

# **Urbanization & Exclusion as Tools of Transitional Rural Formation: the Cases of Anata & Birzeit**

**Researchers**

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## Introduction

It is important to look at the rapid urbanization and construction boom in the post-Oslo Palestinian context in order to get an impression of the profound change in the political economy of the occupied territories and its far-reaching consequences on the social, economic and class structures. Despite the fact that the urbanization process, the expansion of non-productive service sector, the erosion of the village and the decline of economic activities particularly agricultural production have all been a global phenomena that engulfed developing countries as a byproduct of the neoliberal globalization, such changes have dramatically occurred in the Palestinian context due to the interaction of three dynamics that have interacted with one another on several levels. Therefore it is not possible to ignore their decisive roles in the reshaping of the urban scene in the occupied territories: the Israeli colonial order, the effects of international aid and international organizations, and the activities of the Palestinian capital, which tends to profit through non-productive investments.

The urban-social-economic shifts stand out clearly in most areas of the occupied territories. However, the city of Ramallah and its suburbs and villages represent the center of urban expansion, the decaying of the village identity, the emergence of influential capitalist classes, and the expansion of the middle class that is dependant on jobs in governmental institutions, private companies, and NGOs. These dynamics are accompanied by the emergence of excessive forms of socio-economic inequalities, expressed in the process of urbanization. Whereas urban poverty and marginalization is evident in the poor planning and the deterioration of infrastructure in the peripheries, modern patterns of consumerist lifestyle, fancy buildings, large companies,

banking activities and economic luxuries are centered in more central areas, which are characterized by a more organized urbanization.

It might seem to some that this dynamic taking place in the Palestinian territories in general, and the city of Ramallah and its periphery in particular, is the result of a modernizing development process caused by the existence of the PA institutions, the international organizations, and capitalist activities. However, in reality cases of socio-economic inequalities and the widening class and social divisions suggest that the fragmentation of the Palestinian society has surpassed its political and geographical aspects to penetrate the various levels of the social fabric, which in turn led to alarming decline of the of social solidarity networks and the dominance of individualistic tendencies and personal interests over public good. Such a reality cannot be imagined separately from the social engineering programs and the reproduction of the colonial structure in a more convenient way to the Israeli plans that aim to transform the occupied Palestinian territories, villages and cities, into isolated enclaves engulfed by multiple forms of social fragmentation, political disarray, and economic de-development.

These two studies come as an urgent response to the needs for a deeper understanding of the forms of social fragmentation which, as indicated by the two studies, are reflected in socio-urban analysis, focusing on the cases of Birzeit and Anata. These studies are part of a series of studies that embrace a multidisciplinary approach in addressing and understanding the socio-urban shifts in a number of areas in the West Bank.

**Centre for Development Studies**

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# **Anata Town: A Case of Urban Exclusion and Urbicide**

**Yasid El Rifai**

## Keywords

Mutant Urban Formations, Urban Spatial Patterns, Urbicide, Geopolitical Impact

## Intro

The concern of this study is to look into the changes that affect the urban spatial formations and the urban patterns of the Palestinian villages and towns surrounding the city of Jerusalem; their ties to politics and to different colonial practices in the absence of clear national policies and strategies; and their effects on social behavior and economic life in these areas. For the purpose of achieving the study's objectives and developing an in-depth analysis, the study will revolve around a specific case study: the village of Anata. North-east of the city of Jerusalem, Anata is an illustrative model for urban spatial transitions as a result of the colonial practices in the villages and towns on the eastern and northern borders of the city of Jerusalem. These communities were subjected to spatial changes resulting from waves of social and demographic replacement and exclusion, a systematic absence of law enforcement tools of various kinds, and the varying organizational and political segmentation of the area. The spatial fragmentation policies to which Anata has been subject have included practices of colonial blockades, confiscations, and shutdowns, resulting in collective changes to patterns of social behavior and the emergence of crime, social dissociation, and transformation from a productive countryside to a booming consumer society. The result has been a condition of urban exclusion, which shall be addressed further in this study. It is important to note that this study sprang from a previous paper that studied the new urban formations in Palestinian society by focusing on Kufor Aqab<sup>1</sup> – another of the Palestinian communities surrounding the city of Jerusalem. The previous study focused on studying socio-urban shifts and their connection to the urban formations of the local community, while this paper will study the effects of geopolitical changes on shifts in urban patterns and their relation to the emergence

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1- Alsaqqa, Abaher, *The New Urban Formations in the Palestinian Society Kufor Aqab – as a model*, Development Studies Center, Birzeit University: Birzeit, 2015

of social behavioral patterns that have led to the transformation from a productive countryside village society to a booming consumerist society, a process framed by the project of Judaizing the city of Jerusalem.

## **Research Method and Methodology**

This study adopts an ethnographic research method which relies on the study of how patterns of human behavior relate to the physical environment. The methodology relies on in-depth interviews, the recorded observation of related urban and behavioral patterns, a morphological study of changes in vacant spaces and urban structural shifts, and the study of historical sources concerning the urban environment. The research also engages with more theoretical sources. In addition to what has been mentioned, the research relies on analysis of maps related to vacant spaces, their development, and their shifts between different time periods.

### **1. Hypothesis and Theoretical Context**

The project's hypothesis is based on the idea that the study and understanding of urban and spatial shifts in the village of Anata should proceed on two basic levels. The first is general understanding of Israeli policies in the city of Jerusalem; all the shifts in the areas surrounding the city, including Anata, are part of general Israeli planning policies that are related to the idea of Judaizing the city, imposing Israeli control, and managing its spatial circumstances through the creation and enforcement of changes on its perimeter. The second level is specific to the village of Anata, where the urban, social, and demographic changes that are occurring in the village are also part of the social engineering system that is adopted by the Israeli occupation authorities. The occupation authorities aim to create an isolating and isolated area on the perimeter of the city of Jerusalem, characterized by violence, crime, and urban chaos, which contributes to the separation of the area and its isolation on the one hand, and on the other hand, which can be used to draw a picture of the colonized in their relationship with the colonizer through urban spatial reflections. This policy can be described as Urbicide, and consists of a number of systematic and

guided strategies that aim to destroy social and physical/architectural aspects of targeted urban areas.<sup>2</sup> Developments on these two levels reflect the fact that shifts in vacant urban spaces are tightly connected to social, economic, demographic, and political changes, and that they both affect and are affected by said changes. In the case of this study, the overall process serves to aid the Israeli project of imposing control over the city of Jerusalem.

In observing the general scene in the city of Jerusalem and its surroundings, the Israeli authorities' demographic replacement policies become apparent. They take place through the adoption of exclusionary policies embodied in laws, systems, and planning strategies. The project of Judaizing Jerusalem is a main goal in Israeli planning policies in the city; it is evident as such in the Jerusalem plan 2020. The plan points out that its main objective is to maintain the development of the city as a capital for the state of Israel and its Jewish citizens.<sup>3</sup> The Judaization of the city of Jerusalem does not only rely on demographic replacement operations, but also aims to create a cordon surrounding the city of Jerusalem from the eastern and north-eastern sides, in order to reinforce the strategic depth of the city and to create neutral areas between the city and the rest of the West Bank. This policy turns the villages and towns on the outskirts of East and North-East Jerusalem into exceptional components, urban formations intended to function on two levels: first, as areas to evacuate the indigenous people of the city of Jerusalem to, a process managed through the imposition of different discriminatory policies in the city than in these areas and the reinforcement of economic differences; and second, as separating and isolating areas where a special system is formed for laws, regulations, social relationships, and life patterns, differentiating them from their general perimeter. The process of transforming the villages and towns of the eastern and north-eastern perimeters of Jerusalem from rural components into an isolation area requires a complicated process of

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2- Graham, S. 2004. «Constructing Urbicide by Bulldoze in Occupied Territories», in Graham, S. (ed.) *Cities War and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*, Oxford:Blackwell

3- Khamaisi, R. 2007. "In the Shadow of the Separation Wall: Impeding the Right to the City and Shaping the Palestinian Spatial Environment in Jerusalem/AlQuds", in Hasson, Sh. *Jerusalem in the Future: the Challenge of Transition*, the Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies Ltd. Jerusalem

transformations on the political and social levels, and the creation of economic differences that lead to the creation of centers of attraction for certain types of people. It also requires a shift in demographic distribution towards the creation of high-population-density areas. This is accompanied by shifts in the urban structure as a result of the attempt to assimilate the increasing density of the population, to respond to its economic needs, and to use vacant spaces as a means of enabling the criminal society to reinforce the formation of a booming society in these areas – one of the patterns of using vacant spaces as a mean of collective oppression. Any solution on the general level of the case, due to the central importance of Jerusalem, relies, in addition to a number of other factors, on the developments and changes that occur inside the city and the reality manifested within it.

These kinds of shifts can be understood with reference to theoretical frameworks related to the ethics of vacant spatial changes in contexts of colonial occupation, which are usually dominated by three main indicators: the attempt to illustrate the colonist as a modernist and the colonized as pre-modern or backwards; the exclusion of the colonized from civil law and therefore from civilian vacant space; and enforcement through violence.<sup>4</sup> To clarify the relationship between this theory and what was mentioned before: the colonist, for the purpose of achieving colonial objectives in cases of replacement, creates and finds an exceptional vacant space, where the idea of a legitimized and legalized spatial separation is reflected. This forces colonized groups into aggregation in vacant spaces representing confined exceptional cases with characteristics that are related to social violence, and it pushes towards the creation of a state of violence as a main characteristic of these areas, leading to the creation of a collective identity for the colonized that helps to depict the colonizer as the modernist victim, in addition to focusing on the colonized society as a society responsible for practicing violence and bringing crime to its surroundings.<sup>5</sup> The process of creating such configurations aims to establish a state of apartheid using tools of discriminatory law and vacant spatial planning,

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4- Razack, S. 2010, «A Whole in the Wall; A Rose in the Checkpoint: The Spatiality of Colonial Encounters in Occupied Palestine», *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry*, volume I

5- Ibid.

comparable to the apartheid patterns in pre-1994 South Africa. As is noted by Lindsay Bremner, the worst characteristic of the apartheid system in Africa was not a separation wall, but the application of tools for control and humiliation, such as discriminatory laws, spatial planning models, and administrative boundaries.<sup>6</sup>

Turning back to the Israeli vacant spaces planning strategy for the city of Jerusalem and its surroundings, the main goal is to enable a Jewish majority in the city through the adoption of a number of strategies structured around the spatial exclusion of the indigenous people through planning laws and models, restrictions on movement and the concept of residence, and demographic domination.<sup>7</sup> This revolves around the notion of ethnic enabling, which is based on the enabling of certain ethnic groups, at the expense of other groups, to achieve an ethnic majority. In looking at the spatial segmentation of the city of Jerusalem and its surrounding areas, the city can be divided into three major areas: first, the old city; second, the inner area – the neighborhoods surrounding the old city, which started to appear in the period of modernity, and in which there are higher-quality services; and lastly, the outer areas – the Palestinian villages and towns and the Israeli occupation centers surrounding the city.<sup>8</sup> In addition, there are areas that are being separated and marginalized due to the construction of the separation wall; these areas lie on the eastern side of the wall, and Anata is considered a part of them. It is important in this context, and in order to gain an understanding of the geographic reality, to know that the city of Jerusalem lies on the touch-line between the two sides. The Jerusalem 2020 scheme focuses mainly on the issue of demographic balance, aiming for a rate of 70% Jews to 30% Arabs as a basis for the technical solutions enlisted in the scheme. This proposal displays in its framework and general form a technical proposal that aims to preserve the demographic components and the different segments. A number of researchers, including Francesco Chiodelli,<sup>9</sup> Rasem

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6- Bremner, L. «Boarder/skin» in *Against the Wall Israelis Barrier to Peace*, editor Michel Sorkin (New York to London: the New Press

7- Hasson, Sh. 2007. «Jerusalem: the Challenge of transition», in Hasson, Sh. *Jerusalem in the Future: the Challenge of Transition*, the Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies Ltd. Jerusalem

8- Ibid.

9- Chiodelli, F. 2012, "The Jerusalem Master Plan: Planning into the Conflict",

Khamaisi,<sup>10</sup> and Eyal Weizman,<sup>11</sup> have identified management of the demographic balance as a tool of domination within the Jerusalem scheme. Khamaisi illustrated that when looking into the details of the scheme from a technical perspective and calculating density rates, the difference in growth patterns and rates between the Arab and Jewish neighborhoods, and the possibility of expansion, notwithstanding the main objective of the scheme (as pointed out above), the natural growth rates of the population indicate that unless an intervention takes place the percentage of Arab citizens in Jerusalem will reach 40%.<sup>12</sup> This illustrates that the concept of demographic balance was used in order to maintain a Jewish majority on the one hand, and as a basis for the process of the exclusion of the Arab population on the other. The Jerusalem scheme did not shed enough light on the separation wall.<sup>13</sup> The wall led to a dramatic shift in the morphological spatial configuration of the city, leading to the exclusion of the city's eastern perimeter, pushing towards strengthening its connection with the western part of the city (enforcing the dynamics of metropolitan connection between the center and the periphery) and therefore with Tel Aviv. The creation of the wall led to the separation of Palestinian areas that had historical administrative, social, economic, and service-related ties with the center of the city of Jerusalem, in addition to the formation of random configurations due to the absence of administrative tools, planning, and follow-up in these areas. The most important purposes of the separation concern the project of Judaizing Jerusalem and the demographic conflict. The process of separation has led to the exclusion of 55,000 indigenous Arab citizens from the city of Jerusalem

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Institute for Palestinian Studies,' issue 51, 2012. From ([http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/51\\_The\\_Jerusalem\\_Master\\_plan\\_1.pdf](http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/51_The_Jerusalem_Master_plan_1.pdf)) retrieved 21.10.2016

- 10- Khamaisi, R. 2007. "In the Shadow of the Separation Wall: Impeding the Right to the City and Shaping the Palestinian Spatial Environment in Jerusalem/ AlQuds", in Hasson, Sh. Jerusalem in the Future: the Challenge of Transition, the Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies Ltd. Jerusalem
- 11- Weizman, E. Hollow Land: Israeli Architecture of Occupation, London, New York:Verso
- 12- Ibid.
- 13- Chiodelli, F. 2012, "The Jerusalem Master Plan: Planning into the Conflict", Institute for Palestinian Studies,' issue 51, 2012. From ([http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/51\\_The\\_Jerusalem\\_Master\\_plan\\_1.pdf](http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/51_The_Jerusalem_Master_plan_1.pdf)) retrieved 21.10.2016

outside the borders of the wall,<sup>14</sup> in addition to providing a space for the exclusion of a number of citizens residing in the city as a result of a number of exclusionary actions and policies. The establishment of such areas also helped in redefining the relationship of the city of Jerusalem with its surroundings and framing its regional connections. These areas were exposed to administrative, economic, security, service, and spatial exclusionary policies due to their exclusion from the urban space of Jerusalem on the one hand, and the absence of coordination for an actual presence of the Palestinian National Authority's institutions on the other. This resulted in turning this area into a Palestinian area that is isolated from Jerusalem's space on the one hand, and unconnected with the rest of the Palestinian areas on the other.

This separation led to the appearance of chaotic patterns on several urban, social, and security levels, and has led to transforming rural into random configurations. As has been pointed out before, this came in a context of depicting a relationship between the colonized and the colonizer from one side, and enforcing demographic and therefore spatial domination tools from the other, in addition to creating an isolated/isolating area. The process of achieving that relies on spatial and urban shifts that lead to the absence of a personal spatial relationship between the individual and their surroundings and sets the stage for social violence. The transformation is characterized by the emergence of crime and the absence of a feeling of belonging, and it therefore creates negative feelings towards citizenship and civil rights, leading to the emergence of a consumer society in the absence of public space. This is considered pivotal in the literature of Urbicide, as is the case in the villages of the eastern and north-eastern periphery of the city of Jerusalem, which Anata is a part of. This study considers the urban and social shifts in the village of Anata according to this theoretical approach.

## **2. Urban spaces as a colonial domination tool: Between Urbicide and exclusion**

Urban gatherings, with their vacant spaces and their physical formation

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14- OCHA, 2005

(Masses), form an integral urban picture reflecting a number of social, economic, and political patterns for an aggregation and an effective tool for bringing change to said patterns. In this context, the literature on the colonizer's relationship with the colonized space suggests that exploiting it is a tool to impose authority and to exclude and marginalize colonized societies. Kim Dovey's work,<sup>15</sup> which revolves around the idea that built places and patterns represent a medium for contemplation and the imposition of control and authority, portrays the different ways in which vacant spaces and urban construction can be used as a tool for imposing control, as in cases related to the colonizer's imposition of control over such colonized areas as the African continent.<sup>16</sup> Dovey identified five forms of domination, which include the use of force, coercion, temptation, manipulation, and isolation and separation, which are related to the urban environment and the use of spaces as a colonial tool, a means to impose control over colonized groups.<sup>17</sup> In this context, the French philosopher Michael Foucault uses the term Great Confinement to signify the use of power as a tool to dominate the urban environment, and he argued that this reflected a system designed with the aim of gathering and restricting those who are considered a potential danger for the social system within a limited and restricted space.<sup>18</sup>

In this context, it is possible to understand the policies and strategies adopted by the Israelis in matters related to planning and interference with the Palestinian urban environment as a method for imposing control and a certain political agenda.<sup>19</sup> Sharon Rotbard made it clear that Jewish civilian society in "Israel" is enlisted in colonial and Zionist practices aimed at dividing areas and imposing changes related to identity and serving a certain political agenda. This is not limited to any urban action, it has become something more effective; that is, a system

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15- Dovey, K. 2008, «Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form», 2nd ed, London: Routledge

16- Najoh, A. Urban planning of power and social control in colonial Africa, *Journal of Planning Perspective*, Volume 24, 2009- issue. Taylor & Francis Online- retrieved on 22/October 2016

17- Ibid.

18- Ibid.

19- Abujidi, N. 2014, *Urbicide in Palestine: Spaces of oppression and resilience*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York

that brings about changes to the spatial environment with the aim of imposing control. As was argued by Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizmann, the shifts in the Palestinian urban and natural scenes cannot only be considered an indication of the relationship of power and control, but can also be considered a means of control and domination.<sup>20</sup> Referring back to Nourhan Abujidi's work, overall Israeli practices in the Palestinian urban space can be understood in the context of Urbicide which, according to Abujidi, represents a type of political violence towards the urban environment through methods of spatial planning which aim to destroy several aspects, both public and personal, of the social relationships and ties – the origins of political resistance – that affect spatial identity, creating a state of Placelessness.<sup>21</sup> The urbicide process is a means of achieving social and demographic exclusion, or as stated by Martin Coward that the process of the Israeli urbicide resulted in turning the state of homogeneity into a state of antagonism and hostility, which resulted in the creation of isolated and isolating areas that have reinforced the idea of differences and separation between the Arabs and Jews.<sup>22</sup> Abujidi also argued, in relation to mechanisms of urbicide, that models of indirect urbicide are based on the use of planning and construction methods as an urbicide method different from direct urbicide through violence and demolition.<sup>23</sup> It works to destroy what is public, or the capabilities to form what is public.

Turning again to Israeli practices in the city of Jerusalem and its surroundings, these areas are facing a state of urbicide both directly and indirectly, directly represented by the operations of house and facility demolitions and the building of the separation wall, and indirectly represented by the policies of exclusion and marginalization, including the marginalization of towns and villages in the eastern and north-eastern perimeter of the city, or to the east of the separation wall. The process of urbicide in these areas mainly targets the public framework

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20- A civilian occupation Segal, R. & Weizmann, E. 2003, *A Civilian Occupation: the Politics of Israeli Architecture*, Babel & Versco

21- Abujidi, N. 2014, *Urbicide in Palestine: Spaces of oppression and resilience*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York

22- Coward, M. 2001, "Urbicide and the Question of Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina", thesis

23- Abujidi, N. 2014, *Urbicide in Palestine: Spaces of oppression and resilience*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York

of social ties and public space, again on two levels: the framework's relationship with the main center: the city, and the inner framework within particular communities. The process of urbicide is embodied in these areas through exclusionary planning laws and policies inside the borders of the city, and through practices of isolation and embargo on the level of the indicated urban gatherings, where these two elements work together to create isolation areas characterized by exclusion from Jerusalem's public space, affecting the individual's relationship with the city and their right to the city,<sup>24</sup> and therefore their feeling of belonging, which results in the collapse of both individual and collective identity. In addition, such patterns of exclusion result in the emergence of booming urban gatherings which, in addition to being excluded from the public space, are also characterized by traits that are at odds with their native rural social and geographical characteristics; these gatherings are characterized by a high density, the absence of organizational and administrative subordination, and the emergence of violent behavioral patterns, creating a State of Exception in the individual's mental state and the public identity of these gatherings in these areas, which in turn affects their ties with their surroundings and results in a state of isolation and separation as a desired social phenomenon. Consider the village of Anata as an example of the periphery villages on the city of Jerusalem's eastern and north-eastern edges, facing an urbicide that aims to achieve a state of peripheral exclusion to serve certain political agendas.

### **3. The village of Anata: Overview**

The village of Anata is located to the north-east of Jerusalem, at a distance of 9.8km from the center of the city.<sup>25</sup> It is one of the peripheral towns and villages on the eastern and north-eastern edges of Jerusalem. Looking at the spatial structure and zonal composition, the village of Anata comprises two central areas: first, the town of Anata, which is located in categories B and C under the Oslo agreement's

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24- Harvey, D. 2003, «The Right to the City», International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Vol. 27, issue 4, Blackwell publishing Ltd. Provider John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

25- The Applied research institute, 2012, Anata Town Profile, Jerusalem

categorization of lands, and which is the area in which most of the indigenous population of the village are centralized; and second, and Al-Salam neighborhood area, which is located within the borders of the municipality of Jerusalem. The administrative land area of the village extends to a total of 24,027 acres,<sup>26</sup> whereas the constructed urban area lies within an area of 1,210 acres.<sup>27</sup> As for the population count: accurate statistics are not available for the entire area, and the current estimates are limited to the town area of Anata (these estimates are based on the statistics of 2007), and so they do not include the population of Al-Salam neighborhood. Based on the 2016 estimates of the Palestinian Statistics Authority, the total number of residents in the village of Anata is 14,085 inhabitants.<sup>28</sup> The estimates of the town council, based on the residential sector included in services, suggest that the population in areas that are within the borders of the West Bank numbers approximately 25,000 inhabitants.<sup>29</sup> This number of residents live in an urban space that is adjacent to Al-Salam neighborhood area which, as mentioned before, is located within the outlines of the municipality of Jerusalem, with a population count of 20,000 inhabitants.<sup>30</sup>

In order to understand the general context of the village of Anata and its geopolitical framework, it is important to note the existence of the Shou'fat refugee camp, located on the western side of the village and within the outlines of the municipality of Jerusalem. This is considered the only Palestinian refugee camp within the municipal perimeter of Jerusalem. The camp was established in 1965 when the residents of Al-Maghariba district were moved to it before the district was demolished. As a result of the demographic shifts and their urban reflection within a limited vacant space, and for reasons that will be mentioned later, both parts of Anata, the town and Al-Salam neighborhood, along with the Shou'fat refugee camp, make up a contiguous urban unit with a high density. Therefore, any study of the case of Anata must take into

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26- Some sources, like an interview with the mayor/Taha Alrifa'i – 18.5.2016 mentioned that the size of the administrative lands of the village is 32,000 acres

27- The Applied research institute, 2012, Anata Town Profile, Jerusalem

28- The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the annual Jerusalem Statistics book, Ramallah, 2015

29- Mahdi Hamdan, Municipality Council engineer, interview conducted in 18.5.2016

30- Focus Group, session held in September 2016

consideration Anata's relationship with and the demographic and social effects of the Shou'fat refugee camp. In addition, the urban space of Anata consists of an additional element that affects the historical configuration of the village: the grove, or what is known as the valley, planted during the British Mandate as a green reserve on a total area of 90 acres. Figure (2) indicates the four main components of the urban configuration of the village of Anata.

The history of the establishment of Anata goes back to the Canaanite period.<sup>31</sup> It is considered the house of Jeremiah, who had attended the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 586 BC, and who was referred to during the period of Roman rule by the name Anathoth.<sup>32</sup> Through to the end of the British Mandate, that is in the first half of the 20th century, the population of the village was around 438 inhabitants and was fully reliant on agricultural crops.<sup>33</sup> The availability of a nearby water source, the Ein Fara spring, is considered one of the reasons of the importance of the village during the British Mandate; during the Mandate, a water tank (known at the time as Al-Haus) was built, and it was used to distribute water to the other areas of Jerusalem. This signalled the town's expansion outside the borders of the old city and towards the east. In the period of the Jordanian administration/custody, as mentioned above, the Shou'fat camp was established on the lands of Shou'fat, which were adjacent to the village. This period is also distinguished by the establishment of the first two elementary schools: one for males in 1966, and another for females in 1967.<sup>34</sup> After 1967 and Israel's occupation of the rest of the Palestinian lands, Anata remained dependent on its agricultural part as a basis for economic life, and this lasted until the 1980s. This affected the nature of the social structure, as reflected in the spatial configuration of that time. The estimated population of Anata in 1967 was 1000 inhabitants; it had

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31- The Palestinian Academic Group for International Affairs, the Project of Rehabilitating Arab Jerusalem: The Importance of Palestinian Planning for Arab Jerusalem (The Anata District – Study Projects), Passia Institute, Jerusalem, 2000

32- Mustafa Al-Dabagh, Biladna Encyclopedia Palestine, Dar Al-Huda: Kufor Qare' 1991 (New Edition)

33- Ibid.

34- Ibid.

been estimated at 852 inhabitants in 1961.<sup>35</sup>

During all of the previous periods up until 1993, and before the occupation authority's enforcement of a cordon around the city of Jerusalem and the occupied lands of 1948 through the establishment of checkpoints, the city of Jerusalem represented the main service center for the residents of the village. Conversely, Anata (referring here to the town of Anata, within administrative areas B and C) is currently considered, in accordance with the administrative service categorization of the Palestinian National Authority, to be located within Jerusalem's rural areas. Part of its service centers are in the areas of Al-Ram, Al-Ezareyeh, and Abu Dees; from a centric point, Anata is a subsidiary of the city of Ramallah. This shift in the central relationship from Jerusalem to some of the surrounding areas and to the city of Ramallah has affected the collective conception of the residents of Anata, as it led to the dispersion of centers that influenced the individual's pertinence and relationships on the peripheral level. The situation was aggravated by the distance from the city of Ramallah – the new center – and the difficulty of transportation in the shadow of Israeli apartheid procedures such as checkpoints. In addition, the other half of the village, the Al-Salam neighborhood, lies within the borders of Jerusalem. This meant that the residents of this neighborhood, in addition to its vacant spaces, were subject to a different system of laws as well as different centralized links due to the city of Jerusalem being their main destination. In order to understand that, it is important to consider the geopolitical shifts that the village of Anata went through, and their effects on the current urban and social configurations.

#### **4. Anata and the geopolitical context**

Looking back at the British Mandate period, the village of Anata comprised one of the villages that existed in the area described as the countryside of Jerusalem, where it relied on the city of Jerusalem as a main center for both administration and services. It remained that way after the segmentation of the city in 1948; Anata stayed connected with the eastern part of the city. The first geopolitical factor affecting

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35- Ibid.

Anata's modern history was the Kendall scheme for Jerusalem. In 1964 the Jordanian government gave the British planner Henry Kendall the responsibility of preparing an Outline Plan for the administrative framework of the city. It was finished and approved in 1966. The Kendall scheme was founded on the premise that Jerusalem and Gaza represented a metropolitan gateway to the Arab Nation. Therefore, the scheme relied on identifying old sites, new sites, and metropolitan expansion sites: Anata was one of the latter. Based on this scheme, the area of Anata was considered an area for future urban expansion for the city, one of a number of areas where it was possible to provide residence to a total of 30,000 inhabitants<sup>36</sup> (shape 3 clarifies the Kendall scheme for the year 1966). After the occupation of the eastern side of the city of Jerusalem, the occupation authorities placed the Kendall scheme on hold. Based upon that, a number of the villages on the eastern periphery of the city were excluded, like the village of Anata at the time. The demographic rates of the city were determined after these districts were excluded. After 1967, the borders of Jerusalem, in accordance with the Israeli scheme, led to a division of the two parts of Anata. The area known as Al-Salam neighborhood (with a very low population at the time – no more than a few houses) was identified as a part of the city's borders; this was accompanied by the exclusion of the other half – the town of Anata. Based on the Kendall scheme, the city of Jerusalem needed the gardens and farming fields that were available in Anata, while the village needed the service connection with the city (Figure 4 illustrates the gardens and farms in the village of Anata according to Kendall's 1966 scheme)<sup>37</sup>.

In the same geopolitical context, the erection of the separation wall around the village in 2003 was a crucial turning point, leading to a structural change on the level of geographical ties and determiners of the village, which resulted in two highly sensitive dynamics: the exclusion of the village from its spatial, service, and social medium with the city of Jerusalem; and the creation of a hybrid area that comprises

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36- The Palestinian Academic Group for International Affairs, the Project of Rehabilitating Arab Jerusalem: The Importance of Palestinian Planning for Arab Jerusalem (The Anata District – Study Projects), Passia Institute, Jerusalem, 2000

37- Ibid.

three different merged configurations in a determined and isolated space: the Shou'fat refugee camp, mostly comprising refugees and newcomers; Al-Salam neighborhood, comprising newcomers carrying the Jerusalem ID; and the town of Anata, which mostly comprises the indigenous residents of the town.

Based on the segmentations of the Oslo agreement, the lands of Anata were categorized as areas B and C. 918 acres of Anata's land are located in category B, which makes up 3.8% of the land's total size, while 23,180 acres are located in category C, making up 96.2% of the land's total size.<sup>38</sup>

During the Israeli occupation, the village of Anata faced a number of colonial acts that have affected its historic and service relationship with the main center, Jerusalem, including the cutting of ties with some population groups that are carrying the West Bank (green) ID and control of the ease of travel for other population groups that are carrying the Jerusalem (blue) ID. These changes resulted in a number of urban, social, demographic, and economic shifts that led to the transformation of a rural society with the emergence of exceptional spikes of population density and negative social practices. The occupation authorities, with the aim of achieving spatial domination, carried out a number of practices that can be divided into direct spatial practices, such as the establishment of settlements (there are four settlement clusters built on nearly 2,648 acres of confiscated lands that belong to Anata<sup>39</sup>); the confiscation of lands; the establishment of the occupation's eastern service road and line; the erection of the apartheid separation wall (which confiscated nearly 12,140 acres); checkpoints; and the establishment of a military base on Anata's lands (in the location that was determined by the Kendall scheme as an industrial land for the city of Jerusalem (see figure 4)). In addition to these practices, there are other indirect colonial practices that have negatively affected the urban and social structure of the village, such as planning policies and the laws of residence in the city of Jerusalem, which resulted in waves of demographic immigration that have brought changes to the social structure, accompanied by the systematic absence of the role of

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38- The Applied research institute, 2012, Anata Town Profile, Jerusalem

39- Ibid.

security supervision, the fragmentation of social supervision, and the adoption of marginalization policies. These policies resulted in shifts in demographic and social composition, in addition to changes in the spatial identity of the village and its transition from a rural area to an area of random exceptions, leading to the creation of an exclusionary area characterized by randomness and chaos. The following sections will address these shifts and their effects.

## **5. Social demographical changes**

As pointed out before, and referring back to the population count in the village of Anata until the early 1970s, the number of residents in the village at that time did not surpass 1000, most working in the agricultural sector and some in the stone industry.<sup>40</sup> However, looking at the population count during the 1980s and 1990s and into the first decade of the new millennium, it is clear that population growth rates were normal and then mounted: 954 inhabitants in 1982, 7,130 inhabitants in 1997, and 9,337 inhabitants in 2005.<sup>41</sup> These estimates do not include the Al-Salam neighborhood area, which until 2005 had not witnessed any large urban growth; social activities were limited to a small portion of the village's indigenous residents and Jerusalem ID carriers.<sup>42</sup> These statistics also do not include the population of the Shou'fat refugee camp. Going back to the nature of the social structure, the composition was a homogeneous one, most of it made up of indigenous inhabitants who were enabled by the nature of the spatial configuration to maintain the rural character of the place.<sup>43</sup>

The series of laws related to residence in the area of Jerusalem, in addition to the planning models adopted by the Israeli authorities in the city, have led to a turning point in the social and demographic character of the village of Anata in particular, enforced by spatial constraints – the separation wall besieges each of the components of the town of Anata and the Shou'fat refugee camp. Israeli planning laws, emerging

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40- Saleh Alsheikh Yousef, former Head of Council, interview conducted on 18.5.2016

41- Palestine Remembers

42- Mahdi Hamdan, Municipality Council engineer, interview conducted on 18.5.2016

43- It was pointed out through a series of interviews conducted with the mayor of Anata - Taha Al-Refa'i, and Saleh Alsheif - former mayor

from the Jerusalem scheme 2020, rely on the demographic balance between the Arab and Jewish presence in the city. The planning team which was responsible for the preparation of the Jerusalem 2020 scheme addressed the importance of demographic control in areas of Arab expansion with the tools available to the “Israeli government”. On that basis, the scheme relied on allocating 2,600 acres of land as areas for Arab expansion and 9,500 acres for the expansion of Jewish populations and districts, noting that the target population percentage is 30%-70%.<sup>44</sup> This model relied on the method of concentration of Arab neighborhoods, alongside the method of horizontal expansion of new areas for Jewish neighborhoods. Based on what’s mentioned, which defines the areas of Arab neighborhood expansion, and which negatively affected the issuing of construction licenses, it is possible to understand one of the factors used by Israeli authorities in excluding the Arab population. Add to that a number of other exclusionary policies such as the obstacles set by the occupation in issuing construction licenses and the policy of economic narrowing, in addition to the huge difference in the standards of living in some of the available areas such as Beit Hanina and the area of the French hill. All of these elements were factors in the waves of immigration to isolated areas to the east of the wall, which is still considered part of the borders of the municipality of Jerusalem, and again includes the village of Anata (Al-Salam neighborhood) and the Shou’fat refugee camp. This has led to the enhancing of commercial activity in the area, while the differences in the standards of living managed to attract carriers of the Jerusalem ID with medium and limited incomes to look for residence in the village of Anata. These waves led to major shifts in demographic estimates, which were further shifted by the immigration of groups from other Palestinian lands due to the availability of new lands for investment as a result for the huge increase in population – although there are no accurate statistics in the case of Al-Salam neighborhood area.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, according to the mayor of Anata, it is possible to estimate

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44- Khamaisi, R. 2007. “In the Shadow of the Separation Wall: Impeding the Right to the City and Shaping the Palestinian Spatial Environment in Jerusalem/AlQuds”, in Hasson, Sh. *Jerusalem in the Future: the Challenge of Transition*, the Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies Ltd. Jerusalem

45- Mohammed Alhelo Hamdan, Contractor and Investor, interview conducted on 18.5.2016

the population of the town area of Anata, Al-Salam neighborhood, and the Shou'fat refugee camp to be between 70,000 to 80,000 inhabitants.<sup>46</sup>

As a result of the decline of urban expansion opportunities due to violent Israeli practices against the public space of Anata, represented in the imposition of the spatial domination tools mentioned in the previous section, and which had led to the decline and, in some cases, the absence of urban expansion opportunities, and in the context of the steady increase of population, population density increased to an estimated 350 people/hectare, a very high urban density. This led to the phenomenon of expansion at the expense of agricultural lands and available spaces which, in addition to other factors such as the availability of high investment opportunities<sup>47</sup> and transition to a reliance on labor in the inner occupied lands<sup>48</sup>, resulted in the transformation of a rural community social structure to that of a consumerist community. This has reinforced the massive difference between the components, sections, and assets of the new community within the space of Anata, especially in the absence of individuals' sense of spatial belonging and the spreading of crime, drugs, weapons, and the absence of security, all of which has affected the quality of the public space and people's relationships with one another and with the spatial configuration in which these groups live. It was indicated by the concentrated study group, during which a group of new residents of Anata were hosted, that the group did not want to live in the areas of Al-Salam neighborhood or the Shou'fat refugee camp due to the lack of security in these areas; the sole reason for their residence in Anata traces back to issues related to the requirements for obtaining a Jerusalem ID and the competitive economic nature of the area.<sup>49</sup> All of this resulted in a random isolating and isolated spatial configuration, as will be discussed in the upcoming sections.

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46- Taha Al-Refa'i, Mayor of Anata, interview conducted on 18.5.2016

47- Khaled Al-Refa'i, Contractor and Investor, interview conducted on 18.5.2016

48- Taha Al-Refa'i, Mayor of Anata, interview conducted on 18.5.2016

49- Focus Group, Newcomers to the Town, interview conducted on September 2016

## **6. Anata as an urban spike: an investment environment in the absence of an executive authority.**

Shifts on the social and demographic levels have played a role in bringing urban changes and activities on the investment level as a result of the absence of an executive authority on the ground. The investment activity in Anata was mainly focused on real estate, a sector active in the main demand areas: Al-Salam neighborhood and expanding outside its borders towards the Shou'fat refugee camp. The concentration of real estate activity in Al-Salam neighborhood area, which lies within the borders of Jerusalem, indicates that the majority of people coming to Anata are carriers of the Jerusalem ID. This atmosphere created an area of attraction for investors which, according to some of the investors who were interviewed for the study, traces back to the high demand and the rising prices compared to the rest of the lands within category B and C areas, and the limited competition when compared to other Palestinian areas such as the city of Ramallah.<sup>50</sup> This was also heavily affected by the absence of the rule of law on the ground, or due to the fact that the area located within the boundaries of the Palestinian Authority is mainly classified as area C, which means that this area is fully subject to the Israeli authorities that have effectively removed the rule of law and limited the role of Palestinian institutions, or due to the systematic absence of the law's role in areas categorized within the borders of Jerusalem. This absence of law facilitated random construction operations that relied on the method of expanding as much as possible from the town, and on the use of as much as possible of the construction lands without any consideration for design concepts that are crucial in formulating spatial urban configuration such as the floor/area ratio, gravitational repercussions, and high altitudes; in addition, there was little need to secure construction licenses which, in the case of areas within the borders of Jerusalem, require a large amount of time and a huge financial burden. This environment led to high level of construction activity in the absence of laws that guarantee public rights and maintain the quality of the urban structure. This resulted in the

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50- A number of interviews conducted with investors and contractors, Khalid Al-Refa'i and Mohammed Hamdan; the interviews were conducted on 18.5.2016

formation of random urban patterns, dramatic and rapid spatial shifts – undermining important sociocultural values such as the concept of Common/Public space, which is considered crucial for organizing social relationships in the case of diverse communities<sup>51</sup>– the absence of spatial belonging and interaction with the environment on a beneficial personal basis, and the absence of important urban spatial items that play a role in spatial security such as spatial configuration, mobility and visual ties, control and controllability, the feeling of belonging to the public space in regards to its availability, visual formation and tidiness, and the organized urban picture.

## **7. Anata as an urban spike: new urban, architectural, and spatial patterns**

As pointed out before, the vacant spaces of Anata have seen dramatic changes in recent years as a result of systematic colonial practices that have led to demographic and social shifts, resulting in an exceptionally isolated and exclusionary space. By focusing on the architectural and urban sides, a number of urban spatial patterns and architectural indicators appeared (within this geographical formation), and they have played a major role in the different shifts mentioned above. Most important was these factors' role in turning a rural society with a clear social and urban identity into a spatially random society.

The village of Anata was historically formed in the context of a rural identity, and its features were reflected on the economic, social, and vital urban structures. Figure 4 illustrates the spaces allocated for gardens and farmlands according to Kendall's scheme. On the urban level, the village of Anata was formed on the hill known as the old town center, which is where the urban pattern was centrally formed, around the mosque and the public square. The town center contained some important architectural and archaeological landmarks such as the Russian Monastery west of the mosque and a ground layer containing Roman graves.<sup>52</sup> Buildings were first formed as a result of the local

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51- Harvey, D. 2003, «The Right to the City», International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Vol. 27, issue 4, Blackwell publishing Ltd. Provider John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

52- Mustafa Al-Dabagh, Biladna Encyclopedia Palestine, Dar Al-Huda: Kufor Qare'

architectural pattern (Vernacular Architecture), in which houses were formed by spontaneous cubic additions that followed the pattern of daily spatial needs, with each group of houses forming an inner space known as Al-hosh (the yard). During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and as a result of the growing population and the economic shifts resulting from stonework, some architectural patterns, characterized by merging some modern and traditional effects, began to appear outside the boundaries of the old town. This expansion mainly took a natural vital pattern, which was formed as a result of the construction's response to topographical, environmental, and social determiners and available capabilities. This expansion was mainly headed towards the east due to the existence of the Haouz and the British water conversion station east of the town. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the urban pattern and the spatial nature of the town during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Urban growth and architectural development continued with the same nature until the 1990s. There were some changes in the urban pattern due to the emergence of the machine, which affected the stonework industry, the adoption of new construction techniques, and social and economic shifts. Nevertheless, the general pattern maintained the urban nature of the landscapes in regards to preserving farmlands, the availability of gardens around houses, the adoption of the individual houses pattern; preserving the idea of yards between house clusters; and preserving the main center and the town's vital expansion (figures 7 and 8 illustrate the urban patterns and the public space of the village of Anata during the 1990s and 1980s). As for the central aspect, until the end of the 1990s the village was formed around two centers: the old town and the new center surrounding the mosque of Al-Salam neighborhood, where some of the residents built their houses.

The village, especially after the erection of the separation wall in 2003,<sup>53</sup> faced many dramatic changes in its urban and architectural spatial structure as a result of policies of urbicide. The changes can be listed

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1991 (New Edition)

53- This was pointed out by a large number of inhabitants of Anata who were interviewed in September 2016.

as follows:

- Shifts in the urban growth pattern: Urban growth took on a random pattern as a substitute to the vital pattern. Urban expansion took a totalitarian form, starting in Al-Salam neighborhood area and then in the town of Anata, parallel to the totalitarian urban expansion of the Shou'fat refugee camp outside of its known borders. This resulted in the emergence of an attached isotropic spatial component as a result of the absence of horizontal expansion opportunities due to the use of colonial spatial siege tools such as the separation wall to the west, south, and north-west, the military base to the east, and the occupation route and power line (high-voltage) to the north. These factors pushed urban growth to take the form of urban condensing, which is based on construction in the available space regardless of the nature and characteristics of that space.
- Shifts in urban density: Very high-density rates emerged, estimated at 350 people/hectare. This affected the quality of the urban structure and caused pressure on the public space and available services.
- Shifts in the centric configuration of the village: As indicated before, the village was formed around two main centers. Nevertheless, the spatial urban shifts and the random direction which prevailed in urban growth patterns have led to a centric dispersion which resulted in the emergence of scattered service areas. This both opened up exploitation opportunities associated with the emergence of large urban gatherings and resulted in the absence of an organized social centre.
- The extinction of agricultural growth opportunities: Urban expansion resulted in the retraction of spaces available for agricultural reclamation. It has also led to the turning of agricultural areas, such as including the Olive Land, the Figs Garden, and others, into residential

areas, which led to the unavailability of farming lands.<sup>54</sup> The decline of agricultural growth opportunities was further increased by the absence of possible support and systematic Israeli practices that aimed to exclude that sector, such as the demolition of the remaining agricultural facilities, which led the farmers to head towards other lands within the borders of areas under the control of the Palestinian National Authorities.<sup>55</sup>

- Transformation of the public/common space: As a result of random expansion, the institution of the Hosh (yard) was excluded from the public space, eliminating the concept of a common public space. Additionally, the centric dispersion led to the absence of the role of the town's main yard. And in the same context, a large portion of the village's lands that were categorized as endowment lands were violated and turned by investors into residential areas. This undermined opportunities to build public social service centers as well as opportunities to form a public space in the context of a dense and diverse population.
- Shifts in urban patterns: A vertical urban pattern emerged, and tall buildings, in some cases with 12-14 floors, were built. In the absence of the standards and regulations required to preserve appropriate environmental solutions and to prevent the formation of spatial patterns that encourage negative social behavior such as crime, this pattern was characterized by experimental architectural methods and mechanisms that are repetitive and not socially constructive.
- The extinction of green areas: In Anata's original urban configuration there were garden areas that acted like parks for the residents of the village, but this changed due to the factors mentioned above and the phenomenon

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54- Hijjah Safeyeh, village elder, interview conducted on 18.5.2016

55- Hussein Zyadeh, village farmer, interview conducted in 18.5.2016

of urban density. Additionally, the Horsh, or what was known as the valley, which was suggested to be turned into a park and a natural reserve for the town during the 1990s,<sup>56</sup> lost 90% of its size due to the occupation authorities' confiscation of 90 acres of its lands to build the separation wall.

- Future expansion: There is a lack of future expansion opportunities due to the decline of lands available for expansion, as a result of Israeli practices and due to the random urban shifts which left no possible spaces for future expansion.
- Land-use: As a result of the scarcity of lands available for the population's expansion, the population expanded towards the industrial area. This trend was enforced by the fact that the industrial area is located towards the main entrance for the town, which resulted in a mingled urban pattern with industrial and residential buildings merged together.

These changes have led to the emergence of a random urban formation characterized by a high-density population, the absence of public space, the decline of the service and urban structure quality, a centric absence, a transformation of spatial identity, and the emergence of hybrid urban patterns. All these changes led to the emergence of corrupt behavioral patterns such as the rise of criminal elements, weapons, and drugs. In addition, these factors enhanced the pattern of detachment from the general space of the village and the formation of an isolated spatial component that isolated its residents and the city of Jerusalem from urban expansion towards the rest of the Palestinian areas.

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56- Judge Mohammed Salameh, currently judge, formerly head of council, interview conducted on 18.5.2016

## **8. An exceptional urban configuration: civic exclusion and personal shifts**

The urban and architectural shifts that took place in Anata were a result of exclusionary Israeli practices which included direct practices, such as military practices on the ground, confiscation and the establishment of settlements, and the severing of physical ties with the city of Jerusalem, and indirect practices, which included exclusionary practices in the city of Jerusalem and which directly affected the urban spatial configuration of Anata, bringing about the legal absence and the marginalization of the village. Such practices represent a case of indirect urbicide that aims to destroy the public space – the spatial linchpin for the maintenance of a diverse society. These changes led to the emergence of an urban area characterized by the spreading of crime and negative social behavior. The concept of Defensible Space suggests the development of urban environments whose buildings and spatial location is formed in a way that allows the residents to maintain collective security in their environment.<sup>57</sup> The absence of public space and social services, the dramatic shift in spatial identity, the high-density populations subject to spatial patterns not conducive to public supervision, and the declining quality of the urban structure have led to the emergence of negative behavioral patterns. Lifestyles and special laws prevailing in the area further reinforced the detachment of the area from its surroundings. Although the concept of Agamben is connected to the legal state in a different manner, the feeling of being exceptional developed nonetheless in these societies as well.

Looking back at the general framework, these changes, in addition to their contribution to the exclusion of a large number of residents outside of the physical borders of Jerusalem, led to the formation of an area nearby the city that is excluded from the public space due to separation elements such as the wall and checkpoints, in addition to the residents' subjection to the exclusion system, pushing the residents to be detached mentally, psychologically, and spatially from the city's perimeter. This resulted in three major changes to the configuration of the city of Jerusalem and the individual, collective, and peripheral

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57- Oscar Newman, O. 1973, «Defensible space; Crime Prevention through Urban Design»

relationships that characterize it: the formation of groups of Jerusalem ID carriers who have lost their Right to the City as a result to the lack of connection between them and the city, and the consequent removal of these groups' influence on the formation of the city; the emergence of an exclusion area which, alongside other neutral Palestinian communities such as Kufor Aqab and other isolating areas in the east and north-east, form an area of demographic exclusion and an alternate to the carriers of the Jerusalem ID; and the formation of an isolating belt zone comprising the sum of these communities. The peripheral relationships of the city are being transformed in two directions: the severing of the metropolitan relationship of the city towards the north-east and the consequent strengthening of the correlation between the city center and the western perimeter towards the city of Tel Aviv. From the other side, the formation of these communities resulted in an isolating belt zone between the city and the rest of the Palestinian areas, with these communities themselves constituted as exceptional, isolating, and isolated areas.

The urban and architectural shifts that took place in Anata were the result of the Urbicide imposed by Israeli authorities with the purpose of excluding the Arab areas or creating a stable reality within the geopolitical system. These shifts created an exclusionary state that is characterized by the prevalence of chaos and negative social behaviors. The case of Anata is similar to those of other Palestinian communities surrounding the city of Jerusalem from the eastern and north-eastern side. It is crucial to point out the importance of providing entrepreneur Palestinian visions for dealing with these shifts and finding mechanisms on the local, grassroots level with the purpose of providing appropriate solutions that will work on improving the reality of the situation and building capacities to stand up to these policies.

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# **Birzeit: A Transitional Urban Formation**

**Dima Yaser**



## Introduction

This study concerns the rural/urban scene in the shadow of neoliberal spatial impacts in Palestine, as manifested in the process of urbanization. The Palestinian scene, as a result of urban investment speculations and opportunities, has come to be characterized by the accumulation of capital in the shadow of rapid political, economic, and spatial shifts, pursued under the slogan of “building a nation” on the one hand, and urban resistance on the other.

The Palestinian National Authority adopted the model of neoliberalism – a model adopted internationally and not exclusive to Palestine – which from its perspective provides the people with a fertile land for development and prosperity, in the absence of a resistance strategy against the occupation after the tangible failure of the armed resistance.<sup>1</sup> From there, and since the arrival of the Palestinian Authority, the “liberated” areas witnessed a large urban spike in order to accommodate the newcomers and returnees. This phase formed the first spike in the shadow of the process of building institutions and the foundations of a nation. This did not last long, as the situation severely deteriorated with the start of the Second Uprising. As for the second urban spike, which accompanied Salam Fayad’s assumption of the Palestinian Authority’s office of prime minister in 2007, it took a sharp and intense turn towards urban, economic, and political activities under the name of neoliberalism as a method of promoting liberalism and reforming the national movement,<sup>2</sup> which from a different angle reflects the picture painted by the Authority of the future nation. This was met with great enthusiasm by many residing and returning investors to this land, which was now “flowing with milk and honey” – for a specific category of people.

The authority took the city of Ramallah as a “temporary” headquarters for its centers and institutions. This led to the emergence of a social spike and a new bourgeois class, which greatly contributed to the achievement of the national vision of the Palestinian Authority and the establishment

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1- Al-Khaldi, Raja and Samour, Subhi, *New Neoliberalism as Liberalism: The State of Palestine and the Reformation of the National Movement*, *The Palestinian Studies Magazine*, 2011

2- Ibid.

of the nation and its institutions. This led to a dramatic urban spike that is based on a system of consumerism characterized by new urban social formations.<sup>3</sup> This spike led to a growth of population and an increase of random urban expansions in many urban and semi-urban centers, which in turn included the suburbs and rural areas adjacent to these centers as major players in this urban-social consumerist system.

The shifts in the urban frameworks of the different Palestinian cities, whether on an economic, social, or urban basis, have led to an increase of growth speculations and estimates. This seriously affected the investment environment in the areas surrounding the cities, leading to tangible changes in the nature and structure of these areas. Shifts in consumerist patterns were embodied in new urban and architectural patterns and in emerging behavioral patterns. The relationship of the city of Ramallah with its environment is considered a crucial example of these changes; economic and urban growth led to the creation of an atmosphere of speculations, and based upon them, a futuristic picture was drawn for the direction of the city and its expansion, and therefore for investment opportunities and estimates within it.

Based on the previous context, the town of Birzeit is considered one of the models for these changes. During recent years, the town has witnessed a number of changes in its urban and architectural structure, which have affected the demographic composition and contributed to the emergence of urban patterns that are different from the local nature of the town, which was derivative of the rural origins of the area. This paper aims to study patterns of spatial, urban, and architectural shifts in the town of Birzeit, its relationship with the social behavioral and economic patterns of the town, its relationship with the neoliberal system, and the effect of the city of Ramallah as a model and an adjacent and expanding physical framework. It is worth noting here that this study emanated from a previous study conducted by the researcher Jamil Hilal under the title "Ramallah: The City and The Story," in which he focused on the social shifts and their relationship with the urban and social shifts of the city.<sup>4</sup>

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3- Al-Saqa, Abaher, *The New Urban Configurations in the Palestinian Community Kufor Aqab – As a Model*, Center for Development Studies, Birzeit University: Birzeit, 2015

4- Hilal, Jamil, 2015, *Ramallah the City and the Story*, Center for Development

This study adopts an ethnographic research method which relies on the study of how patterns of human behavior relate to the physical environment. The methodology relies on in-depth interviews, the recorded observation of related urban and behavioral patterns, a morphological study of changes in vacant spaces and urban structural shifts, and the study of historical sources concerning the urban environment. The research also engages with more theoretical sources. In addition to what has been mentioned, the research relies on analysis of maps related to vacant spaces, their development, and their shifts between different time periods.

## **1. Urban and Architectural Shifts in Neoliberal Contexts**

### **1.1 Urbanization as a Shifting Capitalist Tool**

Spatial urban and architectural formations are a crucial outcome of political dynamics. These formations reflect a series of correlations and expressions that are based on the nature of social, cultural, and dynamic components.<sup>5</sup> In this context, Manuel Castells commented that the operations affecting urban and cultural shifts are distinct political operations, more so than natural operations. This theory establishes that any urban or architectural process should be read in its geopolitical context; it unveils references and policies that are beyond the natural physical space. In recent years, theoretical analysis focused on the changes that resulted from capitalist domination as a tool that moves and organizes different social patterns, in which context the system of spatial creation arises. The process of creating spatial urban formations, as discussed by David Harvey, is an active moment in the shadow of a temporal dynamic for the accumulation of capital and matter.<sup>6</sup> The concept of urbanization embodies the main instrument used by the capitalist system to identify its relationship with urban and architectural space. According to Harvey, the process of

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Studies, Birzeit University: Birzeit, 2015

5- Castells, Manuel, *the Urban Question: a Marxist Approach*, 1977

6- Harvey, David, *The Right to the City*, *New Left Review*, 2008

urbanization is based on the social and geographical concentration of surplus production.<sup>7</sup> The relationship between the concepts of surplus production and surplus value represents the basis of the relationship between capital and urbanization.

Considering the concept of urbanization in an urban theoretical context, the origins of the use of the term trace back to Ildefons Cerdà and his book *Teoría General de Urbanización*, which considered the movement of vehicles, infrastructure, and the individual's residential unit as the most important components of a city.<sup>8</sup> Applying the model used by Cerda to the city of Barcelona in Spain, an idea of an infinitely expanding Isotropic Plan appears. The origins of the idea are based on the reproduction of homogeneous cities that consist of the same residential units and that reflect the idea of infinite production from the same units, and which therefore embody the concept of Mass Production<sup>9</sup> in an urban context based on a network of transportation and movement. Pier Aureli elaborated how Urbanization as a spatial concept represents the idea of replacing the political with the economic. Urbanization is used as an instrument to create better circumstances for creating work forces. In this context, Aureli argues that Urbanization as a term is synonymous with the term Economic Growth.<sup>10</sup>

As for Urbanization's effects: The process of creating Urbanization relies on practices of Totalitarianism. Aureli argues that the process of urbanization works through the melting of all spatial borders in order to create an infinite dynamic that contributes to processes of mass production. This involves melting the borders between common public space and personal space; the urban component is realized as an absolute private residential space.<sup>11</sup> This shows that the process of urbanization works as an instrument for the privatization of the city and for the implementation of capitalist agendas that aim to transform the

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7- Ibid.

8- Aureli, Pier Vittorio, *Toward the Archipelago*, Log No.11, 2008

9- According to Aureli, the concept of Urbanization with its infinite expansion and Mass Production embodied the concept of Hegel to describe production – The Bad Infinity – which is based on the basis of the infinite production of the same thing.

10- Ibid.

11- Ibid.

city's space from a political product to a distinct economic product.

David Harvey, discussing the concept of the Right to the City, emphasized the importance of The Common.<sup>12</sup> The Common in its spatial concept is a component expressed through public space and public services – all that can be used by everyone without any physical, political, or economic limits or obstacles. These spatial patterns should reflect the value of Inclusiveness. The neoliberal system is set up in systematic hostility to all that is public, as manifested in its tendency to occupy and privatize all that is public and impose Exclusiveness. These shifts arise in the context of the commodification of everything possible in the framework of focusing production on the increase of surplus value. This has severe effects on the relationship of the individual with their environment, excluding individuals' part in forming the public space which, according to Henry Lefebvre, is crucial to strengthening the concept of Right to the City.<sup>13</sup>

In observing urban shifts in the West Bank after the formation of the National Authority, and especially after the embrace of the neoliberal model in the year 2007, one notices that the different urban components have witnessed a systematic urbanization process, varying in degree from one city to another, with the city of Ramallah as the clearest model. The spatial shifts inside the city, in addition to the peripheral effects of future expansion estimates and the scarcity and high price of lands, led to the disappearance of public space and the growth of Exclusive Spaces, in addition to a homogeneous expansion that works to eliminate the urban and spatial characteristics of the city. This model deeply affected the urban components surrounding the city, including the town of Birzeit. This was represented in the adoption of the model of commercial construction, the dominance of residential patterns, and the emergence of consumerist landmarks, all at the expense of the availability of agricultural lands, rural spatial identity, the public space, and the social fabric, which in turn affected spatial identity, future development opportunities, and the individual's sense of spatial belonging.

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12- Harvey, David, *The Right to the City*, New Left Review, 2008

13- Lefebvre, Henri, *La Droite a la Ville*, 1968.

## 1.2 The Palestinian Scene – Spatial Shifts in Rural Areas

In the shadow of political changes before and after the Oslo agreement, the Palestinian scene witnessed moral shifts related to the concept of land and spatial identity, as embodied in spatial, physical, and economic concepts. The most important of the changes that took place in both periods was the redefining of the relationship between the land and the individual – farmer/peasant/land owner – which produced a conflict, a struggle, and a spatial/pertinence (Alienation) between the two sides.

The marginalization of rural areas wasn't only related to the phase after the Oslo agreement. After the ending of Ottoman rule of the area, lands were privatized and owned by individuals rather than the exchequer; ownership had been managed by the people who used them and in accordance with the traditions and customs of the time. These changes in ownership came with the promulgation of new regulations and the project of land recording in 1858.<sup>14</sup> Lands became a commodity for production and for paying the taxes of the Ottoman Empire and/or for bartering the accumulated debts of the farmers to the feudal lords. With the entrenchment of the occupation in the 1970s and 1980s, and the rise of job opportunities in "Israel", the gap in relationships between the individual and the land grew larger as a result of the orientation of the

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14- The Palestinian Information Center – Wafa – Law of Land Registering 1858: The Ottoman empire, through issuing the law of lands in the year 1858, aimed to tighten its control on the land, and to ensure its right to it against the local forces and the remnants of feudalism, and made actions related to lands limited by specific laws placed by the nation; it divided the land through specific laws placed for several divisions as mentioned before, with each division having its own rules and regulations. And to achieve total control over the land, many laws were issued and were considered complementary to it; in the year 1859 it issued the list of instructions related to Tabo bonds, the Tabo law in 1861, and its attachments in 1867. This law made the use of land and its utilization determined by the common offer between the inhabitants, and in some cases the right to use the land was confirmed by papers that were called legitimate pleas, which were approved by the law, and had no value, and without them placing the hand on the land and disposing of it would determine the ownership. In the case of a conflict between the farmers for the land the verbal testimonies of the villagers would determine the ownership, which led to constant conflicts between the farmers. Based on that, this law did not achieve the desired goals, which were represented in: tightening the state's grip over the lands, and registering the lands under the names of their administrators in case of the peasants' attempts to evade registering their lands out of fear of taxes; this led to the concentration of large areas of Palestinian lands in the hands of a small number of owners.

Palestinian workforce, which originally worked in the agricultural sector. This was due to the differences in labor wages and the search for a relatively steady income away from the disturbances of the settlers and settlements that were starting to spread on their lands. In spite of the decrease of opportunities for the Palestinian workforce in “Israel” after the year 2002,<sup>15</sup> the return to farmlands was somewhat limited due to the weakness of the agricultural sector’s infrastructure, the exclusionary colonial practices which prevented agricultural sustainability, and the effects of the Oslo agreement, which limited the use of water resources. This led many workers to seek work in the service sector and available employment in urban centers by the government’s institutions, donors, non-governmental parties, and the civil institutions that have invaded the area. This led to an increase of internal migration from rural areas to urban and semi-urban centers, in addition to reinforcing the absence of development plans to use human resources; this played a role in the growth of the service sector and the construction sector.

Looking at urban growth in rural areas specifically and urban areas in general, in the period before the Oslo agreement, urban activity was limited to some housing enterprises that were supervised by unions and associations such as the Engineers and Doctors Homes Project, in addition to the building of individual residencies (villas and low altitude residential buildings)<sup>16</sup>, paralleled by the emergence of refugee camps which were forming and condensing in some urban and rural configurations. This reflected an exclusivity of demand in the housing sector as a result of the social and economic model prevailing in that time, and therefore the unavailability of means or an atmosphere conducive to the development of residential urban patterns, a dynamic that carried into the period after the signing of the Oslo agreement. Parallel to that, and during the same period, the settlement configurations that were produced by colonial practices began to spread, affecting Palestinian urban and architectural patterns in the investment period after the Oslo agreement. This affected construction techniques and the use of materials, producing spaces with characteristics similar to those of the settlements, which are considered a dilation and expansion of the

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15- Bshara, Khaldoun, Rural Urbanization: the Commodification of Land in Post-Oslo Palestine in Reclaiming Space, Riwaq, 2015

16- Rawaq – Manual for Preserving the Historical Center of the City of Ramallah, 2014

Modern Colonialism produced by Capitalism in Europe and America in the mid-twentieth century.

### **1.3 The Urbanization of Palestinian rural landscapes: The Role of Local and Regional Capital<sup>17</sup>**

This relationship took a different direction in the period after Oslo.<sup>18</sup> There emerged a capitalist dynamic which has redefined the relationship with the land, making interaction with the land an investment tool designed around the accumulation of capital and surplus. It structures housing use, the provision of commercial services, and real estate investment and economic exchange. As mentioned before, in the confines of the National Authority there was a clear vision for investment focused on the service sector, real estate, and consumerism. Areas A and B formed a suitable environment for urban development and investment, and from there investment companies began to emerge and to systematically work in these areas – such as PADICO HOLDING, PRICO, the Investment Fund and its different wings (especially Amar), Tabo, etc. This strengthened the assumption of authority by Salam Fayad as prime minister and his adoption of the Neoliberal Free Economy policies of 2007, which contributed to the production of new urban configurations and “consumerist” patterns that were characterized by urban density, the rise of the suburban model which started to dot the landscape and finally the adoption of the urban (cities’) model , -the infinite and encroaching configurations towards the “liberated”.<sup>19</sup> The direction of expansion of the new urban configurations was towards the available space, with rural areas the primary destination, which led to the fragmentation of the rural scene, the transformation of its character, and the violation of agricultural and natural lands. The urban activities

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17- Regional Incoming Capital refers to the investment companies in the local region which are considered an extension for companies with regional origins

18- The period after Oslo witnessed an intensification of the idea of the commodification of land, which is confirmed by Khaldoun Bishara in “”, which was represented in the essence of the agreement which divided the areas to A, B, and C, and where the Palestinian Authority’s rule was limited to areas A and partially in areas B, leaving areas C under the occupational and colonial rule and dominance

19- The liberated areas that fall under the control of the Palestinian Authority; and here lies the challenge brought about by the colonizer: de-territorialization, as pointed out by Bishara in the same article

transforming the Palestinian environment were not only undertaken by corporations that contributed to investment projects. They also relied on capital imported by expatriates and local investments; these sources were predominant during the period prior to 2007.

These changes played a major role in structural and urban shifts in the Palestinian rural areas. They set the basis for transforming these areas into a traded commodity, with the land at its center, leading to a rise of its commercial value, which in turn hastened the transformation of the land from a source of production to a financial commodity. This was the marketing and investment model for many local companies, illustrated by an advertisement published on the website of the Tabo Investment Company, clearly based on marketing a nostalgic picture of the countryside as a site of luxury: “The Palestinian citizen can no longer bear the burdens of the continuous rise of land prices inside the main cities, which was a result of the rapid acceleration of development and advancement accompanying the establishment of the Palestinian institutions. And surrounding the main cities there lay the beautiful Palestinian villages; although, and unfortunately, these lands are not registered under property title, which creates an obstacle for the Palestinians in being entitled for their lands. It is possible to say that almost 70% of the West Bank lands are unregistered and do not fall under any scheme. And although it is true that these lands are available for sale, in large spaces that are not sifted and in extremely high prices, which made the matter of a citizen owning a land in Palestine a very difficult matter that is out of the reach of most of the Palestinian people”.<sup>20</sup>

The picture was not limited to this; it has extended to the point of marketing the ownership of these projects as a moral and sacred matter. Additionally, these projects are being depicted as resistance projects that aim to preserve the land. Returning to the website of the Tabo Investment Company, terms and phrases were employed such as “make your connection to Palestine a reality”, “now and for the first time you have the opportunity to make your connection with the sacred lands a reality”, “Al-Etehad Development and Investment Company achieves the dream of every Palestinian for reclaiming their legacy and

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20- الموقع الالكتروني لشركة طايبو - www.tabo.ps

reconnecting them to the lands of their fathers and forefathers, all by enabling them to own a piece of the homeland for them, their children, and their future generations”, “a moral investment”, and “Owning a land in Palestine protects it from illegitimate dispossession and occupation, in addition to supporting the right of ownership and rule of these Palestinian lands by the Palestinians themselves”.<sup>21</sup> This takes the case out of its context – the context of investment – and places it in the context of a moral struggle. Such terms have negative effects on collective identity as they create conceptual shifts in the nature of the relationship with the colonizer, in addition to exploiting a moral issue for the sole purpose of marketing.

The town of Birzeit is among the most important urban configurations affected by the shifts outlined above. The town witnessed changes that resulted from investment activity in the housing and services sectors. They were enforced by expectations related to the town’s proximity to the city of Ramallah and by the fact that it contained important service landmarks such as Birzeit University. This led to the emergence of typical urban shifts, in line with the phenomenon of the urbanization of the countryside and the effects of capital on the general physical space in Palestine, as will be discussed in the following section.

## **2. Transformation and Substitution – Birzeit, between the Countryside and the City an Unidentified Entity**

### **2.1 City of Birzeit**

The town of Birzeit is located 10km to the north of the city of Ramallah on a high mountainous area, 800m above sea level. According to the Palestinian Statistical Center, the current population of Birzeit is 5,796 inhabitants as of 2016.<sup>22</sup> However, the mayor of Birzeit suggested that the current number of residents between the indigenous inhabitants (approximately 4,500), newcomers (approximately 3,000), and students of Birzeit University (approximately 3,000) is in total over

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21- Same source as the last one

22- The Palestinian Statistics Center’s website, 20/10/2016 [www.pcbs.gov.ps](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps)

10,000 inhabitants. The borders of Birzeit are connected to the village of Atara to the north, Burham and Jibea to the west, the Western Farm and Kobar to southwest, Abu-Qash to the south, and Ein-Senya and Silwad to the east. The town of Birzeit is distinguished by its beautiful and centric location between the north, south, east and west. Additionally, movements between the villages of Bani Zeid, Ramallah, and Jerusalem pass through Birzeit. It was also popular during the Ottoman era for its hospitality and its market, which was visited by farmers from adjacent villages who came to sell their crops and buy their goods.<sup>23</sup> The town council of Birzeit was established in 1963 to manage the town, to provide services, to organize construction operations, to provide licenses, etc.<sup>24</sup>

It is beyond doubt that Birzeit was a village characterized by suburban agricultural characteristics, as its name suggests – Bir (well) Zeit (Oil) takes the literal meaning of its name from its production of olives and olive oil. The town's history traces back to the Roman era, which gave the town its original name Berzethe, which its current name derives from.<sup>25</sup> It was located on the Khirbet Mountain until the beginning of the Ottoman era. Life started to prosper in Birzeit (the old town as its location after the Khirbet) during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and it started to expand towards the west with the increase in urban activity early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Ma'aref school was moved and when the Sacred Jihad command was established in it. The area continued to witness commercial and urban prosperity until it had become the main commercial center for the town during the Israeli Occupation and up to the present day. In addition to this rapid development towards the west, the new Birzeit-Ramallah road was paved<sup>26</sup> (roughly in its same current location) in 1941.<sup>27,28</sup>

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23- Aloush, Mousa, Pictures from Birzeit, Birzeit 2000

24- Areej, Guidebook for the Town of Birzeit, 2012

25- Aldabagh, Mustafa, from the book Biladna Falasteen, [www.palestineremembered.com](http://www.palestineremembered.com), 2013

26- Aloush, Mousa, The History of the Town of Birzeit, Birzeit 1987 – the road of Birzeit/Al-Bireh/Jerusalem during the mandate period was passing through Jifna and Ein Senya, and the dirt road was passing through Jifna, Al-Jalazon, and Al-Bireh.

27- Aloush, Mousa, The History of the Town of Birzeit, Birzeit 1987 – the road of Birzeit/Al-Bireh/Jerusalem during the mandate period was passing through Jifna and Ein Senya, and the dirt road was passing through Jifna, Al-Jalazon, and Al-Bireh.

28- Aloush, Mousa, The History of the Town of Birzeit, Birzeit 1987

Birzeit University played a leading role in the development of the town and its expansion during the period of its establishment as a school, a college, and a university, adopting the town as a center for the university and its students until the late 1970s and the early 1980s, when the university's facilities were moved to the western side, adjacent to the village of Burham, in order for it to accommodate the new needs of the university and its students. The shift gradually connected Birzeit to the village of Abu Qash. The need for residence increased after the college of Birzeit was turned into a university during the mid-1970s, and the town's residents began to invest in the housing sector in order to meet the new needs of the students, teachers, and employees; this led to a large increase in house rental prices. The area of the town was expanded in 1999, which opened up new horizons for urban development as well as some farming roads in the eastern and western sides of the town, creating an opportunity for construction and urban expansion around those roads.

## 2.2 The Geopolitical Framework of Birzeit

The town of Birzeit is located in an area that falls under the National Authority. The town's lands are located in areas categorized as B and C according to the Oslo agreement.<sup>29</sup> The size of the town's landscape that is categorized as area B is 9,919 acres (making up 75.8% of the area), while the size of landscape under the category or area C is 3,162 acres (making up 24.2% of the area).<sup>30</sup> There are no Israeli settlements established on the town's lands. However, the occupation forces seized an area of the town's lands to establish the occupation route 465 with a 75m buffer zone, preventing the use of these lands by the town.<sup>31</sup> The town, during the Second Uprising, suffered from the severing of its regional relationships with its general perimeter, where the occupation authorities erected two checkpoints. The first one was

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29- According to the Oslo agreement the lands in the West Bank were divided into three different categories: Areas A, which are under the security and administrative control of the Palestinian Authority. Areas B, which are areas under the administrative control of the Palestinian Authority and the security control of Israel. And areas C, which are under the security and administrative control of Israel, and which make up 60% of the total lands of the West Bank

30- The Center of Applied Researches, 2012, The Birzeit Guidebook, Jerusalem

31- Ibid.

the Surda checkpoint, which severed the connection of the town with the city of Ramallah, the second the Atara checkpoint, which severed the town's connection with the northern areas. This sheds light on the fact that any development plan that is based on the town's regional connectedness with its surroundings, in the absence of a political solution, could be susceptible to failure in the event of any security changes, which would negatively affect the investment environment and the status of the town as an attractive residential area.

### **2.3 Birzeit: A Fertile Environment for Investment and Speculations**

It is observed that the rapid and constant development of the cities of Ramallah and Al-Bireh during recent years, and the adoption of Ramallah as a "temporary" capital, have led a large number of real estate investment companies and expatriate and local capital to purchase lands in the northern regions of both cities (the suburbs in particular) and to establish emerging and isolated residential suburbs (gated communities) such as Al-Rayhan suburb, the Diplomatic Neighborhood, Al-Ghadeer Housing Area, Al-Reef, etc. This is a stratified phenomenon that is starting to spread with the growth of the middle class in Palestine. The borders of Ramallah have started to expand towards the north<sup>32</sup> to include the lands of Abu Qash and Surda, making these isolated urban gatherings (such as Al-Rayhan and the Diplomatic Neighborhood) within the organizational borders of the city. This is due to a number of factors including the decline of land prices; residing in the adjacent villages, given these configurations' proximity to the city's general space, makes it still possible to work in the city. Additionally, the decline of land prices was a factor in attracting investment money which increased profit margins. In addition to that,

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32- Ruwaq – Manuel for the Preservation of the Historical Center of the City of Ramallah, 2014 – a new structural scheme was established for Ramallah in the year 1999, and it was expanded upon in 2009 – The expansions show the remaining growth towards the North West of the city, and the areas were categorized by giving more dense populations inside the city. As for the southern areas, the urban expansion in them took a different political direction resulting in emergency urban and architectural patterns, which received tens of thousands of residents due to the political situation and the difficulty of residing inside Jerusalem for carriers of the Jerusalem ID.

the future expansion expectations for the city, according to many citizens and investors,<sup>33</sup> involve the current city forming one urban unit with the northern suburbs due to the lack of expansion opportunities in other directions. The matter that led to the great rise of land prices in Surda, Abu Qash, Birzeit, Jifna, and gradually Atara and the other villages, based on speculations and estimates, was anticipation that this investment and urban phenomenon will continue in the same direction and in the same pace. This is why many individuals moved towards owning lands in these areas for investment and saving the cash value of the capital. From another side, the rush of investment companies focused on these areas abides by a systematic logic, as is apparent in the form of these companies' approach to ownership and to advertisement. For example, the website of Tabo presents the areas in which lands are available, sorted, and divided for sale – these are concentrated between Birzeit and Salfeet<sup>34</sup> – by dealing with the land as if it is something that can be traded online, through something similar to online shopping.

In the same context Ammar Company, one of the development wings for the Investment Fund, works in both Surda and Birzeit by purchasing and re-sorting the lands and then selling them, as in the cases of the Surda Hills and the Birzeit Hills projects. In addition, individual investment activity (especially in the real estate sector) has increased intensively in Birzeit since 2009/2010, as noted by a number of investors and officials in their interviews.<sup>35</sup> Looking at the results of the interviews, we find that the target group was not limited to students, teachers, and employees, but also extended to include newcomers from the northern parts of the West Bank, and a few from the southern parts and the inner occupied Palestinian areas. The investors confirmed that there is a high demand for residences in Birzeit due to its convenient location and its proximity to Ramallah from one side, and the presence of Birzeit University on the other side. Real estate activity in Birzeit can be considered in one way or another related to the movement of capital and surplus from the city of Ramallah, i.e. the accumulation of capital from construction and architecture overlaps with the decline of demand

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33- Osama Al-Hamad, investor and contractor, interview conducted on 24-5-2016

34- The website of Tabou Company – [www.tabo.ps](http://www.tabo.ps)

35- What are these interviews

at the level of prices. There exist thousands of unoccupied apartments and residential units in Ramallah and Al-Bireh; as confirmed by the Palestine's Economic Gate website, "hundreds of millions of dollars are frozen in Ramallah and Al-Bireh alone in the form of unsold and unrented apartments and houses. This is where the risk lies; if the current situation persists, investment will decline, which would cause the hindrance of the economic wheel, especially since the investors will prefer to keep those houses until a good opportunity arises for selling them because their goal is profit, according to experts and studies".<sup>36</sup>

This is what Harvey considers an accumulation of capital in the Palestinian scene, and especially in Ramallah and Birzeit.<sup>37</sup> In a lecture that he held in Birzeit University, he shed light on the fact that investing in the housing and construction sector works to circulate and move capital, which is something that governments use to manage economic crisis (by delaying and manipulating – the prosperity of investment is a convincing indicator of economic growth); he considered Ramallah to be a reflection of this phenomenon. The crisis of inflation of prices in Ramallah pushed the citizens to search for other, cheaper markets in a suitable and nearby location, which increased the demand in Birzeit and caused real estate and investment activities within it. This was reinforced by estimates and expectations that the investors rely on; the construction process is accelerating before the lands available for construction run out, with investors rushing for what lands are left for construction. Mr. Osama Al-Hamd,<sup>38</sup> one of the major investors in the town, confirms that there are big opportunities and a high purchase demand, which is why he so far does not intend to invest in other areas. Investment activity in the town of Birzeit is not limited to the housing sector; it has lately included the service sector as well. The building of the Birzeit Mall is considered a major turning-point in the history of the changes that have been afflicting the town. It is currently considered the largest mall in the areas of the West Bank, and the residents of

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36- The Palestinian Economy Gate electronic website – Article by Imad Al-Rajbi with the title "Empty Apartments are Raising Concerns from the Decline of Investment", 15-6-2015

37- David Harvey, a lecture in Birzeit University, September 2015

38- Interview with Mr. Osama Al-Hamd, an investor in Birzeit, 24-5-2016

Ramallah and Al-Bireh are considered its target customers.<sup>39</sup> In the framework of the investment projects affecting the town of Birzeit, it must be pointed out that the establishment of the Rawabi project has produced a number of factors that have played a role in enhancing the importance of the town and its location, which also reinforced expectations that the town of Birzeit will reflect the future expansion of the city of Ramallah.

These changes, in addition to what preceded them with expectations for the growth and future expansion of Ramallah, led to a rapid increase of land plot prices and the direction of citizens from other areas towards the owning of lands in the town of Birzeit. This caused a radical transformation in the use of land as a commodity and contributed to the increase of construction operations, which as noted has started to cause functional, spatial, and configurational changes in the town of Birzeit. These factors also caused changes on the social and demographic levels; the head of the organization and planning department in the municipality suggested that these changes will lead to Birzeit “becoming similar to Ramallah and Om Alsharayet, where there will be high densities of populations and a change in the demography; for example, the coming of migrants from Tulkarim to own and reside in Birzeit, which will change the rural nature of Birzeit”.<sup>40</sup>

## **2.4 Shifts in Urban and Architectural Patterns in the Town of Birzeit**

As discussed above, the town of Birzeit experienced a number of different changes, on the level of economic and social systems, and the adoption of neoliberal policies. Consumerist patterns that resulted changed the way of life, and the dominance of capital (both local and regional) over the systems of life and growth, in addition to the effect of Ramallah’s proximity, intensified shifts in the financial value of the lands. All of these factors led to creating changes in life patterns in the town of Birzeit. This was reflected in the urban spatial structure of the town and its architectural patterns, leading to dynamic and physical

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39- Interview with Mr. Shareef Al-Bayari, owner of the “Birzeit Mall”, 25-5-2016

40- Interview with Eng. Maysoun Al-Hodali, head of the administration and planning department in the Birzeit municipality, 24.5.2016

changes that can be summarized as follows:

- Shifts in the central structure of the town:

The changes that befell the centers in Birzeit during the Israeli Occupation in the period before the Oslo agreement contributed to the marginalization of the old center and a shift of the central public space to the junction of the main Ramallah – Birzeit road with the Birzeit – Atara road (also known as the Abu Jasar route). This was enforced by Israeli escalations and activities after the year 2002, when the Bireh – Nablus road was closed, which pushed towards transforming the regional ties between the middle and the north through an imaginary center resulting from the road junction! From a different side, the service sections of this area were strengthened. We can observe that the commercial area started to expand along the line of the connecting center. New urban “commercial” patterns started to form, accompanied by several bank ATMs with their slogans and different colors, bakery shops, butchery houses, and grocery stores, all spread along the road for the maximum benefit from passersby, in addition to residents and students from the different areas. This phenomenon was not limited to Birzeit; we can find many Palestinian towns and cities that have formed and taken new centers for themselves – such as Ramallah and Al-Bireh – and left the old ones to become tourist and cultural museums that bring people together for festivals or shows, while their residents are mostly from the poor class.

- Spatial shifts – Urban expansion and the uses of the land:

Birzeit is witnessing a major change in its rural structure and its stock of olive trees, which are being uprooted and replaced by typical residential buildings or buildings with a new urban pattern and use, such as the “Birzeit Mall” that was recently opened, replacing 8 acres of olive trees.<sup>41</sup> It becomes apparent here that horizontal expansion patterns (and vertical – to utilize as much space as possible, and to utilize the commercial value of the land) came at the expense of green areas; the total size of Birzeit is 13,081 acres, 8,013 of which are farmable land

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41- Interview with Mr. Shareef Al-Bayari, owner of the “Birzeit Mall”, 25-5-2016

– over 60% of the total size of Birzeit<sup>42</sup>. Additionally, urban growth and activity is headed intensively towards the west and the south towards the university, Abu Qash, Al-Marj area, and mount Al-Khirbet, as these are the areas that are most attractive for residence and commercial investment. However, this activity becomes weaker in the east and the area of the municipality, which trends more towards industry in accordance with the new structural scheme. Engineer Maysoun Alhodali<sup>43</sup> confirmed that in the new scheme (which is in its final approval stage), in addition to the spatial expansion, the residential areas categorized as B and C have increased, which enables people to build storage houses topped by a residence, in which the amount of construction increases. These categorizations were made based on the desires and “needs” of people. This affects the spatial configuration, increasing the density of the population, and also affects the quality of the residences and the public space, which in turn affects the residents’ feelings of belonging to the common space being consumed. In the shadow of spatial and demographic shifts, there came a sort of social isolation and alienation, as confirmed by the indigenous residents of Birzeit,<sup>44</sup> who also see that in the shadow of rapid construction and the arrival of large numbers of newcomers, the nature of social relationships in the town changed. From another angle, engineer Maysoun emphasized the lack of any characteristics of agriculture or what is needed for the preservation of farmlands and olive trees in Birzeit. She also confirmed that the current council facilitates construction and investment operations more than the previous council, with an ostensibly patriotic excuse, “let the people build,” on the one hand, and the incentive of rising land prices on the other. These facilitators and transgressions have produced urban patterns that use the largest possible horizontal and vertical spaces (ignoring social repercussions, circumventing norms regarding the number of floors on the main street level in order to open as many floors as possible, etc). These patterns can be described as hostile and floating as they do not connect with the earth except by a main entrance; they appear as if they are separated from the ground

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42- For a review, refer back to the guide of Areej “the scheme of green and farming areas”

43- Interview with Eng. Maysoun Al-Hodali, head of the administration and planning department in the Birzeit municipality, 24.5.2016

44- Focus group with the indigenous residents of Birzeit, 8/2016

due to a new construction mechanism which uproots anything on the perimeter of the land in order to plant the typical units for intensive production and consumption.

Birzeit nearly forms an urban unit with Abu Qash, which in turn is connected to Surda, which is connected to the cities of Ramallah and Al-Bireh, forming what resembles a single urban carpet made out of stone.

- The emergence of new urban and architectural patterns:

Housing patterns: Birzeit was characterized for a long time by its individual building pattern and residential buildings of three floors' height, in accordance with the Palestinian construction laws at the time. These houses were distinguished by a modern local style. A number of these residential buildings provided a "veranda" or a balcony on the street level, which played an important role in forming relationships with the public space (the street) and any passersby. These buildings are usually family-extended. Despite Birzeit acting as a residence for a large number of students, the increase of production and urban formation was limited until recently. As for the current period, after the amendment of the Palestinian constructional system to accommodate a higher number of floors in buildings in areas A, which used to be 3 floors and is now 5 floors due to the political situation and the lack of lands available for Palestinians, residences were condensed and construction reoriented towards high buildings. Palestinian construction law does not distinguish between what is rural and what is urban due to the Ministry of Local Government's supposition that the municipalities will work on laws and regulations according to their individual needs and visions. Unfortunately, there was no work towards the use of special laws for each area, and these laws largely served the investors who constructed units for typical residential buildings that are characterized by a pattern similar to compact match boxes that are perforated by somewhat even windows. This killed the public space formed by previous houses and buildings, and the production of these buildings took

a pattern of mass production for mass consumption. It is worth mentioning here the problem of a residence transformed from an individual's dream and desire (the owner's) to the dream of an investor multiplied by thousands – to create an infinitely repeating unit that does not distinguish between the dream of one person or another. The resident (with a medium income, unable to build an individual house) became a consumer that has no part in decision-making when it comes to what they desire for their future house. It is interesting to note that when asked whether they would reside in one of these apartments that they were building – one of the investors answered by saying, “no, no, I am not used to living in apartments. I am used to having grapes and figs trees... additionally; I do not like to share the elevator or the other services in the shade of the municipality's network being absent...”<sup>45</sup> – with the knowledge that the buildings that they build do not provide the minimum limit of shared parking lots and public spaces for the residents, or any green sights, which was something that many people objected to during the interviews and focus groups.

Long commercial and banking services: The town's main road came to be flanked by the colors of electronic banks that were spreading here and there, with luminous colors which permeate the other commercial and service stores concentrated on the same road, and which compete with one another through signboards and placards that race each other to occupy what is left of the public space which is the sidewalk. This, alongside the commercial signs and advertisements that occupy the main road to Ramallah, forms an urban and spatial configuration of a different and expanding type. It enforces the prevailing consumerist system and service environment that the town of Birzeit is based upon. However, the residents of Birzeit rely largely on Ramallah, since it is only a few minutes away and provides cheaper prices (for food and daily products), creating the following relationship between Ramallah and Birzeit – whereas Ramallah provides convenient prices for

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45- Interview with Mr. Osama Al-Hamd, an investor in Birzeit, 24-5-2016

daily products, Birzeit provides convenient prices for housing and investment.

One of the investments that has been standing out lately is the “Birzeit Mall”. The owner of the mall believes that it will become a site of attraction on a national level. The strategic location of Birzeit led Mr. Shareef Al-Bayari to invest his money in this university town. He received a special exemption from the town council to alter the character of land use in order to build the mall in an American fashion; he argues, along patriotic lines, that it aims to create reasons for people to come back from abroad!<sup>46</sup>

### **3. Birzeit, from the rural to the investment medium: the commercialization of spaces and civil rights**

As was previously mentioned, the town of Birzeit has been through a number of shifts on many levels during the last decade, and these shifts were evident while reading the spatial, urban, and architectural configurations and the changes that befell them. This unveils the effects of the capitalist system and the policies and strategies that came out of it, leading to the acceleration of the operation of spatial substitution and the urban transformation of rural and urban areas in general, with Birzeit as a striking example. The Palestinian countryside was affected by a number of shifts on an urban level; the process of forming an urban identity was subject to the consumerist system, in accordance with what the investor sees and what his expectations dictate. Changes in the conception of and culture concerning the land played a major role in these shifts. From considering the land as a source of production and a symbol of belonging to considering it a traded commodity with a fiscal value; the change in this direction led to the circulation of lands and produced urban formations that are socially isolating and flat in form. These utilize as much as can be utilized of the land’s horizontal and vertical spaces. In this context, lands, regardless of their agricultural values, were transformed into investment areas,

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46- Interview with Mr. Shareef Al-Bayari, owner of the “Birzeit Mall”, 25-5-2016

and there was no longer a public space, which is considered necessary for deepening the relationship of the individual with their surroundings and therefore with their community.

One of the most important bases for deepening the feeling of citizenship for the individual is the concept of “right to the city” which, according to Henry Lefebvre, relies on two basic principles: participation in making decisions related to the formation of the public space, and the right to reach and make changes to this space. Lefebvre argued that in order to achieve the “right to the city” the resident must have the right to decide on anything that is constructed in their public space, including private investment projects. Shifts in the town of Birzeit undermined this by cutting the ties between individuals and their public space, whether by excluding them from the decision-making related to the formation of their public space, or through determining all that is public as a private investment space.

This left a deep mark on the relationships of individuals, where the spatial shifts, which reflect an investment activity, led and lead, as mentioned before, to social and demographic changes, with social diversification as one of its most prominent aspects. Public space is considered very important in these cases to organize the relationships of individuals, and David Harvey emphasized the importance of public space in shaping the “right to the city”. The absence of public awareness in the formulation, reinforcement, and confirmation of the public space in the case of Birzeit, and in similar cases in other Palestinian rural areas that have witnessed shifts due to the effects of capital, leads to negative effects on collective behavior and on feelings of belonging and citizenship.

The case of Birzeit exemplifies the changes that were experienced by Palestinian rural areas during the last decade under the effects of free investment policies. The town was deeply affected by the changes that were made to the city of Ramallah, which led to the emergence of urban and architectural models that have caused deep shifts in a spatial structure that had been characterized by a rural configuration. Additionally, it led to the absence and transformation of the public space, with repercussions on the individual, social, and structural levels.

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## Appendix (1)



Figure1: building patterns in birzeit



Figure 2: Birzeit Mall



figure 3: Emerging residential buildings in the Khirbeh area



Figure 4: Birzeit heights brochure – new development by AMAAR Group



