

# A Reading on the Socio Urban Changes in Ramalah and Kufur Aqab



## Researchers

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## A Reading on the Socio Urban Changes in Ramallah and Kufur Aqab

Class disparity and consumerism together with service economy expanded in detriment of other economic sectors. This statement summarizes the prevailing political economy in the past two decades in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, virtually in cities and rural areas.

Any observer of the urban alterations with gigantesque buildings and increased small, medium and large sized service establishments, not to mention the change in the landscape of cities and its expansion into the country side, can apprehend part of the "new" Palestinian life narrative. It is set up with neoliberal acts that range between legally framed official policies and large private sector companies to market margins and the new patterns imposed by these alterations. There is intense distortion of productive and empowering sectors, or in other terms the sectors that could enhance the steadfastness and resilience of ordinary people. Needless to say that this is conceptualized at both physical and moral levels while Palestine still lives in a colonial context. Any observer interested in the mechanisms of political economy will realize that such changes cannot constitute an alternative to the economies and hegemony of the colonization and consequently cannot oppose or resist its domination.

Ramallah is in the front of this new landscape as it hosts amid its neighborhoods the camps of Alamaari, Qalandia and Qadoura not to mention the nearby Jala-

zoun Camp. These camps with still living memory of the Nakba (1948 occupation) continue to suffer daily. Between Ramallah and Qalandia Camp lies Kufur Aqab, a flagrant example of restricting populated and urbanized space to features that contradict with its rural specificity. All such acts take place under a structural system imposed by the colonization on the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The occupation procedures force them to change their residential area to allow family reunification to take place or to preserve the Jerusalem ID. There in Kufur Aqab, thousands of Palestinians share an urban chaos that lack minimum legal, engineering or even decent environmental and humanitarian standards. Amid this chaos, we cannot ignore the byproducts of the daily colonial occupation practices on the streets of our cities and villages, cold-blood executions of our young men and women, the isolation and closure imposed upon humans and their space. It is a different scene from the reality on the ground and the misleading urban landscape.

The main purpose behind these two studies is to produce a visual and methodological documentation to understand the social partition and fragmentation that is taking place in urban centers and examine their expansion to understand their patterns and see who wins and who loses in the Palestinian economic political perspective of Ramallah and Kufur Aqab.

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# Ramallah, the City and its Story

Jamil Hilal \*



# Ramallah, the City and its Story

## 1. Why Ramallah?

At first, I was asked to write a research about the gentrification of poor areas in the City of Ramallah<sup>1</sup>, i.e. the transformation of poor residential areas in the city into zones inhabited by the middle class or bourgeoisie after restoration and development of their physical and service infrastructure.

I have not noticed in my daily acquaintance with Ramallah over the past two decades any such transformation<sup>2</sup>, but rather another form of transformation. The rapid horizontal and vertical urban expansion serves the life style of the middle class, but noticeably without including the acquisition of old and deserted houses in the poor areas to rehabilitate them for use of the well off.

What is mainly taking place is the construction of entirely new neighborhoods and suburbs, like the cities of Rawabi, Rehan, Yasmeen, Alghadeer, Alsendian and Reef.<sup>3</sup> All these names give an impression of serenity, suburbs nature, fresh air and prosperity, as marketed (or so is thought) by real-estate developers for middle

1. To constitute a credible picture of the development of Ramallah from a small village in the 19th century into its current urban form, and its subsequent demographic and urban growth, and of the changes endured the Old City (Ramallah Altahta) following the demolition of many historical buildings that date back to the Jordanian administration times and later, see Issa, E., Joudeh, L., Handbook of Preservation of the Historical City Center of Ramallah, series of papers on the Architectural History of Palestine (17), Ramallah (undated, most probably 2014)
2. I later discovered a supporting opinion in an unpublished draft paper by Khaldoun Bisharah (Director of Riwaq Institution), in which he concludes that the gentrification of Ramallah-Albiereh is impossible. He adds that the Palestinian middle class considers the old neighborhoods as a sign of retardation and less civilized zones. Khaldun Bshara, "Shifting trends: the impossibility of gentrification in the Palestine cities' context" (Draft paper for presentation within the City Debates 2015, AUB), 2015.  
Mr. Yazeed Anani said in an interview that Ramallah was undergoing a particular type of gentrification (i.e. architectural colonization with social class dimension) to take the form of visual replacement or as per the functional value of the term." In other terms, there are areas (like Ramallah City-Center), which take specific architectural and functional forms (offices, stores, restaurants, cafés, hotels) while totally new areas with novel architecture appear.
3. Reef Company Website (<http://reefbayder.ps>) states, "At 1 KM from the Main Ramallah-Birzeit Street, near the Town of Abu Qash, lies an overlooking and gracious hill, from which you can see the Palestinian coast. Baydar for Construction and Development chose this place to build its unique Reef Compound with modern and registered villas, comprising detached and semi-detached villas with two storeys, a roof and other areas adding up to 300 – 370 sq. m.

and upper middle classes (whether in the public, private or civil sectors). It is classified under the same context that transformed the public “recreational zone” of Sarryiat Ramallah into a place designated to specific social strata of the middle class since it integrated private capital, as some respondents stated (interview No 30). See list of interviews in the end of the study.

A closer description is the transformation of the landscape into multi-storey, multi-apartment buildings constructed (as commonly referred to) “commercially. This was the case in Ein Um Alsharayet Neighborhood (Interview 9) where residences were transformed into “cans of Sardine” (interview 8). It is not difficult to find the tall buildings erected in the center of Ramallah in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords, which have vertically changed into (random) poor neighborhoods because of the poor public services and infrastructure and their internal decay.

The question of Ramallah comes to mind since the city has noticeably (urbanely and demographically) grown over the past two decades. This rapid growth took place after the PA advent and its decision to use Ramallah as institutional seat. This growth took place while the city, like other areas occupied in and before 1967, are still subjected to a racist colonialist settler occupation. The colony of Beit El lies at the boundary of the City, at barely one kilometer from the Muqata’ah, the PA headquarters. Ramallah is separated from Jerusalem by the Checkpoint of Qalandia while Attarah Checkpoint lies at its northern entrance. It is surrounded, like other cities, by a separation wall, military checkpoints and bypass roads. The Israeli Ofra Camp, where hundreds of Palestinian young people are detained, is at a short distance from the city. Moreover, it is placed under security and administrative restrictions (a permit system for treatment, visits, work, import and export) on mobility inside the Palestinian area occupied in 1967 and between this Territory and the Palestinian land occupied in 1948. Although the city itself is classified as Area “A” (which means it is under full Palestinian security and administrative control), the Israeli army still enters when it wishes to search and arrest people (including members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and political leaders). We can still recall the invasions of the Israeli army in Ramallah in 2002 and remember how it distorted PA premises and destructed the premises of the PA president, Yasser Arafat, placing him under forced stay until his departure for treatment in France where he died in November 2004.

The reality imposed by the Israeli colonialist settler occupation on the city, among other cities, is the reason why we should question the motor agent behind the

construction, service and recreational expansion of the city. It also leads us to examine how it undertakes its role as the “capital city” and the numerous cafes, restaurants, cinemas, theaters, galleries, stores, hospitals, clinics, apartments, villas and streets crowded with vehicles, pedestrians and sellers. It is at very short-time distance from Jerusalem, which we all still insist is the capital of our future state, and which is being publicly and daily “Israelized”.

Ramallah celebrates, or is almost daily celebrating, its urban, service and recreational expansion notwithstanding the absence of any pillars of state or sovereignty and although Israel keeps control of all aspects of Palestinian life in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

This paper, in its main part and annexes, aims to review a large sample of opinions and literature<sup>4</sup> to understand the happenings of the city in particular and to motivate thinking about the phenomenon of urbanization in Palestine under its colonial settler occupation condition. The paper takes Ramallah as a model and it is therefore necessary to study other models. The most important question is probably whether Ramallah can, with its residents and daily migrants from nearby village and towns, and with its local, national and international institutions, combine its being a city occupied and circulated by colonial settlements on the one hand and a globalized pluralist liberal city on the other. Can it conciliate co-existing the occupation and resisting it in the same time? Can it conciliate the hegemony of greedy capital (neoliberalism) led by values of individualism and profit on the one hand and the dream of building a society led by the values of freedom, equality, solidarity and justice on the other. Can it regulate this relationship between the culture of consumption it celebrates and another (unborn) culture?

The paper is demised on numerous resources, including the researcher’s own experience after having lived and worked in Ramallah in the past two decades. It also includes desk review of literature on the city (as stated in the notes) and conversations with persons closely related to the city (Annex 1.1) and interviews conducted via the Center for Development Studies – Birzeit University with a number of investors and members of government and civil agencies (Annex 1.2).

This paper does not support the demise of the city officials and those who cel-

4 Two books were published about Ramallah, but I did not have the opportunity to read them. The first is a biography and the other is a novel. The first is by Farouq Wadi, titled *Manazel alqalb, Houses of the Heart*, Arab Institute for studies and Publication, Beirut, 1997. The second book is by Inas Abdallah, *No Angels for Ramallah*, Dar Fadaat Alnashr, Amman, 2010

celebrate Ramallah as a lively city with intellectual, political, religious, and cultural pluralism while ignoring the fact that it is subjected to a greedy and vicious colonization. It does not analyze the city without taking note of the increasing cost of living and social and class differences that span extravagance to severe poverty. We cannot ignore also its role as the political, administrative and cultural capital of the declared Palestinian authority and state (which is actually alienated) and Jerusalem, the irreplaceable Palestinian capital. This paper raises the question of Ramallah, without pretending to giving answers thereto, for a definite answer requires more thorough search and perseverance.

The paper concludes that three main powers promote Ramallah in direct and indirect ways and control its architectural, economic, social, security and cultural trajectory. These forces are: 1) Israel with its racist colonialist presence and the way it markets Ramallah to be in practice an alternative to Jerusalem. This involves its control over the city borders and its relations with other Palestinian zones; 2) the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), which is leading the class formations in the city as is the case in the communities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It is mainly transforming Ramallah into a city that matches the taste and life style of the middle class and capital owners through the roles and orientations of its different institutions. 3), the financial and real-estate capital (local, returnee or from the Gulf areas), which produced new architectural and residential forms in the city and created a new hierarchical relation among its components and between such components and its surrounding. This capital, alongside many local and international civil society organizations, together with the PNA, generate a state of denial of the colonialist reality and the excessive dependency faced by the Palestinian society with its political, economic and cultural forces.

## **2. Hijacking the Palestinian city**

The double colonization of Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel left direct and successive impact on many aspects of the life of the Palestinian people, which included rapid exclusion of Palestinian farmers from the economic activity of the Palestinians in their different locations, whether in their Israeli controlled home-land or in the Diaspora.

However, the farmers and handcrafters exclusion did not take place in the context of growth of the Palestinian city since it happened after Israel hijacked the prosperous coastal cities of Palestine (Jaffa, Haifa and Akka) and cleansed them of their

indigenous population while it divided the cultural and religious capital of Jerusalem. In the same time, it preserved the inner cities (Nablus, Hebron, Jenin, Tulkarim and Gaza) and their local texture and conservative composition during the Jordanian administration over the West Bank and Egyptian rule of the Gaza Strip.

After 1948, the Palestinians no longer had cities, which with their own capacities, could transform into interconnected socioeconomic and cultural centers. The Palestinian social classes, as per their national affiliation, became isolated from one another. The middle class started to form (until the PNA takeover in 1994) in metropolitan capitals outside Palestine, in Jordan, the Gulf, USA or Europe to fulfill their class conditions. As for the largest part, the workers, until early 1990s, they were forced under the terms of the settler colonization state rules. Workers in Israel, in 1970s and 1980s, represented over half of the Palestinian labor class. Many of them came from villages and camps. As for the Palestinian national capital post 1948, it found the opportunity to form outside Palestine and had to invest in mostly non-Palestinian labor force. The largest part of the Palestinian bourgeoisie grew in the Diaspora, or outside Palestine, building capital without investment in labor force, with the exception of Jordan where a large percentage of workers came of Palestinian origins. They rather invested in their area of activity outside Palestine, a situation that persisted until the last decade of the past century when some of them started to invest in the PNA areas. On the other hand, the largest share of the Palestinian capital has not developed through capital industrial or commodity production, but rather via investment in services and trade (import and export) and in financial and real estate activities.

After the PNA takeover in 1994, more specifically after the second Intifada and the withdrawal of Yasser Arafat from the national political scene, resident and incoming Palestinian capitals became more active in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in their area of expertise: investment in services, trade and real estate. Before the PNA advent, in the period between 1948 and 1994, the active bourgeois segments in the West Bank and Gaza Strip remained captive to a certain extent of their local clan structure.

The two key elements that triggered the formation of the Palestinian middle class before the Oslo Accords were immigration outside the West Bank and Gaza and university education, both of which – until end 1980s – were conditioned by immigration.

After the establishment of the Palestinian authority (with limited self-rule mandate) in 1994, and subsequent regional and international transformations (collapse of the Soviet Union and migration of Russian Jews into Israel, the Gulf War and Arab dismantling), a new engine of the class formation appeared in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In the aftermath of its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, the occupation state opened its (skilled and unskilled) hand labor markets, transforming the WBGS markets into prisoners of its commodities and reserve for cheap labor. With Israel's control over crossing points and natural resources and settlement expansion, which dismembered the West Bank, agricultural activity was rapidly depleted without any growth of local industries. Cultural capital owners and searchers were forced to opt for one choice, which is to immigrate. The high immigration rate did not decrease until the first Intifada and the Gulf War early 1991 and forced displacement of the Palestinian community in Kuwait with some returning to the territory occupied in 1967. This transformation coincided with Israel's increased restrictions on labor of the Palestinians from WBGS in its labor market.

In 1948, the Palestinian people had lost their coastal cities and West Jerusalem. East Jerusalem became a secondary city as related to the City of Amman, the Jordanian capital, the modern urban city with appeal to investment, work and migration. With the increased immigration from West Bank cities – in 1950s until beginning of 1990s – toward the Jordanian capital and Arab oil cities, less toward other cities in the world, Israel lost its status as a cultural and touristic site. To a certain extent, it also lost its uniqueness as a location of cohabitation of multiple ethnic, religious, sectarian and national cultures.

In the aftermath of June 1967 war, Israel unilaterally annexed East Jerusalem and began a policy to alter the city's geographic, demographic and architectural feature. It isolated it from its Palestinian Arab horizon by circling it with Jewish Israeli settlements, an apartheid wall and settlement expansion within the old city and surrounding Palestinian villages. It applied a slow ethnic cleansing policy against the Palestinian inhabitants. With cumulative Israeli restrictions to halt any (economic, touristic, cultural or urban) expansion of East Jerusalem not to mention the additional obstacles imposed upon other Palestinian cities. West Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, until the first Intifada, were transformed into an appealing hub of shopping and entertainment for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This situation continued until the first Intifada.

### **3. Palestinian Authority, the Engine of Birth of the City of Ramallah and Expansion of the Middle Class**

This situation requires a review of the radical change of the City of Ramallah in particular, and Ramallah-Betonia community in general after the PNA established its headquarters in the city with Israel's refusal to subject East Jerusalem to the control of the Palestinian Authority. The transformations of the City of Ramallah – which I will address later on – were mainly the outcome of this action and its subsequent repercussions and not of specific characteristics that the city embraced for many decades, including the early immigration of its residents to the USA and its Christian communities with religious missionary schools, including the Friends Schools. The city also lived immigration of inhabitants of the cities and villages of Lud, Ramal and Jaffa following the Nakba of 1948 and its status as a touristic site under the Jordanian administration. All of such characteristics are important, but they are not exclusive to Ramallah. They actually apply to all or most other cities including Bethlehem (with its expansion into Beit Jala and Beit Sahour), and its Christian community and absence of any tribal hegemony over the city and its suburbs not to mention its fine weather and the immigration of many of its residents to the USA in the beginning of last century. It is also home of touristic religious and antiquity sites and very close to Jerusalem with old presence of religious missionaries' schools. We may here refer to an interviewee in Ramallah who said that the absence of private capital to invest in Bethlehem, notwithstanding its touristic potential, is mainly attributed to the City's weak infrastructure since capital comes to invest after the construction of the infrastructure and not before. In this case the central authority (the Palestinian Authority here) is responsible for the rehabilitation of infrastructure (interview 21).

The detrimental factor that made Ramallah acquire its current function lies mainly in the settler colonialist state, which is comprehensively imposed upon the territory of historic Palestine to install the PNA (limited self-rule) institutions therein. It grew as the work and residential center of the servants of these institutions and other political leaders and cadres who have experienced living in metropolitan capitals like Beirut and Tunis. Some have even studied and trained in Eastern European cities or in Cairo or Baghdad among other places. The presence of PNA institutions in Ramallah rendered the city a preferred choice for civil society organizations, political factions, international organisations and non-governmental organizations; it also became the new seat of banks and their branches and host

of telecommunication and insurance companies, publicity, hotel and recreational services in addition to trading activities (import, export and marketing). It attracted incoming and local capital investment, which was mostly geared (mainly after the second Intifada) toward real estate development. Ramallah, with its political role, became also the seat of media, research, missionary and financial institutions.

Having said that, it does not mean that the history, location and social composition of Ramallah has no effect on what it became after 1994 (more specifically after 2005). It rather means that those were not the detrimental factors. It is necessary to pay attention to the impact of the building of PA institutions on the existing power relations between the city, village and camp and among areas and zones within the city itself. Without understanding this transformation, it is not easy to explain the participation of the inhabitants of Ramallah (and other areas active in the first Intifada - and to a certain extent during the second Intifada - and the lack of collective action (in Ramallah and elsewhere) against what the Palestinians are collectively and individually facing in WBGS in terms of collective oppression, apartheid system and full control of most aspects of life.

To those who content themselves with attributing what happened in Ramallah to the state of globalization and urbanization, they must understand that globalization and urbanization do not take place outside the structure of the society or outside the local, regional and international (political, economic, technological) power relations. They actually take place within these structure and relations in a context of settler colonization exercised by the State of Israel upon the territory occupied in 1967 (and in 1948).

Moreover, nothing proves that the middle class is the class embracing collectively the values of modernity without scrutinizing the situation of this class with its components within its specific socioeconomic, cultural and political context. More specifically, if evidencing modernity via the adoption of practice of the values of freedom, equality and social justice, we have clear evidence that the Palestinian middle class segments oppose, in practice and discourse, such values. same applies to the Jihadi Salafite segments and other proponents of the "sacred ignorance" and advocates of conservative streams that exploit and easily justify and opt for inequality in different forms. We find these segments of the middle class more in Ramallah-Albiereh, in comparison to other Palestinian cities and towns. We find them in the PA institutions, in stores, schools, universities, among



the leaders and senior staff of political factions, and in civil society organizations and other places.

The Palestinian middle class (and this seems to be the case of middle classes in most Arab countries) is a segment that stands out due to its consumption rather than production (at commodity, ideological, cultural, artistic or technological levels). What differentiates it from its counterparts in productive societies is not only its scarce productive role, but also the fact that it works less than the average (mainly public sector servants). They enjoy more official and religious leaves and pay fewer taxes. Some categories under this class (mainly top subclasses) enjoy larger employment and promotion opportunities through their clientelist relations. Its distinctive feature is the consumption trend (computers, phones, cars, mobile phones, many instruments and medical devices and furniture) and its minimal role in producing what it consumes (mostly imported goods). This applies largely to the intellectual production. Our universities, for instance, depend on the knowledge produced by others while their production is rare. The relative exception remains in some cultural fields, which still preserve its uniqueness, namely in poetry, story-writing, visual art and performance arts. We also witness weak criticism and debate on the production of these fields. This means poor evaluation of products. It is still a class that invests in cultural capital (higher education and fine culture), as seen in race to university education, music learning, dedication to museums, poetry, novels and stories. We also see high turnover in visual art galleries, although partly to search of a symbolic capital or to mark social capital and differentiation.

With the PA creation, changes were not exclusive to the activities of local and incoming capital and expansion of consumption and social class differentiation. The political culture has also shifted from praising the values of struggle, liberation and resistance of the occupation to a culture of reconciliation with a consumer's individualist culture. The salient indicators of this culture in Ramallah are the widespread supermarkets, cafés, restaurants, gyms, hairdressers and wedding and graduation ceremonies. Add to this purchase of modern cars, large apartments and top-notch mobile phones. This transformation in the political culture (or general mood) coincided with the bureaucratization of political parties after many of its senior staff enrolled in the self-rule authority institutions. They omitted their militant resistance uniform to become the white collars in a 'hierarchical' institution. This was mainly the case of the two largest political factions in the Palestinian political scene. (it would be enough to examine the signs of the "Hamass")

persistence to place its government servants in top PA management to understand this transformation). This also coincided with the retreat of the role of the left parties and their voice and mobilization not to mention the shrinking of their social leaders. This transformation led to lack of socioeconomic accountability of political elites for their past and current roles.

#### **4. Increased social, space and architectural disparity**

Talking about the transformations lived by Ramallah necessitates an examination of the hierarchical and power relations that emerged among different areas after the PA takeover in terms of destruction of physical capital (cash and real estate) and sociocultural capital (which stems from political, institutional and clan relations) and symbolic capital (the remaining balance of the struggle record, for instance). This space/time hierarchy among different zones and neighborhoods appears in monitoring the distribution of different capitals and sources of power (influence) among the camps, villages and cities. More concretely, we find it between Um Alsharayet and Almasyoum, or between Ramallah Altahta (lower Ramallah) and Altierh Alfouqa (Upper Tierh). This generated a feeling of supremacy toward neighborhoods like Ramallah Altahtat<sup>5</sup> and Ein Misbah and Qadourah and other poor neighborhoods. This increased with the “legitimization” of social disparity (extreme inequality) via capital mechanisms, as described by an interviewee.

A follower of the social reality of Ramallah comments, ‘the well-off live in Altierh, Almasyoum and Alersal. Some have villas in the periphery of Ramallah in places like Surda or AlRiehand City. They have their own clubs in Altierh with membership annual fees of 2000 Dollars per person. These well-offs are the rich of the Palestinian Authority and private sector (some of the members of the Boards of Directors of Banks are paid \$ 100,000 a year, not to mention other benefits. Others in the private sector receive, as admitted by the said person, about half a million Dollars a year. Some are paid \$ 34,000 a month in exchange of their positions in private-sector funded institutions. A chair of the board of directors of a private sector institution receives \$ 1 million a year in addition to his shares. Some built

<sup>5</sup> Ramallah Altahtat (the Old City) started hosting popular restaurants and cafés (like Bandali, which is sometimes visited by the middle class) and other fancy and middle ones. It has bakeries, green grocers, wineries, spices sellers, bookstores and modern clothing shops in addition to money exchangers and a bank. It also has hairdressers, pharmacies, dentists’ clinics, butchers and institutes to teach ballet. It hosts moreover a small museum and a legacy center with handcrafters (tailors). There are no fancy villas in Ramallah Altahta but neither are their random buildings. However, it has poor people living in old houses. After the modernization of the old city’s infrastructure, it started having paved sidewalks with newly planted trees.

their wealth by abusing of their positions in the public service. The PA president and 150 consultants have special budgets..." (Annex 3, interview 2).

It means it is necessary to monitor the engine behind the change in the balance of powers across space with the change of the political circumstances. For example, in the case of confrontations with the Israeli occupation, the social status (with the rise in the level of the symbolic capital) of Alamari Camp, Ramallah Altahta and Eign Misbah rises, if compared to neighborhoods like Althiereh and Almasyoum. This was the case during the Israeli incursion of Ramallah-Albiereh in 2002, as a result of the huge disparity in the ability and readiness to confront. Some (Annex 3, interview 18) mentioned a competition between Alamaari Camp and Ramallah Altahta because of the different security apparatuses with the largest support in each area. Some noticed, "Althiereh witnessed a decrease in its social level because of the numerous tall buildings (40 apartments per building). Only its main street kept its standard. The so-called luxurious neighborhoods of Ramallah are Alasyoun (where land price is the highest) for residency and service-trade purposes. It now hosts the seat of large corporations (PADICO, banks and hotels) and the neighborhoods around the Muqatah, where Modern Ramallah Project is." (Annex 3, interview 20)<sup>6</sup>.

What merits our attention and contemplation is the social re-engineering of the space through purchase and sale of land and investment in housing and trade and multi-purpose buildings based on class criteria. Indeed, the middle class (more specifically its middle middle and upper middle subclasses) and capitalists (local bourgeoisie) occupied specific areas and residences that are detached from other zones or social classes areas. This is the case of Rawabi City and neighborhoods like AlRiehan, Alyasmeen, and the Diplomatic Quarter and AlSafa Neighborhood. However, the time and form of the architectural buildings of these new neighborhoods and buildings is different from what they used to be (before Oslo and the First Intifada). The place acquires a new time dimension. This is confirmed by the names given to these neighborhoods, streets, squares, restaurants, cafés, hotels and supermarkets.

We should also note the disparity in the class identity of the space as well as its gender dimension. For instance, women are not present in popular café, but this does not apply to coffee shops. The difference between the popular café and

6 A Report published by Aman (September 2015), under the title of Report on the Financial Rights of Non-Ministry Public Institutions Officials and NGOs" referred to huge gaps in the pay across institutions operating in the West Bank, see: <http://www.aman-palestine.org/ar/reports-and-studies/2586.html#sthash.AdWOUkMF.dpuf>

coffee shops has a class dimension (in terms of price, décor, furniture and type of service). It also has a gender dimension. It also applies to the restrictions on mobility and world of children the (residential, school and public) space imposes in cities, mainly in Ramallah-Abiereh with the excessive expansion in residential apartments building (more like a can of sardine, as described by an interviewee). These multi-storey buildings, which increased – under the impact of existing religious extremism based on the severe segregation between the world of women and that of men) – the level of polarization between the private space and the public space, compared to the situation in villages, which did not live the effect of urban and residential expansion in apartments in multi-storey buildings. It is useful to recall that Israel imposed, mainly in cities, strict restrictions on the use of the public space for gathering and debate on national matters or for political and partisan activities or demonstrations and other forms of public resistance against the policy of the settler colonial state, which applies an apartheid regime.

The power relations allow Israel to enter with its army and security forces into Ramallah and impose restrictions on mobility; it enables it use the “clearance” tax revenues due to the PA for political blackmailing. This made many feel that the boom of the middle class (and real estate capital) in Ramallah is a mere ephemeral state. It is vulnerable to collapse at any time. This “existential” anxiety has its repercussions on the ability of future planning of the city and its relations.

Ramallah is a city under occupation par excellence. It is entirely surrounded by settlements, bypass roads and checkpoints. Many of its citizens have been arrested in their homes. Israel will not give a second thought to arresting any individual at any time inside the city without any consideration whatsoever of the fact that it is the seat of the PA and an area “A”. The Israeli forces detained many city citizens and political readers of the main political factions and PLC members (as is the case of Marwan Barghouthi, the senior member of Fatah, two leaders of Hamas, and recently (in April 2015), PLC member and member of the political office of the PFLP, Khalida Jarrar).

## 5. Ramallah and the Dream of the Liberal Palestinian City

Ramallah is the story told by its residents, workers, and visitors. It is the talk of journalists and new comers or those passing by. The most salient feature its rapid (horizontal and vertical) urban expansion, mainly after the second Intifada and after ministerial and municipal regulations allowing for increasing the number of floors in buildings (Annex 3, interview 26). With this expansion, Ramallah's banking and service role inflated (with hotels, cafés, restaurants, shops, markets, telecommunication and transportation), which effluent consumption and depletion of any shame of extravagance show off. In essence, the enigma of Ramallah lies in the true confrontation of the emergence of a Palestinian city after many decades of retention. A phenomenon that spawns various feelings, fears, expectations and suspicions considering the terms and circumstances under which this growth took place and the anxiety about its trajectory. Following are some examples of such feelings, suspicions, expectations and fears with contemplations of the feelings that arose within those who narrated the city:

### **"Ramallah, Bride of Palestine"**<sup>7</sup>

"Weird it is, Ramallah. Multi-cultured and multi-faced, it has not been a patriarchal or gloomy city. It has always led the way toward any new luxury. I watched the Dabkeh in Ramallah as if I were in Dier Ghassanah. I learned the Tango as a teenager. I learned to pool in the Ankars Salon. I started my attempts into poetry. In this city, I developed my interest in cinematographic arts since the 1950s through the program of "Alwaleed" and "Dunia" and "Aljameel" Movie Theaters. In Ramallah, I became used to celebrating Christmas and the New Year Eve."<sup>8</sup>

"The Ramallah Syndrome is a side effect of the new social-spatial order, which emerged after the collapse of the "Oslo Peace Process". It is a form of hallucinations about what is normal and a fantasy (an illusion) of cohabitation with the occupation and freedom."<sup>9</sup>

"Ramallah is an integral Part of the Israeli colonial Apartheid Bantustans, which are subjected to security control and economic dependency. Ramallah, like other Palestinian cities and villages, lived regressive social transformations including

7 Title of a publication by Ramallah Municipality (in English) on the monthly cultural activities in the city's facilities.

8 Albarghouthi, M., I saw Ramallah, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca – Morocco, and Beirut-Lebanon, 2003, p. 48

9 See, the Ramallah Syndrome at: (2009): <http://ramallahsyndrome.blogspot.com/2009/10/ahdaf-souEIF-on-guardian.html>

the formation of social segments whose interests converge with the status quo. This coincided with the dissemination of a regressive culture and economic transformations that deepened the dependency.”<sup>10</sup>

“Ramallah is the hub of the Palestinian night life: coffee shops, bars, salons, numerous home parties... In the weekends, the traditional cafés are stocked with people smoking the hookah. We, the Palestinians, are a lively people; we love to sing and organize festivities... But the night life of a city under occupation is a complex story... The inhabitants of Ramallah are under restrictions and cannot easily travel to Jerusalem or other cities. This turned the city into a refuge, a kind of oasis. As such, it becomes problematic, a kind of mini Beirut. A place known as the bubble. It is the place where you flee the Palestinian reality...”<sup>11</sup>

“A distinguished civilized city, a green, safe and prosperous place, an environment-friendly zone that preserves the natural and cultural legacy with an appeal to tourism an investment, Ramallah hosts culture and arts with intellectual, political and cultural pluralism and respect of human rights.”<sup>12</sup>

“The posters rendering homage to Palestinian Intifada Martyrs disappeared on the streets of Ramallah to be replaced with gigantesque advertisement banners marketing for mortgages. A town of the West Bank – the scene of Yasser Arafat’s last battle, the place where he was besieged in 2002 by Israeli tanks that wrecked off his quarters – was transformed into a small city open to the world with modern bars and luxurious houses.”<sup>13</sup>

“Now, Ramallah has grown into the administrative capital of the PA. It is no longer the song of “Lawee? Aa Ramallah – where to? To Ramallah”. It is now the hub of the life of the Palestinians. Ramallah residents used to work in Jerusalem. Now, the Jerusalemites work in Ramallah and spend their evenings there. Holder of the title of poetry and a poem in a collection of poets (namely, Poet Mahmoud Darwish) said, “this is a rapidly growing city.” Others wrote about the “bubble of Ramallah” and another about “Ramallah the Blond”. A former Director of the French-German

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10 Abdelhamid, M., Demonization of Ramallah, (Series 1), Alayyam News Paper, 5 Feb 2013

11 Christina Ganim, “The insiders’ cultural guide to Ramallah: ‘A misunderstood cosmopolitan bubble’”, The Guardian 20th April 2015 (<http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/apr/20/insiders-guide-ramallah-misunderstood-cosmopolitan-bubble>).

12 Annual Report, Ramallah Municipality, 2013

13 Bart, B., The Ramallah Dream, a Trip in the Heart of the Palestinian Mirage, Dar Jarus Press, Tripoli – Lebanon, 2013

Cultural Center, Gilles Karemer, wrote a different book praising the city. The essence of this book, "what cannot be done in another Palestinian city is feasible in Ramallah. Years ago, a conference was held in Amman on cities. The French organized this conference to answer a side question about the definition of cities and a key issue in describing Ramallah. Is it a village? A city... Has it grown into a city? Had I been in this conference, I would have described it as a Town and administrative capital. It is even the hub and metropolis of national life."<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, this urban isle [Ramallah-Albiereh] appears at times closer to metropolitan cities in the region – Amman, Cairo, Beirut and recently Dubai – than to similar cities and towns enclaved by the occupation. The outcome is that in this urban center, with a population of barely 60 thousand people, we find features that are similar (albeit at smaller scale) to major Arab cities that are much larger than Ramallah. We find for instance the growing social disparity of the population with increased and normalization of social differences and the globalized hostile ethics drafted by the new middle class."<sup>15</sup>

Ramallah is at 16 kilometers from Jerusalem and at 900 meters above sea level. It is uphill and referred to as the bride of Palestine in reason of its geographic aesthetic features. Ramallah has moderate and fresh weather. For many years, it was the preferred summer resort. Modern Ramallah is a lively city with museums, galleries, theaters, parks, many restaurants and a nightlife. Ramallah is rapidly growing into a cosmopolitan city.<sup>16</sup>

"Is there any other town in the world where a young man – an indigenous know to his neighbors and surrounding – would bring six foreign women to his bed in less than a month but still covers his beer or wine bottle with black bags when he buys them? I don't think this would happen in any place other than Ramallah, But the worse thing is that it is "occupied Ramallah".<sup>17</sup>

What takes place in the alleys and streets of Ramallah Altahta, had taken place in the City center streets. They removed the rusty water pipes and built beautiful sidewalks with trees and new lighting. As such, they performed a "cardiac catheterization" of the city heart and protected them against "myocardial infraction".

14 Albattal, H., Alayyam Newspaper, A more/ or less description of Ramallah?!, April 28th, 2015

15 Lisa Taraki, "Enclave Micropolis; the Paradoxical Case of Ramalla/Al-Bira", Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 37; No. 4 (summer 2008). P. 7

16 A photo leaflet on Ramallah and its surrounding, 2014 (in English), Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Ramallah  
17 From Yahai, A., Ramallah the Blond, Dar Alfel, Jerusalem 2013

You go for coffee in a coffee shop in Ramallah on the main street in the morning. In the evening, you go to Alinshirah café – Alsahl St. – in the old city. I am lucky to live in a city that is the heart of this West Bank. I am lucky to live in the bottom and inner old heart.”<sup>18</sup>

“In the aftermath of the signature of the Oslo accord, and with the advent of the National Authority on the Palestinian Territory, the prices of land soared. A public center created its seat in Ramallah whose buildings and residential zones barely sufficed the absorption of this demographic change. Consequently, investors and private sector companies invested madly in trade in land and construction of gigantesque residential compounds, some of which hosted forty apartments. The striking feature of the buildings invading the city was their lack of uniform architecture, color or setbacks compared to their neighbors. They also lacked any uniform system of collective services.”<sup>19</sup>

“The overwhelming feeling that mostly haunts me in Ramallah is that we are living in a bubble that will explode one day. Many times, I feel suffocated. It is probably because I am new to the city and am not used to what should usually make me angry. Ramallah is an uphill city. In my old place (Almasyoun – Ramallah), I used to go out with my wife to walk at night. We would climb uphill and enjoy good mood and deep breath. This does not last long as you see the settlements with their bright lights overlooking the Prison of Ofar. You feel frustrated.”<sup>20</sup>

“In recent years, many literary works addressed the city of Ramallah. The first book was by Mureed Albarghouthi, under the title of “I Saw Ramallah”, published by Dar AlHilal, Cairo-Egypt, 1997. The second book by the same author was, “I was born there; I was born here.” (Part II of “I Saw Ramallah”, published by Dar Riyad AlRayyes for Publication and Printing, Beirut – Lebanon, 2009) and a novel “There are no Angels in Ramallah”, by young female author, Enas Abdallah, published by Dar Fadaat AlNashr, Amman – Jordan in 2010. Finally, there was a book, “Ramallah the dream... A trip into the Palestinian Mirage”, by journalist Benjamin Bart, writer to the French Le Mode and correspondent in the Palestinian Territory from 2002-2011.”<sup>21</sup>

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18 Albattal, H., Cardiac Catheterization of Ramallah Altahta, AlAyyam Newspaper, May 22nd, 2015

19 Farraj, Kh., “Ramallah, Global Village with everything”, Palestine Studies Review, issue 72, Autumn 2007, p 126

20 Alhindi, Kh. Dr., President of Birzeit University until summer 2015, “Khalil Hindi from Altantourah to Birzeit”, Palestine Studies Review, Issue 98, spring 2014, p 149-174

21 Jardat, Mohammad, “Reading of Ramallah the Blond, novel by Abad Yahia, Dunia Alwatan, January 25th, 2013



"Ramallah from here, from behind, resembles a refugee camp without any modern engineering or design. It is a large squatter with too much cement. All of the cities of the West Bank started to look like refugee camps without any general engineering or planning. Each one builds what he wants, which made the cities of the West Bank look like camps or a car parking!!"<sup>22</sup>

## 6. Ramallah between the Self-Rule Condition and the Settler Colonization

Probably the most important event in the modern history of Ramallah (together with Albiereh) was the creation of the Palestinian Authority and its choice of Ramallah as its seat. Upon its takeover in 1994, the National Authority was the first Palestinian rule known to the city (although with limited self-rule mandate). The PA headquartered in Ramallah-Albiereh under the assumption that this would be a temporary procedure until the establishment of the independent Palestinian state with its capital, Jerusalem. This was supposed to take place in a short period (defined as five years, i.e. in 1999) and that there would be a shift toward a state via bilateral negotiation with Israel (being the occupying state). However, this did not happen even after two decades of negotiations. We can say that it is not expected to happen in the near future taking due to ongoing intense settler colonization control of the West Bank and the suffocating siege on the Gaza Strip. However, the failure to establish a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital qualified Ramallah to play the role of the political, economic, financial, administrative and cultural center of the West Bank. Therefore, some see what happened to Ramallah as a "side effect" of the failure of the project to create the Palestinian state. Others see it as the result of the creation of a Palestinian authority for the first time on its territory. Since Ramallah has grown into the political, security, administrative and economic seat of the leadership, Israel dealt with it with relative specificity, compared to other zones, which produced other phenomena that I will address later. It is an illusion that it is a city beyond the control of the occupation and safe from the hegemony of the settler colonizing state.

As in many other Palestinian areas, the Nakba effect was dramatic on the then small Ramallah. Immigration of Ramallah residents outside Palestine increased while it received scores of Palestinian refugees coming mainly from Jaffa, Lud and Ramallah. In 1944 (that is 4 years before the Nakba) the population of Ramallah

<sup>22</sup> Allaham, N., "And Ramallah, from Behind, Looks Like a Refugee Camp", Maan News Agency, May 24th, 2015

reached 6300 persons with the following sectarian distribution: 3570 Greek Orthodox, 700 Roman Catholic, 1080 Latin, 325 Protestants, 200 Friends, 425 Muslims. The same source reports that the population of Ramallah in 1952 (five years after the Nakba) was: 4500 native population (less by 1800 of its levels nine years before), expatriates 2580, refugees and new comers 9000, making the total population around 13500. The refugees (of the Nakba) represented in that year two thirds of the population of Ramallah.<sup>23</sup>

In 1997, the population of Ramallah City was 17851, and increased to 27092 in 2007 (PCBS). The population of Albiereh was 37690 and Betonia 19496, making 84278 capita in this tripartite urban zone. The population in Ramallah in 2015 was estimated at 34173, and Albiereh at 47540 and Betonia at 24592, making a total of 106305.<sup>24</sup> These are estimates and some believe – as others believed in 2007 – that the population of Ramallah is much higher. This is probably due to the difference between the number of residents and number of visitors who come to the city to work, shop or seek medical treatment and other services from neighboring villages and from the Palestinians inside the Green Line. It is natural that the number of users of the twin city (Ramallah-Albeireh) exceeds the number of its residents. The city provides diversified (health, commodity, administrative, recreational, educational and sporting) services that different social segments need (popular and middle classes and capital holders and businesspersons). Considerable villages are part of the Governorate of Ramallah – Albiereh and they need the services provided by the city. It should be noted that these villages do not fall under the rural definition since only a small percentage depend on agriculture. They are villages in terms of social relations (the strong role of clan and neighbors relations).

Although it has special importance, the population of Ramallah is not significant by its number but rather by its generation of new social needs and relations. What matters here is the social, professional, and cultural composition of the residents and workers in the place and those using it. The existing diversity in the composition of inhabitants of Ramallah is not a new thing. However, the consequence of the creation of the Palestinian Authority and choice of its headquarters in Ramallah influenced the professional, cultural, political and ideological diversity in terms of life experiences, artistic and architectural taste and increasingly pushed

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23 On Demographic, Clan and Institutional History of Ramallah until Early 1980s, see Shaheen, A., *Unveiling Ancestors and Clans of Ramallah*, Documentation and Research Center, Birzeit University, 1982 (p 21-22)

24 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (see Annex 2)

it away from the engines of social relations in surrounding villages (including family, neighbors, age groups, gender, ownership and forms of capital).

Therefore, the enigma of Ramallah is largely connected to the formation and occupations and aspirations of the Palestinian middle class<sup>25</sup>, which represents the professional, political, cultural and economic majority in the city and its suburbs. Within this middle class, some find in Ramallah the necessary space of personal freedom and respect of privacy and who prefer that their privacy be respected and not trespassed. This relative respect of privacy is partly attributable to the absence of clan (tribal) hegemony on individual behavior in the city. Some consider that “with the absence of the clan, everybody endeavors to build his/her own world” (Annex 3, interview 9). Others view Ramallah as “Sodom and Gomorrah”, because of the corruption, immorality and undermining of ethical and national values they see.<sup>26</sup> It is a class with subclasses that find in Ramallah the fulfillment of their cultural, artistic, intellectual and political interests; and with others who are happy with its stores, hotels, restaurants, cafés and other leisure and entertainment. The streets in the daytime are crowded with pedestrians and vehicles, conveying a sense of existence in the city. One of our interviewees, a worker on the Rukab Street, says, “the streets of Ramallah are overcrowded because of the increase in the rented or owned multi floor buildings with their commercial shops,

25 On the Characteristics and Features of the Palestinian Middle Class in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, see Hilal, J., “The Palestinian Middle Class in the Face of the Challenges of Political Fragmentation and intellectual-cultural Laziness and Conservative Trend.”, *Palestinian Papers*, Issue 3, Summer 2013

26 This is what critics of Abad Yahya’s novel, *Ramallah the Blond* (Dar Alfeel, Jerusalem 2013) found. See Muhanad Abdelhamid’s review of the novel in three parts under the title of “Demonization of Ramallah”, published in *Aalayyam Newspaper* on February 5th, 12th and 19th, 2013. In the third part he concluded that the novel belongs to “a cultural yet regressive and conservative culture. This appears in the stances and concepts defended or explicated in the novel. It is not a disgrace of Ramallah to host diversified cultural activities, some of which are of fine class while others are a degradation. Still, most of them are useful since culture boosts social development and openness to human creativity. It is a forum to criticize politics and politicians. The Palestinian culture has always played a role of resistance against the occupation notwithstanding the current fragility of the cultural elites. It is still necessary to note that a political collapse may happen while culture and its components shall remain resilient. Every country has several cultures. When the political criticism depends on regressive culture, it loses its strengths and shifts its supporters to the right of those it criticizes. This is what we see in “*Ramallah the Blond*”> some read a different text in this novel. For instance, the Dean of the Department of Sociology and Humanities in Birzeit University, Dr. Abaheer AlSaqa thinks, “the novel reflects the hysterical state lived by Ramallah, compared to Gaza the Black or Red of today.” Al Saqa sees that the novel is narrating the contradiction between the local and the cosmopolitan and talks about many social changes taking place in the city. It narrates the contradictory spaces and all new phenomena in a smooth pleasant way. We all recall our localism in this city, which with days stops resembling us. The novel addresses one of the most controversial issues of Ramallah, namely the foreign presence. It monitors the details of life, architecture, identity policies and relation with the Palestinian diaspora. Abad Yahya goes through this spectrum starting with Slavoj Zizik to reach the sellers of coffee around the city.” (*Haq Alawda Newspaper*, issue 51, Badil (the Palestinian Center for the Sources of Citizenship and Refugees Rights). See <https://www.badil.org/haq-alawda/item/1867-art13>

clinics, labs technical offices. It also receives shoppers from neighboring villages and visitors who simply come for a “walk”, in addition to political faction staff and security apparatuses staff.”<sup>27</sup>

The city also has significant social segments who strive to secure their daily bread, and young people who find it pleasant to “ride” in recent cars and move from one coffee shop to another and from one restaurant to another (whose prices deter most social segments). They go from one club to another, from a 4-star hotel to a 50star hotel. Others barely have a capital of a few hundreds of shekels, which they use to sell small items on the street for a few shekels. They tour the city streets and sidewalks. It is necessary to recall this to those who easily generalize the happenings of this “premature” city, as an interviewee describes it. It is a reminder to those who flatten the city by connecting it to the authority and misconduct.

On the sidewalks of Ramallah, we find salesmen with seasonal goods like cakes, strawberry, drinks, green almonds, stewed wheat, chestnut, humus, fowl, coffee and sellers of books, CD’s, DVD’s, religious books and popular stories. We also find greengrocers selling seasonal produce like zucchini, tomatoes, cucumber, mint, parsley, mallow, chicory and other)... there is also the permanently crowded market of vegetables and fruit. Its streets are always full of taxis, a mix of places (restaurants including fast food like KFC, popular cafés, fancy coffee shops whose prices overmatch European cities). There also stores with local, Arab or foreign names. On the sidewalks of Ramallah, we find the poor from villages marketing what they still produce or do not produce.

Ramallah (together with Albierah) is not exclusive to middle class and businesspersons. It also has Almaari camp, Qadura Neighborhood, and the camps of Aljalazon and Qalandia. It is home of the poor of Ramallah Altahta and Um Alsharayet where the lower middle class lives. The street of Rukab is rarely without beggars on the sidewalks. In its neighborhoods, some knock at doors and offices to ask for help directly or indirectly (by selling religious books).

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27 Ramallah is a market of variant goods and services, popular restaurants (for humus, fowl and falafel, also frequented by the middle class to buy or have breakfast, mainly on Fridays and to a lesser extent on Sundays. In recent years, fast food restaurants and 3+ star hotels (Grand Park, Caesar, Ankars Suites, Royal Court, Alhajal, Beauty-Inn, Casablanca, City-Inn, Movenpick, Merador (in Altierah) in addition to specialized clinics, pharmacies, labs, hospitals, money exchangers, supermarkets and malls. It also has movie theaters, clothing stores, jewelers, hairdressers, car parking and depot of the public transport taking passengers to different parts of the West Bank.

## 7. Ramallah: Urban Sprawl, sign of aliveness or sign of mirage<sup>28</sup>?

A female pharmacist in Ramallah Altahta told me that the citizens of Ramallah who come to visit in the summer say they no longer recognize their city because of the tremendous changes that took place. There are new buildings, lights and a nightlife that – in their words – exceeds what they see in America. This is an exaggeration used to reiterate the level of change that took place in the city over the past two decades. But, based on my own experience and the interviews I conducted, it is quite true if we compare Ramallah today with the city before the advent of the Palestinian Authority.

There is no doubt that Ramallah witnessed in the last decade an increase in the construction of multi storey buildings for housing or work purposes (offices, clinics and labs) or for use as government premises, or for banks, different companies or nongovernmental or civil society organizations. Obviously, the number of coffee shops, restaurants and hotels has doubled<sup>29</sup> after the second Intifada and the passing away of President Yasser Arafat. Some used “globalized”<sup>30</sup> names. Cinemas, Taxi service and all other vehicles are back into the streets of the city. The daytime population of Ramallah is double (according to some estimates, including municipal staff) its nighttime residents because of the number of comers to the city for work, shopping, treatment and official business in daytime.

The urban and demographic sprawl and diversified urban feather is the engine of the Ramallah enigma. This includes the enigma of a new architectural language and the new concept of housing forced by the funds from the Gulf and control of the private sector, which grew as part of the city’s typography. Some consider this like a bubble doomed to explode while others see Ramallah going on the footsteps of large Arab cities like Beirut, Amman and Dubai.<sup>31</sup> (Many interviewees spoke of the influence of Amman and Gulf states’ life style and architectural pat-

28 The term Palestinian Mirage of Ramallah appeared in Benjamin Bart’s book, *The Dream of Ramallah, A Trip in the Heart of the Palestinian Mirage*, Dar Jarous Press, Tripoli, Lebanon, 2013.

29 A press report on Ramallah in the late 2014 states that the number of coffee shops and restaurants in the city, according to the Ramallah City Information Sheet, has exceeded 4000. See Saed Abu Farha, “The Quarrel of the Past and the Present over a Table, the Story of the Café and the Authority in Ramallah”, Annex to *Alsafer* Newspaper, October 2014. <http://palestine.assafir.com/Article.aspx?ArticleID=3098>. To get more information on the different activities in Ramallah and other areas, see the monthly review. *This Week in Palestine*

30 Some of these restaurants and hotels have English names, like the original brand. They include Pizza Hut, KFC, Checkers, Dominos, Mövenpick Hotel, Caesar, Grand Park, Best Eastern, Royal Court Suites, Beauty-Inn, etc.

31 Bisharah, Kh., draft unpublished paper, idem.

tern on Ramallah. Some believe that the happenings of Ramallah are the translation of political agendas and convergence of multiple local, regional and national interests.

The enigma of Ramallah lies largely in the secret of its transformation from a multi-sectarian touristic town with relative high immigration and a summer resort into a city or town with clear urban features. Ramallah lived an urban sprawl that has – over a very short time – transformed its typography through vertical and horizontal expansion and intensification and diversification of institutions and activities. This happened and is still happening with the presence of the Palestinian Authority (limited self-rule) alongside the apartheid settler control of the colonizing state and neo-liberal economic system.

The well-off political, economic and culture elites of Ramallah do not hide the image they want to present of the city. This is obvious in the institutions and facilities they reside in and the activities celebrated by the city. Ramallah hosts the Palestinian prime ministry and seats of different PA ministries and agencies including the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the Palestinian Land Authority (PLA) and premises of different private sector companies, international and civil society and nongovernmental organizations. It has also numerous cultural institutions created during or after the first Intifada (mostly after the Oslo accords) including the Ramallah Cultural Palace and Mahmoud Darwish Museum<sup>32</sup>, Tamer Community Education Institute (established in 1989), Abdelmohsen Alqattan Foundation (established post Oslo), Muwaten, MAS, MADAR, Palestine Studies Institute, Riwaq (located in Albiereh but refers to its address as in Ramallah), Edward Saeed Music Conservatory, Kamanjati, Popular Art Center (Albiereh), Sariyat Ramallah, Alqasaba Theater, French-German Cultural Center, mausoleum and museum of Yasser Arafat, Alsakakini Cultural Center, in addition to many clubs, sports associations, human rights and women organizations and labor unions. Add to all this a crowd of globalized restaurants, cafés and hotels not to mention “malls” and “supermarket” (with Arabic and foreign names) and taxi service.

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32 According to the Ramallah Municipality, the Cultural Palace was established in 2005. It was planned and implemented by the Municipality of Ramallah and UNDP with generous support from the Government of Japan. (See Municipality leaflet titled “Presenting the Facilities of the Municipality of Ramallah, in Arabic and English. Undated. The same leaflet presents the importance of other sites including the Barwa Garden/ Mahmoud Darwish Museum, which opened in 2012 in cooperation between the Ramallah Municipality, the Prime Ministry and Mahmoud Darwish Foundation, and the mausoleum and museum of Arafat (2014).

The names given to the streets in Ramallah (placed at the entrances of streets and crossroads in recent years) reveal the keenness to give the city a secular pluralist inclusive identity (with overwhelming male names) and an Arab and international dimensions. This appears on the following names in random order<sup>33</sup>

Khalil Sakakini, Edward Saeed, Emile Habibi, Yahia Ayyash (Habibi and Ayyash corss at Almasyouun), Philip Hatti, Khalil Albedieri, Fawzi Alqawiqji, Emile Azar, Ben Bella, Issa Ziyadah, Kamal Udwan, Khalil Abu Rayya, Ahmad Sidqi Aldajani, Is'af Alnashashibi, Ibrahim Touqan, Khalil Alwazir, Mukhles Amro, Jabra Alashqar, Mansour Rayyan, Michael Angelo, Mother Teresa, Hanna Michael, Ghassan Kanafani, Lina Alnabulsi, Fayez Sayegh, Saad Sayel, Nicolas Shehada, Newton, Tolstoy, Raf-faili Cireillo (an Italian journalist who martyred during the incursion), Albukhari, Alkindi, Alfarabi, Mar Andraus, Friends, Labeeb Ni'mah, Dier Alrum, Alanarah, Bint Jbiel, Almasayef, Naji Alali, Moeen Besseiso, Mustapha Aldabbagh, Nizar Qabbani, Almuntazah, Sameeh Farsoun, Mohammad Yousef Alnajjar, Henry Ketten, Almajdal, Dar Ibrahim, Ein Misbah, Dar Oudeh, Zanoobia, Louis Aragon, Saint Peter, Falasteen, Lebnan, Tokyo, Brazil, Alhend, Berlin, Janoub Afriqia, Hanoi, Yaffa, Alquds and Gaza.

The same applies to the names of squares (at the crossroads of the streets of the city), which come with names like: Yasser Arafat, King Abdalla, Asra Alhuriah, Alshabab, Abu Ali Mustapha, Nelson Mandela, Heider Abdelshafi Kareem Khalaf, Aziz Shehada, George Habash.

Ramallah Municipality also reiterates its position as a sponsor of public cultural activity and responsible for cleaning the streets and safeguarding the environment. It launched in 2015 a project to recycle carton and papers not to mention the rehabilitation of new areas of the roads and sidewalks and planting trees in many areas including in Ramallah Altahta.

In the same time, we notice that the private sector – usually using the owners' names – tends to give its housing units (which target the lower and middle sub-classes of the middle class) with names that are time and space irrelevant to the Palestinians. Ribhi Alhijjah housing projects for instance are called Kuala Lumpur, Indonesia, Malaysia, Seville, Grenada, Ratel, Yousef building. They also include Is-

<sup>33</sup> The names of the streets were chosen by a committee of the city figures, assigned by the Municipality. A taxi driver told me, 'many of these names are strange to us. Albiereh Municipality did better because it named the streets with the names people used.'

tanbul, and Clementia. As for Niballi Real Estate, their projects are called Ras Al-naqourah, Antalya, and Izmir. Ribhi Alhajah Projects also have names like Ahmad Project, and Samarkand. Alfares and Alnabali chose names like Saida, Fas, Mekka, Alqasreen, Riyadh, Petra, Qasr Abu Dhabi, Cartage, Jeddah, the Andalusia Villas, Agadir, Dubai, Juniah, Algeria and Samera<sup>34</sup>. The widespread use of Islamic names or names of Islamic states' capitals made some say that the new buildings in Ramallah-Albiereh are owned by Islamists, adding "and targeted the corrupted of the PA" (Annex 3, interview 5).

## 8. Why is Ramallah an Exception?

Many factors made Ramallah the exception among the cities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, most importantly – as previously mentioned – its selection by the PA as its seat since Israel prevented that such seat be in Jerusalem. This step led to many deliberate and accidental transformations that can be told as such:

- I. The outcome of the Oslo Accord was the return of tens of thousands of Palestinians with variant experiences and specializations, most of whom lived in Arab and non-Arab cities. They had worked in the PLO institutions and factions in Arab cities (Beirut, Damascus, Tunisia) and some studied or worked in Palestinian diplomatic missions in socialist countries and some western capitals. Because the cities (more precisely the towns) of the West Bank and Gaza Strip had limited growth after the Nakba, most of the returnees were disappointed with the reality in these Palestinian cities-towns.<sup>35</sup> This repulsion between "returnee" and "resident" appeared more specifically before the second Intifada. With the international, regional and local changes in the last three decades, the "secular" stream that hegemonized the PLO factions and institutions and adopted a defensive way and slowly retreated before the influence of "Hamas" and the other political Islam forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and other Palestinian communities. This transformation coincided with the relapse of the influence of the Palestinian left in the society and Islamic forces influence inside Fatah, which became more ready to be influenced by the Islamic stream discoursed..

34 Names taken from the marketing brochures of different housing projects implemented by various companies.

35 See for instance, Alustah, Adel, "Literature of the Returnees – Disappointment of the Returnees", Alayyam newspaper, May 10th, 2015



strong and effective presence of the political Islam appeared in the 2006 elections with Hamas winning the PLC elections. Ramallah was not isolated from the escalation of Political Islam and the decrease in the influence of the left and secular cultures, mainly after the passing away of Arafat in 2004. Large segments of the middle class coped with the ethics and tastes of the Islamic Stream. Probably, Hamas's victory in the elections of the students' council of Birzeit University (the most secular and liberal university of the WBGS) in April 2015 asserts that the Islamic stream still enjoys wide influence among the middle class segments.

- II. The split between Fatah and Hamas in 2007 provided the city of Ramallah with the opportunity to present itself as an open and liberal city that detaches itself from the politics between the two major factions. Probably Fatah and Hamas (each for its own reasons) found this suitable and the PA institutions and Fatah the image of supporter of liberalism, openness and pluralism as opposed to Hamas. Indeed, Hamas's attitude as a de facto authority in Gaza projected a totally different image and granted Hamas's presence in the West Bank a refuge among human rights organizations and the PLC against PA procedures. Starting with this entry point, we can say, as told me an interviewee, that Ramallah is the child of Fatah (Annex 3, interview 16). This identity actually dismantled the attempt of Islamic forces to change the name of the city of Ramallah because it has the name "Allah" in it and enabled the municipality stand against this attempt.
- III. In practice, Ramallah – because of Israel's position – became the political and administrative capital of the PA. The Israeli restrictions on urban expansion outside Areas "A" and "B" (20% of the West Bank without taking the settlements into account) and the PA and private sector's need to establish premises and housing for workers and job seekers sent land prices skyrocketing. Therefore, a wave of investment by the private sector began in trade in land and construction of huge housing compounds, some of which had forty apartments each.<sup>36</sup> This is an indicator that the key party defining and benefiting from the urban expansion of Ramallah and building patterns, sites and sizes of public areas was the private capital. In other words, the political and civil society did not have much influence on the decisions related to urban expansion of the city or its features. This does not mean that Ramallah Municipality did not play any role, but its role was limited to narrow areas. It should be noted that Ramallah, simi-

<sup>36</sup> See reportage by Khaled Farraj, "Ramallah, Global Village with Everything", *Palestine Studies Review*, issue 72, Autumn 2007

lar to other Palestinian cities, is enclaved by settlements and bypass roads. This explains the rush to urban expansion in manners different from the traditional Palestinian architecture (one or two-storey houses). However, this would not have taken place in this manner had it not provided job opportunities for large segments of the middle class of Ramallah-Albiereh and its suburbs. The need for housing in Ramallah-Albiereh, which arose following the second Intifada and the subsequent restrictions, imposed by Israel on mobility within and intra cities, forced many to come daily to work in public and private sector institutions. They needed dwellings near their workplace in Ramallah-Albiereh (including in Um Alsharayet) and constituted an incentive for investment in multi-floor housing compounds to make cost effective use of the expensive land.

- IV. The PA establishment came with growth of the modern private sector (banks, telecommunication, insurance companies, media and health, legal and social services). This triggered growth of the private sector in number and share of the labor force stemmed by the needs of the PA (being the Public sector) and the private sector in general and specialized staff in many areas. In the aftermath of the Oslo Accord the number of NGOs increased as well as the number of freelancers (doctors, engineers, lawyers, dentists). Moreover, the number of universities, colleges and private schools rose and needed more teachers, staff and students.

This rapid and wide growth in the size of the middle class in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, mainly in cities, especially in Ramallah-Albiereh, where the middle class represents 20% of the labor force (Annex 2), introduced a radical shift in the class composition, which until the first Intifada was mainly geared by the working class "proletariat". This actually resulted from the fact that many workers found job opportunities in Israel and its settlements, while immigration (toward Gulf states, Jordan, Europe and USA) contributed to the emergence of a Palestinian middle class outside the territory occupied in 1967. This middle class is differentiated from other classes (including the small bourgeoisie or owners of small capital and businesspersons) by its reliance on the ownership of a cultural capital (high educational attainment and fine specializations) in generating income, social status and a particular lifestyle for itself.<sup>37</sup> After the

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<sup>37</sup> For detailed discussion on the concept of middle class and its Palestinian expressions in terms of composition and internal features and differences, see Jameel Hilal, *The Palestinian Middle Class, Search on the Chaos of Identify, Reference and Culture*, Muwatin – the Palestinian Institute for Democracy Studies, Palestine Studies Institute, 2006

First Intifada, the Gulf War and the Oslo Accord, Israel devised labor restrictions on the Palestinians in its labor market, and employment with the PA, private sector and civil society institutions was open to form a new middle class, which has relative weight and influence.

What distinguishes Ramallah from other Palestinian cities is beyond the fact that its demographic growth rates (compared to the size of the population) is the highest. It actually includes other aspects including the urban sprawl that invaded the city in the last decade with multi-purpose buildings and housing compounds (ministerial headquarters, seats of international organizations, hotels, offices, clinics, restaurants and coffee shops, labs, schools, colleges, stores, cultural and research centers and NGOs). In addition there is this vertical and horizontal expansion to the extent allowable in Areas "A" and "B" and as permissible by municipal plans and capital investment. The urban expansion dwelled in the different parts of the city and its suburbs including the city center and old city.<sup>38</sup> Still, the most salient feature of Ramallah is its population diversity in terms of origin (Gaza, north and south and middle West Bank), and its political, professional, social and cultural diversity. This aspect is highly cherished by official and civil institutions and they endeavor to highlight it.

- V. Ramallah is also distinguished from other cities and towns by its enthusiasm to present itself as the city for all Palestinians (regardless of their place of birth). To a certain extent, it stands up to this image if we ignore the sharp disparity of wealth and authority among its citizens. This particularity stems from deliberate effort of the city's leaders to present it as a pluralist city in terms of respect of plurality of political, ideological and religious beliefs and respect of privacy. To a certain extent, it is as such, which is a feature commended by the interviewees and the municipality. The city is open to different cultures and lifestyles, but because it is interwoven with Albiereh (the more conservative in terms of social relations) and the social and cultural diversity of its inhabitants and daily visitors, it remains cautious, as demonstrated by the fate of "Biet

<sup>38</sup> The reconstruction and urban expansion efforts included the street of Rukab where some old one-floor buildings were demolished to be replaced by multi-storey buildings for offices like Al-lulua, Ziyada, Alnatshe, and Dnia Commercial center buildings and Alzumrudah. This also applies to Alshal St in Ramallah Altahta and Alirsal St., in addition to many housing and non-housing buildings in different parts of Ramallah and the construction of entire neighborhoods in the suburbs of Ramallah.

Aniesah<sup>39</sup> and women's fear to publicly date a man. It is a city that presents itself as a place combining the local and the globalized. It is pretty much as such in appearance, consumerism and services and in terms of the names chosen by its restaurants, hotels, stores (ranging from Darna and Jududuna to Zamn and Michael Angelo, Azur, Prunto, Fainting and many others). The city dwells in addition to PA and NOGs headquarters, the seat of Arab and foreign embassies and consulates and international organizations, during the summer, it receives thousands of its expatriates from the USA and other areas and welcomes their investment in the city and its suburbs and their donations for its developmental efforts.

VI. With the redeployment of the Israeli occupation forces to zones beyond its boundaries, and the presence of a high percentage of middle class, Ramallah (probably more than any other cities) witnessed multiple public spaces that provide room for public dialogue and discussion. It also hosts regular conferences and meetings of think tanks including Muwaten, Masarat, MAS, Palestine Studies Institute, Madar, Abdelmohsen Alqattan, Birzeit University, Riwaq and others in the areas that influence the Palestinian public opinion and PA policies. Its libraries receive many Arab reviews published in Beirut, and Cairo. It is also the center of local radios and TVs and Arab and international stations. Moreover, it holds art exhibitions and poetry salons and cinema and novel evenings (mainly in Mahmoud Darwish Museum).

Consistent with its history as a summer resort before the Israeli occupation Ramallah presents itself as a touristic city with different star hotels although it lacks (if we exclude its weather in summer time) touristic attractions (archaeological, religious and quality cultural). Moreover, its green areas have decreased over the past two decades and Israel prohibits any access thereto – similar to other occupied territory – by citizens of Arab states. Palestinians under the oc-

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39 In an article published by the Lebanese Safir Newspaper, it was written "who is the most famous woman of Ramallah" The answer is easy: Aniesah, but not for her academic, artistic or even political achievements. Ramallah is rather known for its famous bar and discotheque in the PA Territory, the so-called "Biet Anieseh", more specifically in Ein Menjed neighborhood. When you come near the place, you will find a group of security guards recruited from a private company. You would imagine that when you enter the space, you would find women spread here and there waiting for a client to pick one for the night. No, it is not the case, Biet Anieseh is not a place for sex sellers. It is a bar and a restaurant that turns after 10 Pm into a discotheque where dancers scream loudly and come out drunk after midnight. Neighbors would wake up to the voice of those leaving the bar to the extent that the submitted a complaint to the mayor after which the discotheque was shut for a long period. People rumored that the place was shut against a difference between an "incoming" client and the owner of the place (Islam Alsaqqa, Alsafeer, January 13th, 2014, see <http://shabab.assafir.com/Article.aspx?ArticleID=8482>)

cupation cannot travel to the Mediterranean. Still, we find interest in developing tourism with a tourist's center named Ramallah Tourism Information Center in an old building in Ramallah Altahta near the new Ramallah Municipality. Riwaq and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) renovated the building. Moreover, the French Foreign Ministry and City of Bordeaux support the operation of the center in cooperation with Ramallah Municipality. We find a map of the streets of the city with signs showing its key monuments on the wall of this beautiful building in English. This is an indication that interest is focused on external tourism as well and not limited to domestic tourism. We also notice brochures of the city issued by the municipality ignoring the nearby Palestinian refugee camps (Alamaari and Aljalzone) or small inner camps like Qadoura (probably because it is not registered officially as a camp) or Ein Misbah and other poor areas of the city. It mentions the Park of Qadoura, which is a lovely small garden near the small camp.

VII. Ramallah presents itself as a custodian of culture and hosts a number of cultural center (Ramallah Cultural Palace, Mahmoud Darwish Museum, Sakakini Cultural Center, Qasaba Theater and Cinemateque, among others). It also has art galleries, research centers, theaters and cinemas. The city was keen to build "Ramallah Martyrs' Site" with a mosaic mural by artist Nabeel Anani in a quarter inside the old city. It also has a holed iron calligraphy of a poem by Mahmoud Darwish about martyrs: "when the martyrs go to sleep, I wake up, I guard them against lamenting lovers, I tell them, 'may you wake up in a homeland with clouds and blood'".<sup>40</sup> At the entrance to Alsahl St., still stands a memorial of the prisoners and liberated prisoners (although it degraded with time) at the crossroad of Jafa St. and Alsahl St. It also has a verse of a poem by Mahmoud Darwish saying, "we shall love life so long as we can find a way thereto."

VIII. Ramallah and Albiereh are differentiated by their own municipal establishments although visually, it is difficult to tell their boundaries<sup>41</sup>, still the personal freedom is differentiated in each part. Some believe this is due to the Chris-

40 The poem was curved but had a lingo error. Journalist Hassan Albatal alerted the Municipality in his daily column in Alayyam (April 28th, 2015). The Municipality should be commended for immediate response to correct the error.

41 An interviewee I talked to reported the following incident in his residential area: "Ghassan Kanafani St. (in Qadoura Neighborhood) is a narrow road. Half of the street is within the boundary of Ramallah Municipality while the other half is part of Albiereh. Each municipality cleans its part of the street but at different times. This means that waste, with minimum wind, may travel from one side to the other (an area of a few meters). This situation pushed the residents of the neighborhood to intervene with both municipalities to clean the street in the same time."

tian minority (which used to be the majority before) with its different sects in Ramallah. Alcohol is allowed in Christianity and is served in the restaurants of Ramallah and can be purchased in its stores. This is not the case in Albiereh. The fact that the Christian population became a minority did not change the realm of the city,<sup>42</sup> did not change the continuing freedom to drink alcohol in the city's restaurants, hotels and bars. We should not ignore the fact that Ramallah hosts the premises of the PA, which is an authority that still keeps space with the Salafi Islamic stream. It makes an effort to differentiate itself from Hamas and still upholds to the incentive of "secularism" that dominated the PLO institutions in 1970s and 1980s. The demographic composition of the city, which is free of family and clan influence, also raised its respect of religious and attitude pluralism. It is almost certain that if Hamas controlled the West Bank and Ramallah, it would endeavor to impose its cultural and social hegemony on the place, similar to the case of the Gaza Strip.

## 9. Ramallah and The Cultural Field

The recent events in Ramallah do not stem from vacuum. They resulted from the loss of political weight by the Palestinian political movement. An interviewee I talked to about the situation in Ramallah said that and I see it is an accurate opinion. The same applies to the opinion supporting that the internal happenings of Ramallah intensively abridges the impact of neoliberal policies. Another opinion said that a new identity is now present in Ramallah, namely the "employee", generated by the increasing role of businesspersons in Ramallah-Albiereh-Betonia region. We can add to this that it resulted from the transformation of the Palestin-

<sup>42</sup> On the status of Christians of Ramallah and the Territory occupied in 1967, see: Alshayeb, Yousef: "Christians of Ramallah, from landlords to decreased numbers", *Alsafer Newspaper, Palestine Annex*, issue 37 (fourth year, May 15th, 2013). Dr. Hana Issa, Secretary General of the Islamic-Christian Commission for the Safeguard of Holy Sites reports, based on the said reportage, that the number of Christians in the land occupied in 1967 used to be 2000, being 2% of the total population. Today, it decreased to merely 1%. He also says, based on the same report, that the number of Christians decreased noticeably since the Nakba of 1948. They used to represent 8% of the total population but today Palestinian Christians comprise 46,000 in the area occupied in 1967 and about 110,000 in the area occupied in 1948. He mentioned that the number of Christians in Jerusalem decreased from 27,000 in 1947 to about 5,000 today (2013). In Ramallah and its villages, the number of Christians does not exceed 10,000 (2013). In the US alone, there are about 50,000 Christians from Ramallah. Dr. Hana Issa blamed the occupation mainly for the immigration of Christians. He explained that according to the same report, the occupation controls the areas with holy sites and controls access thereto. He also mentioned that there were external forces concerned with evacuating Palestine of its Christian population to make the conflict in our country, especially in Jerusalem, appear as a conflict between Jews and Muslims and that it has nothing to do with the Christians. This is very serious and we must be aware of that at Palestinian and Arab levels. It is necessary to endeavor to consolidate Christians resilience and ensure they increase in numbers."

ian political movement from a national liberation project to a project of a state enclaved by a settler colonizing state. This project of the state transformed, prematurely, the militants into staff of hierarchical institutions. The same applies to PA institutions in Ramallah and in Gaza.

Adopting neoliberal policies means implementing the free market economy as a priority in societal regulation. The society shrinks to mere consumers in a market that provides to the well off (a person with wealth and high income) everything he/she wants. As such was born a phenomenon of showoff consumption. Many said that the wealthy are no longer ashamed of living extravagantly, the shame of the first Intifada and till shortly after the second Intifada disappeared. The young generation does not resemble the senior ones. A young man said, "the new generation adopted a western lifestyle with high ceilings of freedoms among the young men and women of the "cream of the society". Gender mixing is much easier than before". Two other young men noted that banks and corporations' employees adopted a rather non-political religious lifestyle after years of living "irresponsibly".

Noticeable also the emergence of a culture that celebrates individualism and affluent consumerism, promoted by local, Arab and foreign satellite channels and on the Internet and social media. A female interviewee said, "the revolution of space channels introduced every pattern of life, starting with BNC to "fatafeet" (a food network channel working 24 hours). There are efforts to imitate these consumer's styles. People are now ready to be trapped in bank loans for this." (Another interviewee, speaking of the widespread of bank loans and mortgages said, "the country (PA areas in WBGS) are owned by banks". (Annex 3, interview 18). Another confirmed saying, "Ramallah is now pawned to the banks".

Several interviewees said Ramallah offered "a culture of elites and foreigners (Mahmoud Darwish Museum, political debates, art performances, films and dance festivals). However, the large majority of people prefer the gym (fitness clubs) and swimming, which are available for 150 NIS a month. These are even available in Alamaari Camp. People prefer the café and "weight loss" programs and facial care. The dominant tool is the Facebook and TV lost its place as a family activity." A female researcher said, "Rawabi represent intensive capital and Birzeit University is the cultural capital; they are both the product of a crisis...

The Palestinian cultural field – in Ramallah and the Palestinian Territory occupied

in 1967 and probably even the area occupied in 1948 as well – lives in a space that affects its track. There is first the settler colonial state (literature is abundant on the impacts of the control exercised by this state). Second, there is the PA and third the globalization with unlimited capital expansion under neoliberalism. The function of the state (the central political authority) is mainly to protect private capital. Fourth, there is the financial, real estate and trade capital who cares less about the values of modernity, liberty and equality. The PA does not allocate any resources to the cultural field as an independent area. NGOs cultural interests are limited to sponsoring activities that fall within their ideological agendas.

A writer sees that “the private sector does not distinguish between culture, propaganda and advertisement.” Consequently, “the cultural field has turned into an area of trade”. “The PA is partner in transforming the cultural domain into a commercial field,,, (Annex 3, interview 24). He also sees that the cultural field, as it is embodied in Palestine, generates financial and symbolic capital to the non-talented without any risk. It does not expose practitioners to imprisonment (loss of freedom) and generates symbolic capital under the motto of dealing with human and women rights and empowerment”. A young artist confirms “the cultural movement is currently keenly competing over limited sources of funding. It consequently suffers from severe individualist sensitivities and fractions. In the past, there was an inclusive cultural institution (when the PLO was active). Now, we do not have any all-in institution. The conflict is individualized. What is happening is a “Gulfination” of the world; not citizenship. The citizens of Gulf countries constitute only 10% while the remaining population work with a work license. The state bears no responsibility toward them. When they turn sixty years, they are ousted from the labor market and the society. There is new generation of workers who work as freelancers.”

Some said that Palestinian capitalists donate to build a faculty or facility in Birzeit University so that the building bears their names<sup>43</sup>, but most of them are not willing to fund the educational cost of a university student). In other words, the cultural world lacks autonomous resources to ensure its sustainability and independence. Some Palestinian (and Arab) capitalists try to gear part of their financial and commercial capital toward political capital (Muneib Almasri) or cultural capital (Welfare Institution and Hashem Alshawa) or cultural or symbolic capital

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43 The names include Mohammad Almasrouji, Saeed Khoury, Muneib Almasri, Najad Zaani, Aziz Shehada, Omar Alaquad as well as the Kingdom of Bahrain.



(Qattan). Alkarmel magazine, where Mahmoud Darwish was the chief editor (with his cultural capital) was partly funded by Palestinian major capitalists.<sup>44</sup> The Palestinian Museum<sup>45</sup>, currently under construction near Birzeit University, is a major project of the Welfare Association.<sup>46</sup> Some fund educational cultural centers like Qattan Center in Ramallah. Banks and companies (like Jawwal and others) fund artistic and cultural festivals. Some cultural (non school) centers are sponsored by international agencies (like the French-German Cultural Center), Ramallah Cultural Palace, which was built mainly through Japanese funding.

A final remark in this context is: the financial, real estate and commercial capital seeks quick profit, was witnessed by many indicators in the city. It stripped many areas of their historical and aesthetic value to establish profit-making projects. An example to this are the multi-floor office buildings erected in the place of an old house and Albardouni restaurant in Yaffa St. There is also the renovation of Almuqtaah in a manner that altered its old features that had historical and political significance, including the besieging of Yasser Arafat and the demolition of most of its buildings during the land incursion of Ramallah by the Israeli army in 2002. Examples also include Uncle Sam restaurant that was turned into a bus depot. Note must be taken of the multiplicity of patterns of building and the decrease of green and planted areas not to mention the demolition of archaeological build-

44 It is not strange that capital leaves room for ideological freedom since it relies mainly on the balance of social powers so long as this does not hinder the growth of capital or undermine its social, political and ideological weight. (this is very well said with the motto "this was the gift of Allah")

45 I was told that the cost of the first phases of the museum reached \$ 70 million. An interviewee told me that the museum was not discussed at societal level and that it does not represent a priority considering other more urgent needs of the Palestinian people. The Welfare Association defines the museum as "a free forum of dialogue that contributes to initiating a new discourse to communicate, learn and hope; it is a platform that embraces the creative work of scholars, researchers, artists in Palestine and the diaspora. It will open in 2016 with the purpose of "preserving the human memory of the Palestinian people." The leaflet insisted on presenting the museum as an architectural landmark with "modern and contemporary style". It is eager to become a model to be followed in "environmental sustainability around Palestine by its commitment to international green building standards". It does not specify whether Palestine is historic Palestine or the Palestine defined by Oslo since the name of Israel does not appear in the definition and goals of the museum. It also does not include the goals of liberation, emancipation and struggle for the right of self-determination and return and combatting apartheid and ethnic cleansing. The language is chosen to assure visitors that they are before a modernist landmark with the latest environmental, visual aspects. It is the opposite image of the camp and the reality surrounded with poverty, unemployment, settlements, bypass roads, checkpoints, suffocating siege, home demolitions, arbitrary arrest on daily basis. It is a language deeply rooted in the lexicon of modernity, globalization and the capital that is confident to control it all about the Palestinian historical narrative. It is true that it mentions the Nakba but it also states that members of the Board of Trustees of the Welfare Association initiated the idea of the museum in 1998 to commemorate the fifty years of the Nakba. It starts with an entry point that the Nakba is a historical event that must be documented and does not consider it as an ongoing act since 1948 to date.

46 The Welfare Association presents itself as a "not-for profit civil society foundation that aims to provide developmental and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians in the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip and in the areas of 1948 and to the Palestinian communities in Lebanon." It is funded by Palestinian capitalists.

ings to build more ,multistory buildings where glass replaced stone (although more expensive) to duplicate the model of the Gulf states and Amman .

Ramallah is overcrowded with multistory buildings (some with over ten floors like Palestine commercial tower)<sup>47</sup>, built inside the city and within its periphery. Housing compounds also sprawled including Alriehan<sup>48</sup> and Alghader, and cities like Rawabi<sup>49</sup>.

An engineer says, "in recent years, there were many unrented or unsold apartments. Their percentage varies according to different estimates. He gives two explanations for this, "first, they are used for money laundry and the second, the target of this urban sprawl is the employees and this target is already fulfilled leaving this surplus of unrented or unsold flats. The motivation behind continuing investment in construction is that deposits at banks do not generate tangible interest rates making investment in real state a secured profit. The other areas of investment area almost nil. Women in Shaqba village sell their gold to invest in real estate,,," (Annex 3, interview 22). Another adds, "the demand on real estate by international and nongovernmental organizations increased the price of the land. It motivated investment into real estate since banks do not pay enough interest on deposits. (Annex 3, interview 1). The dominant composition of the Palestinian capital is mainly in commerce, services and contracting.

There aren't accurate data on the size and sources of capital invested in Ramallah and its vicinities. This requires extensive review. We can conclude the following:

- I. There is expatriate capital; a number of expatriates who invest part of their funds in their native land (building one or more apartment building) for "na-

47 The building has stores, restaurants, cinemas, a hotel and shops. It is reported to have cost \$ 24 million. Its owner is from Abu Shkhiedem and his sons manage the property.

48 Alayyam Newspaper reported in its first page on June 24th 2015 a piece of news under the title of "Ammar for Real Estate Development" inaugurates the mosque of Alreihan with funding from the Arab Islamic Bank." The chair of the Investment Fund, Dr. Mohammad Mustapha, said on the inauguration ceremony that 'the opening of the Riehan Mosque complements the preparation of public facilities and utilities for the residents of Alreihan.' He also mentioned that complementarity was taken into account in the building of the mosque to enable it provide educational and social services needed for any housing project." Mustapha said, "We, with this opening in the Holy Month of Ramadan, have accomplished an important phase in the construction of public utilities in the neighborhood. The building of the Arab Consultancy Hospital is in its final stages and it should be handed over in summer 2015. The foundation stone was laid for the American School of AlRiehan, to become the academic monument to serve the Rihand and neighboring areas residents. The investment reached \$ 28 million.

49 The advertisement used to promote Rawabi appears on the streets of Ramallah with the slogan "most beautiful apartment in the most beautiful neighborhood", "multiple choices for payment on instalments", "key delivery as of today", Palestine Real Estate Development Company also figures ads to sell office spaces on instalments.

tionalistic” motives. Others build for “money laundering” since part of the assets invested are not officially registered in the USA and they therefore transfer these funds abroad in the form of real estate property. As such, they evade taxes payable to the state since disclosing any such assets (after September 11th, 2001) may raise suspicions about relation with “terrorism”. Others claim that money laundering is not limited to investments by expatriates but includes as well Palestinians from inside the Green Line and others from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, although at smaller scale.

- II. Holding Companies Capital, including PADICO and PRECO among others in addition to the Palestine Investment Fund. They invest in housing and buildings for other purposes as is the case of Rawabi, Riehan, and Reef. Some claimed those were funds from the Gulf States (naming Qatar and UAE), investing in Ramallah. This influenced the concept of housing and architectural language .
- III. Local Capital, part of which is registered under their owners’ names (Alnabali, Alfares, Albakri). This capital is interested in real estate for three reasons: this investment does not require practical experience or specific knowledge (as is the case for telecommunication); second, it is risk-free investment with guaranteed profits; third, it does not require a high level of social responsibility and transparency. Some underscored that the local capital is individualist, being partly a returnee expatriate, and mostly individuals who worked as contractors in Israel and then moved to the West Bank after the Second Intifada. Work inside Israel decreased and building opportunities in the West Bank in general and Ramallah in particular appeared.

Local capital investments generate high profit since they employ family members (including children and women) and opts for informal economy (unprotected labor). Some invest (in real estate and commerce) without having recourse to banks to avoid disclosing their profits and thus evade taxes. Some even provide loans to their clients purchasing housing units or offices (see Annex 4). In the past, some of these investors worked in money exchange and were transformed in pseudo banks to invest in real estate and trade until the PA intervened in the past decade (in the aftermath of the Second Intifada) and regulated money exchange.

## **A final word:**

Ramallah, as described by Mahmoud Darwish, is “a city that grows hastily”. This is not the worrying aspect, but rather that it is growing without a compass and with some self-admiration. It does not observe the wisdom of its national message or of its composition. The city admiringly presents itself (via PA, private sector and civil society organization) as an open, pluralist, modern, and life-loving city. But, it created itself as a middle class city with multiple roots, cultures and experiences. As a class (like its counterparts in most Arab societies), this middle class is obsessed with consumption and is far from being productive. Its new and old well offs exhibit their wealth without any shame. They chant unmonitored profits and fortune without any social responsibility.

In the shadow of the colonial state, the city is fully geared by financial and real estate capital (including banks, real estate developers, private capitals) who are pulling the city outside the Palestinian time and place. They act in a manner that ignores the measures of the settler colonial state and the apartheid regime it imposes. They recall the Nakba like a historical expired event and not as an ongoing act. They – under the pretext of being realistic – jump over the historical rights of the Palestinian people. They do not care for the increasing gap of wealth with extreme wealth and dire poverty. They only view this gap as a reason for some benevolent act.

My fear is that the celebration of Ramallah as the miracle city will turn into a ritual that deviates our attention of the savagery circulating us; it will take us far from realizing that this miracle requires – among other things – freedom making, equality management, justice and installment of the tenets of national and humane dignity.

## Annex 1

### Interviews (without titles) with all respect due

(in Alphabetical order)

1. Jawad Ibrahim (plastic artist)
2. Hazem Abu Hilal (youth, human rights and social activist)
3. Ayshah Ahmad (Researcher in human rights, Independent Commission for Human Rights)
4. Sam Bahour (business consultant)
5. Khaldoun Bisharah (Director of the Riwaq – Center for Architectural Conservation)
6. Alaa Altartir (Program Office, Palestinian Policies Network “Alshabakah”, academic researcher)
7. Marwan Alju’bah (owner of Alju’bah bookshop Rukab Street)
8. Areej Hijazi (Activist in cultural administration)
9. Iyad Haddad (human rights activist and researcher)
10. Isa and Nakhla Alussari (owners of shop for sale and repair of computers – Ramallah Altahta)
11. Mohannad Abdlehamid (writer, political analyst)
12. Muhammad Hamarshe (Architecture)
13. Hassan Khader (writer, political and cultural analyst)
14. Salma Alkhalidi (Expert in education)
15. Saadah Alkhateeb (former employee at the Ministry of Information, professor at Alquds Open University)
16. Yazan Alkhalil (artist and youth activist)
17. Marshoud Zayed (employee at the Palestine Studies Institute, accountant at Darna Restaurant)
18. Mahmoud Ziyadah (syndical activist)
19. Jamal Zaqout (Director of Ard Studies Center, Ramallah)
20. Zeyd Alshuaibi (political youth activist, Ramallah – Albiereh)
21. Ruba Saleh (Researcher on urban zones and conflicts therein)
22. Yazeed Anani (Professor at Faculty of Engineering, Birzeit University)
23. Hada Alaryan (lecturer at Faculty of Commerce, employee at the Palestinian Institute for Democracy studies – Muwatin)
24. Huneideh Ghanem (Director of the Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies – Madar)
25. Muhammad Masharqeh (lived for years in Ramallah and contributed to the organization of the Ramallah Cultural Festival)
26. Janet Michael (Former mayor of Ramallah)

27. Majdi Almalki (Professor of sociology, Birzeit University)
28. Misyef Misyef (senior researcher, Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute – MAS)
29. Adnan Almasri (Employee at Masarat)
30. Hani Almasri, political analyst (Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies – MASARAT)

**2. Interviews organized by the Center for Development Studies (Birzeit University).**

1. Ahmad Abu Laban (Director of Ramallah Municipality)
2. Bilal Jaber (Administrative Director of Ribhi Alhajjah Company)
3. Dima Joudeh (Acting Assistant to the Municipality of Albiereh for technical affairs “engineering and planning”)
4. Mousa Hadid (Mayor of Ramallah)
5. Ahmed Alkhateeb (Director General of Public Affairs, Governorate of Ramallah and Albiereh)
6. Issa Salameh (Secretary of Parish Council of Roman Catholic sect)
7. Ahmad Nasser (Financial Officer, Nabali and Faris for Real Estate Investment)
8. Three staff members in Ramallah Municipality

## Annex 2 Ramallah in figures

### Data of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics show that:

Workers in professions from the middle class (with cultural-academic capital of different levels and forms<sup>50</sup>). In Ramallah, the total number of workers in the city was 59.9%, in Albiereh 55.7%, and in Betonia 45.1%. the percentage of skilled and unskilled labor in the same year reached 8.7% of the total number of workers in Ramallah, representing 11.9% in Albiereh, 17.1% in Betonia. Workers in services, shop attendants and sellers in markets represented in the same year 20.5% of the active population of Ramallah, 18.7% in Albiereh and 19.1% in Betonia. Hand-crafters represented the highest percentage with 18.9% of the active population, 13.6% in Albiereh and 10.9% in Ramallah (General Census on Population and housing, 2007).

The expansion of the middle class appears in Ramallah-Betonia community, if compared to the size of the middle class in the rest of the West Bank. They represented 27.1% in June 2012 (Table 27 on the Survey of Labor Force, PCBS, June 2012). This means half its level in Ramallah-Albiereh-Betonia. In the West Bank, the middle class barely constitute 8% of the West Bank in 1961.<sup>51</sup> The Middle class represented 10 – 12 % of the total population in the West Bank in 1980s till 1993 (prior to the PA advent), and increased to 20% of total workers in the West Bank in 1997.<sup>52</sup>

PCBS data (Census on population and housing for the years 1997 and 2007) in Ramallah-Albiereh-Betonia showed tremendous transformations in this period between the two censuses in the professional composition of the three urban centers. Workers in middle class professions increased noticeable in all three zones between 1997-2—7, rising from 46.8% to 59.9% in Ramallah (an increase of over 13%) and from 46.0% to 55.7% in Albiereh (a rise of over 9.5%) and from 32.8% to

50 These professions included in 2007, as per the Housing and Population General Census, what follows: legislators and senior management (in Ramallah they represented 12.2% of staff, in Albiereh 11.0% and in Betonia 6.6%), and specialized professionals (representing 27.4% in Ramallah, 24.8% in Albiereh and 19.2% in Betonia). They also include assistants to technicians (constituting in Ramallah 12.3% and in Albiereh 12.8% and in Betonia 12.6%), and clerks (representing 8.0% in Ramallah and 7.1% in Albiereh and 6.7% in Betonia).

51 Hilal, J., *The Palestinian Middle Class*, Muwaten, the Palestinian Institute for Democratic Studies, Palestine Studies Institute, Ramallah and Beirut, 2006, p. 55

52 Ibid, p. 58

45.1% (an increase of over 12%). On the other hand, the percentage of workers in middle class professions in Jerusalem (mostly urban area with agricultural labor representing less than 1%), constitute 25.7% of the governorate's active population. The percentage of other labor segments represented 49% with 25.3% of handcrafters.<sup>53</sup>

The relatively large expansion of the middle class (with its different segments) was in the city of Ramallah. We need here to differentiate between the term used by Marx "small Bourgeoisie" (holders of small capital including small farmers, shop owners, small workshop owners and handcrafters who own their tools and are self-employed) and the middle class that appeared mainly with the modern state and its subsequent public and private educational establishments, publishing houses, capitalist market economy and emergence of civil society organizations (political parties, unions, syndicates, human rights and charitable societies). The middle class comprises holders of cultural capital (educated figures, specialized professionals like doctors, engineers, teachers, nurses, scholars, artists, educationists and administrators). It is important to differentiate both classes because of the difference in work terms and circumstances (in terms of pay, working hours, work conditions, paid leaves and insurances), without ignoring the disparity among the segments of each class. This appears if we monitor holders of intermediate diplomas, which is higher among technicians, specialists and their assistants, and clerks". This is the bulk subclass of the middle class, and represented in 2012 60.1% of the West Bank while the rate of service workers and merchants stood at 7.7% and handcrafters constituted 4% and primary professions 3.4% while skilled labors constituted 5.2% and instrument operators 3.4%.<sup>54</sup>

The largest increase of the components of the middle class in the three locations (Ramallah-Albiereh-Betonia) in the period from 1994-2007 was in the segment of specialized professions, technicians and their assistants. It increased from 28.1% to 39.7% in Ramallah, and from 28.2% to 37.6% in Albiereh and from 20.5% to 31.8% in Betonia. This is attributable to the overstaffing of the public sector and increased recruitment in the modern private sector. The upper middle class preserved its levels (of the total active population) marking a meager increase in the three locations with the highest increase in Ramallah where it rose from 10.2% in

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53 Palestinian National Authority, PCBS, Final Results of Census 2007, Ramallah-Albiereh Governorate, Ramallah, June 2009

54 See: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015. Labour Force Survey: (October-December, 2014) Round, (Q4/2014). Press Report on the Labour Force Survey Results. Ramallah – Palestine (table, 28).



1997 to 12.2% in 2007, in Albiereh from 9.9% to 11.0% and in Betonia from 6.3% to 6.6%. the middle class with the lowest share preserved its relative size in all three locations (ranging from 6.5% to 8.0% of the total active population in 2007).

The increase in the size of the middle class in Ramallah-Aliereh and Betonia affected the numerical and relative sizes. Numerically the upper and middle subclasses increased in Ramallah from 1399 in 1997 to 2871 in 2007, in Albiereh from 1722 to 3598 for the same year. In Betonia it doubled from 451 to 1164. In total, the size of the middle subclass in Ramallah-Albeireh-Betonia increased from 3572 persons in 1997 to 7633 persons in 2007. It is expected to have exceeded 12,000 in 2015. If we add to this lowest subclass of the middle class, the population of the middle class in 2007 in all three (neighboring, even overlapping) locations reached 11688 persons. This means their size in 2015 would not be less than 20,000. This is significant if compared to the total population of all three locations. This figure does not include foreign employees in international organizations, embassies and NGOs. It does not include foreign visitors to governmental and nongovernmental organizations either. Probably this explains the relatively constant widespread of restaurants and coffee shops in Ramallah, and is a key engine in its urban sprawl.

Data on population and housing for the year 2007 so that most female workers in Ramallah-Albiereh-Betonia region belong to the middle class (with its different subclasses). They represented 88% of all working women in the city of Ramallah and 86% of working women in Albiereh and 81% in Betonia. Women participation in labor in all of these locations is noticeably the highest across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This is probably attributable to the availability of more job opportunities for women in the public sector (mainly in the sectors of education and health) and to the type of activities of the private sector (as this region is the seat of many private sector companies) in addition to the number of NGOs headquartered therein. Women constituted 27.2% of the labor force in Albiereh and 44.7% in Ramallah and 28.8% in Betonia. The largest segment of working women belong to the middle subclass (in terms of conditions and status of work) since they are mostly concentrated in the middle management of the public sector and the lower hierarchy of the new private sector (banks, telecommunication, insurance). The middle subclass represented 60% of working women in each of the three locations in 2007. However, the share of women in low hierarchy jobs (secretary in the public and private sector) is twice as much the overall average (male and female) in all three locations (ranging between 15 – 16%).

# **New Configurations Formations in the Palestinian Society Model of Kufur Aqab**

Abaher El-Sakka \*

# New Urban Configurations in the Palestinian Society

## Model of Kufur Aqab

### 1. Key Words:

Gentrification: social spatial replacement « the gentrification of poor neighborhoods », social and colonialist engineering, random expansion, urban expansion and social / spatial surveillance strategies.

The study aims to examine the urban changes in the Palestinian urban structures and their effect on the emergence of new residential communities and creation of new socioeconomic classes.

### 2. Summary:

The study reviews the changes affecting the Palestinian urban realm with the emergence of new cities and neighborhoods by analyzing the socioeconomic policies applied to housing. It further examines the promulgation of laws, issuance of building licenses/random construction and their relation to the Palestinian Authority urban planning and the effect of colonization policies on the drawing of social spaces and the zoning of the colonial social engineering of the areas of Palestinian settlers. It also aims to understand the influence of these transformations on different communities: enlargement of the communities, change of their characteristics including appearance of segments or categories who replace other segments. It investigates the move of demographic groups into new urban areas and the socioeconomic exclusion of some cities in detriment of other cities or the gentrification, socio-spatial replacement "gentrification of poor neighborhoods".

### 3. Theoretical Approach:

The approach to the afore-stated cases is two-folds: the first approach is the necessity to examine the mechanisms that led to the formation of urban zones and their history, and to understand the socioeconomic changes in these communities. It also examines the impact of gentrification on subsequent creation of new

social segments that reshape the space. The second approach focuses on gentrification, i.e. socio-spatial replacement with the gentrification of poor neighborhoods. These areas attracted attention in the 1970's in the Anglo-Saxon domain' that focused on urban planning of city centers and its subsequent exclusion of poor segments to serve middle or upper-middle classes. We will apply the first approach.

Under the successive colonial context, the Palestinian society underwent several urban changes that stemmed from socioeconomic policies, which did not respond to the demographic needs emerging from rapid urbanization of Palestinian urban centers. With the accelerated growth of new areas and increased youth segment, which adopted a new consumerist lifestyles - because of the policies dominated by privatization and unsustainable real estate policy- and with numerous social challenges – mainly urban challenges and plural socio-urban disparities, urban sprawl and unregulated expansion of quasi-urban centers and appearance of squatter areas -, the spatial area of Ramallah increased. These centers appeared in detriment of other urban zones, including models like Ramallah and Gaza, making them zones of attraction and expulsion whose inhabitants migrate toward the cities. Consequently, conscious and subconscious policies of total socioeconomic, cultural structural exclusion are applied leading to disparities and urban deflation. We witness than an Ammanization (Amman-Jordan), i.e. "City-state" or the emergence of suburbs and urban crawling.

This study examines some urban problems to understand the changes that affected the social relations in social spaces. It aims to understand the nature of local changes and their relation to "national" changes. It also reviews the role of public sectors in the process whether they disregarded the growth of private sector investments in these neighborhoods through the "urban sprawl" or the policy harmonization with the globalized neoliberal policies to occupied the socio-geographic space. The Palestinian case lacks public housing policies save limited PA intervention. Consequently, the question of geographic gentrification is less appropriate to study the Palestinian urban realm. Indeed, there have not been

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1 GLASS, R., 1964, « Introduction », in Centre for Urban Studies (dir.), London, aspects of change, Londres, Macgibbon & Kee, p. XII-XLI ; SMITH, N., 1979, « Gentrification and capital : practice and ideology in Society Hill », *Antipode*, vol. 11, no 3, p. 24-35 ; SMITH, N., 1982, « Gentrification and uneven development », *Economic Geography*, vol. 58, no 2, p. 139-155 ; SMITH, N., 1992, « New city, new frontier : the Lower East Side as wild, wild West », in Sorkin, M. (dir.), *Variations on a theme park : the new American city and the end of public space*, New York, Hill and Wang, p. 61-93 ; SMITH, N., 1996, *The New urban frontier: gentrification and the revanchist city*, New York, Routledge, XX-262.

wide replacement of the original residents by new comers, not in Kufur Aqab or in Ramallah Althat or in the Qasaba Neighborhood of Nablus. There has not been demolition of old properties nor renovation of old buildings for investment purposes. Such processes were quite narrow in reason of absence of any state intervention therein. There was no “city cleansing” as was the case in other parts of the world. Nor has there been intensive or rather organized demolition of buildings. However, new suburbs emerged creating new social segments and consumption patterns and life-styles. The surging of new neighborhoods – like Kufur Aqab -, which have been attracting new dwellers due to colonial planning and “legal instruments” drafted to force a large portion of the population into these zones. Therefore, the study focuses on Kufur Aqab as a case study to examine the approaches based on a field study and examination of the living situation.

#### 4. Methodology

Two researchers from Birzeit University, Yasmeen Qaadon and Sarah Zahran, conducted the interviews. They held twenty in-depth interview with many respondents. The interviews were difficult because of the suspicion and fear that respondents living in Kufur Aqab feel. A representative sample of different social segments was selected to include contractors, local councils’ members, civil society organizations, activists, politicians, citizens and merchants.

#### 5. Kufur Aqab, Socio-historical Background

Kufur Aqab is a village is part of the Jerusalem Governorate, situated to the north of Jerusalem. It borders Rafat to the East and Albiereh to the north; as for the west, it shares boundaries with Rafat and Qalandia and Ram, Qalandia and Qalandia Camp to the south. Kurfur Aqab Village Council was established in 1996. It bears this name after a person called “Kafeer” who passed by the town in the Ottoman Era and stayed near its will. The term Aqab came from the Arabic word “Aqib”, which means who stayed in the area. The term then mutated to read “Kufur Aqab. The town is home of many antiquities in the old town. It has a number of health centers and schools. Its economy relies heavily on the Israeli labor market, which employs 50% of its labor force. The other labor force works in agriculture, services, industry, government, and private sectors<sup>2</sup>.

2 - ARIJ, Jerusalem, Kufur Aqab Guide, Jerusalem 2012, p 1-7

Kufur Aqab lacks public services, especially hygiene. Its streets are loaded with rubbish and they are not paved. The place is full of dust, and consequently health hazards. Additionally, inhabitants face many problems getting fixed phone line subscription with [the Israeli] "Biezek" Company, which does not care for this zone. Residents are also denied access to the Palestinian Telecommunication Company services.<sup>3</sup>

As for the geopolitical characteristics of Kufur Aqab, it covers an area of 6.665 dunums. It is under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Jerusalem because of its location. According to the Oslo Agreements that divided the West Bank Territory in Areas (A-B-C), Kufur Aqab was not part of this division. It kept its pre-Oslo status-quo and remained within the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Jerusalem. Thousands of its dunums were confiscated by the Israeli authorities to build settlements. Thirty percent of the village land was expropriated for Kukhav Yakov – Abeer Yakov" Settlement. Israeli plans still threaten the village of further seizure of land and demolition of houses to expand the settlement built on its land.<sup>4</sup> On top of the confiscation of land, the Apartheid Wall, built by Israel in the Second Intifada, isolated Kufur Aqab and Shufat Refugee Camp, creating two exceptional cases within the Jerusalem boundary since both areas remained within the municipal jurisdiction of Jerusalem<sup>5</sup>.

## 6. Literature Review

We refer here to a number of studies that addressed the question of Kufur Aqab in recent years. Khamaysi presents a monitoring and analysis in his study of the status of urban transformation in Jerusalem. He thinks it began in 1991 with the restrictions imposed on entrance of Palestinians from the West Bank thereto. These controls intensified in 1993 with the erection of military checkpoints around Jerusalem. Consequently, Jerusalem became a closed zone, which hindered the urban development of the city. In particular, it complied with the demographic, planning and geographic policies of the so-called Municipality of Jerusalem and the "Israeli" government. They both deployed effort to halt an urban expansion of Jerusalem and devised plans to create disconnected enclaves. Consequently, it could not be transformed into a major Palestinian urban center that attracts municipal or na-

3 Abu Ghanam, M., Kufur Aqab, Occupation Municipality opens for tax collection and closes for services, on <http://www.alhayat.ps>

4 ARIJ, IDEM, p 6-17.

5 Ahmed, Jerusalem and the Apartheid Wall, Alzaytona Center for Studies and Consultancies on <http://www.alzaytona.net/Rimawi>

tional events and functions<sup>6</sup>. This included the urban distortion of the Jerusalem area since it was not matched with functional making or alteration. The urban process did not lead to a state of urbanism since the villages merged into the urban expansion and contributed to its formation. The absence of an urbanism process alongside the urbanization, and the absence of the "Israeli" municipal and national institutions that guide the execution of these processes and provide them with the necessary infrastructure to establish for the physical urbanism, which – in providing housing – depends mainly on self-initiatives available on the land. Most of the public lands are under Israeli control and the state [Israel] allocated them to build Israeli settlements and green no-building zones to inhibit any Palestinian Arab urban contiguity.<sup>7</sup>

Khamaysi adds that the remaining areas where it is allowed for the Palestinians to build do not exceed 13%, noting also their soaring prices. It is moreover difficult to obtain a building license from the Israeli authorities<sup>8</sup>. The housing area available per person in the Jewish neighborhoods reaches 20 m<sup>2</sup>, compared to 11 m<sup>2</sup> in the Palestinian neighborhoods<sup>9</sup>. The closure of immigration into Jerusalem and the planting of Palestinian economic activity therein increased demand on housing in Al-Ram, Bier Nabala, Kufur Aqab and Ramallah and Albiereh. Kufur Aqab, situated on the boundary between Qualandia and Albiereh, became outside the Apartheid Wall but remained under the jurisdiction of Jerusalem Municipality. Although it is still officially within the boundaries of Jerusalem, it became a target for investors to started building housing units and stores outside the border of Jerusalem and Ramallah, aligning with space offered by the Wall. The absence of any organized central or local government created a random unorganized urban morphology<sup>10</sup>.

Kufur Aqab is administratively part of the municipality of the colonization in Occupied Jerusalem. It is part of the Jerusalemite neighborhoods ousted of Jerusalem by the construction of the Apartheid Wall. In addition to the transformation I mentioned in the beginning, the establishment of the Apartheid Wall in 2003, this expansion rendered it a choice of residence by the Jerusalemites. Although it was

6 Khamaysi, Rasem, Reshaping the Jerusalem Urban Periphery « Heart of the State », Hawliyat Magazine, Jerusalem, Issue 16, 2013, p. 41

7 Khamaysi, Rasem, Ibid, 41

8 UN-OCHA, East Jerusalem, Main Concerns about Humanitarian Situation, Special Report, March 2011, p.9

9 Uleyan, Nisreen, et. Al, Impact of Poverty Policies on East Jerusalem, translated into Arabic, Citizens' Rights Association in Israel, May 2012, p. 2

10 Khamaysi, Rasem, ledm, 46-47

taken out of the “Wall border of Jerusalem”, and became on the “West Bank Side of the Wall”, it is still part of the Municipality of Jerusalem.

The colonial state “Israel” exploited security pretexts to erect the Apartheid Wall to enforce its policy of withdrawal of Jerusalem IDs from Palestinian Jerusalemites who could not provide evidence of residency and attachment to Jerusalem. With Kufur Aqab remaining within the municipal border of Jerusalem, many Jerusalemites opted to live there and paid the Arnona “property tax” to prove their attachment to their Jerusalem IDs. In addition to its policy to deprive Palestinians of the Jerusalem ID, Israel prevents family reunification of Palestinians of the West Bank with their families in Jerusalem. These families are henceforth forced to migrate toward Kufur Aqab, on the West Bank side of the wall. However, it actually does not receive any services from the occupation municipality, save education<sup>11</sup>. As regards education and its relation to the municipality, Kufur Aqab has two schools under the authority of the Jerusalem Municipality and two others run by the Palestinian Ministry of education in addition to four private schools<sup>12</sup>.

As for housing, the occupation municipality does not play its planning and supervision role to survey land. The land is miserable whether built-up or green areas. The municipality does not regulate the setbacks between buildings or their distance from the street. Consequently, chaos was created with crowded tall buildings whose windows overlook rooms in neighboring buildings. Inhabitants lost their privacy. Moreover, the quality of building is not guaranteed and depends on the conscience of the contractor. Ownership in this neighborhood is registered via revocation of title before a notary public. The title deeds are not officially registered and do not constitute a guarantee of ownership<sup>13</sup>.

The chaos of squatter areas, mentioned before, coincides with the spread of “illegal” buildings due to soaring rents in Jerusalem and shrinking area of land. On the other hand, it is difficult for the Palestinians to obtain a building license. The number of licenses issued per year does not fulfill housing needs. The Israeli organization “Eir Emem” says that the demographic growth of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem requires the construction of 1500 residential units per year. Still, only

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11 Palestinian Information Center, Kufur Aqab, Flagrant Example of Displacement of Jerusalemites, Report, Jerusalem, October 2013

12 ARIJ, Kufur Aqab Guide, 2012, p. 8

13 Abu Ghannam, Maysa, Kufur Aqab, Occupation Municipality Opens for Tax Collection and Closes for services, Alhayat Aljadeeda



400 new housing units received licenses. This leaves inhabitant with a housing gap of 1000 units a year, being the difference between housing needs and legal building license. 32% of Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem were built in contradiction with Israeli zoning requirements.<sup>14</sup>

The Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Occupied Palestinian Territory "OCHA" reports on the "illegal building" as follows: there are no reliable data on the spread of "illegal building" at the moment. Stories told by the people show a decrease in the past years of any "illegal" constructions in large parts of East Jerusalem because of the rigid application of laws by the Israeli authorities. Still, unlicensed buildings are quite common on other parts like Kufur Aqab, where only minimal municipality services and supervision are available.<sup>15</sup> The vision in OCHA's study suggests that "illegal" construction is a confrontation strategy adopted by the Palestinians to face the housing crisis in East Jerusalem<sup>16</sup>. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics has not conducted any census of housing and population in Kufur Aqab in 2007, however the Israel Central statistics<sup>17</sup> reported a population of 14,315 persons in 2010. Civil society resources reported 18 thousand, as stated by the head of the village council referring to the central statistics. Some speak of 70 thousand. This means that registration is a state affair in the Bourdian meaning of term. It has to do with the monopoly of information capital, that is not available to the PA or to any other local authority. In addition to the "illegal" random housing and construction in Kufur Aqab, the village suffers insufficient permits of another type. The Municipality hinders the village council access to permits to establish waste landfills. This leads to accumulation of waste between buildings in Kufur Aqab, posing hazard to inhabitants' health<sup>18</sup>.

## 7. Colonial Discriminatory Practices

The socio-geographic space is par excellence under control and monitoring. It is, as seen by Lefebvre<sup>19</sup>, that the social space is a tool of thinking while simultaneously being an act and a means of production and monitoring. It is therefore a domain of hegemony and influence. The social space is not a mere undifferentiated pot or "neutral décor" of cumulative events taking place in the social life. It is rather a

14 - UN-OCHA, Idem, 30-35

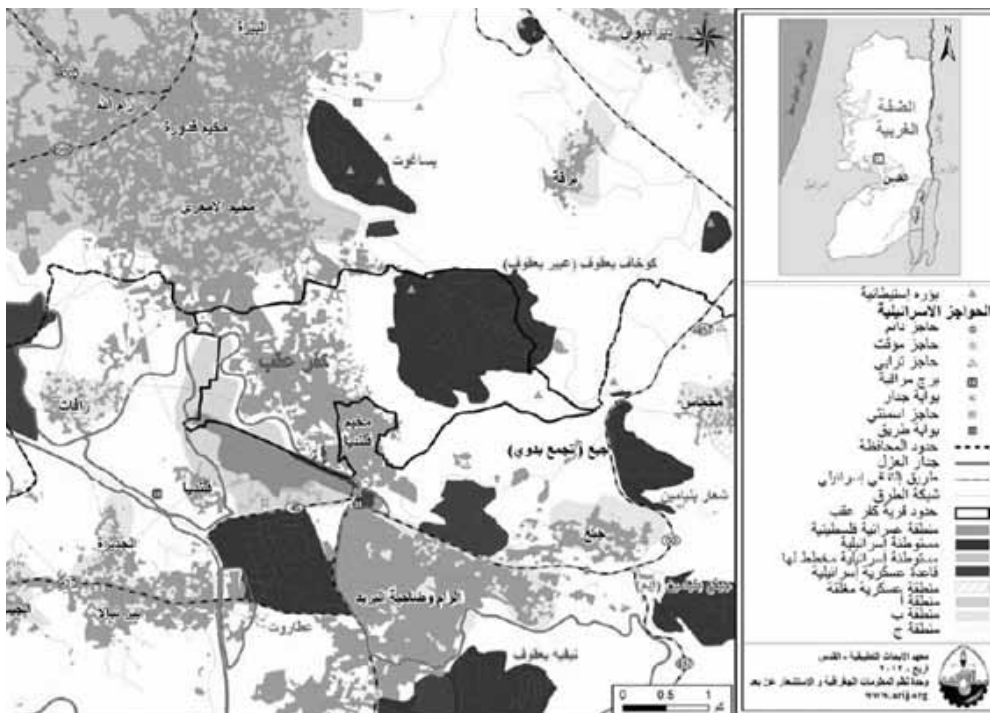
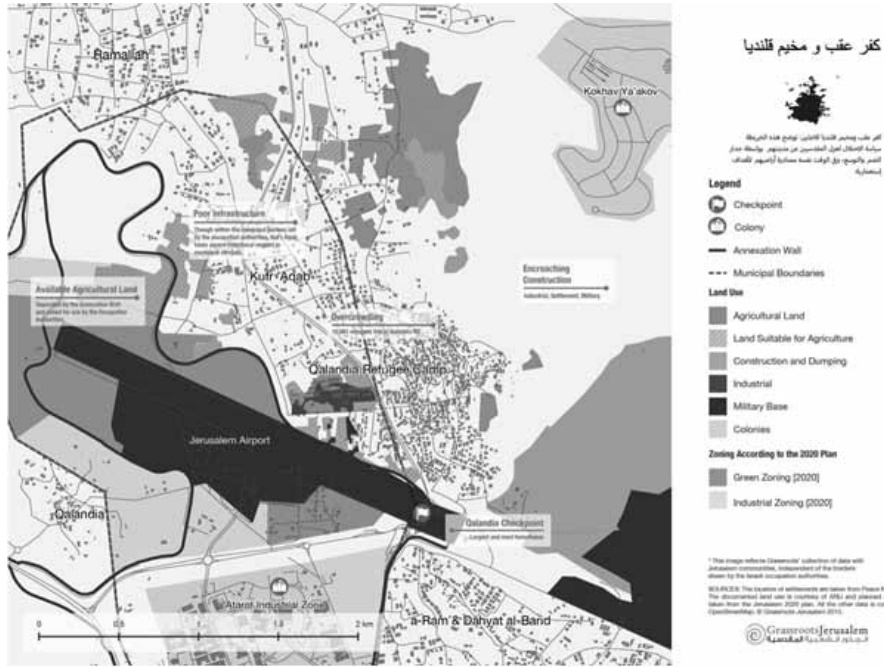
15 - UN-OCHA, Idem, 36

16 - UN-OCHA, Idem, 36

17 - ARIJ, Idem, 7

18 - ARIJ, Idem, 13

19 Lefebvre (H.), *La Production de l'espace*, Anthropos, Paris, pp. 88-89, 1974.



product of the society where all social relations are constituted with their different economic, political and ideological dimensions. In the same manner, it is the place of the social production itself, as seen by Castells<sup>20</sup>. It is also known as a lively space of the discourse of the authority and hegemony, as described by Foucault who considers the typographic and architectural changes as forms of colonial activities for the dominated and a process that forms their spaces in a manner emphasizing the authority representations and tools of control. Geographically, according to Yves Lacoste, Geography is first fit to initiate a war.<sup>21</sup> In the same context, Danielle Lochac<sup>22</sup> thinks that control over the space includes monitoring of the population occupying this space and vice-versa. In other words, the process to control people does not necessarily require full control of the space. These double approaches explain the central role of the space in the social surveillance strategies.

In our case study of a colonized society subjected to a colonial condition<sup>23</sup>, which – in our opinion – must be studied under what can be called the colonial phenomenon. We can refer to Marcel Mauss's<sup>24</sup> description of this colonial phenomenon as a "totalitarian one" in order to diagnose the Palestinian case. Since the nature of the colonial project to control the space and its occupants, we need to recall that this colonization per se, quite simply, means space domination in several forms including: control over large areas of the urban space in the cities regulated by the colonial power; promulgation of laws and regulations based on two core principles, namely "ethnic" discrimination – which is linked to suppression-, and mitigation, which has functional expressions in cities, as described in a similar case in the Martinique by Aimé Césaire<sup>25</sup>. "We saw the first French gendarme before we saw social welfare." As was the case in former colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America, see for instance studies on the role of colonization in the urban planning of Morocco inhabitants in the colonial era<sup>26</sup>, we notice that the "Israeli" practices have precedence in other "colonialist" models. In our opinion, Palestinian studies must usher into spaces of comparison to exit what we commonly call "the Pales-

20 CASTELLS (M.), *La question urbaine*, Maspero, 1972.

21 LACOSTE (Y.), *La géographie, ça sert d'abord à faire la guerre*, Petite Coll. Maspero, 1976.

22 LOCHAC, (D.) « Espace et Contrôle Sociale », dans Chevalier J, centre Periphitia Territoire, CURAPP, Paris, PUF, 1979, p170.

23 BALANDIER (G.), "La situation coloniale. Approche théorique". EXTRAITS. Un article publié dans les Cahiers internationaux de sociologie, vol. 110, janvier-juin 2001, pp. 9-29. Paris: Les Presses universitaires de France.

24 MAUSS (H.) 1969, *Œuvres*, T. III : Cohésion sociale et divisions de la sociologie, Paris, Minuit. 1978 [1950], *Sociologie et anthropologie*, Paris, PUF.

25

26 Naciri (M.), *Pouvoir de commandement, espace rural et modernisation au Maroc*, in BATAILLON (C.) et autres, *Etat, pouvoir et espace dans le Tiers Monde*, P.U.F., Coll. IEDES, 1977.

tinian specificity” to institute the necessity to recall other colonial experiences in the world. This will first localize the context and then open new horizons for studies about the Palestinian context, being a colonial context.

We may remember here what Fanon said about the differences between the zones of the colonizers and those of the colonized even with time-space differences. This comparison institutes for the understanding of the mechanisms that separate the zones of the colonizers and the colonized. Fanon says, “these two zones are contradictory and subject to mutual exclusion: there isn’t any possible conciliation since the city of the colonizers differs in the stone and iron ... it is a city with paved roads and lights... their streets are clean and smooth without holds. It is the city of the lazy, and well-fed population ... the city of the White foreigners. The city of the colonized is a negre village with unnatural space; it is full of men with bad reputation stacked in boxes one on top of the other. They die there ... in the city of the starved, deprived of bread, meat, shoes, and coal. They live with minimum lights... the city of the colonized is designed to land on its knees...<sup>27</sup>.

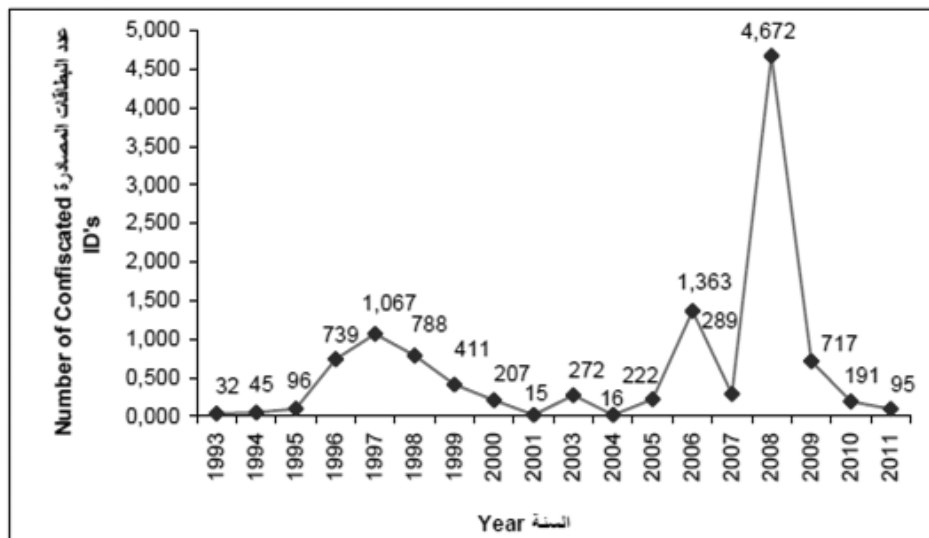
The description of Fanon does not necessarily apply to the Palestinian urban formations since the Palestinian economy – whether before Oslo or after the Paris Protocol – and its urban architectural byproducts produced forms similar to the colonialist cases described by Fanon in some camps and poor Palestinian suburbs. However, it did not produce “modernist” colonial formations that reproduce the colonizers’ architecture and adopt their construction patterns and tools. We should recall here that the new suburbs built by the Palestinians, like the Palestinian Diplomatic Quarter near Altierah in Ramallah, have a visual appearance like an “Israeli” settlement, architecturally speaking. It also occupies an elevated space and applies the patterns of construction and inner spaces applied in these settlements. This makes us believe that Fanon’s imaginary of the colonized passion for the colonizer and the attempt made by the colonized Palestinians to personify the colonizer by applying its architecture and consumption patterns<sup>28</sup>. This is emphatic in the Palestinian colonial case and reproduces the colonialist domination in the form of new engineering forms in the spaces of the colonized. They appear like authoritarian engineered shapes and reproduce the colonial domination by reproducing the designs that help shriveling the colonized Palestinian space by

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<sup>27</sup> Fanon Franz, *oeuvres, la découvert*, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Fanon, Frantz. *Peau noire, masques blancs.*, Paris : Seuil, 1952.

عدد بطاقات الهوية المقدسية المصادرة حسب السنة\*، 2011-1993  
 Number of Confiscated Jerusalemites' Ids by year, 1993-2011



عدد بطاقات الهوية المقدسية المصادرة، 2011-1967  
 Number of Confiscated Jerusalemites ID's, 1967-2011

Year	عدد الحالات Number of Cases	السنة
1967-1976	1,442	1976-1967
1977-1986	1,405	1986-1977
1987-1996	1,061	1996-1987
1997-2006	4,361	2006-1997
2007	289	2007
2008	4,672	2008
2009	717	2009
2010	191	2010
2011	95	2011
Total	14,233	المجموع

the Zionist colonizer in the streets, checkpoints and settlements and through the settlement expansion of the colonizers themselves.

## 8. Colonial social Architecture Planning Kufur Aqab

The Colonizing state has always endeavored to evacuate the city of its indigenous inhabitants to replace them with colonizers of different types. It used several pretexts to strip thousands of Palestinian Jerusalemites of their "residency rights in Jerusalem", through "Israeli planning" of the administrative borders of Jerusalem, which is considered part of the "state of Israel". Consequently, Palestinians residing in Jerusalem suburbs lose their right of residency, as is the case of other Jerusalemites in the Palestinian governorates. Information on the confiscation of Jerusalem ID cards is mainly derived from what the "Israeli Interior Ministry" reports. It reported confiscation of 14,233 ID cards in the period from 1967 to 2011, depending on the ID of the head of household. As such, the number of individuals affiliated to the family of the head of household who list their ID's is much higher than this figure<sup>29</sup>.

## 9. Investment Appeal Zone: Between Colonial Planning and No PA Intervention

Kufur Aqab is a rural area and has a village council but nothing connects the space to the Palestinian village. The colonial distortion juxtaposes over many Palestinian villages which have grown into shantytowns. In these areas, the village prescribes the culture, which is in disharmony with the physical/ geographic and typographic scene. The village is disfigured and preserve only "social conservatism" while its urban architecture becomes modern in terms of space and function. The Palestinian village no longer produces crops or kettle save at very small scale. It adopted consumerist patterns consistent with the urban style. This concurs with what Saleh Abdeljawwad and Sari Hanafi call "total socio-cide" or total destruction<sup>30</sup>.

29 PCBS, Jerusalem Annual Statistics Book, Ramallah, issue 14, 2012, 203-204

30 For more details, see studies by Saleh Abdeljawwad and Sari Hanafi, where Abdeljawwad Saleh defines the term socio-cide, similar to genocide, which means cleansing since the objective of genocide and socio-cide is similar although with different approaches. It is the total or partial destruction of an ethnic national or religious group but while genocide involves widespread killing is genocide. Israelis use all forms of violence in a systematic manner through policies that have long-term effect in halting any economic progress of the Palestinian society. To learn more, see "Socio-cide", symposium held in Ramallah under the theme of Palestinian socio-cide – Khalil Sakakin Center, 28th April 2015. See also, Sari Hanafi – Space cleansing – a new attempt to understand the strategies of the Israeli colonial project, Almustaqbal Alarabi – Arab Unity Studies Center, Beirut – issue 360, 2009



## 10. Random urban sprawl

To analyze the causes of the urban sprawl, we asked some contractors who answered as follows: Mr. Mahmoud Diab<sup>31</sup>, talking about investment in Kufur Aqab, said, "From investment point of view, this does not incur huge expenses like other places. For instance, you pay water taxes and other documents needed for the council. Still the investment is profitable because you can build several floors with many apartments. The only problem is that people phase payment over five or more years. Investors feel they are selling in vain." Sameer Fayalah<sup>32</sup> agrees and adds when asked about who determines the number of floors and building ar-

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Mahmoud Diab, Housing Contractor, 1 August 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Sameer Khayry Fialah, 1 August 2015

as, "the land owner. You may build up to 17-18 floors in Ramallah. However, by habits and for respect, we usually build far from the street and residential zones. There is not authority other than the landowner to decide on the setbacks from the street and neighboring buildings. Many buildings are adjacent to the street." When asked about the technical architectural and space features, he answered about the number of flats per floor, "nobody determines this either. In the end result, you have a commodity and you must present the best commodity to the Jerusalemites. Therefore, I own the most expensive apartments because I only sell top quality. People here are annoyed with the way of sale. I do not sell to anybody. I set strict conditions on my tenants. Kufur Aqab is an area without law or justice and I have the right to set my own conditions to make them abide by my rules. Therefore, I must choose those who are going to live here.

Speaking of the guarantees needed for real estate development, he said, "we use checks that may be payable over ten years. But these guarantees are "act of god" and may span ten years because there is abundant offer and clients abuse of this. The market is highly competitive; I personally do not ask for a down payment. Otherwise, I cannot sell. Everybody lives an adventure in Kufur Aqab. The Apartment remains registered in my name until the last check is paid. But it is possible to receive repayment of the first checks and then payment stops. There is no law that allows me to reacquire the apartment. Therefore, contractors use gangs.

Answers of respondents show that Kufur Aqab has become an investment-appealing zone. Mr. Fialah, a contractor, prefers to invest in Kufur Aqab rather than in Ramallah and explains, "Because the PA shares all of your investment. They allow us to build only on 36% of the land and limit the number of floors to 4. So, if the building has 8 floors, I will have to sell the apartment for 400000 Dollars to generate profit if I bought the land for a million dollars, at Ramallah current land prices."

When we asked a village council member, Mr. Rashed Barkat<sup>33</sup>, about the reason of increasing investment in Kufur Akab, he answered: "investment is easy here and does not need license. We do not a digging permit or ask neighbors. Neighbors do not intervene or object to any violations. There is no building law; all that matters is citizens' safety. After the problem occurs, they come to the council although in the outset, the tenant or buyer does not ask the landlord for any legal deeds."

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33 Rashed Barakat, Real Estate Developer, Village Council Member, Interview on 18 August 2015



To find out more, we asked village council member, Mr. Ashraf Thabtah<sup>34</sup> about laws and regulations governing building and contractors' investment in Kufur Aqab, he answered "there is no law or legal procedures. As I explained before, all buildings are in violation of the law." We then asked further why people buy apartments in Kufur Aqab and what is their legal protection? What are the procedures applicable to the purchase of apartments", he added, "there is no property registration in Kufur Aqab, but rather irrevocable power of attorney, certified by a notary public. The notary public in this case is "only Israeli". People buy here because it is cheaper compared to buying in Jerusalem where an apartment may cost 200 to 300 thousand Dollars. He said, "it is like choosing the devil over the deep blue sea. In Kufur Aqab, rent is less costly and houses are bigger. Many come to buy here because it is a proof they still live within the boundary of Jerusalem. Their blue ID cards are not confiscated. Regarding sale of land and whether it is subject to PA rules or the so called "Jerusalem Municipality", Mr. Thabta said, "the land here is part of the Jerusalem area and most of them are sold because of very high demand and small offer. The remaining land of Kufur Aqab is under P control. People in Qalandia buy their to invest, but there is virtually no empty land in Kufur Aqab. Therefore, we have this vertical expansion of construction." To the eye, the architecture of Kufur Aqab differs from the scene in Ramallah and Albiereh where regulations prevent vertical expansion above 5 to 6 floors and precondition a ceiling.

When we checked whether Jerusalemites would have bought flats and land or invested in Kufur Aqab without the policies and restrictions on their ID cards, the answer was no. Kufur Aqab for many people is expensive because its inhabitants have a Jerusalem ID and their income and purchase power are higher. Everything here is more expensive starting from juice pack to apartments. It is however cheaper than inside Jerusalem. Without the restrictions on ID maintenance, there would not have been this boom in Kufur Aqab. Most people rent flats here as a proof of their residency in Jerusalem, but they actually live in other places. Another contractor from outside Kufur Aqab, when asked about why he invested there, replied, "why invest in building in Kufur Aqab? <sup>35</sup> Because the proprietor grants workers insurance while in Ramallah there is no labor insurance. Additionally, the pay here is higher than in Ramallah and it is made in cash. Most workers in the West Bank are all with West Bank ID. There are no workers with a Jerusalem ID in Kufur Aqab. Take the plumber for instance; in Jerusalem, he would make NIS 600 a day. How would

34 Interview with Ashraf Thabtah, Tax Collection/Village Council, on 13 August 2015

35 Interview with Mr. Islam Ladawah, Contractor, on 5 August 2015

they waste such a daily pay and come to Kufur Aqab to work for NIS 150 a day. And who will employ a plumber from Jerusalem to work in the West Bank?"

It seems there are imaginary advantages of the colonizers' zones and their self-classification. The justifications for each group are different and each one has its own rationale and presents its justifications from their point of view. They either have economic reasons or deal with the area as if it were another country. This is due to lack of harmonization of laws, as we explained before about the differentiated imaginary of Palestinians as colonizing subjects based on the socio-colonial engineering. When asked about his opinion of the building in Kufur Aqab, he replied, "very bad. The construction is of poor quality. The buildings rise out of a sudden without any engineers or supervisors. The whole job is "rubbish" starting with the cement through to the electricity and water connections. The material used is the worst and the construction components are low quality made in China. It all depends on the conscience of the contractor. If they all act against their conscience, there is always a possibility that the house or building will fall, like "Alsalaymah building" which had a crack in the middle and its inhabitants were evacuated."

We asked, "nobody is held accountable in this case?" "Of course not, there isn't any law to hold the contractor accountable. There is no legal contract signed between the contractor and landlord. The only contract is a verbal one therefore there is no possible liability." When we asked if investors wish to live in Kufur Aqab since it is an attractive zone, their answer was most of them would not. A respondent said, "never, first because the rent is too high to the West Bankers. For the Jerusalemites, it is low since they would be asked to pay 1000\$ for rent in Biet Hanina. To them the 2000 NIS (500\$) is reasonable in Kufur Aqab. Moreover, the Jerusalemites see living in Kufur Aqab better because it is closer to Ramallah and they can purchase their needs in Ramallah, which is still less expensive than Jerusalem. When we asked if Kufur Aqab is appealing to holders of green ID's (West Bank) to buy a piece of land or a building? The answer was affirmative, "no way, the best donum in Kufur Aqab would cost 350,000 and construction cost 350,000. With 700,000 \$, you can buy all of Ramallah. In cases where one of the partners is a Jerusalemite or the wife has a Jerusalem ID, then yes. Otherwise, it would be impossible even if they have strong acquaintance here. This perception is inaccurate since questionnaires showed that other people still wish to live in Kufur Aqab.

We then investigated other socioeconomic segments. We interviewed a doctor who has recently opened a practice in Kufur Aqab. His answers were affirmative

about refusing to live in Kufur Aqab. Why don't you live in Kufur Aqab? "Am I crazy to live in Kufur Aqab!!" Why would you be crazy to live in Kufur Aqab? "First of all, I live in Shufat and it is the most prestigious neighborhood, like Almasayoun in Ramallah. Moreover, there is no safety in Kufur Aqab, no police or whatsoever. Of course, around buildings, there are surveillance cameras, but they are only there." If this is the case, why did you open a practice in Kufur Aqab<sup>36</sup>? "To be honest, I had a choice between Kufur Aqab or Tel Aviv, but when I thought carefully, I found it better to have my practice in Kufur Aqab. This building belongs to my grandfather and as such I would save the 1000 \$ I would have paid in Tel Aviv."

In the same context, Sahar Khateeb<sup>37</sup> said, "I came to live in Kufur Aqab because of the high rent I used to pay in Jerusalem. I thought therefore of buying a house in Kufur Aqab where the rent is lower and I still can maintain my ID. I did not choose Kufur Aqab; it chose me. Most people here are in my situation. They live in Kufur Aqab either for family reunification – women or men – or to preserve their Jerusalem ID."

Kufur Aqab is not appealing only to investors, but also to residents or social segments who hold a Jerusalem ID. They need to preserve their ID card or otherwise they colonization policies would expel them out of Jerusalem, which is under a full Jewishization wave. Its residents are denied the right to building and their houses are demolished while their ID cards are regularly confiscated. The other segments include spouses of Jerusalem ID holders and some social classes like students or workers since ownership is easy.

Abu Ahmad, who lives in Kufur Aqab, said<sup>38</sup> that he lived in Kufur Aqab with his wife, who has a Jerusalem ID while he has a West Bank ID. Why do you think there is increased demand on living in Kufur Aqab? "Because Kufur Aqab is the Israeli plan to evacuate Jerusalem of holders of Jerusalem ID. It is the trap set for the Jerusalemites. They went to live in Kufur Aqab for several reasons. It is like our case. We moved here to preserve my wife's Jerusalem ID. They also come to live here because of soaring rents in Jerusalem, if you managed to find a house suitable for your family to start with. The situation is seemingly more difficult beyond imagination. The Arnona (property tax is lower here than in Jerusalem. This means we pay here a property tax of 3500 NIS while in Jerusalem, we would pay 10000. This is exhausting for citizens who cannot have this kind of money." About his view of the

36 Interview with Dr. Mahdi Marqah, 15 August 2015

37 Interview on 27 July 2015

38 Interview with Abu Mohammad, Clerk, 30 July 2015.

situation in Kufur Aqab, he said, "we lack security and safety in Kufur Aqab. The PA is not present here and has no role. The Israeli police does not enter here either. The municipality does not intervene in most activities like building and licensing. All a person can do is to relinquish ownership before a lawyer and this is the property deed. Otherwise, nothing preserves rights in Kufur Aqab except cases of raids against houses. Narcotics are widespread in Kufur Aqab and they kill people we also hear shooting of unidentified sources; we do not know who is shooting or at whom. Nobody knows. Everybody says it is arm dealers working from Kufur Aqab because it is not subject to any law.

We asked him who benefited from Kufur Akab and he said, "Some groups benefit from this situation, mainly investors and real estate developers. They abuse of the current situation in Kufur Aqab, which is an open market. You may find facilities to purchase including soft instalments through writing deferred checks. People do not take the deed proving their ownership of the apartment, until all instalments are repaid." West Bank people benefit a lot from Kufur Aqab because it is an important labor market, whether in construction or commerce. Some stores sell above 10000 NIS a month. They sell at prices higher than the West Bank and lower than Jerusalem. For the Jerusalemites, these prices are excellent. As such, shop owners make high profit. Therefore, some may ignore the lack of security in Kufur Aqab to make this kind of profit. Jerusalemites benefit because they have to preserve their Jerusalem ID. They try to keep some hope for their children and grand children even when they are in dire need for the services not available in Kufur Aqab. Here there are no municipal services, wastewater drainage, or waste collection. There is no monitoring of building not to mention the problems related to electricity and water connection. There is no security here, as we said before. Israel is also benefiting from the situation since it is aiming to evacuate Jerusalem of all Palestinians. Israel does not offer any facilities or building licenses. To the contrary, it forces people to pay around 45000 \$ to get a license and people wait for years to be able to build, if they are even allowed to do so.."

Some people also left their homes empty and settlers expropriated them, claiming they were theirs. Israel can steal land and homes much more quickly and easily from spouses with different ID cards benefiting from Kufur Aqab to keep the Jerusalem ID of either one of them. There is always a problem in the family structure since one of the spouses cannot move into Jerusalem with his/her family." In the event there is a problem like stealing or aggression, they cannot depend on the dwellers of Kufur Aqab. "Usually, they just forget about it and revoke their

rights waiting for divine justice. They can call upon Israeli police if they were Jerusalemites, but this rarely happens because of the problem this would raise to us as Palestinians. Any person reporting incidents to the Israeli police would be accused of collaborating with the enemy. There are alternative solutions including traditional tribal justice and factions, like Qalandia faction, which is very powerful.

## 11. Architectural Features of Kufur Aqab and their socioeconomic effect

Similar to other Palestinian cities, glass buildings started to emerge like a form of “modern architecture”, which is unfit for the topography and climate of the area. These are ready models imported from other countries and suit best cold weathers. Europeans and northern countries, in their attempt to rationalize use of energy and use solar energy, opted to these models. In Palestine, such architectural models are less fit because they consume much energy to cool in the summer or even winter since this kind of architecture is not fit for the climate in Palestine.



We notice from previous interviews that Kufur Aqab has turned into an investment-appealing environment. Architecturally and space wise, the buildings are a total chaos because of the absence of planning and zoning regulations. The effect of the colonizer is persistent with the delimitation of the space and the manner of occupancy, offering "legalization" of use of the space by settler colonizers, allowing them to expand. On the other hand, it limits the space available to the Palestinians. Opposite to this colonial plan, there is total absence of any Palestinian plan.

To examine the impact of this type of building and squatter neighborhoods, we asked respondents about the social effects of this unplanned architectural sprawl.



### ***Lack of Social Security***

The first field observation was a general feeling of lack of social safety or peace. We asked many respondents to describe this collective feeling, Ms. Alkhateeb said, "Of course, we don't have safety. Even children ride motorcycles and cars and use them to play. They usually pose a threat to the people in the area. There are no services, no authority or feeling of belonging. Even the traffic lights were vandalized. There is no mobile phone signal. The telecommunication service provider is Israeli "Biezek", and usually there is no signal."

A respondent said, "with the absence of "preventive security" forces, we face daily problems that cannot be solved. Narcotics are widely used and there are no institutions to raise awareness of their danger. There is also trade in heavy weapons

and violation of the street landscape either through the buildings of the stores. There isn't a single legal building in Kufur Aqab; they all violate building conditions."

These visions concord with other respondents expressing a feeling of insecurity with a zone that turned into home of all illicit acts in an environment where law is absent. Many people reported this feeling of insecurity. Ms. Alkhateeb said, "A while ago armed people entered into a school. The principal called the Israel and Palestinian police. None of them was able to enter into the school. In the end result, the Palestinian police said, "we are banned any civil or military access to this zone."

## 12. Law entirely not present and recourse to other references

Local authorities representative, like Kufur Aqab village council say, as described by Mr. Ahsarf Thabta<sup>39</sup>, "It is the only PA affiliated institution. Its core task is to provide services to inhabitants including waste collection. Actually waste is a vital problem in Kufur Aqab because of increased population. The local authorities also provide electricity and water services and issue tax clearance certificates for contractors and inhabitants of Kufur Aqab. Mr Thabta explains, "the colonization authorities exercise their power in the manner that serves their colonialist plans. He adds, "when it comes to Jerusalem ID holders, they refer to the public service center of Kufur Aqab. In general, the services offered by Jerusalem Municipality to Kufur Aqab inhabitants cover only 20% of their needs. This is why waste accumulates and there is chaos. There are not services or interest to provide services.

In the absence of laws, inhabitants of Kufur Aqab, like other areas, refer to different social institutions to achieve social safety. They refer to clans, conciliation committees and political factions, mainly to Fatah, which sometimes intervenes to solve problems. Thabta told us, "of course, they intervene in case of social problems. This usually happens through awareness campaigns and networking with institutions. If there is a problem, conciliation committees intervene as well as Kufur Aqab Faction and Qalandia Faction. There are so many problems, which they cannot solve. Not all people accept tribal justice decisions. There is no law." This scene differs from the trends of some respondents who reiterated that factional split affected the nature of PA and security apparatuses' intervention. The security

39 Interview with Ashraf Thabta, Clerk, Village Council, 15 July 2015

organs are affiliated with Fatah and people view them differently. A respondent close to Hamas said, "Some factions and their discourse are present here without any organized effective presence since their activists are prosecuted by the occupation and the PA... Others are (factionally) present and officially supported but have smaller public... When we asked about whether the people from Hamas felt this was a safe area for them since the PA has no access there – Under Oslo Accords, Kufur Aqab is under full "Israeli" security control – to detain people without coordination, the answer was, "there are mutual arrests between the two parties to the Palestinian split. Hamas suffocates and arrests Fatah affiliates in Gaza while Hamas members are harassed by the PA security apparatuses in the West Bank.

Another respondent said, "Of course not... Unfortunately, the PA, when it comes to security issues and prosecuting resistance, they cross the checkpoints... there were arrests in Kufur Aqab in the form of "kidnapping", unfortunately. A lady told us, "there is not security in Kufur Aqab for me and my family to live. There is no law nor Palestinian nor Israeli police. Kufur Aqab is a hub of prostitution, weapons, drugs and outlaws. For instance, this store allows a person to sleep in the store because the store was stolen several times. Can you imagine, that even with surveillance cameras, they still managed to steal.

"Suppose I choose to live in Kufur Aqab, how would I know who lives next door or in the building. If a person lives or works in Kufur Aqab for some time, he/she would be shocked with the stories taking place here. In this place, prostitution is facilitated. Renting is possible using the ID of any person. Then nobody worries about what takes place in the apartment. Of course, those doing illegal acts feel safe without any surveillance or punishment. The latest stories we heard was about the Qalandiq faction when it unveiled a prostitution house. Such problems are usually discovered by accident."

Interviews revealed that there is no "total absence" of the law. Probably respondents were referring here to the "civil" procedural definition of law, which is not enforced. On the other hand, people refer to legal references like political factions and tribal/ clan conciliation committees. This coexistence of civil legal references – Jordanian, Egyptian and "Israeli" laws" under direct occupation, where references of laws creating the paralyzed legislative council because of the split since over 9 years, leave space to traditional tribal laws to prevail. It is not only a status quo, but an old trend that appeared in our reading of the social history of families and the external factors that maintained this traditional role, where some



families are treated as noble and others are despised. This appeared clearly under the Ottoman, British, Jordanian/Egyptian and Israeli rule and even recently under the PA. the PA has actually reinforced tribalism with the creation of the Tribes Directorate within the Ministry of Interior. The PLO did not marginalize this clan regime, although it claimed otherwise and although many of faction leaders and their grassroots do not belong to the “noble” families. Still, the clan remained as a major identity reference<sup>40</sup>.

### 13. Trans-class relations

Relationship between indigenous inhabitants and new inhabitants is based on differences across social groups. It is based on self-proclamation of identity by the dwellers comprising this identity and belonging. We refer here to Weber who sees identity as a declared feeling of belonging to a social group compared to other different and distinct social group within the same social entity, which requires that individuals therein proclaim distinct social identities<sup>41</sup>. We therefore took the initiative to ask about the different social components and found classical disparities. Some indigenous people have particular social imaginary that asserts disparate social subjects in which they imagine the outsiders<sup>42</sup>. We refer to Howard Becker’s logic of social enclaves and their problems. It is a universal scene expressed in different places of the world. Researchers speak for instance of:



40 El sakka, Abaher, Palestinian Social Identity : Fragmented Representations and Multiple Overlapping, work-paper submitted to the second annual conference held on 17 and 18 January 2013, under the theme of Palestinian Communities, their representation and the future of the Palestinian Question, p. 5

41 Weber, Max. *Economie et Société*. Paris: Plon social. Paris: presse universitaires de France. 1971.

42 Becker, Howard, *Outsiders*. Etudes de sociologie de la déviance ; paris, Ed, A.S Métaillé, 1985.

"We used to be happy here without this crowdedness. We would take the car quietly. Today, we need an hour and half to find a car to travel. There is no respect of the law or social life. Neighbors do not know each other and do not check on one another. The city has changed a lot. It is not as it used to be." Another respondent said "nobody is happy with this situation. Everybody wishes to see Kufur Aqab like before but we all know this needs a miracle. Many people buy flats and land in Kufur Aqab and it is difficult to evacuate any person with such property." Another resident adds, "our life in Kufur Aqab was fine before. We used to exchange social visits but today everything is lost and people barely know each other. In the past, if a person dies in Kufur Aqab, all of the neighborhood goes to the funeral. Today you may find a funeral and a wedding in the same place.

Mr. Rashed Barakat, a resident of Kufur Akab, considers that in 2003-2004 we started to see strange faces living in Kufur Aqab. We surrendered to the current situation. At first, respectable people came to live and we established social relations with them. They shared our good and bad times. Today, the situation has changed and people no longer connect with each other. Residents of Kufur Aqab are Jerusalemites whose only goal is to prove they are residing in Jerusalem. This same differentiation applies as well to the social comparison between the original zones of the inhabitants and their new place of residence. This is a recurrent issue and reminds us of Emile Durkheim work in the beginning of the nineteenth century about the perceptions of the people who recently moved to new areas after the industrial revolution. He examined the impact of the emergence of new cities in Europe on their feeling of loss of their reference points and association to their past and original areas, which they qualified as more intimate, more secure and friendlier. The interview with Mrs. Samah Abu Zeid<sup>43</sup> confirms this hypothesis; she describe her hometown as a better place. When asked about whether she noticed a difference between living in her hometown and in Kufur Aqab and where she preferred to live, she answered, "yes, there is huge difference. My hometown is more beautiful and full of love, social life, family and friends." Ms. Luna Abu Sharif agrees with this perception<sup>44</sup>. When we asked her about the distinctive feature of Biet Hanina for her, she said, "services there are available. The area is clean and this is what we are missing here. There is rule of law but no law is applied here. For instance, there are no licenses. Although we own our apartment in Kufur Aqab, we do not have a title deed to prove it. We only have these papers that all people

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43 Interview with Samah Abu Zeid

44 Interview with Luna Abu Sharief, Employee, Kobat Holim (Israeli Health Insurance System)

do.". Iman Abu Shalbak consents. She said, "Kufur Aqab used to be a small village without even a school. Most students attended the school in Qalandia. It was an empty area with close family relations. At least people knew each other. I do not recognize the place any more. I do not know anybody here as I have recently moved to the place. You won't find any independent house except for my parents' house. My siblings and I suggested to build a tall building in the place of the house like many others do. My mother opposed the idea because she loves the house and the garden around it. She says, "I will not have people living over my head". The house is surrounded by six tall buildings. We do not have any sense of freedom and do not enjoy quietness because there are many people.

When we asked her about her opinion in the social relations in the area, she replied, "there are no connections. People do not know each other. There are no relations with the neighbors and there is gap between the people "because you do not know what type of people you are dealing with", so no social relations. People here throw garbage from the window. They do not care about the street or their neighbor. Children play with everything and they do not receive proper education. Children do not have clubs to go to and spend their spare time. There are no community organizations to work on public awareness or at least mitigate the problems." Similarly, Mr. Ali Dawoud<sup>45</sup> sees that relations have changed and people are quite different from before. If you conduct a study on any housing compound, you will find 20 families coming from a different location each. There is no harmony among them unless there is a major problem in the building, like a fire or any other problem that threatens them all. When asked, "do you feel that dealing with people in Kufur Aqab who are not the indigenous population of the village is a source of fear? The answer was, yes of course. You would fear somebody you don't know because there is this political issue and fear of partisan affiliations. Because of the nature of my work in the village council where I have been sitting for many years, I was able to build relations with people from different areas. However, other people actually fear dealing with strangers, especially that most of them have criminal records and other problems. They feel it is necessary to be careful. To the question, do the people of Kufur Aqab still practice their original rituals?, the answer was, "there aren't many rituals these days. The Diwan opens for special cases like death, marriage, engagement and such occasions. Food is served to the family of the deceased inside the Diwan although this same Diwan used to be a place to meet and talk and serve other purposes.

45 School Teacher, Head of Council for 15 years, currently head of Barakat Family Diwan, old inhabitant of Kufur Aqab

A merchant told us in this regard, "Qalandia the camp is much better off than here. There is security control and relations between the people. They know each other and respect each other. You find people who have been neighbors for fifty years. How couldn't they be respectful to each other? But in Kufur Aqab, neighbors do not know each other. The faction in Qualandia Camp has large mandate and the authority to enter into the camp. However, in Um Alsharayet and Kufur Aqab, it cannot arrest or imposed any form of authority."

We observe here common examples of dealing with the alien/ non-"original" population as a source of anxiety, fear and suspicion. The negative perception of these people exhibit the inability of a certain segment of the population to cope with the rapid changes that followed the emigration of many people into their area. It is clear that inhabitants long for the traditional institutions of social safety in the absence of modern institutions. It is known that the Diwan (clan), as an institution, played a key role in the urban and village formations to solve family problems and even in interventions in the Palestinian public spaces<sup>46</sup>. It is however clear that its role in this area is limited. When we asked whether the "original" residents of Kufur Aqab melted with comers from all areas, the answer was no since the houses of the native population are in areas where no further building is possible. Consequently, Kufur Aqab appears as a partitioned zone with very few "indigenous" population compared to the current population that increased over the past ten years. There is high rate of immigration to USA. Almost 90% of the people immigrate to America. We speak here of very limited geographic space since a large part of Kufur Aqab lands turned into tall buildings.

#### **14. Growth of Formal and Informal Economic Activity**

Any observer of Kufur Aqab will notice that investment is not limited to apartments since the area is noticeably commercially active. This is obviously the result of demographic density, but this is not the only reason. There are other reasons that boosted trade and small businesses. Abu Salah says<sup>47</sup>, "it is simply that rent in Kufur Aqab is lower than Ramallah and profit on goods is higher.". However, there are other reasons that encourage social segments to live in Kufur Aqab. We see plenty of stores exercising tax evasion, including a tobacco shop that moved from

46 For further information, refer to our study in French: Al Diwan : «Une institution entre transmission et re-production sociale», dans Bouget D. et Karsenty S. (dir.), Regards croisés sur le lien social, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005, pp.351-363.

47 Owner of carpets store – Kufur Aqab

Ramallah to Kufur Akab to avoid the high taxes imposed by both the colonizing power and the PA. Any observer of the economic activity in Kufur Aqab will see similar business to those in other Palesitnian urban zones. There are restuarants with traditional print and other globalized and fast food ones. Economic activ-ity clashes within the same zone. You see for instance Alsalam Shoe Store next to Naseef gas station and other small businesses like Falafel Abu Ali in an iron container in the middle of the street, reiterating the residential and commercial un-planning.

### 15. Urban Zone full of Negative Social Perception

Different interviews showed that the area is perceived as ill reputed. A female re-spondent said, any citizen living in Kufur Akab will be vulnerable to the negative stereotyping. According to some respondents, "Kufur Aqab is a "charge". People will treat you differently if you tell them you are from Kufur Aqab, especially if you are dealing with capital owners or PA officials. There is nothing positive in this zone except the fact you can find good jobs there, even of most work comes via the networks. However, the networks here are guaranteed because they are Israeli. After 5 bounced checks, your account will be suspended.

### 16. The colonized Aware of Israeli Plans

Residents are fully aware that the colonizer plays a key role in the manufacturing of the place. They, as inhabitants, see themselves as victims, but hold the civil soci-ety and PA institutions accountable for the deterioration of their living standards. People in Kufur Aqab fully understand the plans of the colonization. Mrs. Alkha-teeb, for instance, says "Jews turn their back" to Kufur Aqab to jeudize it. This is why we have to facilities to live in Jerusalem. I lived in Jerusalem for 19 years, dur-ing which I moved to 6 houses. Every time there was a problem with the house. Israeli dos not give us building licenses or any other facilities granted to the Is-raelis. Even when you apply for a license, and that you live in Biet Hanina, it may take up to 15 years to receive an approval. She added, "what forced us into this misery, is the more miserable situation we had." A village council respondent, Mr. Abdeljaber Barkat<sup>48</sup>says, "Israel very clearly encourages stealing and law-breaking. It abandoned the area from security perspective and not at all interested in it. For instance, 60% of the cars in Kufur Aqab are stolen. Israel intervenes only when

48 Interview on 29 July 2015

there is a wanted member of Hamas. Only in this case we see the Israeli police. Problems are settled via tribal justice, if solved, and after fastidious coordination with the Palestinian police. Problems usually end with banning you access to the area. If a resident reports a problem, he/she will be accused of “collaborating” with the enemy.

## **17. Colonialist representations**

Based on our previous perceptions, Kufur Aqab and its occupants represent part of the colonizer’s planning, geography and population classification. It is also part of the settlement mechanisms of the colonized themselves. The Palestinians produce colonialist representations according to a number of imagined privileges. The paper analyses the previously produced colonial practices under other colonial contexts – i.e. the “Israeli” colonizer division of different areas into colonized areas of privilege concordant with colonial categorization linked to the colonial engineering and “geopolitical” policies of the harmonized colonized spaces (Foucault). The colonized, reproduce the colonial discourse of these colonialist differentiations like: considering the inhabitants of the colonies different in terms of the privileges given to them by the colonization. Colonialized self-differentiation of the Palestinians in the areas occupied in 1947, in the first colony, compared to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Then there is the differentiation between the residents of Jerusalem against those of the West Bank, and those of Ramallah compared to those in northern West Bank and those in the West Bank compared to those in Gaza. Based on this logic, the colonizer creates social hierarchies, which fabricate imaginary identities of privileges of socioeconomic subjects loaded with colonizational culturalist stereotyping.

We see here some field remarks about residents with blue ID cards. These Jerusalemites have an arrogant manner. They make noise with their cars when they drive or what people call vandalism on the streets. Since the Oslo Accord prevents the Palestinian police from entering areas under Israeli control, and that local committees are denied any right to intervene, we also observe other phenomena including disrespect of traffic lights and rules. Actually drivers’ attitude changes before Qualandia Checkpoint. They immediately take off their seat belts. Certainly, not only drivers with Israeli-plated cars drive from the rules in the Palestinian urban space, but many others act as such. However, this takes a special form in Kufur Aqab to the extent that some act indiscriminately thinking, as young men, there is no control over them by the Palestinian police, because of what we explained earlier.

## 18. Conclusion

Taking into consideration the changes in the socioeconomic, transportation, space, place and environmental dimensions, we notice that the increased demand on housing in Kufur Aqab increases the uses of space in architectural term of basic functions like housing, transportation, waste, recreational services. Those do not entail sufficient services to influence the type of space needed and respond to the inflation of this suburb, we can conclude the following:

- I. There is squatter housing inflation with absence of legislation and planning. There is lack of harmony in the space and socioeconomic distribution of urban areas between Jerusalem and Ramallah. This triggered the emergence of this unbalanced housing zone where there is concentrated demographic eight, compared to other zones. It is unconsciously evacuating Jerusalem of its inhabitants.
- II. Based on the general information and state of infrastructure in Kufur Aqab, as mentioned by our respondents, it appears that passing to this zone via main roads to Kufur Aqab and from these roads to the city (Ramallah and Albiereh) is miserable. There are few lanes and small sidewalks. The sidewalks and setbacks in front of the stores are narrow. The lanes are interrupted and unusually crowded because of exploitation of the setback areas by street vendors and temporary building. Consequently, cars park on sidewalks and even on the street lanes. Since pedestrians are unable to use the [occupied] sidewalks, they share the street with the cars and cross the streets at random. Consequently, passage area is reduced and road safety deteriorates as pedestrians and vehicles are vulnerable to accidents, mainly to be knocked of. Kufur Aqab lives traffic congestion in daytime. All projects implemented and being implemented thus far by the Palestinian Authority to improve traffic on the main roads leading to Kufur Aqab aborted. As a result of the agreements signed between the PA and the colonial state, which the latter does not abide by while the former upholds to, the state of Kufur Aqab main roads, which is the street connecting Jerusalem to Ramallah, is miserable. The different projects proposed remain constrained with the "Israeli" colonial planning either by improving the conditions at a checkpoint or devising plans and projects normalizing – even legitimizing – the checkpoints. Even the policies of donor countries to these projects sustain the status quo, which does not undermine the colonial realm. They actually fund paving of streets and lanes while digging together, in a manner that does not jeopardize the Israeli colonial engineering plans.
- III. Palestinian cities are residential centers endured unplanned process and chaos with its urban expansion. At times, it faced misuse of land or overlapping use

of land due to arbitrary distribution. The Israeli colonial policies and emergency state laws, imposed by military orders, serve the Israeli government's greed for settlement expansion. This concurs with increased colonial Israel control of the spatial development of the Palestinian Territory including Kufur Aqab, which represents an example of this state. The study of Kufur Aqab shows that the dominant logic in this area is linked to the geography of colonial hegemony, i.e. absence of any urban planning, which remains restricted to the controlled areas. In other terms, it is planning for what is available. We actually notice that most planning processes stem from a perception of a "two-state" solution, which constitutes part of the proposals linked to the imaginary of political projects associated to funders' agenda. It contradicts with the colonial practices of social engineering that transforms the demographic nature of the space and confiscates land to dig bypass roads to serve the colonies and preserve fixed and mobile checkpoints. It imposes facts on the ground.

- IV. There seems to be confusion in the public Palestinian urban policies, which are supposed to determine the pattern of urban development. Consequently, squatter areas appeared in Kufur Aqab, in poor quality of urban environment and random expansion. This coincided with imbalance in the development of main centers pushing many families to emigrate from parts of the West Bank into Kufur Aqab. Moreover, Jerusalem inhabitants who are forced to show their connection to Jerusalem in the manner prescribed by the colonization authorities, land in Kufur Aqab.
- V. The growth of a "liberal economy", which undermines the proliferation of the real estate sector, which generates quick profit, pushing residents to invest in this lucrative sector. It is also linked to credit policies that turned residents into borrowers as per the vision of the "World Bank" and "International Monetary Fund". It also stems from the public policies associated with "rentier economy" that depends on external aid and boosts a consumerist culture and lifestyle with "living on credit" models and maximized consumption trends, offered to new employees and young people. The discourse used preoccupies citizens with the desire to own a company and a vehicle. It is supported by bank policies that transform residents into borrowers. This consequently influences their social, societal and national visions associated to their ability or inability to realize the new standardized dreams. Simultaneously, the colonizer plans and implements schemes leaving these inhabitants in squatter areas. The study shows that the hypothesis about the "gentrification" of Kufur Aqab is an invalid concept in our case study. As we explained, the process did not generate an urban zone with bourgeoisie features. And even, the housing processes and construction and commercial expansion produced new beneficiary segments, but did not represent a form of geographic gentrification.



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