



This Project is Funded by



EUROPEAN UNION

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

Romeo Carabelli

PhD in Geography

Research engineer at the mixed research unit CITERES

(CNRS and University of Tours – France)

2019

Synthesis

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of AFRAT, ICP, PCR and Tétraktys and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union



TÉTRAKTYS





This Project is Funded by



EUROPEAN UNION





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
- Ḥikāyāt 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., 2019. “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



This Project is Funded by



EUROPEAN UNION



Foreword

This work 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. The text proposes an analysis of the architecture (traditional, transitional and contemporary) with an attention to some of the settlements' structure (the core cluster, the historical area and the recent sprawl), in order to show the links between tangible and intangible types of heritage, between the architecture and the ways of living.

Table of Contents

Foreword	6
Table of Contents	6
Background	7
Some general references	7
Protecting heritage, inventories and registers	11
Sunset of the traditional way of living	13
Tangible fragments link to the past: the physical part of identity and a way to modify space perception	16
From ancient stone to new concrete walls	17
The co-existence of contemporary and ancient walls	18
Ancient way of building	21
Peasant Houses	24
Inside peasant's traditional houses	26
Transitional ways of building	29
Slowly leaving the old housing traditions: a British mandate "Mukhtar house"	29
Contemporary ways of building	34
The presence of Israeli occupation	35
Hoshes (central courtyards)	38
A really fast glance in town	43
Bedouin settlements	47
From an unambiguous character to a generic environment	50
Bibliography References/ Works Cited	52
Plan- List of images	53

Background

In this first two decades of the 21st century, Palestine has been facing the powerful development of singularity against plurality; this affect also the social and cultural aspects of Palestinian society. Watching built legacies, the still existing architectures produced in the past, their protection and valorization is becoming more and more useful.

Some general references

From a historical point of view, we use a 4-period timetable. Of course, it is difficult to impose timeframe restrictions, but we need some limits in order to situate the text in a general shared and relevant timeline.

We propose **traditional** as the “former” past, the mythical time when the landscape was featured along the centuries, something that makes people dream about the building of 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 when people were using local raw materials in slow pace? Traditional time ended during the **Late Ottoman**, starting from the mid-19th century to 1917. The Ottoman period organized Palestine into an inclusive system, including towns, throne villages and simple settlements. The Ottoman reforms (Tanzimat) lead to the transformation of the society, traditions and buildings (Cf. e.g. the Amin Maalouf’s novel *The Rock of Tanios*).

Modern is used for the changing time of “modernity” (new building materials coming from the Industrial Revolution, a melting population due to fast transportation, modern colonization time...). We propose a lapse including the British and Jordan periods (from 1917 to 1967). New kind of buildings arrived and nowadays they are considered part of heritage, but not “traditional heritage”. Because of the changes in economic and social structures in this period, the relationship between settlements and their outskirts started to be based on distance from the so-called traditional configuration. The **British mandate** (1917 to 1948) marked the transformation of the old society into a new one. Some modifications in buildings’ and in settlements’ structure appeared, connected to the global transformation that the Eastern Mediterranean area was living. From 1948

until 1967, a part of Palestine became Israel; the West Bank was a part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. During this period new kinds of buildings appeared such as cinemas, airports and modern villas. The social structure withdrew both with the traditional way of living and the organization of the spaces, inside and outside houses. Some Palestinian residents of the newcomer state of Israel became refugees and some refugees' camps were prepared for an imagined temporary shelter.

From the etymological point of view, *modern* should not have restriction dates but local history indicates 1967 as the line that separates a kind of social, economic and territorial development from another. We use the term *modern* up to 1967 and **recent** after it, up to the blurry limits of contemporaneity. It is an arbitrary choice for those adjectives, but we need this separation because of reality. Of course, housing and public spaces changed seriously, including the way we put settlements in relationship with the outside landscape, urban areas with rural ones. From 1967 to 1994, there was the Israeli official occupation, then, from 1994 to now, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) with a partial occupation by Israel.

This last period has witnessed a massive urban transformation: the PNA can authorize building construction only inside Zone A - in Zone B and C building authorizations are (not) delivered by Israeli services. Therefore, all Palestinian needs and investments converge in the limited A Zones overloading them.

We use **Contemporary** to indicate the way spaces are actually and effectively modified in present time. This historic framework is also the “time of heritage”; we are producing now the most contemporary buildings and, at the same time, we are also making claims for the protection of heritage and safeguard policies.

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 process is somehow normal in this geographical area.



Image 1 '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)

The importance of reference to heritage valorization and identity is clear and unforgettable; it is a future vision for 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 2 A "key" monument in a roundabout, north of Nablus (photo RC)

Inside built heritage, there are not only houses, but also the dreams of them. The house keys are **symbolic objects**, the portable items commemorating lost homes. Showing keys keeps alive the will to return.



Image 3 A British Mandate Passport, shown as a symbol of the last unified Palestine (photo RC)

Protecting heritage, inventories and registers

In order to protect and valorize heritage, 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 promulgated the first heritage protection law that was the basis for the whole 20th century protection legislation:

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 some years of serious concerns, a new heritage law was passed and became official on June the 3rd, 2018 Now we are waiting for the by-laws that make the law operational.

Within the law, another instrument is essential for heritage management namely, **the heritage register**. Nowadays the Ministry – with the support of the Unesco Ramallah office – is planning a new and official register of heritage “items” (buildings, sites, ...).

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

The production of a new major juridical instrument to protect, valorize and enhance heritage issues is essential. At the same time, we should remember that laws are not the only effective actor in territorial issues; local actors totally linked to the population are 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)



This Project is Funded by



EUROPEAN UNION

Probably, the best valorization of action is the vision of heritage integration into living spaces and societies. We can find a reference about this 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. (Goffredo SERRINI et Claudio ZAGAGLIA, « The Atlas. Reading and design of the urban environment », in Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan BACMP (ed.), *The Atlas*, Paris, United nations educational scientific and cultural, 2012, pp. 11-25, p.11)*

Sunset of the traditional way of living

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

During traditional time, the whole village was a “unit”, a part of the ensemble that was acting effectively as a “unit”.

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)

Palestine then was exposed to general “modern ideas”, a new way of conceiving human, social, and spatial configurations.

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. At the same time, there is a decline in the village autarky and self-sufficiency – that produced migration to urban centres, looking for work. Wage labour, markets, urban jobs and cash linked the village to a network of forces [...] reference was and is the nation and not the village. 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. 212).

New actors were composing the configuration of the social pyramid and local forces lost their high power over people and land. Military and protection needs decreased, and consequently, the influence of local army chiefs decreased too. This started a new way to produce wealth, disconnected from the local context 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)

Together with social and economic transformations, there was the arrival of new techniques and new material elements that modified the building technologies. Flat glasses allowed larger windows, iron (and before it, the cast iron) allowed larger openings, while the arrival of Portland

concrete allowed a total transformation of 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 for 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 an interest in independent residential houses outside of the historical settlements 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

We would like to highlight this path to modernity, because it is largely underestimated in discussions of Middle Eastern heritage. We did not pass immediately from “traditional” to “modernity”, from “historic” to “contemporary”. The intermediate experiences are significant because they show us the trodden path in order to modify an old structure toward the contemporary one.

The biggest transformation, from the point of view of society’s ways 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 unity concept of settlement to a scattered one. All over Palestine, the centripetal patterns – including clustered communities – slowly became network settlements, developing according to linear patterns along motorways. Simple centrality was replaced by multiple grid structures.

Tangible fragments link to the past: the physical part of identity and a way to modify space perception

The text starts from the observation of the tangible elements of “traditional heritage” and the way of building houses and settlements as a composition of social and technical issues

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

The industrial revolution introduced – together with new economic ways to increase wealth – some industrial products were able to revolutionize the building processes. Cast iron and then iron beams allowed enlargements in openings while flat industrial glasses allowed bright and spacious interiors saving the isolation from weather condition. Finally, the arrival of reinforced concrete (actually the “Portland cement” combined with a steel frame) modified all the housing production. We show some images in order to identify ancient, transitional and contemporary ways of building.

They are the media for understanding the links between ways of living and material legacies.

From ancient stone to new concrete walls

The Palestinian way of building uses limestone walls without external plastering since antiquity. Therefore, the “traditional” texture of anthropic landscape of Palestine is stone composed. Nowadays, Palestinian walls keep the “stone pattern”, but the situation changed drastically. Multiple storeys buildings are showing contemporary kinds of walls in town, even if structural stone houses are not the normal way of building anymore.



Image 4 'Arraba outskirts: Stone walls and plastered walls houses. (photo RC)

The co-existence of contemporary and ancient walls

This characteristic emphasises the mixed texture we can find frequently: some new buildings – of course including new walls – find themselves inside old quarters. New or modern stone-clad walls stand alongside historic load-bearing stone-walls. The result is a complex aesthetic that characterises the Palestinian townscapes nowadays where new and old buildings compose the living urban fabric.



Image 5 Sanur: Street inside the old quarter; we can see old structural stone walls and contemporary concrete plastered walls (photo RC)



Image 6 Sanur: arched passageway inside old quarter, structural stone walls, cladded walls and plastered ones compose the contemporary townscape (photo RC)



Image 7 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 imsamsm) facing the street. At the upper level, we can see some concrete blocks (photo RC)

Technical issues and multiple dynamics are producing different walls. Construction using the ancient techniques of stone blocks is extremely expensive today; therefore, we can see now cladding walls and new concrete storeys, probably waiting for a future cladding.

Ancient way of building

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

Unfortunately, ancient walls are frequently becoming monuments themselves inside abandoned areas but the aesthetic power of those stones should be considered as a significant and unmissable inheritance.



Image 8 Sebastia: ruins of an ancient traditional vault hall (usually the roof of such kind of these halls called djamalou - photo RC).

In the following image, we can see one of the “traditional” ways of negotiation and management of the openings; in the nearest house, small windows with a strong thick stone lintel and small doors – with a simple arch in this case – 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 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; windows and other openings could be larger and reflect a “more important” status. The combination of a simple 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 airflow with the closed door.



Image 9 ‘Arraba, traditional openings in a deserted quarter (photo RC).

Groin vault is an aesthetic product and, for centuries, it was used as “simple” home vaults, elegant vaults for public areas, and the most sophisticated vaults for religious high society spaces. Once vaults were made of light stone shaped and assembled in cross vaults, frequently plastered inside and protected outside by compact waterproof mortar.



Image 10 Hebron's old town: cross vault in an abandoned building. We can see the importance of corners in load bearing issue.



Image 11 Nablus Old City: plaster decoration. Cross vaults in "Arafat Soap Factory".



Image 12 Hebron's old town: Interior of the “Turkish bath” rehabilitated with international cooperation funding. A former hammam, nowadays a Tourist Visitor Centre (photo RC).

Peasant Houses

Cubes shaped with the traditional local stone, covered by a tiled hip roof or a groin vault, the peasant house is something like the basic element of housing in Palestine.

[...] 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).

Careful about intrusion coming from outside, the traditional houses are circumspect. Small windows and small doors protect the inside from climatic conditions – filtering the summers' hot

weather or the cold winters – they produce the same effect on the social structure, saving family privacy and properties from unexpected events.



Image 13 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 14 Birzeit: an old traditional peasant house; note the dome instead of flat roof in the recent one. (photo RC)

Inside peasant's traditional houses

Doors play 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 15 Birzeit compound: Cross vaults ending with pointed vault interior traditional hall

Housing also includes the way of hosting the “other”, not only people composing the family. We should work on this figurative threshold in order to integrate tangible heritage into the contemporary social and economic situation.

Inside the simple traditional peasant houses, we 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 two-level houses. 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.



Image 16 Kafr Malek: a traditional house interior (photo RC).



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

Nowadays, cattle and other animals are not present anymore inside houses and the lower level became kitchen, laundry room and storage area. The former unique space of *mastaba* tends to include separation walls, in order to offer some privacy; it is a tangible transformation coming from the different way of living inside families.

Transitional ways of building



Image 18 Hebron (Yatta?): independent recent building (a school) in the former immediate outskirts of Hebron historic center (photo RC).

A transitional building outside the historic hyper-center in Hebron, a suburbs independent house, with windows opening on the four sides. It was probably built during the British mandate.

Slowly leaving the old housing traditions: a British mandate “Mukhtar house”

Toward the end of the Ottoman Empire, a central hall (the Liwan) started to appear in Palestinian houses and the traditional peasant house model became obsolete. This was a sign of the social, political and economic transformation that was producing modernity.



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

Starting from the 1920s and the 1930s social identity was increasingly being defined by a person's job, wealth, occupation, but not by the lineage. Houses started to be located in the middle of an individually owned plot of land, modified both in their structure and in their use.



Image 20 Kafr Malek: Liwan Inside a British mandate house. Note the colored tiles and the compound cross ending with pointed vault (photo RC).

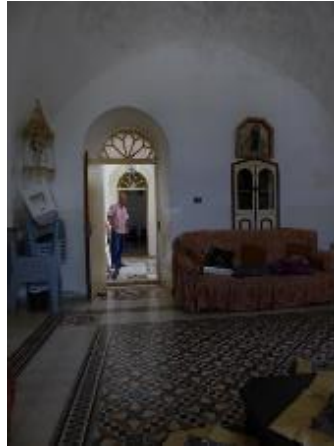


Image 21 Kafr Malek: British mandate house: a reception room with Colored tiles. The “mastaba level” does not exist anymore and has been replaced by a ground floor (photo RC).

Not all the social and technical innovations are inherently positive. At least one of them is producing a problem in the housing situation of 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, the time of adjacent and overlapping buildings driving to an architectural, organic and unified framework was also definitely over.

In the first part of the 20th century, concrete skeletons, including pillars and beam structures, became the normal way of building; frequently cladded outside.



Image 22 Ramallah: modern openings in an independent house (photo RC).

The first industrial modernity introduced new paradigms in openings. In this case, the vertical double window deals with the theme of light up the staircase. This early 20th century aesthetic solution is not old and traditional but is becoming “heritage.”



Image 23 Hebron: Historic-modern town-house and commerce, a mandate period building (photo RC).

The old town changed, too - transitional buildings, like this mixed commerce and housing one built in the first part of the 20th century (we hazard to date it back to the British Mandate, but we do not have authentic sources about it).

The residence of the upper class changed, too-- the Ramallah Alhambra Palace Hotel Suites is an example. It was a private residence built during the British mandate in the outskirts of Ramallah. It was transformed into a hotel immediately after the Second World War, was later used as a student residence for Birzeit University students, and now it is back to the hospitality business.



Image 24 Ramallah: The Alhambra Hotel (photo RC).



Image 25 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).

Contemporary ways of building

Nowadays we cannot imagine building and living the way it was in the “old time”; we should be able to enhance the awareness about it. Heritage is not about pushing people back to the past, but it should be moving forward towards a new future, including the past’s interesting elements.



Image 26 Kafr Malek: Concrete and iron reinforced masonry (photo RC).

New techniques are used in new buildings, even if the “stone aesthetic” is still there. Industrial products are pushing towards large openings and multiple storey houses.



Image 27 Ramallah: building in construction in the old village; contemporary opening, far from the stone wall esthetic (photo RC)

This building is near the core of old city of Ramallah, an area under a heavy real estate pressure. Beams and pillars multi-storey buildings use reinforced concrete capacity in terms of span to propose large openings for commerce on the ground level and large windows at the upper levels. On the corner a kind of cultural memory: some arch-windows that commemorate an ancient aesthetic.

The presence of Israeli occupation

In the current Palestinian environment, forgetting the signs of the Israeli military occupation is impossible. This presence plays a major role in the Palestinian way of life. From an architectural point of view, the constant and oversize concrete Israeli presence shapes Palestinian landscapes and ways of living; the most impressive presence is materialized by the separation wall, which began to be built in 2002. Palestinians will inherit this military presence and they are participating in building the Palestinian identity.



Image 28 Bethlehem: the northern entrance to the City. Closed gate in the separation wall (photo RC).



Image 29 Arab ar-Rashayida: Israeli colonial Military watch tower (photo RC).



Image 30 Hebron's old town: Modern Jewish symbolic Menorah overhanging a traditional building (photo RC).



Image 31 Hebron's old town: entrance to al-Shuhadā' Street, closed by concrete cubes and an Israeli military checkpoint (photo RC).

Hoshes (central courtyards)

Hoshes need a special paragraph because they are the materialization of the traditional social structure, both in urban and rural areas.

Naseer Arafat, in *Nablus: city of civilizations* Naseer R. 'ARAFAT, *Nablus: city of civilizations*, Nablus, « Chec », Cultural Heritage Enrichment Center, 2012, 317 p. describes the hoshes as follows:

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 communal space surrounded by a group of buildings. Frequently, the word hosh is translated as courtyard but this term does not contain the social value that hosh suggests. Several semi-private areas directly adjacent to? the hosh are traditionally used as passages? to private homes; in urban hoshes the semi-private areas frequently disappear and the transition towards private space is the role of simple doors. In the past, the different status of an area - public, semi-public, semi-private and private – was used to define their use, with substantial differences between male and female rules.

Those architectural structures were built as a convivial courtyard where huge enlarged families were living together. Nowadays this social structure vanished and this aspect of tangible heritage does not fulfil its role anymore.

The hosh structure reflects the traditional social structure and rules; therefore, hoshes are unadaptable to the current 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 to more public spaces, weakening ther the feeling of protection they provide.



Image 32 Nablus Old town: Hosh al-'At'out open courtyard, recently rehabilitated by Welfare Association (photo RC)



Image 33 Nablus Old town: Hosh Al-'At'out passageway, rehabilitation includes some benches (photo RC)

Finally, hoshes were organising the traditional housing compounds in town and in the core of the rural villages. Hoshes suggest significant themes for rehabilitation, as we can see in Birzeit and Bethlehem.



Image 34 Bir Zeit: Hosh E'lleit Rabe' in 2018 (photo RC).



Image 35 Bir Zeit: Hosh E'lleit Rabe' in 2013 (photo RC).

Hosh E'lleit Rabe' in Birzeit was restored in the first decade of the century, but it seems closed today even though the concept of installing a common use inside hoshes is the solution to recover abandoned hoshes.

Still in Birzeit, the Hosh Jalsa has a better chance; the rehabilitation project introduces common functions in former common spaces. Here it includes a room for travellers and spaces for cultural and social activities.



Image 36 Bir Zeit: Hosh Jalsa guesthouse and cultural center (photo RC).



Image 37 Bir Zeit: Disarming design from Palestine (photo RC).

In Bethlehem, a tourism-oriented activity is underway in the Hosh al Syrian Guesthouse, based in a former hosh. The historical ensemble is heavily rehabilitated through international cooperation and a French-Palestinian manager propose a quality restaurant concept that situates the Guesthouse in a cozy market niche, including heritage environment--an excellent location and rare food.



Image 38 Bethlehem: Hosh al Syrian, roof view (photo RC)



Image 39 Bethlehem: Hosh al Syrian, a room interior (photo RC).

A really fast glance in town

Towns reflect the transformation of Palestinian traditional living spaces into contemporary ones. They do it by enhancing the contrasts between the heavy modification of buildings and the total transformation of the social structure. Old town quarters are the target of population transformation, even before the alteration of tangible spaces. The old cities are not appealing for upper- and middle-class inhabitants who prefer the outside quarters, leaving there the lower classes and the new inhabitants, usually migrants from rural areas. Those are conditions that demand long term public processes to enhance the quality of life inside the old areas where mixing of activities and population can happen.

The most extreme example is in Ramallah, the biggest Palestinian town (we cannot consider Jerusalem as an independent Palestinian town). In Ramallah, we can see the clearest example of change in the transformed Palestinian way of living and understanding it directly through the architecture. 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 most dynamic Palestinian town, it is a really important place in the West Bank and there is an historic downtown, including monumental and not monumental tangible built heritage. FARHAT MUHAWI et Sahar QAWASMI, *Re-walk heritage*, op. cit.

Its huge transformation mainly started in 1948, that originated as a result of the fast “immigration” of Palestinians coming from the new state of Israel and changing its status. The small peripheral town of Ramallah became a pulsing urban area.

Ramallah has a double centre: the historical centre and the Al Manara district, which is shared with the El Bireh (the other municipality, integrating the Ramallah conurbation).



Image 40 Ramallah: City center in front, Old town to the right (photo RC).

Al Manara square is the Ramallah/El Bireh’s conurbation central plaza, which gives the name to a huge commercial district, and is a space frequently used 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 expand towards each other, creating the contemporary conurbation. The name of the place (al Manara, “the light post”) has been in use since 1935 and comes from the location of the first electric switchboard that was driving the power grid.

During the Jordanian rule period (1948-1967), the area witnessed a great transformation, integrating new commercial centres and larger numbers of inhabitants and consumers, too. Several new public buildings structured the newly developed area (new public library, hospital, post office, vegetable market). 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. As the number of inhabitants increased, a traveling population was using and living in Ramallah’s new modern multiple storeys buildings. Modern edifices – both individual and big ones – were not linked to traditional pattern and forms. Like elsewhere in the world, modernity brought a discontinuity in the housing and building developing trend. Bauhaus and western influences serve as evidence but we can find also references from other Middle Eastern housing traditions, as the great Lebanon experience in modern buildings.



Image 41 Ramallah: Al-Manara square (photo RC).

Ramallah “plays” the role of the (exiled) capital. It became a kind of hub for Palestinian activities and a kind of Jerusalem’s suburb.

Around al-Manara, there is a global connected (and Israeli filtered) generic space of commerce and generic spaces are (for better or worse) typical spaces of the new 21st century. Ramallah municipality is trying to save some fragments of its heritage, fragments of a real life with real and local actors, but carrying out this task is a tough challenge



Image 42 Ramallah: Demolition of an historic house on August 13 2018 (photo RC).

The absence of an effective historic centre (it is physically far from the effective development area) made the conurbation free to develop without the “heaviness of memory” and, probably, without the presence of social inertia. Because of its situation, Ramallah has an active social contemporary life, which also received a lot of boost from the foreign institutions based in town. Ramallah is showing the contemporary Palestinian way of living or, at least, a part of the dreamed one.

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



Image 43 The fast growing Ramallah suburbs from the Alhambra Hotel (photo RC).

Bedouin settlements



Image 44 al-'Auja: Bedouin pride (photo RC).

Bedouins descend from proud nomadic populations present in this area since the dawn of time. Nowadays it is hard to find places to live and ways to earn a proper income; in addition, there is precariousness in housing and school education for children.

Moreover, the relative isolation of Bedouin society that was a defensive character of their culture enabled them to survive without weakening the social structure and Bedouin identity, is becoming a strong complication in the more and more open and global world of the 21st century. In a society that is colonizing the entire world space, keeping Bedouin identity alive is a stronger and stronger issue.

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 contemporary Palestine. Their way of producing living

spaces was – and it still is – different from other Palestinians, both in the materials 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)

Their way of living did not involve 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 open landscape does not produce tangible buildings and what can be perceived as a precariousness is a part of Bedouin cultural heritage, too.



Image 45 al 'Auja: Traditional Bedouin settlement (photo RC).



Image 46 al-'Auja: mixed building material: stone, tent and sheet metal (photo RC).



Image 47 al-'Auja: spartan kitchen environment (photo RC).



Image 48 'Arab ar-Rashayida: an "authentic and mimetic" Bedouin settlement (photo RC).

From an unambiguous character to a generic environment

The Occupied-Territories nowadays were a part of Ottoman Empire, and were sharing a traditional way of living and producing spaces with other Middle East areas. Some historic towns scattered on a wide territory were living with several smaller rural settlements extremely linked to their immediate neighbourhood. They were depending on this close land and its agricultural production.

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

A modernisation of Palestinian society – characterised by a different way of living – modified completely the way of producing living spaces, mixing also rural and urban characteristics. The architectural production followed up the transformation from the centripetal social, economic and tangible center towards a linear development of settlements along the main roads and later towards the contemporary residential-sprawl.

Actually, the big problem is not that modernity is modifying Palestinian spaces and societies. Transformation is normal; the real issue is changing and losing the rich world of “before” to accept a trivial present devoid of social complexity and cultural contents. Common spaces lost a lot of their mythical power; the spaces of human exchanges, the places where societies used to be fulfilled, lost their sense of reference.

The global Palestinian issue in terms of development is a sequence of crisis and Palestinian cities are included in this sequence. The situation is complicate but, from the architectural and planning point of view, we can only go on with an interest in inheritance issues, focusing on the best management for tangible and intangible heritage in order to save the deep cultural spirit. Heritage

issues can help us in transform Palestinian settlements into pleasant and attractive spaces, areas that help in saving and developing community life, societal peace and social harmony.

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 part of contemporary towns) conserve the traditional tangible space but the act of living there is “expensive” from the symbolic point of view. These areas have a downgraded image, and consequently, high- and middle-class inhabitants left them preferring new accommodations.

At the same time, the fast, generic and multi-coloured growth of new settlements shows the hardness in planning in oppressed contexts but also the vitality of Palestinian society: the so-called traditional society is not here anymore and the relationships with spaces are totally new. We are in charge, now, of an active participation in the inclusion of heritage issues into the Palestinian cultural narrative of the 21st century.



Image 49 Kafr Malek: Abandoned 18th century house. (photo RC)

References/ Works Cited

AMIRY Suad, *Peasant Architecture in Palestine. Space, Kinship and Gender*, Ramallah, RIWAQ, 2017, 256 p.

BISHĀRAH Khaldūn, BARLET Jacques et SĀLIM Rubā, *Restauration et réhabilitation en Palestine: Hosh el Etem dans le centre historique de Birzeit = Restoration and rehabilitation in Palestine: Hosh el Etem in the historic centre of Birzeit*, Namur, Institut du Patrimoine wallon, coll. « Dossiers de l'IPW », n° 10, 2013, 143 p.

BSHARA Khaldun, *Tashgheel: RIWAQ's Job Creation through Conservation 2001-2011*, Ramallah, RIWAQ, coll. « The Architectural History of Palestine », n° 13, 2011, 174 p.

CANALI Laura. « Il muro tra Israele e Palestina », in *Limes*, <http://www.limesonline.com/il-muro-3/87710>, 2015.

FARHAT MUHAWI et QAWASMI Sahar, *Re-walk heritage: Ramallah highlands trail: a heritage guide*, Ramallah, RIWAQ, 2012, 150 p.

RABAH Khalil et CAROL Michel, *The second Riwaq Biennale*, Ramallah, Riwaq-Centre for Architectural Conservation, 2007, 150 En + Arabic p.

SERRINI Goffredo et ZAGAGLIA Claudio, « The Atlas. Reading and design of the urban environment », in *Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan BACMP (ed.)*, *The Atlas*, Paris, United nations educational scientific and cultural, 2012, pp. 11-25.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE, *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, including a glossary of definitions*, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=48857&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html, consult? le 6 septembre 2018.

'ARAFAT Naseer R., *Nablus: city of civilizations*, Nablus, « Chec », Cultural Heritage Enrichment Center, 2012, 317 p.

List of images

Image 1 '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)	9
Image 2 A "key" monument in a roundabout, north of Nablus (photo RC)	10
Image 3 A British Mandate Passport, shown as a symbol of the last unified Palestine (photo RC)	10
Image 4 'Arraba outskirts: Stone walls and plastered walls houses. (photo RC).....	17
Image 5 Sanur: Street inside the old quarter; we can see old structural stone walls and contemporary concrete plastered walls (photo RC).....	18
Image 6 Sanur: arched passageway inside old quarter, structural stone walls, clad walls and plastered ones compose the contemporary townscape (photo RC).....	19
Image 7 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 imsamsm) facing the street. At the upper level, we can see some concrete blocks (photo RC).....	20
Image 8 Sebastia: ruins of an ancient traditional vault hall (usually the roof of such kind of these halls called djamalun - photo RC).....	21
Image 9 'Arraba, traditional openings in a deserted quarter (photo RC).....	22
Image 10 Hebron's old town: cross vault in an abandoned building. We can see the importance of corners in load bearing issue.	23
Image 11 Nablus Old City: plaster decoration. Cross vaults in "Arafat Soap Factory".	23
Image 12 Hebron's old town: Interior of the "Turkish bath" rehabilitated with international cooperation funding. A former hammam, nowadays a Tourist Visitor Centre (photo RC).	24
Image 13 Kafr Malek: Traditional independent Peasant/Fallāḥ house "end of the 19 th –beginning of the 20 th century." Note the dome instead of flat surface (photo RC).	25
Image 14 Birzeit: an old traditional peasant house; note the dome instead of flat roof in the recent one. (photo RC).....	25
Image 15 Birzeit compound: Cross vaults ending with pointed vault interior traditional hall.....	26
Image 16 Kafr Malek: a traditional house interior (photo RC).	27
Image 17 Kafr Malek: Inside a rehabilitated traditional house (photo RC).....	27
Image 18 Hebron (Yatta?): independent recent building (a school) in the former immediate outskirt of Hebron historic center (photo RC).	29
Image 19 Kafr Malek: the Mukhtar house, built during the British Mandate (photo RC).....	30
Image 20 Kafr Malek: Liwan Inside a British mandate house. Note the colored tiles and the compound cross ending with pointed vault (photo RC).....	30
Image 21 Kafr Malek: British mandate house: a reception room with Colored tiles. The "mastaba level" does not exist anymore and has been replaced by a ground floor (photo RC).	31
Image 22 Ramallah: modern openings in an independent house (photo RC).	32
Image 23 Hebron: Historic-modern town-house and commerce, a mandate period building (photo RC). ..	32
Image 24 Ramallah: The Alhambra Hotel (photo RC).....	33
Image 25 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).	34
Image 26 Kafr Malek: Concrete and iron reinforced masonry (photo RC).	34
Image 27 Ramallah: building in construction in the old village; contemporary opening, far from the stone wall esthetic (photo RC)	35
Image 28 Bethlehem: the northern entrance to the City. Closed gate in the separation wall (photo RC). ..	36
Image 29 Arab ar-Rashayida: Israeli colonial Military watch tower (photo RC).	36

Image 30 Hebron’s old town: Modern Jewish symbolic Menorah overhanging a traditional building (photo RC)..... 37

Image 31 Hebron’s old town: entrance to al-Shuhadā’ Street, closed by concrete cubes and an Israeli military checkpoint (photo RC). 37

Image 32 Nablus Old town: Hosh al-'At'out open courtyard, recently rehabilitated by Welfare Association (photo RC)..... 39

Image 33 Nablus Old town: Hosh Al-'At'out passageway, rehabilitation includes some benches (photo RC) 39

Image 34 Bir Zeit: Hosh E'lleit Rabe' in 2018 (photo RC). 40

Image 35 Bir Zeit: Hosh E'lleit Rabe' in 2013 (photo RC). 40

Image 36 Bir Zeit: Hosh Jalsa guesthouse and cultural center (photo RC). 41

Image 37 Bir Zeit: Disarming design from Palestine (photo RC). 41

Image 38 Bethlehem: Hosh al Syrian, roof view (photo RC)..... 42

Image 39 Bethlehem: Hosh al Syrian, a room interior (photo RC). 42

Image 40 Ramallah: City center in front, Old town to the right (photo RC). 44

Image 41 Ramallah: Al-Manara square (photo RC). 45

Image 42 Ramallah: Demolition of an historic house on August 13 2018 (photo RC). 45

Image 43 The fast growing Ramallah suburbs from the Alhambra Hotel (photo RC). 46

Image 44 al-'Auja: Bedouin pride (photo RC)..... 47

Image 45 al 'Auja: Traditional Bedouin settlement (photo RC). 48

Image 46 al-'Auja: mixed building material: stone, tent and sheet metal (photo RC). 49

Image 47 al-'Auja: spartan kitchen environment (photo RC)..... 49

Image 48 'Arab ar-Rashayida: an "authentic and mimetic" Bedouin settlement (photo RC). 49

Image 49 Kafr Malek: Abandoned 18th century house. (photo RC) 51