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The Graduate School

Department of Architecture

**ARCHITECTURE AND THE CITY**  
**RAMALLAH'S CHANGING IDENTITIES**

A Thesis in

Architecture

by

Dima J. Yaser

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The thesis of Dima Yaser was reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Ute Poerschke  
Associate Professor of Architecture  
Thesis Advisor

Jin Baek  
Assistant Professor of Architecture

Deryck Holdsworth  
Professor of Geography

Loukas Kalisperis  
Professor of Architecture  
Graduate Program Chair

\*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School

## **Abstract:**

Architecture goes beyond its visible image to the city's construction and symbolic meanings representing the development of the city over time. Architecture is continuously remodeled so that it accommodates the transformations and alterations that a city and its society undergo.

This study investigates how architecture defines the identity of the city by adapting Aldo Rossi's framework of deconstructing the city into urban artifacts. It defines the identity of a city as formed by the accumulation of the expressions and history of the city and its society, including its architecture and structure. Many cities have undergone drastic changes on their structures and have thus acquired complex and highly differentiated identities. The architecture of the city shares the memories, and communicates the past and present to its users. The question of identity regenerates the controversy of what architecture is and how it narrates the identity of the city and its inhabitants.

This study attempts at investigating how architecture defines the identity of a city through the exemplary case of the Palestinian city of Ramallah. Ramallah city exemplifies changing architectural and urban identities across Ottoman, British,

Israeli and now Palestinian eras of control and the consequences of these transformations on the whole being of the city are assessed. Two major artifacts of the city - Al-Manara Square and the Palestinian Headquarters - are investigated in order to trace and [re]define the multiple identities that Ramallah has acquired through its existence.

**The greatest products of architecture are not so much individual as they are social works; rather the children of nations in labor than the inspired efforts of men of genius; the legacy of a race; the accumulated wealth of centuries, the residuum of successive evaporations of human society – in a word, a species of formation.**

**Victor Hugo**

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## CHAPTER ONE

### PROLOGUE

## INTRODUCTION

Cities in the Middle East endured colonialism during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries leaving a significant external footprint on these cities. Colonialism came into Middle Eastern cities with varying packages of westernization. These political, social, economical and architectural influences have been projected on the environment of these cities. Prior to the colonial era, many other influences were significant; such as the Ottoman Rule and Christian missions. The returnees from the United States of America and Europe have also played a role in bringing about new trends of architecture and hybrid cultures.

Ramallah represents the temporary center of the Palestinian State. As with many other cities, it has undergone drastic changes from being a small village into a city of nearly 40,000 residents, as shown in figures (1-1) and (1-2.) These changes are highly visible on its urban structure and architecture. Moreover, Ramallah underwent colonial and post-colonial eras, such as the British mandate and the Israeli occupation, which had a significant impact on all aspects of the city, its architecture and its community. Additionally, since 1994 the Palestinian Authority also had a significant impact on the urban development and thus the identity of the city. (Figure 1-3) gives a general impression of how Ramallah looks today.



Figure1-1 Ramallah City during the 1940's  
([www.palestineremembered.com](http://www.palestineremembered.com))

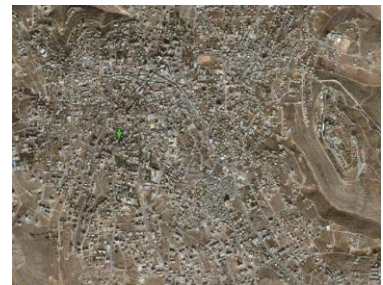


Figure1-2: Ramallah City, 2007  
([www.palestineremembered.com](http://www.palestineremembered.com))



Figure 1-3: Aerial view of Ramallah City, 2008 (researcher)



Figure1-4: AlManara Circle in the late 1930s  
([www.palestineremembered.com](http://www.palestineremembered.com))

This research will investigate how cultural and political transformations have left their imprints on Ramallah's urban structure and architecture, and if this can be identified as the city's identity. It will present an introductory synopsis of the theory of the city and a general overview of the physical changes of the city of Ramallah. It will also focus on two key elements of the city which exemplify this transformation: first, Al-Manara Circle which was no more than a British roundabout connecting the northern part of the city, which consisted of new destinations, to the old core, and is now the main commercial center and meeting place for Palestinians from many different parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip [Figure 1-4] and [Figure 1-5]; second, the British Administrative Headquarters and prison, which later became Yasser Arafat's Headquarters, and now have been transformed into the Palestinian Authority's headquarters and public museum and mausoleum for the late Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat [Figure 1-6].



Figure1-5: AlManara Circle 2007  
(researcher)

This study will also examine how an 'identity' of the city can be defined as well as the several ways in which architecture can embody these changes and become a manifestation of the city's identity. The discussion about the 'Identity' of the city will be founded on Aldo Rossi's theory. It will investigate how the changes of Ramallah's urban structure and architectural



Figure1-6: Palestinian HQ formerly  
British Admin.2008 (researcher)

appearance reflect the search for the city's identity by its inhabitants, yet even more the search for the identity for the Palestinian people.

## **1-1 THE PREMISE**

### **1-1-1 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

*This research aims at investigating how architecture defines the changing identit[ies] of the city of Ramallah.*

### **1-1-2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1- What constitutes the identity of the city? How can Aldo Rossi's theory, be utilized to formulate an understanding of the 'identity' of the city?
- 2- A. [How can Rossi's theory be applied to the city of Ramallah?] How can we understand Ramallah's contesting identities through its urban artifacts [Aldo Rossi's theory]?  
  
B. Hence, how can architecture define the identity of the city of Ramallah?
- 3- If identity changes, how does architecture represent and partake in the constitution the identity of the city of Ramallah [among these complexities and contradiction of its urbanized state]? Moreover, is change an inherent component of identity?

4- Amidst the rise of modernization and urbanization, how can we address the changing identity today? How is 'change' related to the identity of the city?

## **1-2 METHOD OF INQUIRY AND ANALYSIS**

Different methodologies and processes will be used to approach the problem of the research. The study encompasses first an *archival research*, where the historical background as well as the literature on Ramallah is assembled in order to understand the settings and conditions of the city of Ramallah and its experience throughout its existence. Colonialism rolled into occurring dramatic changes within the areas it over controlled, and it has imposed an ongoing impact on its identity and structures up to this day. Thus colonialism, post-colonialism and Orientalism are among the lenses that look into the city of Ramallah. It is important to understand the hegemonic relationship between the British Mandate (and the other regimes (earlier the Ottoman rule and later the Israeli occupation – post-colonialism), and the Palestinians, and how this influenced the Palestinians and their settings/environments before and after the Colonial period.

After giving this overview on Ramallah, Aldo Rossi's theory of the city will be studied as it examines the main urban artifacts that characterize the city's different layers; as well as Pier

Aureli's theory of the contemporary Westernized city, as he delves into the concepts of urbanization and capitalization of the city. They both consider architecture as the main construction of the city, and therefore it provides solutions for the 'problem' of the contemporary urbanized city. This stage provides the research with the necessary *theoretical dialogue* to formulate the basic ground of analysis of Ramallah city's identity and the relationship to its architecture.

Based on the theoretical dialogue, this study defines the city's identity as the accumulation of the expressions, transformations and history of the city and its society, and their projection on its structure and architecture. Thus the identity of the city is interconnected to the different layers of the city; such as history, culture, and economy, *"The layers of the city appear as a primordial and eternal fabric of life, an immutable pattern"* (Rossi, 1982, p.21). The city is thus studied as a palimpsest where the different layers and stages in the lifetime of the city come forth as components of its construction and identity.

The third step comprises of bringing the theoretical dialogue and the city of Ramallah together, hence the research will be investigating two main key elements of the city; Al-Manara and Al-Mukata'a. In order to conduct this, a *field study* is required to equip the research with concrete data and documentation



of the physical transformation of the city of Ramallah and specifically these two main sites. This phase shall provide essential data for the research in order to examine the transformation of the city and the multiple identities it acquired throughout the different periods of its existence.

These places and buildings have changed over time and have been greatly influenced by the different regimes and systems that passed over the city. Ramallah lived through great destructions and demolitions, expropriation and rapid changes in use and, as a result of speculation and obsolescence. These two cases are the most recognizable signs of urban dynamics. These layers of the city are living witnesses of these transformations and have thus kept a record of the memories of the city and the people who have lived in it.

### **1-3 SIGNIFICANCE**

Existing research on Ramallah city has addressed the city's history, planning, sustainability and conservation of the old center. These researches were mostly concerned with the technical aspects of the disciplines.

One of these recent academic researches tackles the matter of sustainable development of the Palestinian cities, mainly Ramallah, "Promoting sustainable urban development in Palestinian cities" by Lubna Shaheen [2006], Another

research addresses the subject of preservation and conservation of the old city center of Ramallah, "Old City as a Part of Present Day Dynamic Reality: the case of Ramallah Old Town" by Shaden Qasem (2006). Other technical and scholarly works address Ramallah's historical and political backgrounds. They address the political conditions of the city, among these works is "I saw Ramallah", by Mourid Barghouti (2003), which is basically a documentation of the author's journals (memoirs). Rasem Khamaisi (1997 & 2006) deals with the planning development and master plans of the city. Adaniya Shibli (2006) is among the researchers who study Al-Manara square from a political stance and was concerned with power and politics and not architecture and identity. Azeez Shaheen (1982) attends to the historical documentation of the city.

Among the most important organizations that deal with the reservation and conservation of the city of Ramallah is Riwaq<sup>1</sup> – their main focus is the architecture and history (descriptive) of the old city core, their work is basically technical documentation and conservation.

Ramallah is considered the temporary center of the Palestinian State, thus it holds a significant status among other Palestinian cities and the national identity. This research

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<sup>1</sup> Riwaq is a Ramallah based nonprofit organization; it's a center for architectural conservation

will be the first to address Ramallah city's changing identities and its relationship to the architecture of the city itself.

On the theoretical level, the significance of this research lies in the fact that the theory of the architecture of the city that has been introduced by Aldo Rossi (1966) has been constructed based on Western and European cities but has not yet been applied to a Middle Eastern city.

This research investigates the theory of Rossi on a middle eastern city with a western/colonial influence. It examines the universality of his theory of the city and its architecture. This research aspires to re-examine the identity of the city and its relationship to its built artifacts and possibly advance new approaches and visions towards the city of Ramallah, Palestine.



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## CHAPTER TWO

# THE CITY'S OVERVIEW

In 1996, Ramallah was chosen as the temporary center for the Palestinian authority; it has encountered massive and drastic transformations and alterations on its being. This development of Ramallah city as the center for the Palestinian life core encountered the establishment of settings for international organizations as well as governmental and commercial institutions. Ramallah, which used to be a small town, is now the center for all these major activities. Due to the importance given to the city as a center for the Palestinian state, it has to enfold the new meaning for its users and inhabitants.



Figure2-1: Map of Historical Palestine 2003 (<http://visibleearth.nasa.gov>)

Based on maps and images, this chapter investigates the morphology of the Ramallah city's structure; images of the current status of the city as well as its past, hence the different time periods [a chronological study]. This enables the research to locate the two artifacts in the city of Ramallah and explain their importance for the city.

## 2-1 The Geography of Ramallah

Considered the center of Ramallah and Al-Bireh district, the city is located in the center of Historical Palestine (Figure 2-1), it lies 12km to the North of Jerusalem City and as part of the mountains chain extending from Jerusalem in the south, to Nablus in the North, and from Jericho in the East toward the



Figure2-2: Map of the West Bank (<http://usaid.gov/wbg/maps.h>)

green line in the West (Figure 2-2). Ramallah is attached to Al-Bireh City from its eastern borders; together they formulate twin cities. It is located on a flat plateau, elevated around 880 meters above sea level. The City is well known by its Mediterranean climate; rainy winters and dry summers (ARIJ, 1999). The urbanized areas of the city have continuously expanded and have become attached with Qalandia and Kufor Aquab in the South, and with the Baytonia in the West, in high densities and rapid sprawl.

## **2 - 2 THE HISTORY OF RAMALLAH**

The area of what is now known Ramallah wasn't much mentioned in the ancient eras. Its significance started to come forth later in the Crusaders rule over Palestine (1099–1187 CE); the area was set up as a military settlement, as it served as an important crossroad in the ancient times. It was also temporarily settled from time to time throughout the centuries (Shaheen, 2006).

Ramallah, originally a small agricultural town, came into existence as a place in the mid-sixteenth century, when Rashed Hadadin, who descended from a Christian Yemenite family, led his small caravan across the arid hills of Jordan to a location not far from Jerusalem. The environment he found was compatible with his home town. Therefore he bought

khirbet [Arabic for the ruins of a place] Ramallah from its original owners Al-Ghazawneh. His sons stayed in Ramallah while he went back to Jordan, and became the ancestors of today's Ramallah population.

Ramallah city has undergone different regimes and rules that have contributed to constructing its status today. Each of these eras has left significant traces on the city's structure and image (Figure 2-3).



Figure2-3: Overview of the city of Ramallah, 2006 (RIWAQ)

## 2 - 2 -1 OTTOMAN RULE

During the Ottoman rule, which ruled over Palestine from 1526-1917, Ramallah was growing and prospering. According to the Ottoman registration lists in 1596, Ramallah consisted of 71 Christian families and 9 Moslem families; its population was around 400 (Aljube & Bshara, 2002; Qasem, 2006). The moderate climate and the fertility of Ramallah made the city an appropriate place for settling and developing. Throughout the Ottoman rule over Palestine, and specifically during the Ibrahim Pasha's governance (1831-1840), Christian missions started to infiltrate into the different cities and villages. As a result administrative and public buildings were introduced into the village.

In time, Ramallah expanded and grew. In 1807, the first Greek Orthodox Church was built, as this was the predominant Christian denomination in the Holy Land region, which was dominated by the mother church of Constantinople (Ramallah Municipality), and in 1869, the Friends School for Girls opened by American Quakers in an attempt to uplift/westernize the educational system and living standards of the city (Figure 2-4). During that same decade, the Latin (Roman Catholic) Church established its presence in Ramallah, which was home to the second largest Christian denomination in the city. Throughout the later decades, and with the influx of Muslim and Christian refugees and internal migration, numerous



Figure2-4: The Friends Girls School, Ramallah, 2008, (researcher)



Figure2-5: The Quaker Meeting House Ramallah, 2008, (researcher)



Figure2-6 The Friends Boys School, Ramallah, 2008, (researcher)



Figure2-7 The commercial strip in the Old city of Ramallah, 2006 (Riwaq)



mosques were founded throughout the area, as well as a few churches. The Jamal Abdel Nasser mosque is one of the city's largest mosques.

In 1902, the ottoman government decreed Ramallah a district including 30 of its neighboring villages. By 1908, Ramallah had been designated a city and a municipal council was appointed to run its affairs. Later the Friends Meeting House was built in 1910 (Figure 2-5), and in 1914 the Friends School for the boys was completed (Figure 2-6). In spite of the considerable transformations Ramallah City had gone through during these eras, the City was still formed with a vernacular urban pattern and architecture style (Figure 2-7); housing units had become scattered arbitrarily taking into consideration the social privacy, which was the regional norm in the area of Ramallah, and the topographical and climatic conditions. In this manner, the City was formed according to “Ahwash” urban organization system, where the place was divided into different zones according to kinship, privacy, and public social relations. These are internal courts within the vernacular pattern in the Arabic village; are enclosed spaces within the edges of the building. The space is characterized with its arbitrary shape, and significant with it is level of privacy.

These houses resembled the traditional architecture of the

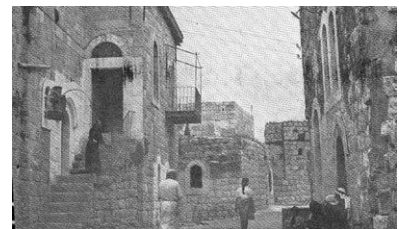


Figure2-8 Traditional Houses in the Ramallah during the Ottoman Rule, ([www.palestineremembered.com](http://www.palestineremembered.com))



Figure2-9 Traditional Houses in the Ramallah during the Ottoman Rule, ([www.palestineremembered.com](http://www.palestineremembered.com))

region of Ramallah figures (2-8) and (2-9). These houses were built according to the 'Ahwash' system using stone - that was prevalent in the mountainous region of Ramallah - as the main building material. Peasant houses usually consist of two or more levels; the first level is a shelter for the animals and a storage, while the second is the human dwelling space. In other Palestinian cities, such as Nablus and Hebron, the city structure was influenced by the Islamic structure and so was the residential architecture which was of a regional (Islamic) style.

## 2 - 2 - 2 THE BRITISH MANDATE PERIOD

The British Mandate came to Palestine in 1917, after the Ottoman Empire came to an end. It brought with it distinctive architectural styles in Ramallah City known as the Colonial Style. This style was distinguished by the separate villa system, which was typified with the luxurious ornamentation and proportions, and buildings were surrounded by well organized gardens figures (2-10) and (2-11). During the British Mandate, the municipality of Ramallah played a major role in improving the City's landscape through adapting strategic policies which increased the green built (Vegetation around the houses and public buildings) over the cityscape.

On the planning level, the British Mandate provided along with



Figure2-10 Villa Houses in the Ramallah during the British Mandate, Ramallah, 2008 (researcher)



Figure2-11 Villa Houses in the Ramallah during the British Mandate, Ramallah, 2008 (researcher)

the municipality of Ramallah structural plans for the City. The first structural plan of the City was completed in 1940, but was implemented several years later. The British Mandate cooperated with Ramallah municipality in preparing a proposal for City regulations and suggestions, but this proposal was not set into place due to the political circumstances. The current center of Ramallah City had emerged during the British Mandate in 1935, on the location of a regional road that links Jerusalem with Nablus. The Municipality of Ramallah placed an electrical pole in joint area between Ramallah City and Al-Bireh City, and therefore was called “Al-Manara”, which means the light house [Figure 1-4]. The City started to expand toward Al-Manara Circle due to the returned money from the immigrants to United States, the location of some important public organizations like the Friends School, the construction of the British administrative offices “Al-Mokataa” [Figure 1-6] on a site near to Al-Manara, and the importance of the regional road.

## **2 - 2 - 3 JORDANIAN ADMINISTRATION**

After the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, Palestine was partitioned into a Jewish State and an Arab state which was divided into Gaza strip and the West Bank, Gaza was given to the supervision of the Egyptian governance and the West Bank to the Jordanian.

Urban development and City structure during the Jordanian period were characterized in two main aspects. Considerable changes in the population structure and social components took place, which led to rapid expansion and the evolution of new social, residential and commercial spots inside the City [Table 2-1]. And adapting the British outline plan, limited efforts had been spent in preparing new development plans. Considerable transformation on the demographical aspect in Ramallah City took place after the 1948, war due to the refugee waves that invaded the City. According to Shaheen (2006), population in Ramallah City was about 5,080 in 1945, and rose up in 1952 to 17,145 [33% increase per year].

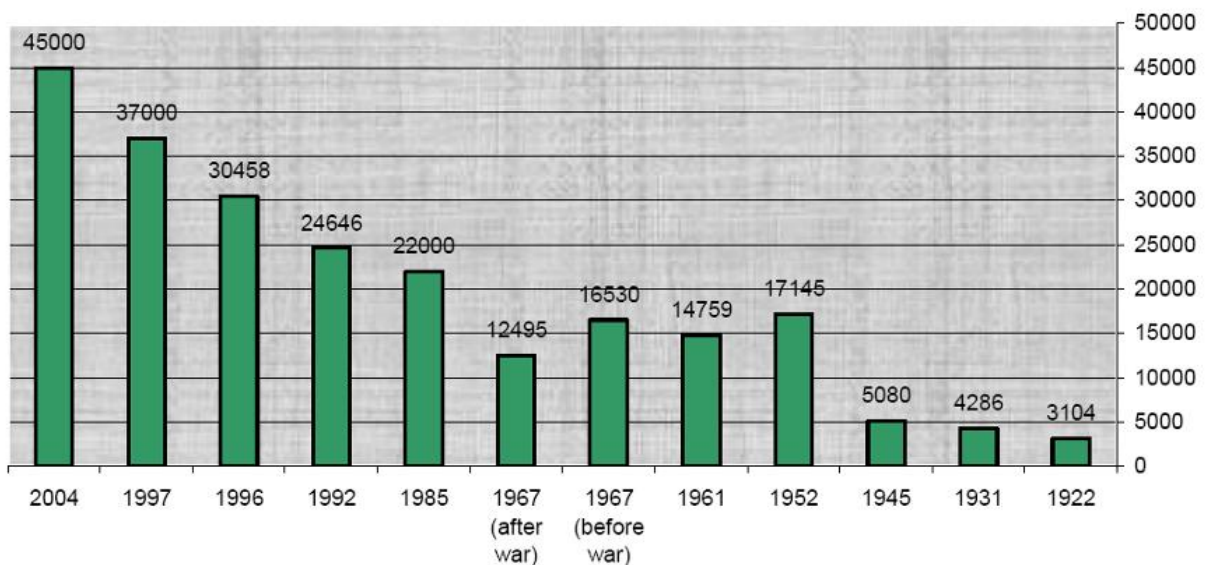


Table2-1: Graph of the population growth of Ramallah city between 1922-2004. (Rasem Khamaisi 2006)

Hence, the new status of Ramallah City entailed the need for housing and social services. It required urban expansion typified with two forms:

- The first is the emergence of refugee camps- which are the residences for the refugees after 1948 war. Ramallah City hosts three main refugee camps, Al Amari, Qadora and Aljalazon. The three camps are distributed among the surrounding neighborhoods of the City toward the Center; despite their incompatible<sup>2</sup> urban structures and living conditions (Figure 2-12), they now consist part of Ramallah City Center's urban structure.



Figure2-12 Refugee Camps in the Ramallah 2008 [researcher]

- The second is the spread of the urban neighborhoods in an arbitrary circular pattern around the Old City of Ramallah. This later took a linear urban pattern, pushing development in the direction toward the new Center of Ramallah City “Al-Manara”. Commercial facilities developed along the way, and it finally led to the shifting of the City Center from the Old Core into Al-Manara Circle.



Figure2-13 Almanara Circle during Jordanian Rule 2008  
[[www.palestineremember.com](http://www.palestineremember.com)]

After the development of “Al-Manara” as the new city Center, work was completed in 1951 on a monument to replace the old “Al-Manara” pole (figure 2-13), which became unnecessary

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<sup>2</sup> The structures of these refugee camps were based on the temporary construction of shelters for refugees; the living conditions in these camps are below the minimum requirements for normal living

with central street lighting. This shift brought about significant changes on the city structure and new architectural styles which were evident in the residential building.

#### **2 - 2 - 4 ISRAELI OCCUPATION PERIOD**

Ramallah was recaptured by the Israelis after the 1967 war. And the whole area of the West Bank was under the governance of the Israelis. Tracing the urban development during the late sixties and seventies, the expansion of Ramallah City started to fill the areas around the Old Core and Al-Manara Circle. The City development witnessed urban expansion toward the West side of the City after the construction of the industrial area in 1973; it became attached with nearby villages, Ein Areek and El-Tirah. Urban expansion broadened to connect the City with Betunia City from the South- West and with El-Bireh City from the East, formulating a packed urban fabric.

Urban development during the eighties and the early nineties was typified with changes that led to major transformations of the City. The urban pattern transformed into a dense urban fabric as the new buildings filled the empty sites all over the city. In addition to the destruction of the old buildings which were located around the City Center, and replacing them with multi-story and multi-functional buildings.

During this period, Israeli occupation influenced the City structure, urban development orientation and spatial pattern of the City through a number of actions:

1. The limitations and restrictions in issuing building permits, which abstracted the City development.
2. Military orders toward confiscating lands for constructing settlements. This led to the disjunction of the city with its neighboring villages.
3. The negative impact on the economical life which caused the immigration of the inhabitants of Ramallah to the United States, Canada and other western countries.

The impact of the Israeli occupation on the City Center area was significant. In 1982, during the administration of Moshe Biton, a decree was issued to demolish Al-Manara Circle and replace it with traffic lights that would control the area traffic flow. The traffic lights were never installed due to security reasons (Figure 2-14).



Figure2-14 Almanara Circle during Israeli Occupation, late 1980s (Ramallah Municipality)

## 2 - 2 - 5 PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY PERIOD

In 1994, the Oslo Accords were signed between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) (who's leader at that time was Yasser Arafat) and the Israelis as a step forward toward establishing peace in the area. The Palestinian



Figure2-15 Modern architectural style, Israeli Occupation, 2008 (researcher)



Authority became the governing figure of some Palestinian cities, of which Ramallah was one.

Ramallah was handed over to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1996. The PA headquarters were based in Ramallah and as a result Ramallah was chosen as the temporary center for the PA. This quick development of Ramallah city as the center for the Palestinian life core encountered the need for the establishment of settings for international organizations as well as governmental and commercial institutions. Consequently, this led for the arrival of political returnees (from Tunisia, Jordan, Europe, Etc.) and the influx of the City by many financial resources, which influenced both the economical and social structures within the City. As a result, a huge construction movement, beside development and business projects, had taken place in the City.

The housing business has boomed enormously, as there was considerable need for new affordable residences for the people who migrated into the city on a regular basis. New residential areas have been developed to accommodate the increasing numbers of the population (Figure 2-16). Changes took place on the following aspects of the city;

- Positive and negative form transformations- manifested in the new attitude toward building horizontal unplanned expansion impact the negative space compassion, which refers to the direct relation



Figure2-16 New Residential Areas during the Palestinian Authority period, 2008 (researcher)



Figure2-17 Horizontal unplanned expansion during the Palestinian Authority period, 2008 (researcher)



between the positive forms, buildings, and it is surrounded space, and that gives a sort of comprehensive vision for all the spatial relations (Figure 2-17).

- Massing vertical structure transformations- Another impact of the urban new expansion on the massing and the spatial structure is the vertical building addition (Figure 2-18).
- New architectural styles are obvious in the new emerged neighborhoods like Um Elsharait; the City Center through modern commercial and offices buildings (Figure 2-19).

## 2-3 SUMMARY

The development of Ramallah as the temporary center for the Palestinian Authority has had influences on the country in general and Ramallah city in specific. These stages resulted in the drastic transformation of Ramallah city's urban and social structures. The changes have been greatly manifested in the center and the suburbs of the city which led to an urbanized state of the city. Yet the city is still encountering the consequences of these shifts, and the speculations are that the re-occurrence of similar development and growth as soon as the political situation improves and an active solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are set forth.



Figure2-18 The emergence of vertical structures during the Palestinian Authority period, 2008 (researcher)9



Figure2-19 The emergence of new architecture style during the Palestinian Authority period, 2008 (researcher)

The city's 'temporal' socio-political status, in addition to the practiced violence against the city during the second Intifada, has elevated the status of Ramallah city not only as a political, social and economical center for the Palestinian life, but as the symbolic core of the Palestinian state. This new status of the city has become part of the Palestinian national memory; it has symbolized the vivid home for all the Palestinians in West Bank, Gaza, and exile.

Significantly Ramallah's symbolic status has reinforced the Palestinian solidarity. It has played a vital role in unifying the two main separate Palestinian State parts, West Bank and Gaza, into one state. A major shift took place in 2006 after the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian Legislative elections, although Hamas has been dominant over Gaza even prior to the elections. The political consequence of this condition, which is characterized by the conflict between the Palestinian Authority and the international community on one hand and the civil clashes in Gaza between Hamas and Fateh on the other hand. This ended up with Hamas overpowering Gaza and hence the separation of Gaza from the other Palestinian parts. This dramatically changed the role of Ramallah City as the symbolic center in the memory of Gazans; some people migrated to Ramallah as a result of these conflicts and for some Ramallah was nothing but a symbol of Fateh and its corruption.



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## CHAPTER FOUR

# ARCHITECTURE AND THE CITY

**“The city is a fact in nature, like a cave, a run of mackerel or ant-heap. But it is also conscious work of art, and it holds within its communal framework many simpler and more personal forms of art. Mind takes form in the city; and in turn, urban forms condition mind, for space, no less than time, is artfully reorganized in cities: in boundary lines and silhouettes, in the fixing of horizontal planes and vertical peaks, in utilizing or denying the natural site... The city is both a physical utility for collective living and a symbol of those collective purposes and unanimities that arise under such favoring circumstances. With language itself, it remains man’s greatest work of art.”**

**(Lewis Mumford, 1938, p.5)**

### **3–1 THEORIES OF THE CITY**

Cities are considered among the most enduring and extraordinary manmade artifacts. They are constructed of a composite structure of architecture, community and time. Many have tried to answer ‘what is a city?’ in their writings, even in ancient times. Ancient Egyptians represented the city in an ideogram of a cross enclosed in a circle, where the cross characterized the convergence of roads bringing in and redistributing men, merchandise and ideas (Lopez, 1963, p.27). Lopez further explains this definition of the Egyptians as he finds it most fitting for the essence of the city as shaped by identity; “Communication plus togetherness, or, a special aptitude for change combined with a peculiar feeling of identity: is not this the essence of the city?” (Lopez, 1963, p.28)

Others define the city based on the presence of the market; Henry Pirenne (1925) contends that without a market, one could not speak of a city. This was clear in the Middle Ages, as Islam thought of the city as religious, social and a market. It was thought to serve to the different types of the human activities. Accordingly, the city existed only when there is a mosque, bathhouse and a bazaar. Many scholars and theorists (such as Friedrich Ratzel (1891) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1944)) have used function to classify the city and help define it (Rossi, 1982, pp.40-50).

Many other theorists have explored the city beyond its utilitarian and functional aspect, to its constructional dimension. They look upon the city as a work of art; rather as an artifact. Mumford (1938) discusses the idea of the city as a work of art in his book 'the culture of cities', he contends that the city is a physical utility for the collective living and a symbol of the collective purposes, he thus sees it as man's greatest work of art (Mumford, 1938, p.5). Aldo Rossi (1966) confirms this conception of the city as an artifact in his study of the city as the sum of its different architectures. He believes that architecture is the main construction of the city, "the city is seen as a gigantic manmade object, a work of engineering and architecture that is large and complex and

growing over time” (1982, p.29).

Spiro Kostof (1991) also defines the city as an artifact; he contends that “cities are amalgams of buildings and people. They are inhabited settings from which daily rituals – the mundane and the extraordinary, the random and the staged – derive their validity. In the urban artifact and its mutations are condensed continuities of time and place. The city is the ultimate memorial of our struggles and glories: it is where the pride of the past is set on display” (Kostof, 1991, p.16). He studies cities according to their urban patterns and their meanings. Although Kostof (1991) understands the city as an artifact, he primarily focuses on its urban patterns and their meanings, whereas Rossi studies the city in relationship to its parts; i.e. *singular places, locus solus* (Rossi, 1982). He studies the part (urban artifact) and ties it back into the whole (the city). Thus, Rossi’s theory of the city and its singular places enables research to go beyond the boundaries of urban patterns and structures, and investigate architecture as the main construction of the city, that serves beyond its aesthetic dimension.

Pier Vittorio Aureli corroborates Rossi’s theory of architecture as the construction of the city, and takes architecture beyond its autonomous realm, “an architecture of the city that is no longer situated only in the realm of its disciplinary status, but

is directly confronted by the rise of urbanization and the requisite of habitable space that it entails" (Aureli, 2008, p.91). He believes that architecture is part of the whole (city), in the sense that we cannot speak of the city separately from its architecture; therefore it is confronted with the same challenges as those of the city, and becomes a determining factor in the development and growth of the city. He asserts that we need to address the explicit social and cultural power architecture acquires to produce representations of the world through exemplary forms of its built reality. Aureli attends to the problem of the contemporary city and the relationship architecture aspires in this world that is no longer constituted by the scheme of the 'city' but rather dominated by urbanization. Aureli differentiates between the concept of the city and that of urbanization. He takes their definition back to both the Greek model of the *polis* and the Roman models of *urbs* and *civitas* (Aureli, 2008, p.

This chapter generates a theoretical dialectic focusing on main aspects of the city; the urban event/artifact, Identity, collective and architecture. The main argument of this research is based on Rossi's approach of tackling the city and its architecture; it allows the research to address the 'identity' of the city in its urbanized state,

### 3-2 ROSSI'S THEORY OF THE CITY

Aldo Rossi's "Architecture of the city", (1966)<sup>3</sup>, is a critical polemic of the modern movement on the city. Rossi understands and explains the city as merely architecture; he believes that architecture is the main construction of the city. According to Rossi, Architecture came into being with the first traces of the city; it is deeply rooted in the creation of civilization and is a permanent, universal and necessary artifact (Rossi, 1982, pp. 21-28). In this book, He considers the city as a unified element; it is a gigantic manmade object, a construction of its different parts. Yet he recognizes the city's singular places; i.e. *locus solus*. He sees, based on the historical intentions of his thesis that the city and its parts are in a continuous process of change and modification due to natural and manmade reasons. Rossi (1966) identifies elements of constancy and permanence amidst this process of urban dynamics; these elements are the monuments which represent the fixed points and signs of the collective will. He contends that architecture as a creation is inseparable from civilized life and the society in which it is manifested (Rossi, 1982, pp. 21-24).

Rossi (1966) attributes particular emphasis on the historical

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<sup>3</sup> The first edition of Rossi's book Architecture of the City was in Italian, 1966, 'L'Architettura della Citta', the first English edition came out in 1982.



method - the history of the city as a basis for the analysis - however he argues that the city cannot only be studied using the historical method; one must elaborate a city's enduring elements or permanences in order to avoid the history of a city as merely a function of them. He believes that certain elements and characteristics of the city persist and are revealed through the monuments and the physical signs of the past, such as its basic layout and plans (Rossi, 1982, pp.50-55). From his standpoint, cities tend to remain developed on their axes, within which they maintain their position of the original layout and grow according to the direction of the older artifact. These artifacts have their own character where "Sometimes these artifacts persist virtually unchanged, endowed with a continuous vitality; other times they exhaust themselves, and then only the permanence of their form, their physical sign, their locus remains. The most meaningful permanences are those provided by the street and the plan", (Rossi, 1982, p.59). According to his city evolution proposition, the study of the city is based on investigating the existing city that has developed as a collection of the many times the city has passed through "The form of the city is always the form of a particular time of the city; but there are many times in the formation of the city" (Rossi, 1982, p.61).

In his theoretical works, Rossi was inspired by several French

geographers and urbanists, such as Tricart, Poete, Chabot, in his search for understanding the idea of the city. Their influence helped Rossi develop his own theory and understanding of the city, as he contends “we believe [...] that the whole is more important than the single parts, and that only the urban artifact in its totality, from street system and urban topography down to the things that can be perceived in strolling up and down in a street, constitutes this totality” (Rossi, 1982, p.35). Rossi considers the relationship between the typology of buildings and the city as the basic hypothesis of his work; hence regarding these buildings as monuments and parts of the whole that is the city, “This was clear to the architectural theorists of the enlightenment,” he asserts, “Durand wrote in his lessons at the Ecole Polytechnique, ‘Just as the walls, the columns, & c. are the elements which compose buildings, so buildings are the elements which compose cities’” (Rossi, 1982, p.35).

Then Rossi takes on the structure of the city, and here he focuses on architecture as the main construction of the city; i.e. urban artifacts. The theory of urban artifacts and their permanence will be explored thoroughly in the following sections of this chapter. Rossi further addresses the individuality of these urban artifacts, i.e. locus solus, and their collectivity, and finally regenerates the problem of politics in

the city as a choice and its urban dynamics.

Aureli sees that Rossi's thesis of the city and its architecture leads to recognizing the importance of architecture as a self-determining, autonomous discipline. Rossi's hypothesis of autonomous architecture entails more than the rejection of the naïveté of functionalism, rather, it is a search for rational language: a theory of form liberated from the sequence of formal styles in the service of the dominant bourgeois institution. He aims at establishing a new autonomous field of research in which architectural form is conceived as the primary means of constituting the politics of the modern city [Aureli, 2008, pp.56, 57]. His involvement with the communist party in the late fifties, led him to see architecture no longer as a product of masters but as an integral part of the evolution of urban phenomena [Aureli, 2008, p.56]. The idea of the city as an archeological artifact and as autonomous structure as forwarded by Rossi, characterizes the new city as an object and more importantly redefines its subject – the architect himself [Eisenman, 1982, pp. 5-10].

Rossi's reintroduction of the architectural dimension of the city did not represent the recovery of a historical form, as is commonly maintained, but rather a search for the concreteness of objects as opposed to the vagueness of planning. Rossi made clear that the analysis and project of the

city had to go beyond totalizing and diagrammatic attitude of planning, (Aureli, 2007, p53)

For profound understanding of Rossi's theory, it is important to discuss his theses on Urban Artifacts, Locus and the Collective Memory. The debate between these aspects is going to formulate the fundamental discussion of the theoretical framework of the research and the analysis process.

### **3-2-1 URBAN ARTIFACTS**

The theory of urban artifacts emanates from the city's identification as an artifact itself and from its division into individual buildings and dwelling areas (Rossi, 1982, p.21). Rossi contends that there is something in the nature of urban artifacts that renders them very similar to a work of art. The aspect of art in the urban artifacts is linked to their quality, their uniqueness and thus their analysis and definition (Rossi, 1982, p.32). He further elaborates that "urban artifacts are complex in themselves, and while it may be possible to analyze them it is difficult to define them" (Rossi, 1982, p.32).

Rossi dwells on history and description as methods of unfolding urban artifacts, as well as the relationships between local factors and the construction of urban artifacts, and on

the identification of the principal forces at play in the city – the forces which are at play in a permanent and universal way in all urban artifacts. Therefore urban artifacts are characterized by their own history and form.

The main qualities and characteristics of urban artifacts reside in their collectivity and permanence. “If urban artifacts were constantly able to reform and renew themselves simply by establishing new functions, the values of the urban structure, as revealed through its architecture, would be continuous and easily available. The permanence of buildings and forms would have no significance, and the very idea of the transmission of a culture, of which the city is an element, would be questionable. None of this corresponds to reality” (Rossi, 1982, p.49), this basically posits the historical character of artifacts.

Some buildings possess a unique character over time, despite the fact that they transform and change; they become an artifact and characterize certain typology. “One is struck by the multiplicity of functions that a building of this type can contain over time and how these are entirely independent of the form. At the same time, it is precisely the form that impresses us; we live it and experience it, and in turn it structures the city” (Rossi, 1982, p.29).

Type according to Rossi is a “logical principle that is prior to form and that constitutes it” (Rossi, 1982, p.40). He begins his account of type reflecting on the life of buildings over time, hence buildings have a time of origin and a subsequent time of modification. This can sustain the original form or can radically alter it; i.e. ruination or demolition of the artifact itself (Leatherbarrow, 1993, p.71).. It could be thought to be the result of a process of comparative analysis and reduction that progressively eliminates particular or deviant characteristics in order to isolate shared essential form (Leatherbarrow, 1993, pp.70-74). Type developed according to both needs and aspirations to beauty. Type is found in all architectural artifacts; it is a cultural element and thus becomes the analytical moment of architecture, and it becomes readily identifiable at the level of urban artifacts. Eventually, Rossi sees type as the very idea of architecture, that which is closest to its essence (Rossi, 1982, pp.40-41). A type is a shared essence that grounds particular forms. A Roman amphitheatre and a market share an ideal. They are two different expressions of the same ideal.

A type is a temporal backdrop that allows existing buildings to perform their changing roles. Types are thus always already given and, because of this are often described as lasting, permanent, or constant and thought to be necessary in all

architecture; types therefore establish identities in architecture (Leatherbarrow, 1993, pp.70-74). Typology thus becomes the instrument, the apparatus of time's measurement. Accordingly, urban artifacts and monuments can modify themselves because they are typologically apt.

Accordingly, what makes one building meaningful depends on the degree of its participation in the articulation of the ideal. When a building participates successfully in the articulation of the ideal, it outlives its owner's/architect's span of life. It can transform itself to accommodate different functions. In this process, it grows into a monument surviving thousands of years to come. Hence, type is a common ground that allows different forms of monuments and urban artifacts to emerge, Rossi's typology opens a path to locate type away from the visible formal realm in favor of the dialectic between the unrepresentable ideal and the represented real (Baek, 2008, p.42).

Within this highlight, Rossi focuses on the concept of locus as an essential parameter of constituting the city's whole pattern in an interrelation manner and therefore its identity.

### **3-2-2 THE LOCUS**

Rossi defines the locus as the relationship between a certain

specific location and the buildings that are in it, "it is at once singular and universal" (Rossi, 1982, p.103). The locus is conceived of a singular place and event, which works as the relationship of architecture to the constitution of the city and the relationship between the context and the monument. Each part of the city seems to be a singular place, a locus solus, although it is impossible to make decisions about such interventions in any rational manner solely on the basis of local situations, one must realize that their singularity is still what characterizes them (Rossi, 1982, p.21). Every artifact is confined within a specific event and place that has its locus solus, but at the same level it is connected with the whole of the city.

He argues the possibility of identifying singular points by a particular event that occurred there at some time or an infinite variety of other causes, both rational and irrational (Rossi, 1982, p.103). He gives the example of Italian piazzas depicted by Renaissance painters where "the place of architecture, the human construction takes on a general value of place and of memory because it is so strongly fixed in a single moment" (Rossi 1982, p.104).

Rossi considers *locus* the characteristic principle of urban artifacts. Therefore the complexity of the urban artifact can be understood in the highlight of locus, architecture,



permanences and history concepts altogether (Rossi, 1982, p.130). The locus is thus strongly connected to the memory – the collective memory of the society and hence its identity.

### **3-2-3 COLLECTIVE MEMORY**

The city acquires memory and consciousness over time; whether it is the memory of its inhabitants and users or the ruins and remnants conferred on its structure. There is always this reciprocity between the city and its inhabitants; the city speaks to its inhabitants and the inhabitants in respect speak to the city by simply dwelling in it, traversing it and looking at it (Barthes, 1967, p. 415).

Rossi believes that the city is the collective memory of its people; it is the locus of collective memory (Rossi, 1982, p.130). Italo Calvino (1978) believes that the city soaks up the waves of memories that flow in like a sponge and thus it expands. He argues that the city is redundant; it repeats itself so that something will stick in the mind. At the same time, he believes that memory is redundant; it repeats signs so that a city can begin to exist (Calvino, 1978, p.19). Hence, the city is a theatre of all human activities; it takes on its account the different imprints left by its people.

Rossi believes in the dominant role of politics played in the

evolution of cities. Political decisions settle on the image of the city if not the city itself; hence the city becomes the reflection of the collective will. Collective memory participates in the actual transformation of space in the works of the collective, Rossi argues that “a transformation that is always conditioned by whatever material realities oppose it... memory becomes the guiding thread of the entire complex urban structure and thus respect the architecture of urban artifacts is distinguished from art”, (Rossi, 1982, pp.130-131).

### **3–3 THE CITY AND IDENTITY DIALOGUE**

Although Rossi does not discuss the identity clearly in his text; it can be inferred throughout his theory. He discusses the different characteristics and qualities of the city such as permanence, urban artifacts, and the aspect of time, typology, and collective memory and most importantly in the discussion of identity locus solus (the singular elements within the city). These major characteristics and components give the city its distinctive identity.

Some places stand out and speak for themselves and thus correspond to the city's identity(s). It is important to study the influence of the transformations that the cities undergo in addition to how the new typologies, brought about by different regimes and colonial systems, are structurally linked to the

type of the societies created in these cities as this all adds up to the Identity of the city. This will be explicitly revealed in the analysis of Ramallah city through identifying two major urban artifacts in the following chapter.

The city can be understood through its architecture. Architecture represents an aspect of the city's complex reality. Although architecture changes and transforms as the city renovates itself adapting the different challenges and the different factors that the city encounters, it still provides concrete evidence of the city's survival and endurance. In essence, architecture is concerned with both aesthetic intentions and creating a better living surrounding. Certain values and original themes of the city persist, however the city renders the themes of its own development. There is a constant process of modification and rendering, not only on the city's structure but more importantly its urban artifacts.

### **3-3-1 WHAT CONSTITUTES THE CITY'S IDENTITY?**

So far, in this research, identity has been defined as the accumulation of the city's history and present, its urban transformations, its architecture, its changing societies, it is the collective memory of its inhabitants and users; i.e. it is the sum of the layers of the city. The layers of the city comprise of its history, development, culture, economy (a composite

structure of collectiveness, time [represented by history and the present] and architecture.]. These layers are transparent and allow what lies beneath to come forth and merge with each other. When architecture is considered as the main construction of the city, it is then possible to study these layers as palimpsests that cover and grow upon the city itself.

The city is constructed of a composite structure of architecture, community and time/history. Architecture represents an aspect of the city's complex reality. Although architecture changes and transforms as the city renovates itself adapting the different challenges and the different factors that the city encounters, it still provides concrete evidence of the city's survival and endurance. In essence, architecture is concerned with both aesthetic intentions and creating a better living surrounding,

Rossi reintroduces the element of history and deploys it as a measure of time, and in turn is measured by time. Eisenman sees this element of history analogous to a 'skeleton', where this skeleton bears the imprint of the actions that have taken place and will take place in the city. "For Rossi, architecture's history lies in its material; and it is this material which becomes the object of analysis – the city" (Eisenman, 1982, p.5). However, the city does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets...

every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls (Calvino, 1978, p.11), therefore identity is embedded in the city's layers. Architecture unveils these layers and brings them to a visible level. Hence it links the city to its history where it is at once a structure and a ruin, a record of events and a record of time.

Samir Khalaf (2006) discusses the notion of urban identity in his book "Heart of Beirut". He focuses his quest on the Bourj area of Beirut – which is the ancient center of the city. He sees that the main components of urban identity are the past and collective memory of the people that is reflected on the urban environment. He argues that one can better understand the emergent socio-cultural identities even the economic and political transformations by seeing their manifestations in this ongoing dialectic between place and space; thus these ordinary day-to-day places are suffused with meaning and symbolism and are vital to the individual and group identity (Khalaf, 2006, p.30).

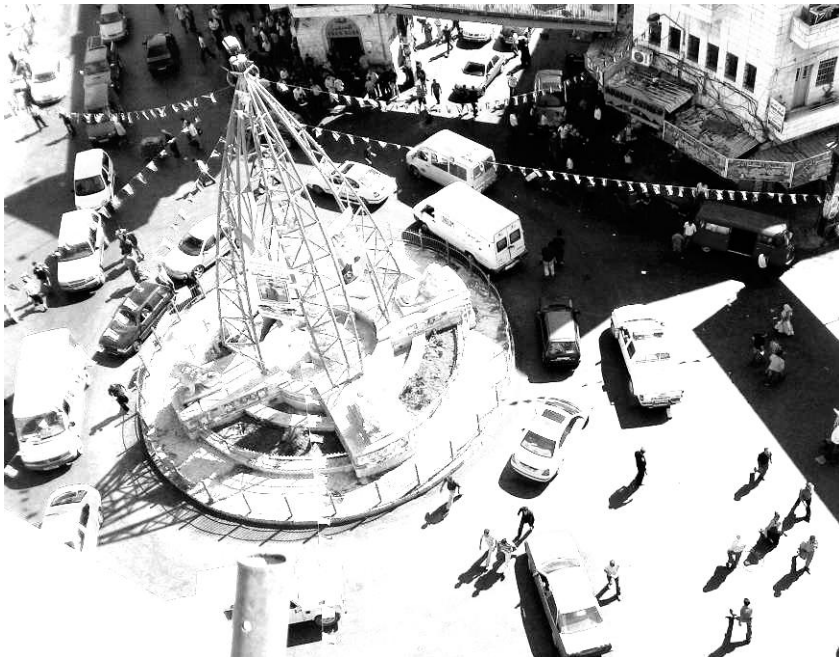
Parallel to Rossi, Khalaf sees history as more than just a record of how man becomes what he is; it is the largest element of his self-conception, he asserts that "our past history, imagined or otherwise, is an important source in our conception of selfhood" (Khalaf, 2006, p.32). Here, past plays an important role in constructing collective memory and

hence the identity; and since humans leave their imprints on their physical surroundings, past and identity are both reflected on the built artifacts of the city.

History is an important aspect of the city's endurance and architecture, and partakes in the constitution of the city's identity. Cities grow and reflect upon themselves, and so does their identities. Consequently, many elements (components that are original to the themes of the city) come together and formulate the city's identity. It is a composite skeleton of collectiveness, time (represented by history and the present) and architecture. These three elements represent the city's changing structure, society, and urban transformations.

Identity is a dynamic aspect of the city, it constantly changes as it adapts to the changing nature of the city itself. Among these changing qualities, some elements of the city persist, and provide the city with a layer of constancy that creates a base for its identity. The multiple layers - discussed earlier - are thus grounded with this layer of constancy and persistence, and they all create the city's identity as they merge together. Architecture can be a constant yet changing aspect of the city. It persists in the form of urban artifact that takes the city's past on its behalf. However, this artifact also remodels itself and confers the city's present. This complexity of the urban event depicts the changing qualities and identities

of the city itself.



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## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE EXPERIENCE OF RAMALLAH



**We are subjected to different experiences and different impressions... all these experiences, their sum constitute the city... it is in this sense that we must judge the quality of a space.**

**Aldo Rossi, 1982**

Ramallah city has endured many different regimes as explained in Chapter Two, where a general description of the city under each regime was given. The experience of the city is what permits the discovery of the elements of permanence and constancy, and identification of them as urban artifacts (Jo, 2003, p.231). Hence, this chapter provides further analyses and investigations on the identity of the city of Ramallah – under the different regimes - in reference to Rossi's theory and how it's constructed through its persistent elements; i.e. monuments and urban artifacts.

This chapter discusses the identity of Ramallah and its construction, along with the main influences on the city of Ramallah. The first part deals with the historical analysis of the city, as it formulates a comprehensive view of the city in general and looks into the Western influence on the city, through the lenses of Orientalism, Colonialism and Postcolonialism. For a deeper understanding of the persistent

component as the construct of the city and its identity through the city's urban artifacts; two selected urban artifacts are going to be analyzed as they hypothetically represent the changing identities of the city

#### **4-1-1 RAMALLAH: ORIENTALISM, COLONIALISM & POSTCOLONIALISM**

Although significant urban and architectural changes took place during the British mandate period, but the infiltration of the colonial influence into the traditional and cultural aspects of the city was subtle. This demonstrates the hegemony of colonialism; the control is beyond the brutality of a mandate/occupation since it involves changes on the cultural, social and economic facets of the community, and therefore the city as a whole. Consequently, colonialism has an ongoing influence on identity and the city.

Colonialism rolled into occurring dramatic changes within the areas it over controlled, and it has imposed an ongoing impact on its identity and structures up to this day. The influence of Colonialism and its consequences on the survival of the city and its identity is of great significance. Thus it is important to understand the changes and the traces that colonialism has left upon the city of Ramallah through its architecture.

In order to recognize the role of Colonialism in oriental cities, Orientalism well defines this relationship between the colonized

and the colonizer. Orientalism created a turning point in the relationship between the West and their creation of what is known to be the 'Orient'; and most importantly the polarity of the world. This relationship between the man-made Orient and Occident was a relationship of power and domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony. Orientalism, as a discourse, unveils the systematic discipline that the European culture used to manage and produce the Orient on different levels; politically, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically, military during the post enlightenment period. Thus Orientalism is a system of thought; a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said, 1978, p. 3).

The most important issues that have been tackled in Said's criticism of Orientalism are: "the representation of other cultures, societies, histories; the relationship between power and knowledge; the role of the intellectual; the methodological questions that have to do with the relationships between different kinds of texts, between text and context, between text and history". (Said, 1985, p. 89).

In post-colonial literature, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), the definition of post-colonial(ism) clearly describes the aftermath of colonialism yet one can link it back to Orientalism: "We use the term 'post-colonial', however to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of

colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by the imperial aggression" (Vijay and Hodge, 1992, p2).

Since colonialism aims at redefining the orient's cultural social and political life and architecture being mainly a manifestation of these aspects. Colonialism brought about great changes on the structure of the colonized city; socially politically, ideologically... which was unveiled through the relationship between the Occident and Orient even prior to Colonialism. The dominance of the occident over the orient represented by Colonialism and other forms of westernization such as globalization constitutes modern cultures and modes of perception and to a great extent their identity.

New social trends started evolving, as well as new 'Western' visions in colonized cities. This was accompanied by the rise of new social entities; social classes became more evident. The notion of Westernization and associating it with modernization has been very appealing to the colonized thus creating more westernized communities rather than 'oriental'. The impacts of colonialism still survive up to this day, and colonialism reappears in different disguises and we tend to overlook and rather believe it is a form of the 'modern' world we live in. Thus

one can argue that some cultural and social aspects of globalization are nothing more but forms of neo-colonialism.

In the case of Ramallah city, the role of colonialism in the westernization of the city has been significant. However, the process of westernization started before the British Mandate period, as American and European missionaries infiltrated into Palestine in the mid nineteenth century during the Ottoman rule. These missionaries represented the first Western impact on Ramallah city. Their influence on the city structure was manifested in the new buildings and typologies representing the occident understanding of the orient. Orientalism is a mutual relationship between orient and occident, the American European missionary traces were characterized with a hybrid style that matches between the occident's understanding of local traditional values of the orient and the influence of western ideas.

This can be traced by looking at a number of examples that represent the westernization of the city of Ramallah (Figure 4-1 & Figure 4-2). Some of these examples have been mentioned in chapter two<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> For further clarification, see section (2-2-2).



Figures 4-1 & 4-2: Friends Girls School; Manifestation of Colonial Style, where a hybrid style emerges as a result of local architectural elements [arches, materials, openings proportions] and Western style [roof and massing]. This demonstrates the mutual relation between Colonialism and Orientalism through architecture. It is how colonialism understands the social life in Ramallah through architecture, 2008 (researcher)

Looking at residential examples from the two periods, e.g. the Vernacular house of Ramallah and that of a British Mandate villa, further explains and demonstrates the way in which Colonialism attempted to understand and then represent the architecture of Ramallah City (Figure 4-3 & Figure 4-4).



Figure 4-3: A comparison between vernacular house of Ramallah before British Mandate (Left) and another house that demonstrates the colonial style (right), Vernacular house with vaulted roof, arches, cluster massing, and local materials and the colonial house with the pitched roof and new understanding of massing through imposing one neat cut mass, with a Modern space surrounding the house, (researcher)

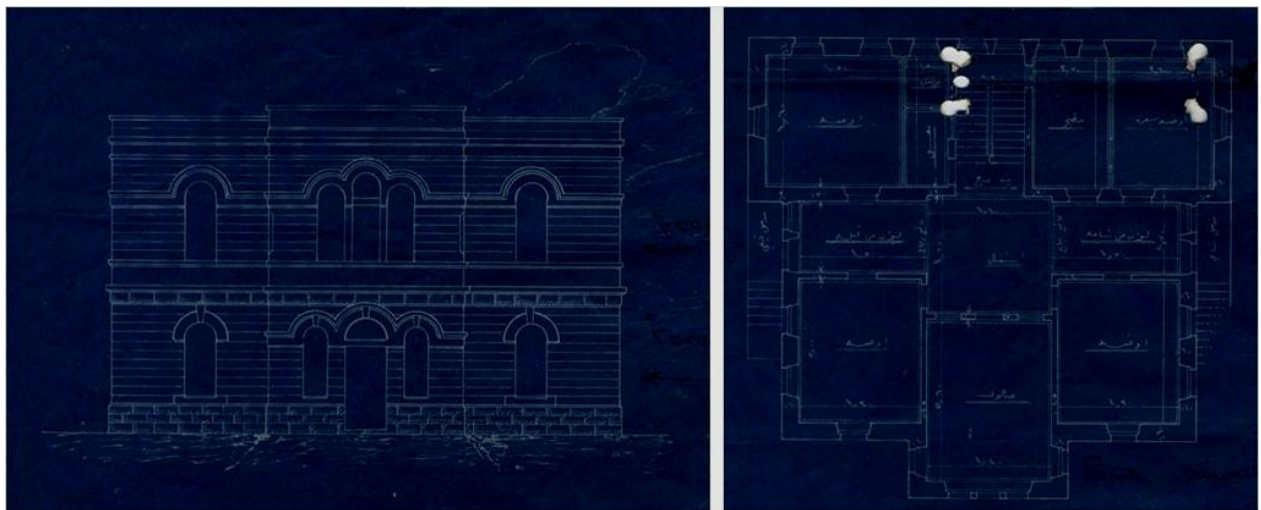


Figure 4-4: A comparison between a vernacular house plan of Ramallah before British Mandate [top] and another house that demonstrates the colonial style [bottom]. Vernacular houses normally composed of the main unit, the cell, and each cell hosts a branch of the extended family and then attached to it is another cell that hosts another branch of the family. They all are connected together composing a clustered compound of residences. The house is significant with its square space/unit, small openings, interior stairs, thick walls and vaulted roof; it is an organic unit which is assembled around an external court. On the other hand, the colonial style house composed from one unit mass that host a number of space inside it, the open court were replaced with internal gathering space, and the stairs were located on one specific part, somehow modern idea. 2008 (Riwaq & Ramallah Municipality)

On the city structural level [Macro Scale], the development of primary elements accelerated the growth of the city towards the northern boundaries; such as the Friends' Boys' School and the new roundabout. According to Rossi primary elements can



retard or accelerate the process of urbanization (Rossi, 1982, p.86). These elements accelerated the growth of Ramallah toward its northern boundaries, away from the old core (Figure 4-5).

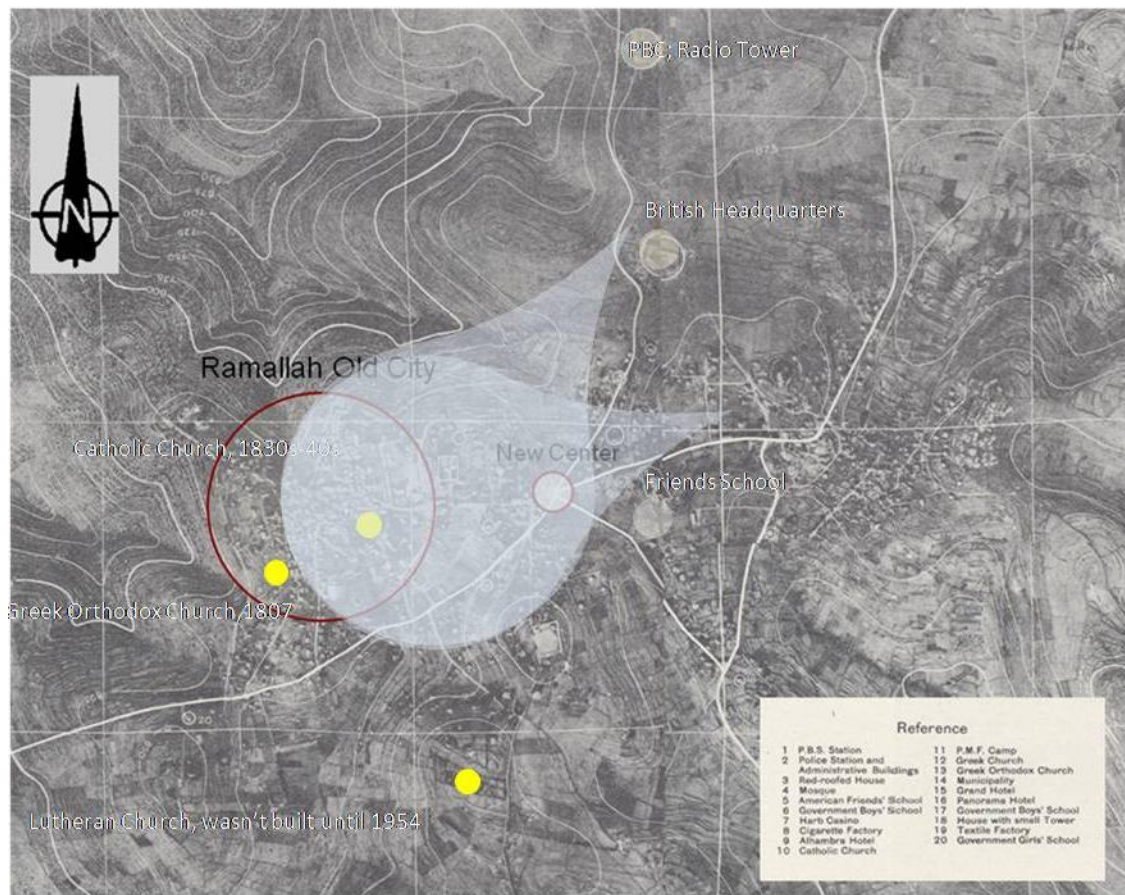


Figure 4-5: A map of Ramallah in 1945, showing the primary elements that accelerated the growth of the city and the expansion of Ramallah towards the new destinations in the northern part of the city (researcher, Base map from PSU libraries)



Figure 4-6: Figure Ground of the old centre of Ramallah city showing the original organic composition and the relationship between positive and negative forms, [researcher]



Figure 4-7: Buildings from the Jordanian Administration period. New vertical additions had emerged, with the adaptation of modern (post colonial) style, through the exposed structural elements, openings, and functional spaces with some colonial elements.[researcher]

Palestine was handed over to the Jordanian governance. During this period, the city had expanded over its old core. In spite of the organic composition of the original Ramallah center (figure 4-6), the new expansion had adapted a horizontal linear growth and had dominated with the vertical additions over the old masses. The New emerged architectural style has been classified as post colonial style, where modern architectural openings, horizontal buildings, and exposed structural elements with pitched roofs were represented in the buildings (Figure 4-7). Jordanian Administration period was followed by the Israeli occupation until 1994. As a result Palestinians weren't able to construct viable structures for themselves. Although the Palestinians clearly defined their national identity, they have been unable to develop lasting viable structural forms for this identity, or control a national territory in which it can be exercised (Khalidi, 2006, p.12-17).

The development of Ramallah as the temporary center for the Palestinian Authority has created new circumstance that have influenced the country in general and Ramallah city in specific. The lack of strategies to handle such major changes somehow led to the deterioration of architecture and urban environment. It is important to mention here that these shifts and changes were heightened with the arrival of the Palestinian Authority. The changes have been greatly manifested in the center and suburbs of the city which led to an urbanized state of the city.

## 4-2 AREAS OF STUDY: MANIFESTATIONS OF BUILT IDENTITY AND ITS CHANGES

The city is a live museum of events; therefore one has to look at its dynamic urban artifacts in order to understand the city. This research examines the following cases as, Al-Manara Square and Almokataa Headquarter (Figure 4-8) they 'hypothetically' represent the city's changing identities. They exemplify Ramallah's main urban artifacts; hence, they are studied in the highlight of the previously discussed concept of the city and its identity.



Figure 4-8: Aerial photo of Ramallah city showing the location of the two cases. Al-Manara Square [top circle] and Al-Mukata'a Headquarter [bottom circle], [Google Earth]

#### **4-2-1 AL-MANARA SQUARE:**

The city center of Ramallah, Al-Manara square, has witnessed drastic changes on its form and aesthetic value. The area holds important cultural and political identity and meaning for the users and inhabitants. The literal meaning of Al-Manara is the light house. It was founded as an electric pole between the two cities of Ramallah and Al-Bireh. Al-Manara Square used to be a regional road connecting Jerusalem and Nablus, which then became a British round about joining the two cities of Ramallah and Al-Bireh. Due to its value for the original inhabitants of Ramallah, a new modern monument was placed in the middle replacing the old commemorating the four original families of Ramallah. Arafat decreed the reconstruction of the roundabout so that it mimics the original one which was placed in the 1950s and thus replaces the Israeli intersection that occupied the area at that time [Figure 4-8].



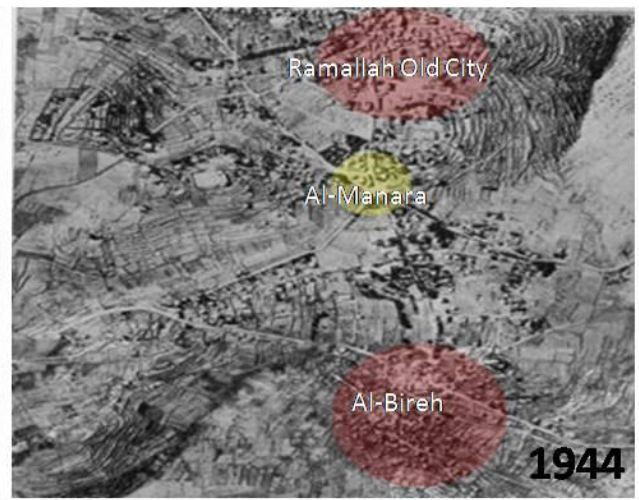
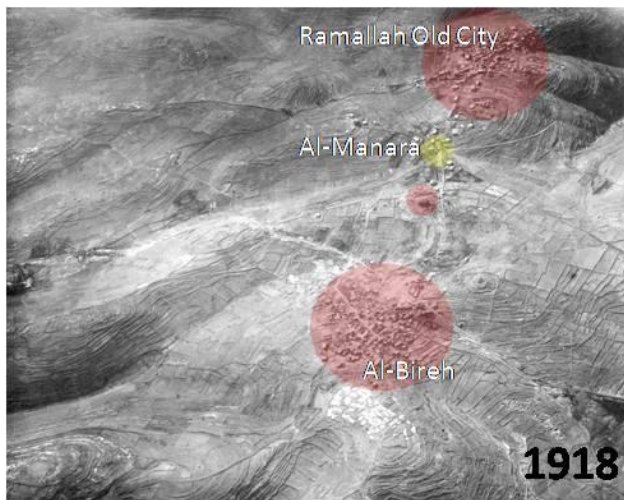
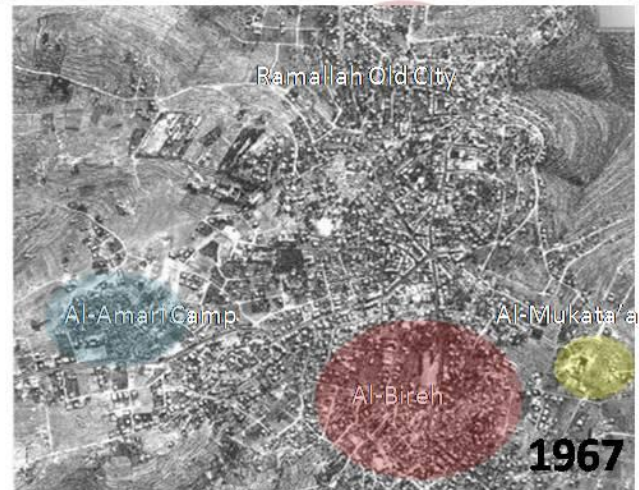


Figure 4-8; the emergence and development of Al-Manara square. Al-Manara before the British Mandate, between both Ramallah and Al-Bireh villages, a dirt intersection road. Top right Al-Manara square during the British Mandate, some buildings and districts started to emerge around the centre. Bottom right, Al-Manara centre during 1967, the year Israel has occupied the city, Al-Manara square unifying the two cities into twin cities, and where high density neighbourhoods emerged around the centre, 2008 (Ramallah Municipality).



Among the many changes brought about by the British Mandate, random places started evolving as rather central; most significantly Al-Manara Square. The evolution of what is now Ramallah's city center from a dirt road, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which extended almost one kilometer and a half to connect two villages: Ramallah and Al-Bireh. In the early twentieth century, this dirt road started gaining importance due to the founding of the Friends Boys School in 1901 (it was completed in 1914) by Quaker missions in Ramallah. The school lies on the outskirts of Al-Bireh city, and about three

hundred meters from Al-Manara Square. In the year 1902 the Ottoman governor decreed Ramallah a district comprising of thirty of its neighboring villages. Later in 1908 Ramallah was designated a city.

The British Mandate came to Palestine in 1917 after the end of the Ottoman rule in the region. Many changes took place on Ramallah's structure prior to the arrival of the British Mandate but were accentuated during the new regime. Ramallah was changed into an administrative district and thus the infrastructure was developed and wider paved roads were constructed in order to facilitate the movement of military vehicles in and out of the city (Figure 4-9).

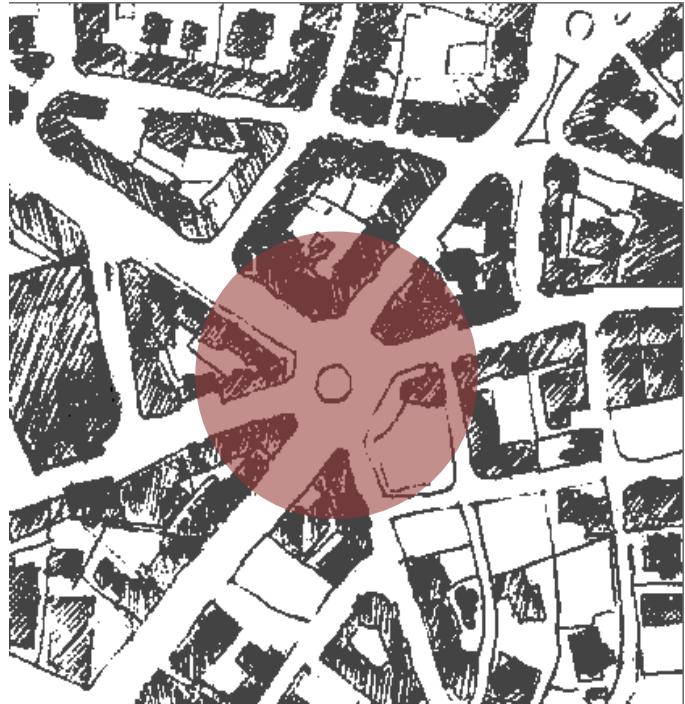
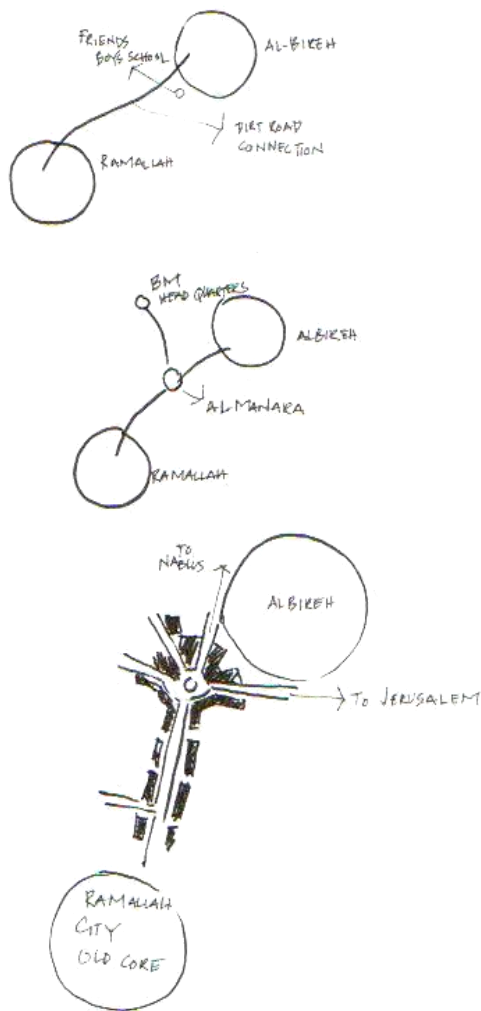


Figure 4-9; sketches showing the evolution and the persistence/permanence of Al-Manara Square, 2009, [researcher]

The new center of Ramallah evolved during the British Mandate. The City started to expand toward Al-Manara Circle due to investment of returned money from Palestinians who had immigrated to the United States<sup>5</sup>, the location of some important public organizations like the Friends School, the construction of the British administrative offices “Al-Mukata’a” on a site near to Al-Manara, and the importance of the regional

<sup>5</sup> A number of these families live in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Detroit, New York, running their own small businesses (grocery stores, gas stations, etc.)



road. Palestinians protested against the British Mandate several times, but the most significant was the uprising of 1936 (which lasted until 1939). The British then decided to construct an independent compound of all administrative offices in addition to a prison (Al-Mukata'a) 800m to the north of Al-Manara and widen the roads in order to control any future uprising.

During the Jordanian Administration over the West Bank in 1946, the municipality of Ramallah commissioned a local artist to design a monument in order to replace the old Al-Manara electricity pole. Completed in 1951, the monument comprised of four heads of lions, representing the five major families descending from the Haddadeens, placed on a stone pillar surrounded by fountains and flower beds.

In 1967 the Israeli occupation took over Ramallah and replaced its municipal council with an Israeli military governor. A new vision was superimposed on Al-Manara's monument. In 1982, the Israeli governor, ordered the destruction of Al-Manara square in order to be replaced by traffic lights. The traffic light were never installed due to security matters, but were replaced by small islands at the head of the six roads that branched out from Al-Manara square to different towns (Shibli, 2006, pp. 52-64) (Figure 4-10).



Figure 4-10; Al-Manara Square during the Israeli Occupation period, the monument was replaced with traffic Islands for security reasons, Late 1980's, (Ramallah Municipality)

The new status of Ramallah city as the center of the Palestinian Authority entitled major transformations on its urban status mainly in Al-Manara region: heavy traffic, crowdedness, and new constructions (new commercial style buildings). For the relief of the traffic congestion and the ease of the people's motion, the municipality demolished the islands that were constructed by the Israeli administration and replaced them with a traffic circle. Later in 1999, the municipality decided to commend the design of Al-Manara square to an English architect who had previously designed monuments in Amman and Beirut (Shibli, 2006, pp. 52-64). The vision was to revive the monumentality that Al-Manara had

once acquired in the 1950's until the Israeli administration demolished it.

The new design of the monument was inspired by the old design that was put in 1951. It comprised of a stone pillar that was placed at the center of the space. Around the pillar assembled four marble lions in different positions: sleeping, standing, sitting and with cubs. The four lions represented the original inhabitants that first came moved to Ramallah city. The lion figures symbolized pride and power. A high-tech steel structure stretched from the base of the monument and extended all the way beyond the pillar. At the top of this structure was a light that was said to reach as far as ten kilometers directed at the sky. The steel structure supposedly represented the connection between the past and the present. The execution of this monument was completed in the summer of 2000 (Figure 4-11). Al-Manara has become a significant identification spot of the city, regardless of how or what the monument looked like. The artifact has transcended the actual object here and has extended its parameters to the site and location of the actual object.

In her study, Adania Shibli (2006) contends that the crowning of Al-Manara as the center of Ramallah and Al-Bireh disregarding the original centers of both cities was a British desire in order to create a focal point serving the British

presence, priorities and interests. This is obvious in the way the two cities developed inseparably; no clear boundaries can be drawn between them.



Figure 4-11; Al-Manara Square, in 2008, the new monument in the centre of the city, back in place, 2008, [researcher]

The persistence of the form and the vitality of the Manara confer the characteristic of an urban artifact. It has gained a great value in the collective memory of the Palestinians over time; thus it developed into an urban artifact. Al-Manara has become the space of the people (figure 4-12). Demonstrations, festivals and other public events take place mainly in this square. It was set up in a way that it has become a central crossing/destination for most inhabitants and visitors. It

occupies a special significance in the Palestinians collective memory, the inhabitants of Ramallah in specific. The Manara has developed into a rich urban artifact, and now persists as the center of the city, not only the physical center but also the reminiscence central space of their collective memory. One can experience the form of the past in the Manara; its form has assumed different functions and has continued to function, conditioning the urban area in which it stands and continuing to constitute an important urban focus. Its vitality is highly expressed, as Rossi has mentioned about the nature of the urban artifact, in the functions at ground level as retail markets (Rossi, 1982, p.59) (Figure 4-13).

This applies to Rossi's thesis of urban artifacts..."certain original values and functions remain... [...]... we might discuss our most general memory of it as a product of the collective, and what relationship it affords us with this collective" (Rossi, 1982, p.29). Even when the space was demolished and transformed into an intersection with islands defining it in 1982, the place never lost its essence and maintained its status as the space of the people.



Figure 4-12; Al-Manara Square surrounding buildings, the persistence and remodelling of architecture; i.e. the Arab bank, between different eras, [researcher, 2009]



Figure 4-13; Al-Manara Square, retail shops and a bank at ground level demonstrates the vitality of the centre as an urban artefact, 2008, (researcher)

The development of Al-Manara as the political, social and commercial center resembles the Greek polis as explained by Aureli. Polis here is the space of the many, the space that exists between the individuals when they coexist (Aureli, 2008, 92). Al-Manara Region (the expanded city center along with Al-Mukata'a which is about 800m away from Al-Manara square) became the space which gathers people on special events and occasions, whether demonstrations or festivities (Figure 4-14);



it makes one think of this as an intended political space. Aureli continues that “political space is made into institution of politics because the existence of the space in between presupposes potential conflict among the parts that have formed it”. Recognizing Al-Manara as Ramallah’s polis, led into commercializing and capitalizing (figure 4-15) it. In the sense that Al-Manara not only represents the political state of the city but also the economic center of Ramallah; the capital.



Figure 4-14; Al-Manara Square, during the first Palestinian legislative elections, 1996, [researcher]



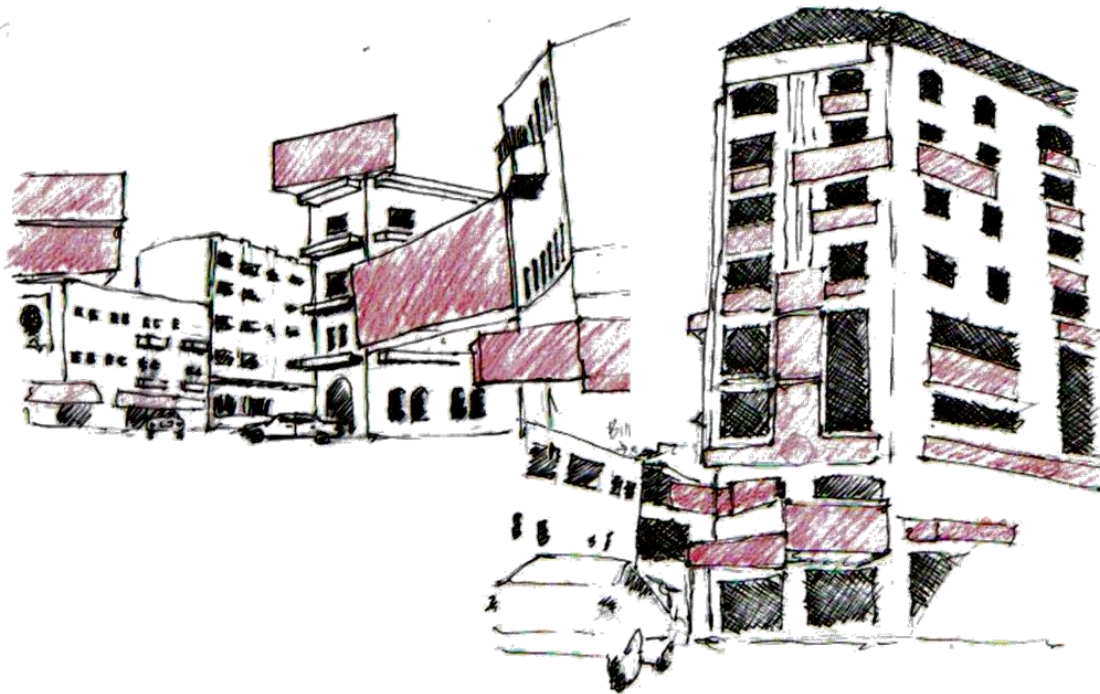


Figure 4-14; Al-Manara Square, The capitalization of the centre demonstrated through the dominance of billboards and the emergence of commercial buildings, 2009, (researcher)

#### 4-2-2 AL- MUKATA'A:

Al-Muqata' is the Palestinian leadership headquarters in Ramallah. One of the most significant buildings for the Palestinians, it has a great value in their collective memory. Its value in the people's memory varied significantly with the different ruling regimes. It has been associated with the late Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, in the past decade. Although nowadays it occupies a symbol of the Palestinian power and leadership, it used to be a prison during the British mandate

and was thus associated with occupation, oppression and remoteness (as it was constructed on the outskirts of the city). Later it was transformed as the headquarters for the Palestinian leadership. It was demolished during the Israeli incursions to Ramallah city in 2002 and acquired significant renewed symbolism from the local and international media. Now it is being reconstructed as a memorial center (Figure 4-15) & (Figure 4-16).

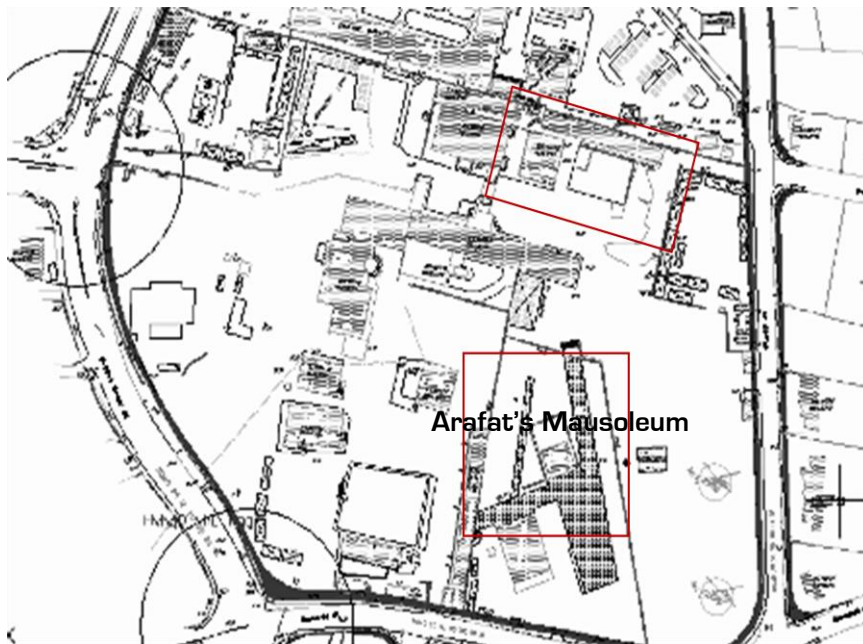
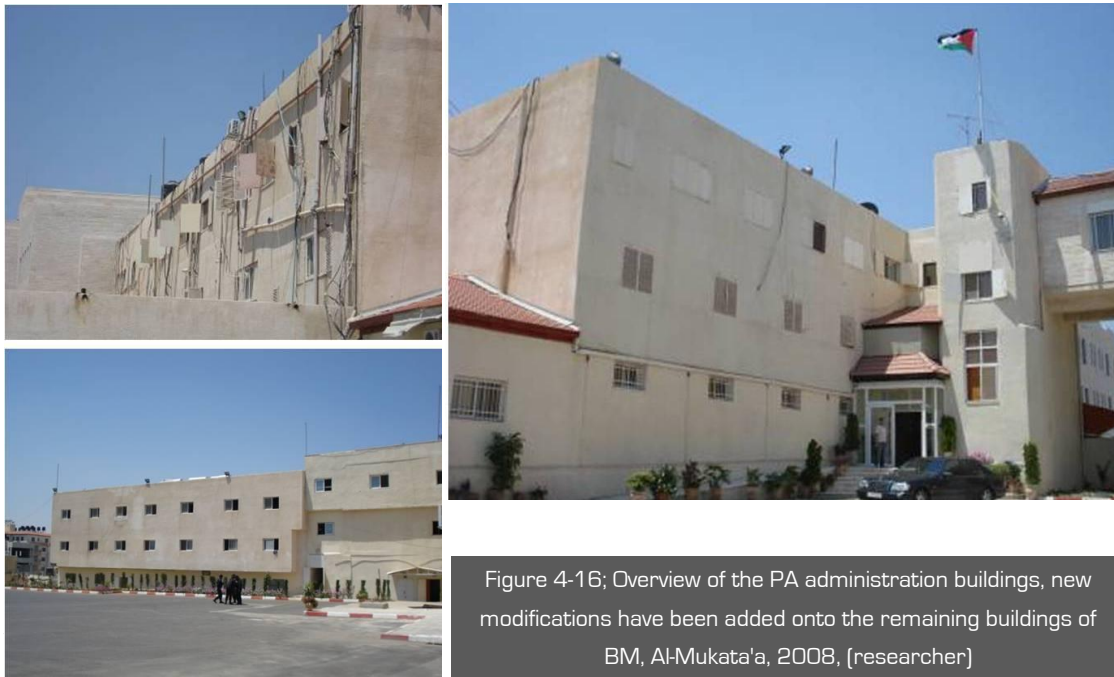


Figure 4-15; Al-Mukata'a site plan, with the old buildings and the new mausoleum  
[Arafat's shrine] [Al-Mukata'a]



During the British Mandate the Mukata'a existed in other Palestinian cities, such as Nablus, Hebron and Jericho. The architectural form of these buildings was the same standard module in these cities; rectangular boxes with small openings. They had a simple floor plan of offices around a stairwell. The building material was concrete, and the facades were kept as is without stone cladding. They all had the same negative intuition in the Palestinians' memory as they were reminders of the British colonialism and dominance (Figure 4-17).

Throughout its existence in Ramallah, it served different purposes under different regimes. The main purpose was power and control whether from within the Palestinian society or from a colonial/occupying administration. The Mukata'a was

the British Administration headquarters (basically a prison in order to detain revolutionaries), and it was located far beyond the city's original borders. During the Jordanian Administration, it was used as a military base. No physical changes were made to the buildings. The Israeli Occupation used it as a prison as well for arresting Palestinian activists. Parts of the buildings were also used for the national and internal affairs. Ordinary citizens weren't allowed access into the buildings, and thus their contact point with the Office of Internal Affairs was through a tunnel-like passage way from the sidewalk to the inspection room.

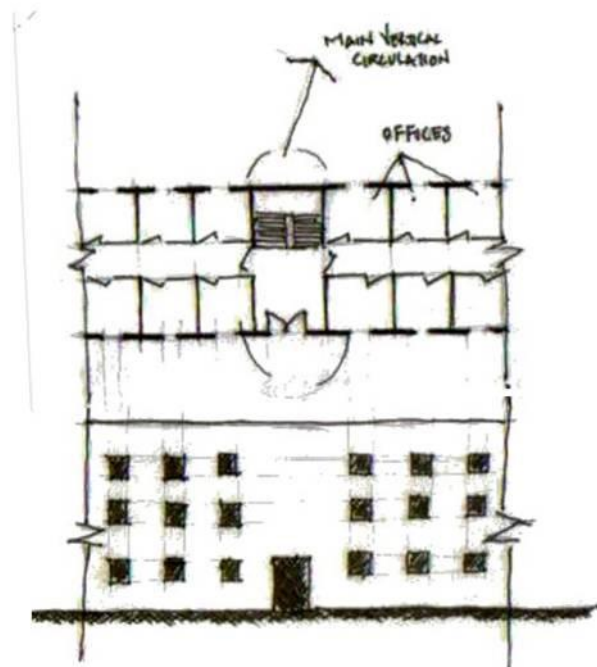


Figure 4-17; Al-Mukata'a basic unit 2009,  
[researcher]

The most significant change of the place occurred during the Palestinian Authority period. Ramallah was handed over to the Palestinian leadership in 1996; then headed by Yasser Arafat. In 2002, Arafat's headquarters were bombed by the Israelis during their incursions to the city in that same year. The Headquarters signified Arafat's leadership to the Israelis and Palestinians as well; therefore it was an important target for Israeli missiles. The major buildings that existed since the British Mandate were mostly demolished symbolizing the debilitation and demoralization of the Palestinian Authority and State (Figure 4-18).



Figure 4-18; Israeli violence over Al-Mukata'a, [www.palestineremembered.com ]

These buildings, after their demolition, the very standard boxes with holes in them, all of a sudden signified the Palestinian Headquarters and the Palestinians themselves, what once signified oppression and occupation was now *the* icon of Ramallah's identity. The international and national media played a major role in the dissemination of this materialized symbol of Palestinian power.

After Arafat's death in 2004, the significance of the place was now more than a question of power but rather the representation of power and identity of an independent state. The Headquarters started undergoing drastic transformations and new master plans were put forth for the new Palestinian Headquarters which encompassed Arafat's tomb. The new master plan opened up the site partially to Palestinians and visitors; it dedicated a decent part of the site to a mausoleum for Arafat which was designed by an important regional architect; Jaafar Toukan (Figure 4-19). The other administrative buildings were commissioned to a local architect, Hashem Abu Lafi, who designed a prototype for what he called traditional/regional architecture which would be applied to the different administrative buildings (Mukata'a) in the other Palestinian cities. This so called traditional building has not been open to the public yet; however it has been highly criticized among architects of Ramallah city (Figure 4-20). It demonstrates a need for an identity that we can associate



ourselves with, and here Hisham abu Lafi, the architect might have opted for the Grand Mosque of Isfahan. Do we really need to look for our identity somewhere else, where the architect creates a fake image of what he thinks the 'new' identity should look like? I believe the architect might have opted for this solution to a highly rich and complex site with contesting identities.



Figure 4-19; Arafat Mausoleum, 2009, [researcher]



Figure 4-20: Left the Grand Mosque of Isfahan, Right: the new administrative building of Al-Mukata'a 2008, Search for identity? (Researcher)

The major transformation of the Mukata'a wasn't on its physical state as much as the Manara but was rather in the memory that it enfolded. The Mukata'a underwent minor physical changes prior to the Palestinian Authority period. The Palestinian Authority added buildings to the complex in order to accommodate their spatial/functional requirements. For decades, this compound reminded Palestinians of their misery and suffering. It was a creation of the British Mandate and signified the helplessness of the Palestinians and the power and dominance of the occupier. The British Mandate had built the same complex in different Palestinian cities, in the same architectural style. The same architectural object was replicated as a statement of power and control. This recognition of the collective persisted even after the British Mandate period.



In 1996, a significant change took place in the Palestinian's memory. The Palestinian Authority headed by Yasser Arafat came into power. This was a great shift for Palestinians. Arafat in a way 'victorized' the place; he freed it from all the remnants of the ex-regimes and took over the place that symbolized defeat and distress. This place symbolized the Palestinian power and its victory over occupation, regardless of the architectural object.

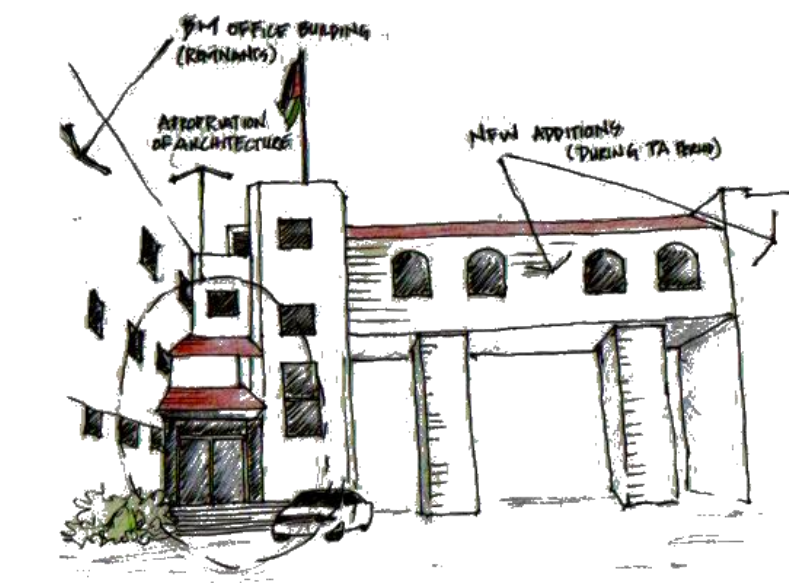


Figure 4-21; appropriation of architecture in order to fit the new needs and 'appearance' of the new administration, 2009, [researcher]

The major physical change took place in 2002, the image of the destroyed buildings of the Mukata'a, after the Israeli occupation of the city of Ramallah has left major traces in people's memory. The image of the rubbles of their Palestinian Leadership Headquarters was devastating because their dreams of an independent state and power crashed at the scene of the destruction of Arafat's Headquarters. The Israelis demolished what symbolized the Palestinian power. This intricate history of Al-Mukata'a makes it an urban artifact in Rossi's sense, since "... it is a general characteristic of urban artifacts that they return us to certain major themes: individuality, locus, design, memory" (Rossi, 1982, p.32).

Ironically, the buildings that were mostly destroyed were originally the British prison and administrative offices of a different form of occupation. What once symbolized the Palestinian misery is now symbolizing the Palestinian grace and pride. What Palestinians hated for years and longed for its disappearance has now become the essence of their identity. This contradicting load this architecture carries is highly complex. How can one commemorate a place that once housed their opponent? (Baudrillard, 2003, pp.X-XI) Media has contributed to the implosion of the meaning of the architectural event (Baudrillard, 1994, pp. 79-82). The reiteration of these images on TV, newspapers and the internet constantly inflated the meaning and position of this compound in the collective

memory of the Palestinians and the international community. It developed into an urban artifact in its annihilated stage. It was in this particular incident that all the history of the place and its identity was summed up in one architectural event.

The complexity of the piece of architecture here is at its utmost. This raises the question if architecture can defy the meaning and purpose imposed by others and the architects that have designed the architectural objects? This leads us to a fundamental matter; what is Architecture? The built object was no longer important. It was assigned meaning according to the ruling power. It didn't matter how it looked like, it was already assigned a changing identity that modifies itself accordingly. While in the Manara case, architecture generated meaning. It shaped the central space of the city; even in its earliest stage of evolution, it was an electric pole which was significant at that time and somewhat created a landmark. By time and as Al-Manara developed, architecture generated the place and its meaning.

The complexity and contradiction of architecture is the essence of the city and its identity. Venturi makes it a clear statement towards the end of his book 'Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture' that "an architecture of complexity and contradiction does not forsake the whole" (Venturi, 1966, p.88) The "difficult whole" (Venturi, 1966, p.88) contributes to

the understanding of Rossi's architectural theory, and the duality established by pivotal ideas that stemmed from his views on architecture and the city. One is a generalizing view of the city and its process of becoming; the other is the idea of the singularity of the urban event as a concrete category of the architecture of the city (Aureli, 2007, p.39)

These two artifacts represent the way the identity of Ramallah was constructed and shaped. In the course of their construction, their original themes persist, however they modified and rendered their themes of their own development (Rossi, 1982, pp. 30-39). They unveil the past of the city of Ramallah, and connect it to its present. They tell the story of Ramallah city and the Palestinian identity. Memory plays a fundamental role in the transformation and preservation of cultural manifestations. Memory works as a biological-social instrument of identity, conservation and development, allowing events to flow legibly (Luz & Dos Santos, 2004, p.99).



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## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

**Only by engaging with the changing fabric of the city and by acknowledging change as both loss and enrichment can we adequately approach the experience of living in urban space, without being caught between utopia and decay.**

**Elizabeth Wilson**

This thesis discusses the theory of the city as put forward by Aldo Rossi; it formulates the identity of the city based on Rossi's persistent components of the city; urban artifacts, collective memory and locus. This was done by looking at the historical evolution of the city and by focusing on two key elements; i.e. urban artifacts: Al-Manara square and Al- Mukata'a Headquarters, and hence testing the validity of Rossi's theory beyond its regional boundaries.

## **5-1 URBAN ARTIFACTS AND IDENTITY**

These places and buildings have changed over time and have been greatly influenced by the different regimes and systems that passed over the city. Ramallah lived through great destructions and demolitions, expropriation and rapid changes in use and, as a result of speculation and obsolescence; they are the most recognizable signs of urban dynamics. These layers of the city are living witnesses of these transformations and have thus kept a record of the memories of the city and the people who have lived in it.

Therefore, the architecture of the city took on its behalf the changing identities of Ramallah's society and the city as well. However the status of Ramallah as the temporary center for the Palestinian state elevated the level of the city to represent the national identity of the Palestinians.

And at a time when more modern international style office buildings and apartments are being built, swamping the older smaller scale commercial and residential structures that comprised earlier Ramallah, these two colonial sites – one a lamp post and the other a prison - have become sites of constancy amidst changing identity.

These urban artifacts represent the continuity of the postcolonial up to present day even though they are no longer remembered as the colonial sites representing the Western varying degrees of complex hegemony; but rather two important landmarks in the Palestinian's identity and specifically the city of Ramallah which represents the temporary center for the Palestinian state. Consequently, Rossi's thesis of the city can thus be applied to places of contesting identities and politically charged cities.

*"Thus the complex structure of the city emerges from a discourse whose terms of reference are still somewhat fragmentary. Perhaps the laws of the city are exactly like those that regulate the life and destiny of individual men. Every biography has its own interest, even though it is circumscribed by birth and death. Certainly the architecture of the city, the human thing par*

*excellence, is the physical sign of this biography, beyond the meanings and the feelings with which we recognize it" (Rossi, 1982, p.163).*

An urban artifact transcends the built object; it goes beyond the individuality of the architect and outlives the life of his work. Thus an urban artifact cannot be created by one architect; it is the essence of the city's identity. The artifact transcends the actual building and rather expands the notion to the site and context. Thus the significance and the symbolic dimension of the site grow along with the building and sometimes apart from the object itself.

An urban artifact further develops a capacity that accepts and withstands different roles and performances that weren't originally intended. It has the capacity to transform itself to accommodate a different program. It is not an issue of form, size, scale, but an issue of the capacity to accept what was not initially intended. It is persistent, not because it does not change, but precisely because it changes while maintaining consistency/permanency. The permanence cannot be revealed unless time is working to create differences. This form survives the test of time, while being in time, not against it. It survives in time and takes on its behalf the different circumstances that it witnesses, "a built artifact; which is never the same in time – just like the changing functions naively associated with it" (Leatherbarrow, 1993).



## 5-2 CONSTRUCTING URBAN IDENTITY

The urban artifacts that have been studied unveil the importance of collective memory throughout their survival and persistence. Although their functions have been of great value in terms of power and location, the value they had acquired in the people's collective memory was greater, and hence have become part of their identity on the scale of Ramallah city and the Palestinian nationality. Hence, the city is the repository of the collective memory and identity.

This verifies that architecture is the basic component of the city; it represents the history, memory, tradition, and cultural patrimony, and hence the identity. It tells the story of the city's endurance and transformation. The protection of this cultural patrimony leads to rescuing and the consolidation of the community's social identity in its historical evolution.

The city remodels itself as it grows, this can be seen as the reconciliation of the city with its elements and its past, as well as the reconciliation of the inhabitants with their city. How much and in what form shall history come back and to what extent shall we restore it into the present. In the case of Ramallah, history haunts the city constantly with the persistence of the two major spots of the city that represent its changing identities. How can one understand the originality and the tradition of a place that is haunted constantly by colonialism? It is

compelling how persistent the colonial and postcolonial forces are in impacting urban space and identity.

In reference to the urban artifacts selected, it is a fundamental matter that the choice of how urban centers are selected can begin with the ideological motivation behind it; this has always been the case that it results in switching symbols right and left especially in the case of the British prison which later became the Palestinian Headquarters. This leads to the idea of that identity is never identical (i.e. that once an identity is set, nothing can ever be 'identical to it'). This can be seen through the appropriation of architecture (e.g. the Mukata'a case) and how it remodels itself to adapt the changes of the city, the social and cultural structures.

Aureli questions the form of architecture that can define the city in the urban world, where the city is no longer constituted by the idea and the motivations of the city, but rather is dominated by urbanization. While urbanization is a non-reversible process, Aureli proposes a solution to the problems attributed to urbanized cities; he suggests going back to the archipelago model. He believes in architecture that is absolute and that which constitutes the whole. Moreover, Rossi's thesis of elevating architecture as the main construction of the city and that which defines it intends at setting forth solutions from within the city itself. The problem of urbanization results in mass production of architecture, there is no need for form or monuments [Aureli, 2007, p.104]. Architecture should be absolute; it should be defined by and makes clear

presence of borders that cross the city. The singularity of places within a city embodies its essence; the city as a site of confrontation and thus of coexistence.

This leads to the need to readdress the way architects, urbanists and planners approach the cities. How do we come to common ground? And how should architects and planners respond to changing identities and contexts in politically charged areas? And as I think of identity in design, is it feasible to incorporate 'identity' in a building, by responding to the context or is it an inherent characteristic of any building? Although this research has addressed identity in relationship to the city and its architecture, a lot of these questions arise and reiterate themselves the more we delve in. It is not a matter of an absolute answer, and yet opens up the opportunities for future research,

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