of a Mameluke Caravanserai (1291-1516 ACE); most of the rest are buildings from the Ottoman period. The village possesses the propitious characteristics necessary for a complete rehabilitation project. There is a rich historic centre, largely abandoned; it is near Ramallah, the central and lively site of the West Bank for both Palestinian and international cooperation offices, where civil society organizations

operate and where a Mayor, Mr. Youser Nasir, lives and works as an advocate and supporter. Last but probably not least, the proximity to the Riwaq headquarters. All those positive conditions made the municipality of Birzeit a possible place to test the 50x50x50 villages' project to save Palestinian architectural heritage and identity.

The NGO Riwaq led the work in Birzeit and, because of the quality of the global approach and the job, Riwaq received an important recognition: the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

Aga Khan Award for Architecture

The revitalization of Birzeit's historic center is a dynamic project In which Riwaq succeeds in mobilizing stakeholders and local craftsmen into a process of healing that is not merely physical but is social, economic, and political. By reversing a process of neglect and erasure within a complex and difficult political context, the project manages to transform not only a neglected historic core but also people's lives, and restores not only buildings but also the dignity of their users. The project offers an alternative to "museified" historic cores, and it pioneers the regeneration of Birzeit's historic center into cultural infrastructure. It facilitates the reclamation of heritage by the people involved, while also allowing them to achieve their self-expressed aspirations. The project is an exemplary dedication to rural heritage that can serve as a model for the 50 villages in which Riwaq is involved, particularly the strategic interventions designed to stimulate long-term development.

The Jury Statement of the 2013 Aga Khan Award for Architecture. (Amiry and Bshara, 2015 – p.9).

Another reason for our interest in the Birzeit rehabilitation project is the work time and planning. From 2005, Birzeit's built environment under study and integrated analysis by several interdisciplinary teams.

Several strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were articulated during this phase. Tangible heritage (the intact historic core) was considered a strength for local development rather than an obstacle to future development. The absence of an institutional framework to guide development was considered one of the project's main

weaknesses. (Issa, 2015 – p.122).

Started in 2007, this experience has been going on for over ten years now and, in between, we had the opportunity to make some personal field visits with them. Before starting with the architectural and town planning working, Riwaq organized a conceptualization process requiring the inhabitants' participation. Residents were involved in research studies through focus groups, interviews, public meetings and questionnaires. Of course, specialists were involved in researches and conceptualization, but they also were a source of direct information and also an instrument of mediation with the inhabitants.

A team of stakeholders acted with flexible membership and, at the same time, a community- based planning session participated to the rehabilitation plan's conception.

The rehabilitation of the historic centre of Birzeit, which was begun in mid-2007, is intended to be a case study for understanding the rehabilitation process for the 50 most significant historic centres in rural Palestine. (Muhawi, 2009 - p.17)

The principle goals of those interventions are to upgrade living conditions for those residing in and using the historic centre and to present public and attraction activities for those who live in Birzeit. (Muhawi, 2009 – p. 18)

The Birzeit revitalization project was developed with the aim of achieving a practical balance between heritage development and conservation. It stressed the fact that regeneration is feasible through parallel process of dynamic planning and physical intervention. This approach gave way to integrated and strategic choices that included rapid upgrading of infrastructure (including basic services, street rehabilitation, and the implementation of signage systems, public plazas and gardens), the renovation of key structures, the introduction of heritage protection bylaws and regulations, and professional development for key stakeholders. (Issa, 2015 – p.109).

The historic centre of Birzeit has been looked at and examined in the context of its relationship with the town as a whole, as well as in the regional context of the surrounding towns and villages. (Muhawi, 2009 – p. 17)

Revitalization is a process that results in upgrading the living conditions of those who reside

in the historic centre, developing current activities in the centre and reusing abandoned buildings for the benefit of the local community, all with clear guidelines for the protection of the traditional architectural fabric of the historic centre. (Muhawi, 2009 – p.18).

In addition to the studies, Riwaq has worked on numerous rehabilitation and conservation projects, including the preventive conservation of at least 50 historic buildings (conservation from outside and cleaning), as well as the restoration of one historic building to be used as the Municipal Service Centre and another to be used as a hostel. Additionally, Riwaq and the Municipality were able to raise funds for the rehabilitation of part of the centre's infrastructure and the paving of many streets, alleys and plazas, and soon we will design and create a public garden and a children's playground, in addition to redesigning and improving new additions to historic buildings. (Muhawi, 2009 – p. 18)

As the project progressed, we noticed a continual increase in the number of participants from the local community. (Muhawi, 2009 – p.18)

The general framework of strategic planning for Birzeit has been adapted to guide the historic centre regeneration process through the years 2007 and 2012 ... General and specific strategies were designed and a tentative five year plan was put together along with a detailed first year action plan with qualitative and quantitative indicators. ... The involvement and commitment of the local authorities and the local community were perceived as an opportunity, and the continuous abandonment and fragmentation of premises within the historic centre were considered as a threat to the entire process. ... Improving of the quality of life, protecting the tangible cultural heritage, encouraging investment, promoting the historic centre as a cultural and touristic centre, and developing the institutional framework for the rehabilitation processes. (Bishārah et al., 2013 – p. 42- 43).

Observing the development of Birzeit rehabilitation project, we can notice the huge interest in public and common spaces. The general project tries to introduce common functions in former common spaces. In the former hoshes, the concept tries to insert spaces in public use like the “Disarming design from Palestine” in the *Hosh Jalsa* that includes a guest room, spaces for cultural and social activities, coffee shop like in the *Hosh E'lleit Rabe'* and even a small museum at the northern edge of the old town.



Image 68 Bir Zeit: Hosh Jalsa guesthouse and cultural center (photo RC).



Image 69 Bir Zeit: Disarming design from Palestine (photo RC).

The best example of the complexity of rehabilitation is the hosh el-'Etem residency. The general idea was to give back to the old town some of the Birzeit University's functions, as it was before the construction of the new University campus. The Birzeit municipality, which owns the *hosh el-'Etem* buildings, made it available to Riwaq and Birzeit University.

By 2009, Riwaq and Birzeit Municipality decided to intervene and rehabilitate the Hosh [el - 'Etem] into a Birzeit University guesthouse that would host foreign visiting scholars.

By 2010, funded by the Belgian WBI and IPW, and supported by Birzeit Municipality and Birzeit University, Riwaq started the implementation of the rehabilitation project.

By Spring 2012 the physical rehabilitation of the project was concluded waiting for the Birzeit University to move in. (Bishārah et al., 2013 – Pp. 46- 47).

This case shows the need for a wider collaboration system capable of funding a complex project starting from a strong concept that is capable of supporting the risky and not easy narrative about cultural issues as well as terms of reference for development. A skilled technical team (Riwaq in this case) received the funding through international cooperation. This kind of international support could be difficult to secure in the future.

The professional capacity of the Birzeit's rehabilitation process was strong enough to create a global holistic narrative. When the project was already well advanced in 2009, an interview with the Mayor showed the existence of a dream development narrative for this village. The rehabilitation project is certainly not the only reason of this optimistic vision but it a big part of it.

Al-Cilicon Valley – Birzeit

Farhat: Do you have a future vision for Birzeit? I heard you mention a Silicon Valley in Palestine!

Mayor: True. We view Birzeit as an educational and industrial place. The most effective and economic industry here would be Information Technology and Programming. One of our targets is to encourage Birzeit to become the Silicon Valley of Palestine in the beginning, then for the entire Middle East region. Other than that, the old historical part of Birzeit ...
(Riwaq Biennale et al., 2009 – p. 62).



Image 70 Bir Zeit: Hosh E'lleit Rabe' in 2010, including a coffee shop (photo RC, 2010).

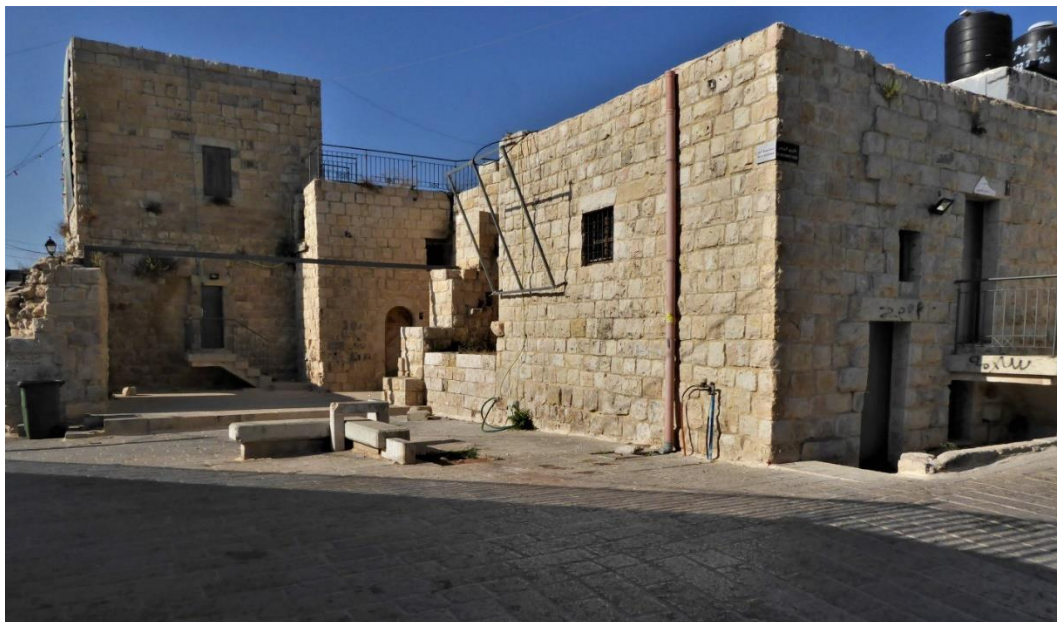


Image 71 Bir Zeit: Hosh E'lleit Rabe' in 2018 (photo RC).

Through tangible examples and sustainable works with inhabitants, Riwaq increased awareness in these communities about the architectural and cultural heritage treasures in their living places. Ten years after the start of the rehabilitation project, and after the election of a new Mayor, we had the opportunity to visit the village and its historic core again. In an informal conversation with the director of Rozana association, he presented the changes in the municipality's priorities, nowadays less interested in development via the cultural heritage. Of course, the change in political priorities is a pity but, at the same time, we can see the effective structural transformation.

The architectural rehabilitation projects are well done but we are not surprised because, as we remarked before, technical and technological competencies in architecture and urban rehabilitation are largely present in the Territories (their eventual fall out of use is a political and economic choice and not a lack of skills).

We had only a short experience on site; but we had the chance to see some artists working in the *Hosh Jalsa*, preparing new activities. Clean and well-decorated streets in the historic center have become locations for artisans and restaurants. There is also a newly born private kindergarten that is working at full capacity.

The fact that coffee shop in the *Hosh E'lleit Rabe'* seems to be closed shows how the idea of "re-creating" a social-centered public space in the old quarter is hard to implement. Although the former People's Museum is not open any more, the global issue of social and economic revitalization via the urban and architectural rehabilitation seems structurally established throughout Birzeit village and specially in the historic center.

Perhaps we are using an extreme way of interpreting the built environment, but the new commercial center looks like it is well installed in its location. It is there, opening outward to the landscape without imposing the usual massive, invasive and ugly mass that characterizes the Palestinian contemporary malls.

“Like Saigon during the war”: the strange case of Ramallah development

This section’s title is excessive and challenging: the comparison with Saigon (now Ho Chi Min Ville, Vietnam) is a strong and may be unrealistic but it alludes to the effective quintessence of this town. Ramallah is a unique effective player in this complex area. Ramallah is a “hyper place” (Lussault, 2017) mainly because it exists on several geographical scales at the same time and because of the high number of external players involved in its recent transformation. Its proximity to Jerusalem gives to Ramallah the capacity to embody the (temporary?) capital of the Palestinian state (after being the administrative center of the Jordanian West Bank).

Ramallah was established some five hundred years ago by seven clans. No invaders or pilgrims passed through the hills close to Ramallah. The people in Ramallah lived protected by their hills. The first asphalt road to Jerusalem was released in 1901. It was a rural settlement up to the end of the 19th century and it is now a modern generic and unique conurbation. Ramallah is the more dynamic Palestinian town, it is a really important place in West Bank and there is an historic downtown, including monumental and not monumental tangible built heritage.

Located 15 kilometers north of Jerusalem, on a hilly area at about 850 meters above sea level, the Ramallah conurbation includes the municipalities of Ramallah and El Bireh; the 2010 census data shows 66000 inhabitants living in the area (27000 Ramallah, 39000 el Bireh). The fast urban growth also includes the southwest municipality of Beitunia.

In 1902 the Ottoman Governor of Jerusalem decided that Ramallah would become an administrative center comprised of more than 30 villages and was declared as a city in 1908, making Ramallah a municipal council.

The historic centre of Ramallah is located on a hilltop to the west of the new city centre (located on a higher hill). The compact groups of historic buildings built in grey limestone blend naturally with the surrounding landscape and form the traditional fabric of the historic centre. (Farhat Muhawi and Qawasmi, 2012, p. 46).

The historic centre includes 208 historic building, 67% of which are composed of one storey and 80% are in use mainly for residential and commercial purposes. All buildings inside

the historic centre date back to the late Ottoman Period. (Farhat Muhawi and Qawasmi, 2012 – p. 46).

Ramallah went through a radical transformation mainly since 1948, which had its origins in the fast “immigration” (refugee wave) of Palestinians who were expelled from the new state of Israel. The occupation of coastal towns and villages put the West Bank under a demographic pressure. The small peripheral town of Ramallah became a pulsing urban area.

The “tangible mark” of the attraction towards the contemporary al-Manara square (and commercial district) is still evident; it is the *Suk el-Kundardjiyeh* (shoemakers’ market), built between 1901 and 1910.



Image 72 Ramallah al-Tahta: Shoemakers' market / Suk el-Kundardjiyeh – (photo RC).



Image 73 Ramallah al-Tahta: Shoemakers' market / Suk el-Kundardjiyeh – bis (photo RC).

Ramallah has a double central cores: the historical center – including the Ramallah municipality – and the Al Manara square, the main commercial district which is shared with the el Bireh (a second municipality, making up the Ramallah conurbation).

The first born family-centers developed up to approach each other; at the city's greater development - since the early twentieth century - the historic district was immediately abandoned as reference or model, both on the architectural way of producing housing and the way to manage urban spaces. (Carabelli, 2002 – p. 135).



Image 74 Ramallah: City center in foreground, Old town to the right (photo RC).

Al Manara, is the central plaza of the Ramallah/el Bireh conurbation, after which the huge commercial district is called, and is frequently used as a space for public demonstrations. A road from Nablus to Jerusalem used to pass here and in the first decade of the 20th century it was enlarged and paved, which helped the two old villages to become a contemporary conurbation. The name of the place (al Manara, “the light post”) is in use from 1935 when Ramallah and el Bireh were connected to the power grid. Streetlights were operated from a switchboard placed in the area of the contemporary round-place.

During the Jordanian period (1948-1967), the area witnessed a great transformation by integrating new commercial centers and attracting larger numbers of inhabitants and consumers, too. Several new public buildings structured the newly developed area (such as a new public library, a hospital, a post office and a fresh produce market near al-Manara). The al-Manara area became the core of the new town, a city of the middle 20th century, including new modern concrete buildings, shaping the “downtown” and showing the modern aesthetic.

Cinemas and other public spaces appeared and Ramallah played the role of summer resort on the high hills too. Among the growing population, a travelling population was using and living in the new modern multiple storeys Ramallah’s buildings. Modern edifices – both individuals and big ones – were not linked to the traditional patterns and forms. Like elsewhere in the world, modernity brought a discontinuity in the housing and building development trend. Bauhaus and western influences are clear evidence of this influence but we can also find references to other Middle East housing trends such as the great Lebanon experience in modern buildings.

Ramallah’s old historic quarters lost the link with their historic role. A symbol we can present the monumental complex in the Manara square. The first one was recalling the patrilineal lineage names of the five families that were at the base of the old settlement (the central quarters still conserve the names of the families: Ibrahim, Jerias, Shaqara, Hassan and Haddad). Five lions that symbolically represented the five “original” families. The monument was demolished in 1982 under the Israeli rule and the actual one was produced 2000. This new monument is proposing eight families; it recognize the importance of three other families (al-‘Ajlouni, Hishmah and Al-‘Araj).



Image 75 Ramallah: Al-Manara square (photo RC).

Ramallah “plays” the role of the (exiled) Palestinian capital, waiting and hoping to move to Jerusalem. It became a kind of “hub” for Palestinian activities and a kind of a suburb for Jerusalem.

1997, the Palestinian National Authority took over the control of Ramallah and el-Bira as stipulated in the Oslo Accords of 1993. Ramallah experienced a large wave of construction and was treated as the de facto capital of the PNA. Governmental as well as non-governmental organizations took home in Ramallah. (Farhat Muhawi and Qawasmi, 2012, p. 51).

Constrained by the impossibility of proper development of the country, housing and commercial development had a special push in this “hydroponic” town. (Why hydroponic? Because we try to give an idea about the strong and fast Ramallah’s development that is really far from a structured and “normally” rooted development. This conurbation is not drawing its energies from “its” roots but from an artificial source of growth).

The Ramallah’s development plan, conceived in between the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century, tried to manage the relationship between the historic area and new development. The juridical and administrative planning instruments were obsolete, heavily inspired by the old Jordanian rule. The new territorial narrative, which modified the conurbation, and which was pushed by high economic growth, produced the contemporary situation.

Traditional private gardens that surrounded private houses were and are still neglected and were used to build up new constructions. This settlement pattern, where buildings are constructed according to individual needs, is growing up today, answering more to investments and housing demands than to a territorial development plan.



Image 76 Ramallah: Demolition of an historic house in, August 13 2018 (photo RC).

The absence of an historic town gave Ramallah (to the conurbation Ramallah / el-Bireh) the freedom to develop without the “heaviness of memory” and, probably, without the presence of historic social inertia.

Because of its situation, Ramallah has an active social contemporary life, including the events organized by the foreign institutions based in town (music, dance, theatre, arts ...). Ramallah shows the contemporary Palestinian way of living or, at least, a part of the desired one. At the same time, Municipal authority is trying to bring a lot of attention to heritage,

The Ramallah Municipality has also shared a common interest in restoring historic buildings as a driving force for socio-economic-political development. ... Further, Riwaq signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ramallah Municipality to partner in their endeavor

for protection and development of heritage sites in the town. (Bishārah et al., 2013)

Some cultural actors provide awareness and informational activities geared towards Palestinian population and foreigners.

Ramallah Tour | 9 am - Ramallah Urban Tour

Meeting Point: Arafat Mausoleum

Ramallah is not easy to capture. It is a village with the size of a city. It is a city with the functions of a capital. It is a hub with the size of a transit station. In the last three decades socio-economic and politico-cultural changes affected Ramallah resulting in a cosmopolitan space that is always on the run. In this urban tour, we explore the city's landscape through different magnifying lens in an attempt to reclaim a space that has been, like time, passing swiftly in front of our eyes, and leaving us with vague memories and scrappy narratives. ("Ramallah Urban Tour," 2018)



Image 77 the image illustrating the Ramallah Urban Tour in the Qalandiya International Newsletter, October 9th 2018.

The contemporary town is also a contemporary way of living space; of course, we can ask ourselves about the constitution of the future tangible legacies: will the new Ramallah's quarters be the future heritage? Around Al Manara there is a globally connected (and Israeli filtered) generic space of commerce, and generic spaces are (fortunately or not) typical spaces of the new 21st century. The Ramallah municipality is trying to save some fragments of its heritage, fragments of a real life with real and local actors and carry out this task is a tough work.

What we think now about Ramallah is not significant, not because the relative importance of our thought but because of the role of Ramallah plays in shaping the contemporary Palestinian way of living and producing spaces. That is the important. This pulsing urban area shows the vitality of the contemporary Palestinian society, locked inside a shrinking space (something as the Honoré de Balzac's *The magic skin/La peau de chagrin*) and opening to the world with the international cooperation and the worldwide diaspora, balancing between starving or partying.

The irregular aesthetic of pulsing Ramallah is – also – the shape of the Palestinian living power. We cannot forget this strange conurbation because here we are assisting in shaping of a contemporary aesthetic and way of living.

The separation wall and others Israeli “amenities”

Whatever notion of architecture we decide to use, whether the most inclusive definition “From the spoon to the town” (Ernesto Nathan Roger, 1952 reformulating Hermann Muthesius and Walter Gropius saying), or the most strictly monumental one, it is impossible to forget the signs of the Israeli military occupation. This presence into the Palestinian way of life occupies a major place.

From the point of view of construction, the presence of the common and oversized Israeli concrete shapes landscapes and ways of living; the most impressive presence of the Israeli occupation is manifested by the separation wall, which began to be built on June 16, 2002.

When completed, the wall's total length will be 723 km, twice the length of the 1949 Armistice Line (also known as the Green Line) between Israel and the West Bank. Approximately 84% of the wall has been constructed inside the West Bank. [...] The wall and checkpoints are material representations of Israeli occupation and therefore are part of the Palestinian people's recent heritage and memory. (Farhat Muhawi and Qawasmi, 2012 - p.44).

Without thinking about the political and military ramification of the occupation - which remains at the level of abstraction for the writer who is writing from another continent and who travels with an EU passport -, this military presence will be inherited by the next generations of Palestinians, as we inherited the bunkers of the 2nd World War, blockhouses and other war legacies. It participates in shaping the Palestinian identity and they will stay there for a long time to come.

In addition, the Israeli occupation implemented measures to control historic buildings in Nablus (for example, Joseph's Tomb), Bethlehem (Rachel's Tomb), and Hebron (the Ibrahimi Mosque) and to demolish the Magharbeh Quarter in Jerusalem in 1967 and the historic parts of the Hebron and Nablus old cities in 2002. The Israeli occupation also encouraged drug trafficking and other antisocial activities, which accelerated the process of desertion and the classification of town centers as unsafe and dangerous. (Bshara, 2011- page 13).

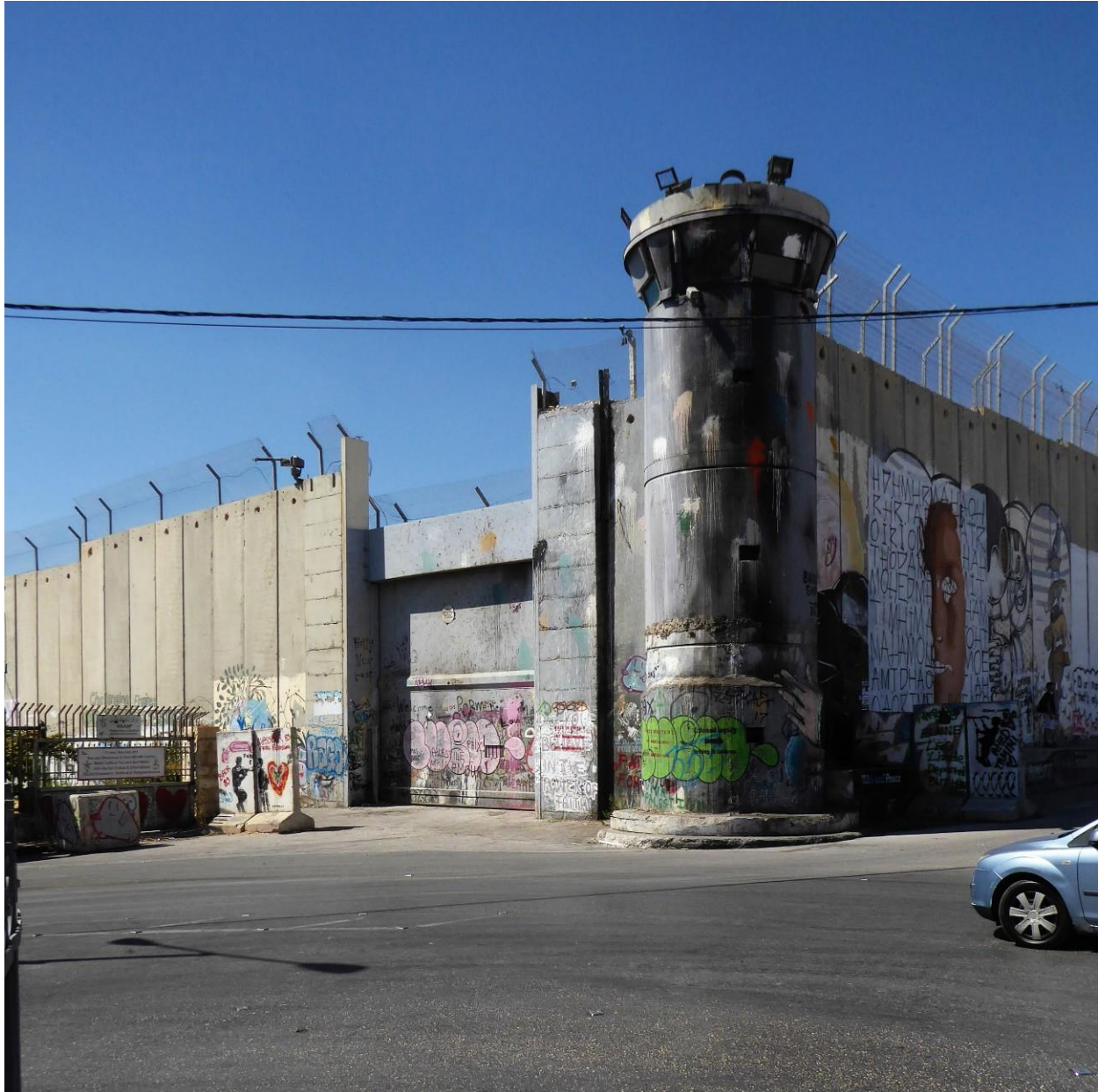


Image 78 Bethlehem: the northern entrance to the City, Closed gate in the separation wall, (photo RC).



Image 79 Arab ar-Rashayida: Israeli colonial Military watching tower (photo RC).

Shaping the occupied West Bank is a general cultural process, which plays a major role in the way Palestinian living spaces are thought. For example, we can see at the Israeli Pavillion at the 2018 Biennale d'Architettura di Venezia (La Biennale di Venezia, 2018) how the references to the Palestinian territories are “forgotten”. The pavilion presents some monuments, considered only as shrines:

The five sacred monuments explored in the exhibition and book In Statu Quo: Structures of Negotiation are located in or between the historic cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron. (Nitzan-Shiftan, 2018 – p. 21)

As architects we stand mute in front of these monuments. They extract enormous emotion; they inspire endless political maneuvers. [...] What can architecture tell us, in other words, about the relationship between a sacred site and political might in a territory that was successively under Ottoman, British, and Jordanian rule and has been occupied by Israeli

forces since 1967? (Nitzan-Shiftan, 2018 – p. 21).

In our fractured moment architecture cannot intervene even in the preservation or restoration of these monuments, since such activities are often tainted by claims of divine authority. [...] Architecture is such an efficient tool of negotiation: it focuses on the actual space of worship, in spaces where violations of the Status Quo can provoke deadly conflict. [...] In the meantime, this exhibition suggests, this “matter-of-fact” architecture of negotiation can prevent the sacrificing of lives on the altar of nationalism. (Nitzan-Shiftan, 2018 – p. 22 and 23).

While the presence of a Palestinian entity does not appear in the Pavilion, in the scientific texts of the catalogue offers a little more open position than the one offered to the larger public.

But these new Status Quos didn't last long. With increased numbers of Israelis settling in the Hebron area, the Jewish section was extended, causing many unilateral actions and disagreements regarding the conduct at the site. As a consequence, violent outbreaks occurred, culminating in the massacre of twenty-nine Muslim worshipers by a Jewish extremist in 1994. [...] True, like the Tomb of Samuel, north of Jerusalem, the Hebron shrine is shared under a special situation of Israeli occupation. Coexistence and cohabitation are not voluntary but imposed. (Reiter, 2018 – p. 52).

The leitmotif is nevertheless clear in the catalogue, too. We can see an image of the bypass road 60 and its protection. Titled “Wall”, the caption indicates the site as “Israel-Palestine” ... We do not the right to publish the image, but here is the caption and, using Google map, we indicate the place under the caption.

Route 60, Beit Jala, Bethlehem area, Israel-Palestine, 2011 (Courtesy Josef Koudelka /Magnum Photos) (Finkelman et al., 2018 – Pp. 274 - 276).

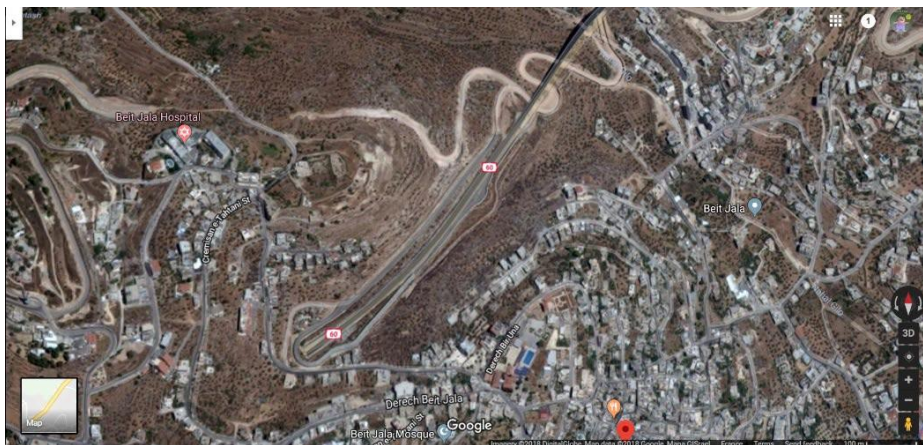


Image 80 Google map image for Beit Jala, bypass road, Route 60, the site is marked as “Israel-Palestine”.

4 - IL MURO

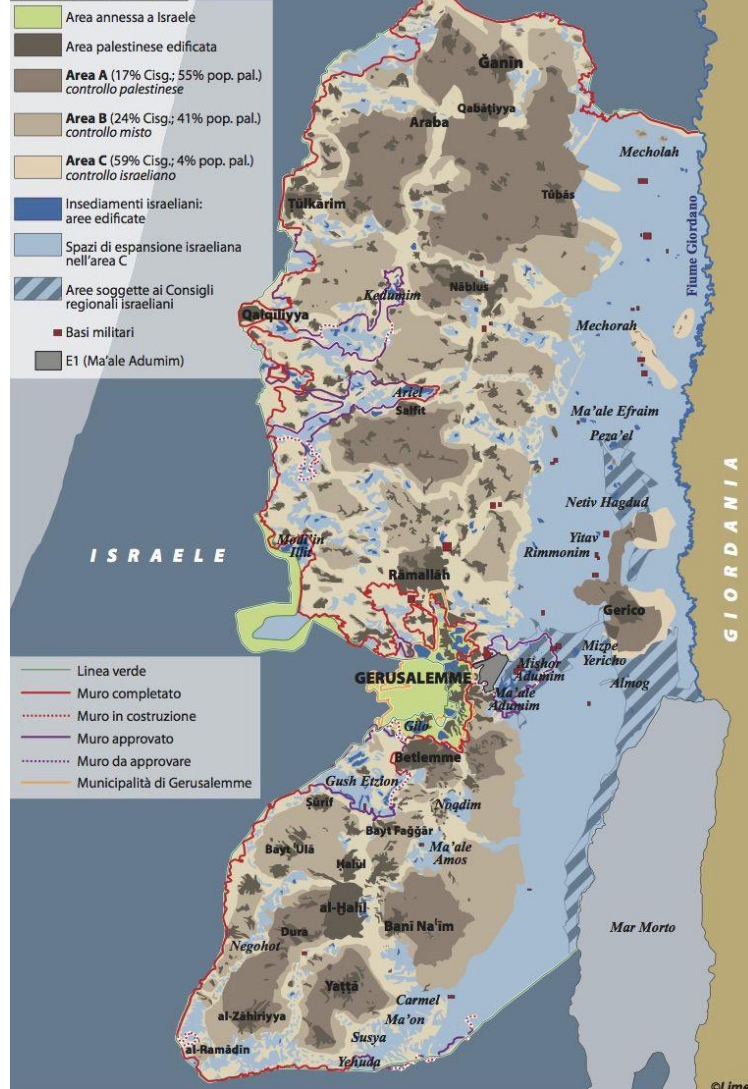


Image 81 Il Muro - The wall- (Canali, 2015)

Jerusalem – as “a special guest”

Jerusalem is the great city of the three main monotheistic religions. Centuries of conflicts have pitted populations in formally religious based differences and the conflict issue does not seem to have ended and has not been stabilized.

As the capital city of the state of Israel, a great part of Jerusalem is changing as a result of the political decisions of the Israeli government that is acting in order to limit the visibility of the Palestinian existence and its history. Even the old city is changing fast as a result of the global situation, as can be seen with the Mamilla Mall near the Jaffa gate or with the tramway service. The “Palestinian” part of Jerusalem has witnessed growth dynamics, too.



Image 82 Jerusalem: Light and sound program on the Old City walls, near Jaffa gate (photo RC).

Actually, this town cannot be utilized to produce a general reading of Palestinian reality. Jerusalem is a special city and Palestinians inhabitants live in a very exceptional context. Of course, goes without saying that Jerusalem is the most important Palestinian city,

The land of Palestine is rich with history and culture, and some of its sites have even made it to the list of World Heritage Sites, including the Old City of Jerusalem, which is struggling to maintain its Palestinian identity. (Al-Bandak, 2007 – p. 28)

At the same time,

Jerusalem persists as an intricate and intractable cornerstone of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (Diakronia International Humanitarian Law Resource Centre, 2017 – p. 4).

Its inherited and contemporary situation is too complex and intertwined to allow for a generalization about the way of living. The city partition is under redefinition process and it is a peaceful and democratic redefinition every time. The formal administrative situation is based on the 1947 resolution,

The UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, a partition plan for Palestine, on 29 November 1947 (Partition Plan). The Partition Plan recommended the division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, with the Jerusalem area to be constituted as a corpus separatum under a special international regime administered by the Trusteeship Council on behalf of the UN.(Diakronia International Humanitarian Law Resource Centre, 2017 – p. 4).

With a 1949 amendment,

Thus, the 3 April 1949 Israel-Jordan General Armistice Agreement formalized Jerusalem's de facto division between the two powers effectively controlling different parts of the former mandate territory, yet the agreement expressly disavowed that it should be interpreted as having any relevance to the ultimate political and legal disposition of Palestine. (Diakronia International Humanitarian Law Resource Centre, 2017 – p. 6).

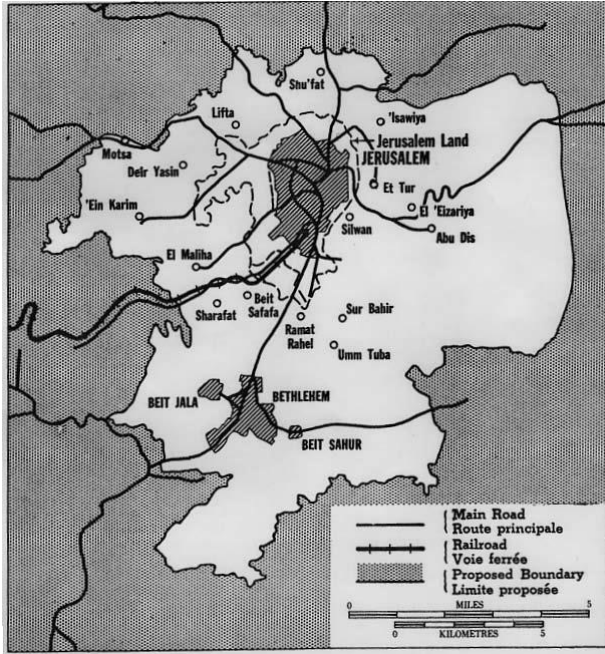


Image 83 “City of Jerusalem” Boundaries proposed (map published as Annex B to 1947 Partition Plan).

The whole situation changed in the 1967 war and the situation has become complex and uncertain.

With regard to the non-monumental architectural heritage, we can read that:

In Jerusalem architecture, the Israeli architectural historian David Kroyanker, names the houses of the Muslim Quarter as the only vernacular style in the Old City (Cf. David Kroyanker, Jerusalem Architecture, New York: Vendome Press, 1994). (Tung, 2015 – page 79).

Finally, Jerusalem is “too big for a bite”.

Short conclusion

In this report, we have tried to offer a synthesis about the multiple links connecting architectural and settlement inheritance and the Palestinian ways of living.

The main reference is with the tangible and monumental heritage. The contemporary architectural-inheritance is able to suggest to us an interpretation of the general Palestinian's way of living. Starting from that, and using both material transformations like the traditional way of building walls and social transformations like the decline of kinship typical of agricultural-based societies, we try to explore the relationship between Palestinians today and their living spaces.

Two main stories are emerging, proving to be fundamentals in building the contemporary way of living and the Palestinian cultural identity.

One is the link between the narrative of the local relationship and tangible cultural heritage, mainly the architectural one. Which kind of narrative coming from the past and "frozen" into tangible heritage could be used to argue for a part of the identity narrative in this complicate land?

We consider material inheritance, the tangible buildings that the ancestors erected here, to be still rich enough to support the narrative of Palestinian identity (or identities, if we consider religions, cultures and ethnicities present in Palestine). We can observe a great need for rehabilitation project there, including the big issue of finding the funding for it. Palestine is not a free country; therefore, its economic independence and ability to make transformative choices is limited.

At the same time, we know that heritage issues are rarely interesting for short and middle term investments; private investors are not the best heritage protectors. Heritage issue needs public investment.

Several local actors are producing the restoration narrative, and frequently with the help of the international cooperation/donors (some questions came from this international cooperation: should we consider this cooperation something similar to the greenwashing dynamics? Are we facing a kind of white-washing the choices Israel is making by several countries?); they are showing the way to include heritage issues in contemporary development.

The second big narrative, which is less prominent here although it is probably the most important narrative, is the fast and anarchist growth of new settlements. They do not only show the difficulty of planning in contexts of oppression but they are also showing the total transformation of Palestinian society: the so-called traditional society is not here anymore and the relationships with spaces are totally new.

Unfortunately, the way of producing space for “post-modern” societies is a generic, multi coloured one, limited common spaces, Individual interests are highly parasitic and they are consuming common interests.

The absence of a common and reliable narrative makes Palestinians produce generic spaces and generic villages just like what is happening quite everywhere in the contemporary world!

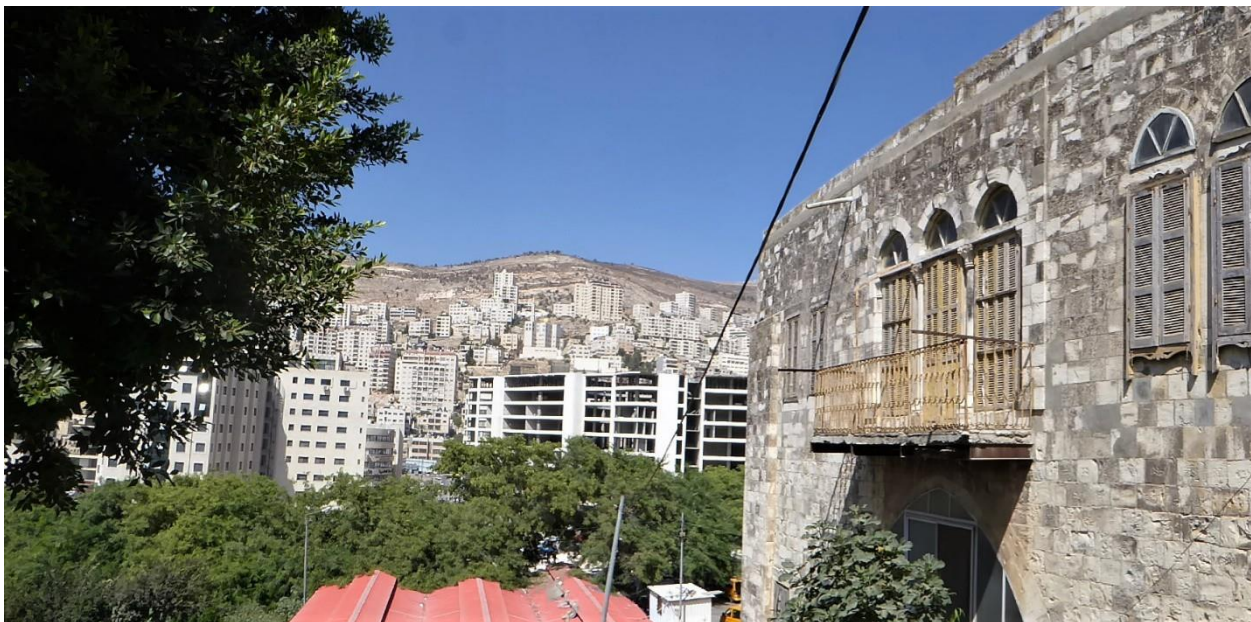


Image 84 Nablus an early 20th century transitional house and the new quarters. Image from Shwaitreh Street towards the mount Ebal on the north (Openstreetmap, February 9, 2019 - photo RC).

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Appendix 1 – Genealogy

1916	Sykes-Picot agreement between the
1917	End of Ottoman presence in
1917-1920	Informal British control of Palestine
1920-1948	British mandate on Palestine
1948 May 15 th	Israeli Declaration of Independence
1967	Six-Day War
1987-1993	1 st Intifada
1993	Oslo 1 – signed in Washington
1994	Welfare Association start the Old City of Jerusalem Revitalization Programme (OCJRP)
1995	Oslo 2 – signed in Cairo
1998	Hebron Rehabilitation Committee got the Aga Khan Award
1998	Opening of Ramallah's Museum
1999	Opening of Al-Bad's Museum
1999	Forecast birth date for the Palestinian independent State, 5 temporary years. An Oslo dream ...
2000, September 28	Sharon walk to the Haram Sharif/Temple Mount, start of the 2 nd Intifada
2000-2005	2 nd Intifada
2002	Nablus old City seriously damaged by the clash
2004	OCJRP got Prix Aga Khan Architecture
2007	OCJRP "exports" it's work from Jerusalem to Nablus Funded by Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development In order to help with expertise the rehabilitation of the old town, seriously damaged in 2002.
2011	HUL – Historic Urban Landscape - UNESCO

2011November 23	Palestine member of UNESCO Assembly acceptance vote on October the 30 th (?)
2012, November 29	UN Observer Status to Palestine
2018	Israel adopts divisive Jewish nation-state law

Appendix 2 – Tourist facilities: a possible way to “talk about heritage”

This appendix is not a typical scientific text but offers personal reflections on the relationship between tourism and heritage and identity issues. Because of the role that tourism can play into heritage issue, we choose to have a direct experience of these issue during our last trip to the West Bank by staying in heritage hotels. This experience, based on a self-reflection not scientific observation, looks like an interesting one (here we are not presenting pricing or other commercial issues, we are not really aware about the effective and real market).

Like other countries around the world, cultural tourism in Palestine is a choice and the product should respect the forecast for tourist expectations. It is clear to experts on tourism that three points have to be considered in this regard:

- *First of all, an overall sensitive experience: the tourist has to be impressed by hospitality, good attitude, landscape and all what can be provided. Therefore a collective education is necessary, to ensure uniqueness and unforgettable experiences.*
- *Certain cultural standards must be ensured, to satisfy the increasing request of cultural tourism.*
- *A deep and complete attention on protection of local environment and on the improvement of local economy.*

Therefore, to define the vision of tourism it means designing a certain kind of program, upon certain priorities and values; for example gives priorities. (Sa'adeh, 2009 – p. 74).

Making cultural and natural heritage an important tool for economic and social development is an objective, a mission that could be integrated into development strategies and Palestine has several significant assets (for heritage, cf. the local sites listed on the UNESCO's WH and Tentative lists – Protecting heritage, inventories and registers section). The tourism sector cannot be developed now as was anticipated, because of its limited contribution to the Palestinian GDP is limited:

The tourism sector's direct contribution to GDP [of Palestine] is approximately 4%, which is less than the immediate region economies (6% in Israel, 20% in Jordan, 13% in Egypt and 37% in Lebanon). (Negotiations Affairs Department, 2017 - page 5).

Like the other entire economic sectors, tourism is also influenced by the Israeli policies with respect to screening people (heavy limitations on visa permits, favoring tourists from countries that do not require visas to enter Israel ...). The most significant issue about tourism and its limitations is made by the Israeli denial that the Palestinian Territories exist. As we have already mentioned in the former section (the separation wall and others Israeli “amenities”), territorial occupation denies the existence of the “other”. Tourists coming into Israel in order to visit the Christian’s religious sites are not informed about their passage into the Occupied Territories; Israeli Tours operators who also “operate” in the Territories with a predator approach without explaining it.

Holy Land Tour with CLUB7 HOLIDAYS
Jordan, Israel & Egypt 8N/9D
Day -01: Chennai – Amman

Assemble at International Airport in India and departs to **Amman, Jordan**. Upon arrival at Amman, after finishing all visa formalities, we will reach to Hotel, Have Dinner and Overnight Stay at **Hotel AlFanar** in **Amman, Jordan**.



Day 2: Madaba/Mukhawir, Amman City Tour

After Breakfast we proceed to **Mount Nebo (Mt. Nebo is presumed to be the site of Moses's death and burial place)**. On top of the mountain is a Franciscan Church

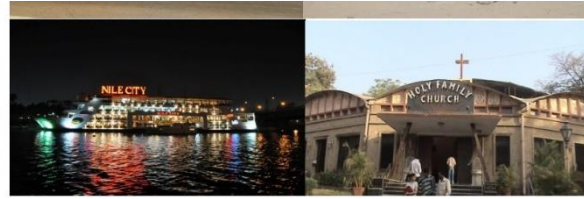


Drive through **Galilee**, and ride in a **Galilean fishing boat**. Have lunch at restaurant. Then drive to **Yard nit** situated on the **Jordan River**, the traditional Baptismal site. Travel via the city of **Caesarea to Haifa**, Israel's largest port, built on the slopes of **Mt. Carmel**. Visit the famous **Persian Hanging Gardens**, then have a visit to **St' Peter's Church**. View the beautiful **Mediterranean Sea**. Have dinner in hotel at Bethlehem. **Overnight stay at the Bethlehem Hotel**.



Day 7: Jerico/Dead Sea/Taba

Breakfast & Check-out & proceed Jerico Proceed to **Dead Sea**, where we stop at a private beach. It is the lowest spot on earth and do not miss the opportunity to float in the salty buoyant water, rich in minerals. **Move to Bethany, the Town of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Visit Jericho, Mount of Temptation and Sycamore Tree.** It is the place where Jesus stopped on the way to Jerusalem on the Eve of the Passover, and where Jesus cured the blind man during his stay at **Zachaeus house**. . Enter into Egypt after formalities. Overnight stay at Sinai in **Hotel Morgan Land**.



Day 9: Cairo - Cairo/ /Pyramids /Spinx

After breakfast checkout from hotel to visit the **Pyramids of Giza**. We

Day 3: Cana/Sea of Galilee–Capernaum–Jordan River–Nazareth Haifa / Mt. Carmel / Joppa (Tel Aviv) / Bethlehem

After Breakfast checkout and Proceed to **Sheik Husain Bridge** to cross the border and complete the visa & emigration formalities and enter into **the Promised Land. Drive to Visit Nazareth**, the boyhood town of Jesus and the **Church of the Annunciation**, where Archangel Gabriel appeared to announce that **St.Mary's well** Mary would bear a son. Visit **St' Joseph's Workshop and Cana**, where Jesus performed his first miracle, of changing water into wine at the wedding feast. Check in at Hotel and have dinner overnight at **Astoria Hotel** in Galilee.Tiberius



Dav 4:Sea of Galilee–Capernaum–Jordan River–



“The Tomb” (widely believed to be the part of the stone that covered Jesus Tomb). Visit the **Cenacle – Last Supper Room**, tomb of King David, **Wailing Wall**, which is the holiest place for the Jewish religion. Have lunch then visit **Ein Karem**, the birthplace of **John the Baptist**, and the **Church of Visitation** Drive to the Hotel and have Dinner and overnight stay at the **Bethlehem Hotel**.



(“Holiday Packages in India | Domestic & International Tour Packages | Club7Holidays,” n.d.)
<https://www.club7holidays.com/>

Image 85 Fragments of an Indian flyer for a religious trip in the Middle East, the trip is planned into the Territories without informing the traveler about it.

Of course, the image of Palestine as a conflict zone is not helping the realization of the goals of tourism, since frequent conflicts give the area a false but understandable idea of being a “tourist unfriendly” area. Nevertheless, some international tourists come, some of them as volunteer and, in the last years, we can realize the arriving of some tourists from Islamic countries.

During our last personal trip, we had four overnight stops in the Territories, and we also had the opportunity to visit two of the “Bedouin camps” of the Masār Ibrāhīm, without overnighing there. We try to present a part of hosting facilities.

Jerusalem – Jerusalem Hotel

This hotel is the property (if our information is correct!) of the president of the Rozana association in Birzeit (Cf. section “Birzeit: a long-term village rehabilitation process”) and it is located in front of the bus station that provides transportation to the Territories, near the Damascus Gate, which is one of the major points of entrance to the old City in Jerusalem.

English is widely spoken here; the building is a late traditional one, rehabilitated in order to be used as hotel. While the external façade of the building is interesting but not emotionally and aesthetically moving, the quality of the cozy interior is really captivating. The open coffee shop and the restaurant area, together with some cultural activities organized there, make the place pleasant and provides opportunities for possible mixing between tourists and Palestinians. Hotel concierges are able to address tourists and provide travel information to the customers.

The hotel has a web page (<http://jrshotel.com/>) and the more frequently used online booking services demonstrate it. Travelers can locate it on the Google Maps and read reviews there, which has a considerable impact on traveling public.

From the Google map first reviews:

1. Nice service and excellent location close to old city and west Jerusalem. Quite atmosphere with authentic rooms and furniture that reflects the culture of Jerusalem.
2. Great Arabic food!!! 5 stars! Staff was polite although the service was quite slow in spite of the fact that the restaurant was fairly empty. The terrace was nice but it needs work done to it. Must renovate/maintain the terrace!!!!
3. My experience of the hotel was that it was very basic and a little run down; however, they are in the process of refurbishment in the near future. The night staff, Jacob/ Yakub looked after us so well. His hospitality was outstanding, he was warm and welcoming...thank you for making my very short stay so pleasant!



Image 86 Jerusalem: Interior of the Jerusalem Hotel (photo RC).

Ramallah – Alhambra Palace Hotel Suites

The Alhambra Palace Hotel Suites used to be a private residence built during the British mandate in the outskirts of Ramallah, which was at that time a very small town. It was transformed into a hotel immediately after the Second World War and nowadays, after serving for some years as student residence for the Birzeit University students, is back to hosting guests and, because of the fast and consistent development of Ramallah, the hotel is located downtown.

The Alhambra Palace Hotel shares the same management as the world-famous Mount Scopus Hotel in Jerusalem, benefiting from decades of hospitality (“Alhambra Palace Hotel Suites and Resort — Al Hambra Palace Hotel Suites & Resort, Ramallah,” n.d.)

Although it is managed by a famous hotel in Jerusalem, English is not really commonly used here. Some of the people at the reception desk speak English and they are really kind in helping travelers. Some information about Ramallah can be found here, both about logistical issues, heritage and tourist information (Municipality and Ministry of Culture flyers).

The hotel has a simple old-style web page (<http://www.alhambra-palace-hotel.com/>) and the more frequently used online booking services demonstrate it. Travelers can locate it on the Google Maps and read reviews there, it is not really “easy to use” for a non-Arabic speaker.

From the first reviews on Google Maps, we realize that the reviews are frequently in Arabic, translated into English through Google:

1. Reasonable priced hotel in Ramallah. Not far from the centre.
2. No elevator. But the room was cozy. Water pressure of shower is better than others.
3. Wonderful place amazing
4. (Translated through Google) A very great hotel that has a special service for all visitors



Image 87 Ramallah: The Alhambra Hotel (photo RC).



Image 88 The fast-growing Ramallah's suburbs from the Alhambra Hotel (photo RC).

Bethlehem – Hosh al Syrian Guesthouse

As its name shows, the Hosh al Syrian Guesthouse is built on the location of a former Hosh located near both the Nativity church and the Syrian church. The building is an historical ensemble that can be found in a cozy market niche linking together heritage environment, excellent location and rare food. The Guesthouse offers a unique stay (but there are some actual difficulties for people with disabilities). It was heavily rehabilitated with the help of an international donor. The French-Palestinian manager offers a high-quality restaurant (limited in its menu but offers high quality courses and generous and high quality breakfast).

English is not commonly spoken by the staff who nevertheless try to solve all clients' issues and questions in a very kind way. The management speaks both English and French and has been quoted in publications, including the PNA's publication titled "Israel's Exploitation of Palestinian tourism and international complicity: tourism as a tool to normalize occupation" about global tourist issues in Palestine.

The guesthouse has a web page (<http://www.hoshalsyrian.com/>) and the more frequently used online booking services demonstrate it. Travelers can locate it on the Google Maps and read reviews there, which has a considerable impact on traveling public. The accurate esthetic of the heritage building, including the tourist oriented transformations, places it into a very appreciate "place to stay". From the Google map first reviews:

1. We had a wonderful stay at the Hosh al Syrian guesthouse. The hotel is in a renovated 800 year old house. The girls who work here were friendly and helpful. Thank you, Rawan, Fateen, and Niven. Breakfast is just fantastic.
2. No words describe the beauty of this place. The crew is legendary all the love and thanks
3. This place is a historic palace, including old luxury buildings ... here is Palestine
4. Wonderful atmosphere. The rooms are super great, cozy and big. The sitting areas and terraces are wonderful. The staff is very nice and welcoming. The breakfast is delicious!



Image 89 Bethlehem: Hosh al Syrian, roof view (photo RC)



Image 90 Bethlehem: Hosh al Syrian, a room interior (photo RC).

Sebastia – Mosaic Guesthouse

Travelling to the Northern West Bank, we decided to stay in Sebastia, which is marked on Masār Ibrāhīm map as a village that has at least one guesthouse. Actually, there are two guesthouses, namely the Al Kayed Palace, and the Mosaic Guest House. The former one was the object of a rehabilitation project by Riwaq, and was largely described in the literature (Amiry and Bshara, 2015; Bshara, 2011).

The Hosh al Syrian owner in Bethlehem gave us the telephone number of the manager of the Mosaic Guest House; we called him to book a room. We had a very kind person on the telephone who spoke a very elementary English, but we presume we made the correct booking.

Arriving on site it was not possible to confirm the phone booking. There was a vacancy available but we were not able to understand whether or not our room was the one we booked. The level of spoken English was very limited while kindness was really high.

The guesthouse is amazing, with a fantastic view of the nearby landscape and to some of the archaeological excavations. The guesthouse – like Hosh el Syrian – was rehabilitated with the help of international donors.

Mosaic Guest House has a web page (<http://www.mosaicghsebastia.com/>) and the more frequently used online booking services demonstrate it. Travelers can locate it on the Google Maps and read reviews there. It has a strict link to the Mosaic Centre in Jericho.

From the Google map first reviews, here too – like in Ramallah – we can realize that reviews are frequently in Arabic, translated into English through Google:

1. Very nice and lovely guest house. welcoming and cheerful and pleasant
2. Wonderfull place to stay and sleep ... and set with your friends, family and your beloved people ...
3. (Translated through Google) It is a beautiful and quiet place with distinct sessions
4. (Translated through Google) Nice place to stay. Interesting detergent
5. (Translated through Google) A quiet and magnificent place



Image 91 Sebastia: Mosaic Guest House, terrace on the landscape (photo RC).



Image 92 Sebastia. Mosaic Guest House, view on the archeological excavations (photo RC).



Image 93 Sebastia: Mosaic Guest House, introduction of new ironworks inside a room (photo RC).

A small lintel allows the opening between the room and the newly built bathroom. A very small architectural act reminds us that small actions also produce small fragments of the narrative about the heritage and the contemporary use of it.



Image 94 Sebastia: Mosaic Guest House, view from the outside, archeological excavation area and Guest house (photo RC).

Bedouin's sites



Image 95 'Arab ar-Rashayida: Bedouin Guest place and Landscape from the (photo RC).

We have not yet had the opportunity to stay overnight in a Bedouins based camp. As we have seen in the “Bedouins settlements” section, those populations have a specific relationship to the tangible component of heritage. Their way of living was never based on strong building production and they are still today far from it. Therefore, their places are poor in architecture; their breath- taking relationship with the wild opening landscape does not produce tangible buildings.

Hosting several people through a commercial transaction pushes them towards the creation of curious elements. Because of the temporary use of their houses, Bedouins cannot host people into inherited places therefore; they are obliged to build new small settlements.

Because of travelers are used to some aesthetic standards, this place can look quite poor. At the same time, building something new and different from the precarious Bedouin way of living would betray the Bedouin cultural heritage and the open link between Bedouins and their open territories.



Image 96 'Arab ar-Rashayida: Bedouin Guest place, external view (photo RC).



Image 97 'Arab ar-Rashayida: Bedouin Guest place, internal view (photo RC).





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