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Changing urban morphology, colonial and neoliberal footprints: a case from west bank, Palestine

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Introduction

The West Bank (W.B.) is a land of political conflict defined by its geopolitical constraints and diverse urban forms. Human settlements in the W.B. are diverse, as they include rural areas, urban centers, refugee camps, new pre-planned neighborhoods, and Israeli colonies. Rural areas are regions that have vernacular architecture with an organic layout. Cities are urban centers that expanded from their original historical cores. Refugee camps are permanent shelters that were established to host displaced Palestinians. New neighborhoods/suburbs are neoliberal and modern developments established by investors around major cities. Israeli colonies are areas established by Israeli occupation authorities since the 1970s designed to host Jewish immigrants. These different urban forms are apparent in the W.B landscape and can be easily seen in almost every sub-region.

According to the Oslo interim agreement (The peace agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1994) the W.B. (5,500 Km^2) land was divided into three jurisdiction zones: Areas A, B, and C. Area A consists of land under full civilian and security control by the Palestinians (18%). Area B is a land under Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control (22%). 60% is considered Area C, which is under full Israeli civilian and security control. Different land jurisdiction constraints force limitations and certain rules on urban development typologies and morphology on the varying Palestinian communities in the W.B.

The different regimes that ruled the W.B. in the past century have heavily affected Palestinian communities. After the 1948 war, thousands of Palestinian refugees settled in the W.B. around major towns. In 1967, the W.B. was occupied by Israeli forces, who then started to build colonies for Jewish immigrants around Palestinian communities and in remote areas. After the signing of the Oslo agreement, Palestinians built new projects, mainly residential ones, in areas under their jurisdiction: villages, towns, and cities in areas A and B. New forms of development were established during the past two decades in and around Palestinian communities in the W.B.

The aim of this paper is to shed light on the changes of built environments under the changing geopolitical context in the W.B. This paper examines the urban morphology of

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four settlements: Atara, an indigenous Palestinian village, Al-Jalazon, a refugee camp, Rawabi, a new Palestinian pre-planned suburb, and Beit El, a Jewish colony. Each of these cases represented a different setting and different urban form (indigenous community, refugee camp, neoliberal project and colonial settlement). All are located on the north-eastern side of Ramallah, and can be considered a part of the Ramallah-Jerusalem-Bethlehem conurbation. The morphological elements were analyzed to highlight the changes on the built form due to colonial and neoliberal interventions.

Literature review

Urban morphology is "The study of the physical (or built) fabric of urban form, and the people and processes shaping it" (Larkham and Jones 1991,P. 55). The change of urban form is a continuous process caused by varying conditions such as socio-economic circumstances, natural settings, and political/colonial power. It is the study of human settlements' form and the process of their transformation, focusing on plot/lot, street, and building patterns (Oliveira 2016). He added that socioeconomic factors' impact on morphological elements within urban context could be directly related to density and centrality. Levy (1999) describes morphology as; "historic rules and principles which transform and/or are shaping cities' structure by investigating physical changes in different periods." Larkham uses "physical" in his definition which is a major component in studying morphology, while Oliveira adds other components like socio-economic and colonial power. Levy also referred to historical rules and their role in shaping cities. In his book, Arabic-Islamic Cities, Hakim (1989) discusses the morphological elements in Arab-Islamic cities, where he emphasizes the interrelations between streets, open spaces and buildings. Hakim adds that urban growth is a piecemeal process decided by individuals and follows *Urf*, or local traditions and guidelines. The resulting form was named "spontaneous" urban pattern by Bianca (200), where such a form is related to vernacular urban configuration developed from rural origins. Spontaneous urban pattern exists as an "organic" urban form resulting from incremental decisions at a grass-root level, rather than obeying imposed external schemes (Bianca 2000).

Colonialism has been a major force that shapes settlements and the development of architecture and built forms. According to King (2014), although different settlements were subjected to varying colonial influence, common features gave colonial settlements distinct urban forms in comparison to indigenous built-up areas. Njoh (2009) and King (2014) mention that the colonial town was typically designed in a different typology which underscores the idea of segregation between colonizers and indigenous people. The apartheid city in South Africa was a clear example of structural segregation, where landuse zoning was used to introduce new forms of settlement into the landscape (Home 2013). Colonial powers affected the colonized regions by imposing a new variety of urban forms and regulations on the colonized regions (Thawaba 2018). New developments built by colonizers affected urban morphology by imposing a new layer of urban fabric/infrastructure on indigenous landscape settings through establishing new settlements, building new suburbs adjacent to existing ones, and introducing new planning regulations/zoning clauses.

In a study of conceptual and theoretical approaches to third world colonial cities, Simon (1984) argues that third world colonial cities display uniform structural features,

despite their geographical and cultural diversity. The British colonization was one of the main colonizing powers that affected the urban form of many cities in the third world. Home (2013) studied the British colonial city by examining plans prepared by British planners, which were implemented in many colonies such as Singapore, Nigeria, South Africa, India, and Palestine. The features of built fabric which were introduced by colonial powers included but were not limited to: the gridiron street plan, buffer zones for racial segregation, and low-density versus high-density residential (Dupont 2004).

Çelik (1997) examined how urban form and architecture were impacted and dominated by the imposition of the French colonial identity in Algiers. The plans prepared by the colonizers for the new settlements were made to achieve a rapid circulation for military troops through wide streets and large squares (Hadjri and Osmani 2004). Boulevards were introduced to link the old town with the new European quarter, an area which has a gridiron structure with squares and parks, regardless of the existing fabric of the organic structure of the adjacent indigenous town (Çelik 1997; Hadjri and Osmani 2004). Abu-Lughod (1980) added that planning Rabat neighborhoods were due to the weight of French colonial power, where plans ignored the housing needs of the indigenous people and focused on European housing quarters and services.

In Palestine, different foreign regimes and colonial powers played a major role in reshaping the Palestinian urban landscape. Khamaisi (1997) and Thawaba (2018) state that the various foreign regimes that governed the area imposed their regulation and legislation on Palestinian land, and built environment. Jerusalem and its environs are a clear example of urban landscape transformation in this context. The legacy of the policies prepared by British Mandate planners, and the ongoing plans and policies by Israeli occupation, changed urban form drastically (Thawaba and Al-Rimmawi 2013). Rajjal (2001) states that the Israeli occupation played a major role in the morphological transformation of Jerusalem by constructing new colonies and infrastructural projects around and between its indigenous settings. In the 1970s, Israeli occupation started a strategy of colonizing the W.B., wherein new suburbs/community settlements were established close to major cities and towns. According to Schwake (2020), this strategy was characterized by a transformation in the pattern of population distribution, which included the increase in rural settlements at the expense of urban ones. This concept was named by Schwake (neo-rural) experience or phenomenon that came after the agricultural settlements of the Kibutzim and Moshavim of the pre-state year due to changes in the socioeconomic and cultural transformations. Community settlements were introduced by the Gush Emunim group in the newly occupied land of the W.B. to attract homogenous communities to settle in the highlands of the region. Later, this type of settlement spread to different areas of the W.B. through a systemized suburbanization process that relied on private, corporate-led, and real estate-oriented development. By doing so, the process of colonizing the lands of the W.B. has been transformed from a communal setting (kibbutzim and Moshavim) into suburban settings with private household and commodified land as a market-based strategy (Clarno 2018; Schwake 2020).

Many researchers agree that land and development became the means for profit and investment via neoliberal strategy: " ... Open competitive, and unregulated markets, liberated from all forms of state interference, represent the original mechanism for economic development. ... " (Brenner and Theodore 2002). These strategies were a ploy for access to global capital, with its prestigious business centers and a new lifestyle

for the elite and upper middle classes. According to Storper (2016), cities and regions suffered from the abandonment of state interventions because of the greater influence of privatization and market mentality. Neoliberalism affected urban spaces and forms by transforming them into a market-oriented economic growth arena (Sager 2011). The neoliberal approach affected built environments for the sake of revenue; buildings become denser, public services and collective identity are degraded and public spaces are privatized (Harvey 2007; Elsheshtawi 2008). According to Elsheshtawi (2008), Amman (Jordan) witnessed a wave of neoliberal projects (Abdali), where residential compounds, gated communities, and privileged shopping malls invaded the urban landscape.

In Palestinian areas, new developments emerged in areas A and B in the W.B. after the signing of the peace treaty between Palestinians and the Israelis in 1994. These developments were driven by private sector "investment driven projects." This period thus represented a new era in urban development in the W.B., where land became a commodity.

Development projects are advancing in many places across the Palestinian landscape; these projects are urbanizing the remaining agrarian lands. They are taking the form of suburbs consisting of housing, mixed use, and shopping malls. Tayeh (2019), stated that the remaining space of the W.B. is being eaten away by developments, driven by Palestinian capitalists and by Israeli colonial power. Rabie (2021), described this kind of transformation and mixing public and private sectors in service firms as "stated and unstated" goals for ongoing capital accumulation. He mentioned that Rawabi is a part of the mechanics of incorporating noncapitalist places (fallow land) into capitalist social relations, market and practice. On the other hand, the W.B. is witnessing an increase in colonial construction activities in the settlements where neo-rural phenomenon is taking place. These settlements are attracting Jewish immigrants of middle-class and upper-middle-class city dwellers to rural areas (W.B.).

Context

After the end of March 1948, the state of Israel was declared. Hundreds of villages were destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians became refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip Many had lost their homes and lands and set up temporary encampments on the outskirts of towns in the W.B. and Gaza Strip. These camps started with tents, then gradually became permanent features in the landscape (Marx 1992). Malkki (1995) describes refugee camps as "un-urban space or not-cities," while Marx (1992) describes them as urban neighborhoods, their inhabitants fully integrated in the region's economy. Sanyal (2010) names the built environment of the refugee camps "hybrid spaces," exceptions that are able to transgress the boundaries of place and non-place.

In 1967, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the W.B. Ever since then, Israeli spatial planning has played an important role in transforming the urban space of the W.B. In the 1970s and 80s, Israel prepared regional plans (Allon, Drobless, and Sharon) in order to colonize the W.B. (Weizman 2017; Lein and Weizman 2002). The establishment of the Israeli settlements in the W.B. can be identified as the beginning of landscape transformation, and the introduction to a new era of urban/rural morphology. Samman (2013) states that large areas confiscated by the Israeli occupation in order to establish Jewish colonies seriously affected Palestinians' urban and rural built environment growth possibilities.

Since the Oslo accords in 1993, Palestinian cities and specifically the city of Ramallah expanded to accommodate new developmental projects. According to Clarno (2018), the Palestinian authority's economic policies are based on a neoliberal vision of a private, sector-led, and free market economy. These policies were associated with the emergence of a new class of Palestinian capitalists and business owners. The Palestinian Authority stimulated investments, especially in real estate projects. This ultimately resulted in the emergence of new neighborhoods and suburbs around Ramallah city, before the preparation of a master plan for the metropolitan area to guide such urban change (Alessandra 2014). As a result of Oslo land classifications, the colonial settlement activities, and neoliberal restructuring, Palestinian communities with areas A and B have experienced a process of rapid urbanization. Some villages in the W.B. have been transformed into an urban-like setting due to vertical expansion and infill building activities, developments which came about as a result of space limitations. Restrictions on land in area C have inflated the value of the land in Area A and B (Clarno 2018).

The W.B. is an area where different urban morphologies exist: i) the indigenous rural Palestinian communities, represented by villages in rural areas with their organic and vernacular settings (Figure 1) ii) Israeli settlements that have been planted in the area since 1967 with colonial pre-planned layouts (Figure 2) iii) Refugee camps that represent
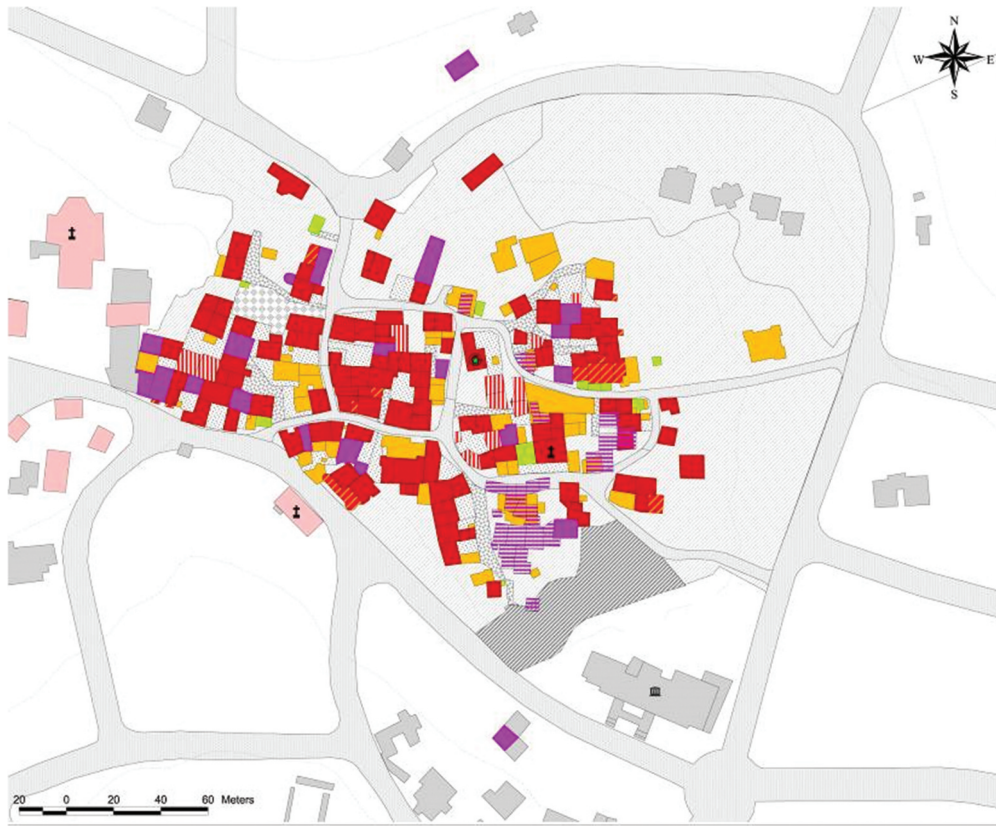

Figure 1. Typical figure ground of a vernacular/traditional Palestinian town (Birzeit town) (Riwaq 2013).
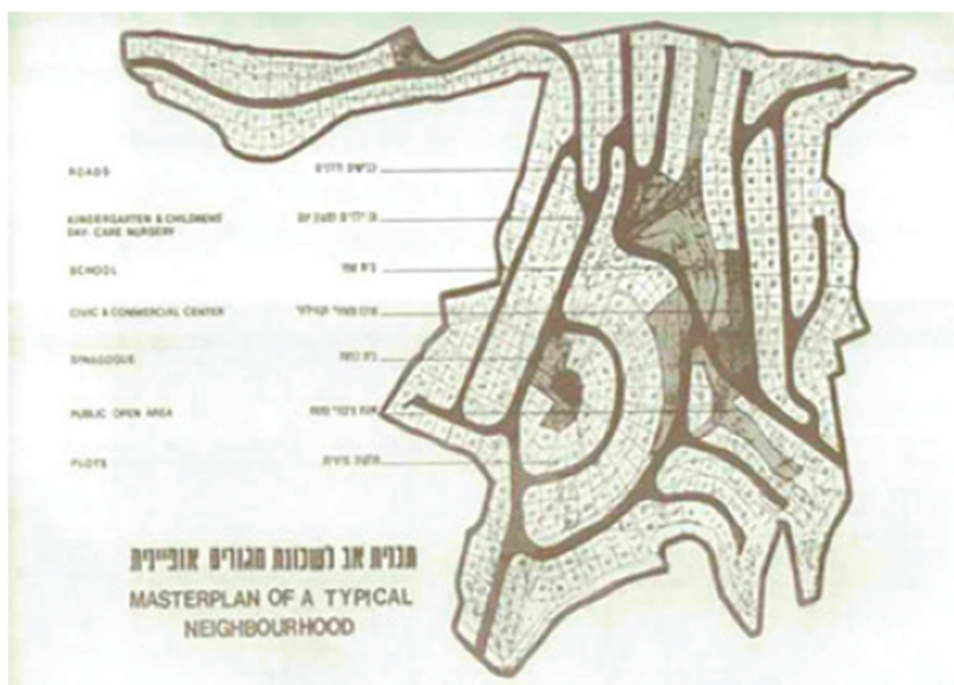
Figure 2. Typical Israeli settlement layout (Schwake 2020).

informal developments since 1948 iv) Neoliberal projects constructed by investors in and around major cities representing a new era of Palestinian urban patterns.

The W.B. is an area with a mix of urban settings with different morphological forms consisted of the above-mentioned urban/rural landscape. The intervention of colonial and neoliberal urban forms are apparent in the urban landscape of the W.B. This study represents a sample of these interventions in the outskirt of Jerusalem area.

Method

In most research on urban form, singular elements are identified and analyzed either separately or in relation to each other: the plot, the street, the constructed space, and the open space (Levy 1999). The main approaches to morphological analysis that have been developed over the last decades are the historic-geographical approach, the process typological approach, numerical content (space syntax), and spatial analysis (Oliveira 2016). Analyzing these elements help in understanding how cities grew, the forces behind urban form transformation, and the interrelations within the surrounding environments.

In this study, a structured comparative analysis was built on the morphological elements which are used as a frame of reference. Spatial data is explored and mapped out in order to present a clear picture of the main elements shaping the selected cases: street layouts, plot division, property lines, density, and built-up spaces were analyzed, showing figure ground and open spaces layout and transformations. The analysis was built in a way
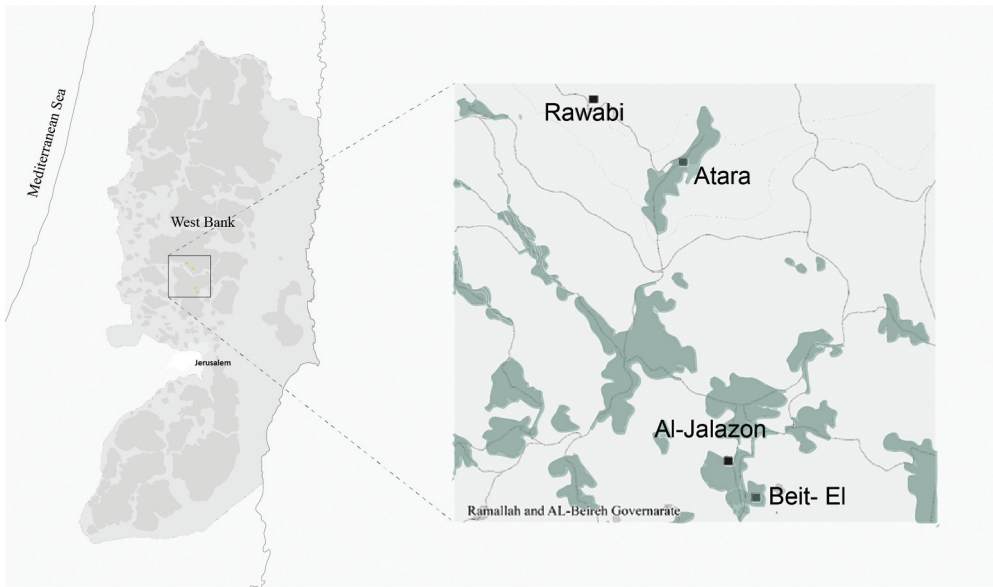
Figure 3. Study area.

to show the geometry of the built environment for the different selected areas in order to clarify similarities and differences between the morphological elements.

In this research, spatial analysis is used to identify the main morphological elements in these communities. Aerial photographs and master plans are digitized and analyzed using GIS and Auto Cad. Typological maps were used to analyze the main elements of urban morphology: *street patterns*, *plot patterns*, *constructed space and open spaces*. The study area contained four kinds of built environments developed in different circumstances; i) organic indigenous village *('Atara)*, ii) informal development (*Al-Jalazon Refugee Camp*), iii) colonial footprint *(Beit El*, an Israeli colony), and iv) a modern neoliberal pre-planned suburb which was constructed by the private sector (*Rawabi*) (Figure 3).

The spatial analysis approach was conducted to map out the morphological elements for each case in the following sequence: Historical background for land lots and built environment, road system, constructed space and open space and their interrelation to socioeconomic features.

Similarities and differences between selected forms are identified in order to show the influence and implications of the colonial/neoliberal approach on the formation, and the transformation of the built-space (Table 1).

Analysis and discussion

The study presents different urban forms and settings, each with its origin and basis that shaped such a fabric and layout. The study investigates the morphological elements in each and highlights the process to its recent form. This research seeks to excavate the links/differences/similarities between the four case studies.

Table 1. Comparative data.

Built-up name	Type	Area Km^2	population	Density (person/Km^2)	Land ownership	Parcells	Open space ownership	Built-up area
'Atara	Village	9.674	2,492	258	private	Land is parceled according to ownership	Limited-Public	Grows incrementally By individuals
Beit El	Colony	1.163	6,101	5,541	WZO*	Reparcelated to cope with the design (commodity)	WZO*	Pre-planned
Rawabi	New suburb	0.85	6,300	7,411	corporate	Reparcelated to cope with the design(commodity)	Corporate	Pre-planned
Al-Jalazon	Refugee Camp	0.248	8,201	33,068	Leased by UNRWA	Divided between refugees	No open space	Grows vertically by inhabitants

*World Zionist Organization

Figure 4. Al-Jalazon camp in 1950s. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jalazone_Refugee_Camp_1950.jpg

Al-Jalazon refugee camp

The 1948 war displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who took refuge in the neighboring countries, the W.B. and Gaza Strip. The UNRWA, established in 1950, provided the refugees with food, shelter, clothing, and health services. UNRWA provided the refugees with tents, hoping one day they would return to their original villages (Figure 4). Over time, the refugee camps became permanent urban entities (Mushtaha 1998). Al-Jalazon camp was established in 1949, 5.3 km to the north of Ramallah city, with a population of 8,201 who lived on (248 dunums) 0.248 km^2, (33,000 person per km^2, see Table 1) area (PCBS 2017). The inhabitants of the camp were originally from 36 different Palestinian villages near Lydda, Ramla, Haifa, and west of Hebron (BTSELEM 2018).

Since the Palestinian refugee camps are unique in terms of planning, it is difficult to compare them to slum dwellers in other areas. Although refugee camps and slums may look similar, refugees should not be seen as slum dwellers, since they were originally forced to be refugees and only accepted the camps as a temporary solution. The UNRWA used government and private land, leased for 99 years, to build camps (Mushtaha 1998). By 1959, the UNRWA replaced tents with brick structures, since tents needed to be changed every two years (Figure 5). The size of each shelter/hut varied according to family size; a family of four to five members had one room of 12 square meters, while a family of six to eight had two rooms (Jabr 1989).

http://egovacademy.ps/en/node/2784

Figure 5. The camp in 1970s. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jalazone_Refugee_Camp_1950.jpg

Investigating the development of the camp in different stages is necessary to illustrate the morphological process. In the early stages, the camp land was divided into many parcels (70 to 100 sq. meters) surrounded by pathways; internal roads were 4 m wide, while roads on the southern edge leading to the nearby villages were 12–16 m wide. The camp was originally a "temporary" tent camp on land leased from residents of the adjacent village of *Jifna*. Due to necessity, the refugees started to build walls from concrete blocks and metal sheets as rooftops as opposed to traditional building materials. Later, in the seventies and eighties, the inhabitants tried to improve their shelters on their own and reshaped the camp to include apartment buildings adjacent to each other (Mushtaha 1998) (Figure 6). They gradually built rooms to fill the whole plot, and in some regions, the built-up area was enlarged to encroach on public streets, turning them into narrow alleys. Some residents managed to purchase land in the nearby villages to build their own houses, outside the official boundary of the camp. Buildings are in poor condition since the building materials were not meant to be durable.

In Al-Jalazon, morphology elements are limited to plots, built-spaces, and roads. Due to a lack of a master plan defining property lines, plots were not completely demarcated and buildings were entangled with each other. Land plots were marked using small rocks in the 1950s to form property lines, which lead to property edges and roads. A random layout for narrow streets and alleys intersected the mass of the built-up area. The roads in the camp were a byproduct of dividing the land allocated by UNRWA between the families (Figure 7(a)) 7 (7).

Al-Jalazon camp is a densely populated area in the form of a huge mass of concrete. Buildings intertwine irregularly. Open spaces and greenery are absent from the camp. Houses were built with a piecemeal approach and a lack of planning; any new additions to houses were vertical because of the limited land availability.

Figure 6. The camp recently.

Al-Jalazon refugee camp represented a new urban form built on a piecemeal process to host Palestinians exiled from their hometowns by Israeli forces. The camp was a byproduct of a colonial act. This new urban form was introduced into the Palestinian landscape as a result of the Israel State declaration in 1948.

The camp in its physical status today is a result of long and ongoing spatial processes. The built-up area has become overcrowded, highly urbanized and fully utilized space. The camp was established in a gridiron pattern with narrow streets and corridor alleys leading to the main square with a mosque. Each neighborhood was named after the name of the village of origin, where each family/clan chose to live in a specific quarter. The socio-economic structure of the inhabitants was turned from peasants used to work on their farmlands, which they were forced to leave in 1948 to urbanized settings with its total different lifestyle. The inhabitants work different jobs: private sector, government jobs, and UN (Bshara 2014). The inhabitants have been continuously building and rebuilding the camp during the past seven decades of exile as a temporary built space. Buildings of the camp were constructed by their owners in successive phases as a multistory structure to accommodate descenders. Socioeconomic factors effected the built-up tissue of the camp where it is clear from maps and aerial photos that such a mass bloc has different characteristics when compared to the surroundings: densely populated, narrow alleys, absent of open spaces and green areas, and homogenous urban tissue.
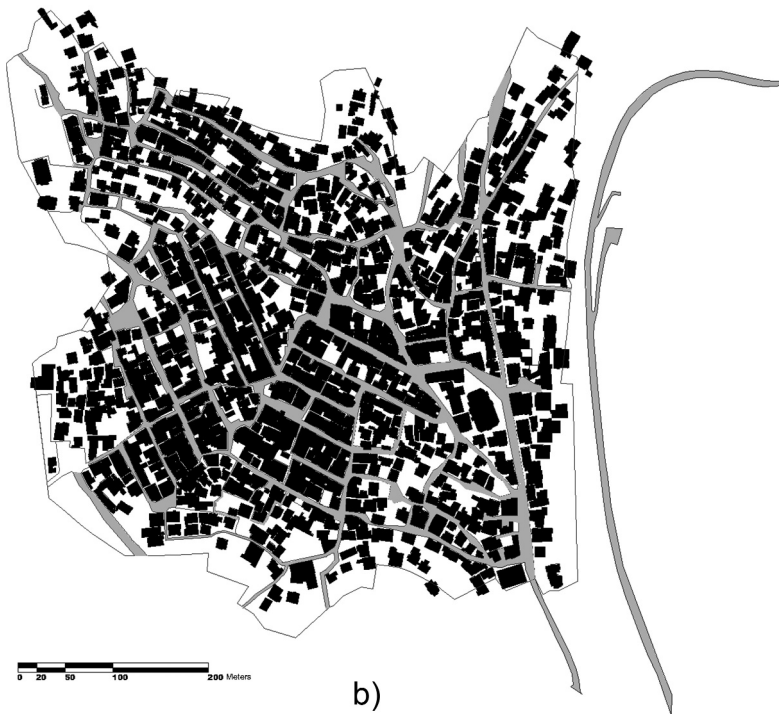
Figure 7. (a) Al-Jalazon Road system. (b) Al-Jalazon constructed space.

Beit El

Beit El is one of the community settlements established by the Gush Emunim Jewish religious group whose objective was, and still is, to settle throughout the W.B. and particularly in the dense Arab populated areas of the highlands of *Judea and Samaria*. This strategy was named *Yishuv Kehillati* (community village) where the aim was to enable each settler to buy their own house in the suburbs and commute to work in a nearby city or town (Newman 1981). According to Schwake (2020), this new mode (not the Kibbutz or Moshave) aimed to fulfill the desire of middle-class families for "quality of life" in "gated localities" while being "protected from the undesirables." This new mode of settlement was named by Schwake as "a neo-rurality," where it is more related to urbanity that enabled corporate-led construction to build homogenized built spaces.

Beit El was established in 1978, on the hills north of Jerusalem adjacent to Ramallah city and overlooking Al-Jalazon camp. In 1970, Israeli occupation forces confiscated lands from nearby villages to construct Beit El: 680 dunums from Drual al-Qar,' 346 dunums from Al- Bireh and 137 dunums from Ein Yabrud. Later, in 1977, Israeli authorities seized 2426 dunums using a military order (1/70) which classified the seized land as "security needs." The land was confiscated for a military outpost, and in 1997, it was recognized as a civilian settlement. In its early stage, 16 families immigrated to live inside the military base, and subsequently individual houses were constructed to host more families (ARIJ). 96.85% of Beit El was built on private Palestinian lands. By time, the settlement expanded towards the north reaching the edge of Al-Jalazon refugee camp (Figure 8(a)). The number of inhabitants living in the colony is 6,101 in 1,200 households (Table 1) (BTSELEM 2018).

Israeli authorities planned the colony to house new settlers in the W.B. The layout of the settlement is concentric circles tracing around the contour lines (BTSELEM 2002). The layout of the colony, designed to address topography and security concerns (Weizman 2017). The houses were designed to be single-family homes of one or two stories with tiled roofs, on identical lots of approximately ½ a dunam (BTSELEM 2002) (Figure 8).

The original plots were reparcelated to allocate houses and apartment buildings following a planned geometry. Like all other community settlements in the W.B., Beit El currently has regular lots along the arterial roads, with a uniform street network (Figures 9 (a) 9 (9).

Beil El has large areas of open spaces compared to other communities. These open spaces include public parks, swimming pools, green areas, parking lots and playgrounds. Red-roofed single-family homes are the dominant residential structure in the colony. These houses were constructed along the contour lines and were distributed around the central plateau overlooking the surrounding landscape. Beit El is a neatly planned settlement with a new urban layout imposed by the Israeli colonial project on the urban/ rural fabric of W.B.

Israeli colonies, which were first established post 1967 the W.B., introduced a new fabric into the region. Neat, preplanned geometries shaped these new settlements. Streets are wide and circular, surrounding the hills and creating stepped terraces. Land parcels are identical and established along the main streets, creating row houses and apartment buildings around the hills.
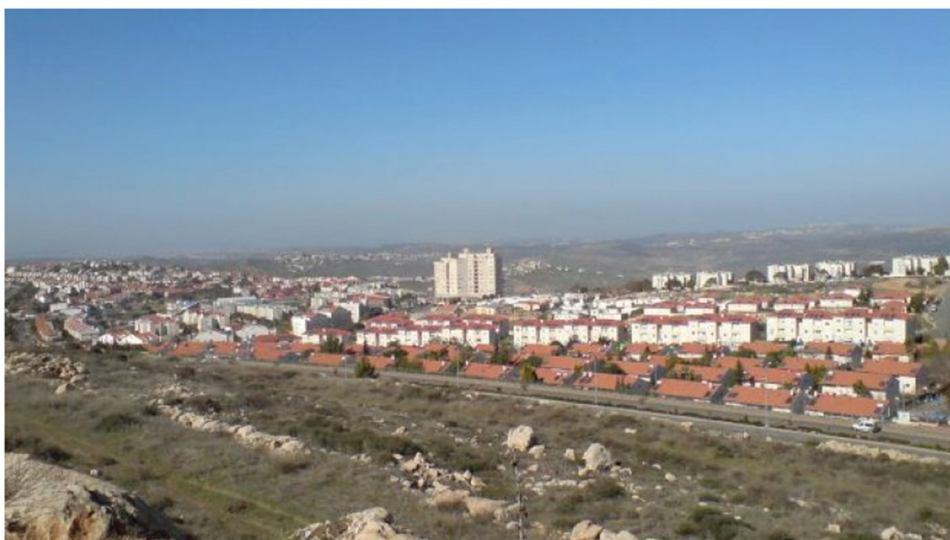
a)

b)

Figure 8. (a) Beit El in late 70s. (b) Beit El recently.

Figure 9. (a) Beit El constructed space. (b) Beit El recently.

During the past decades, the settlement went through a process of transformation in its socioeconomic structure. Beit El, as a community settlement, was introduced by the Gush Emunim group in late 70s to attract homogenous (middle class) communities to settle in the W.B. near major cities. This new settlement followed a suburbanization process that relied on private, corporate-led, and real estate-oriented development. The settlement was transformed from a communal into suburban settings with private household and commodified land as a market-based strategy. At the beginning, the settlement was consisted of individual/row houses on separate land lots with a front and back yards. Houses were designed along roads that circled public service buildings. Residents commute to the major city (Jerusalem) for work. Recently the developers introduced multistory apartment buildings to accommodate more inhabitants as a new approach for commodifying the land. Major bypass roads were constructed to link the settlement with Jerusalem in order to facilitate accessibility for the inhabitants to reach their workplaces. Maps and pictures illustrate morphological elements of the settlement with its different zones of houses, apartments, public area and road network. The process of transformation was described by Schwake (2020) as "neo-rural" where communal settings of settlements were turned into suburban ones with private household and commodified land as a market-based strategy.

By doing so, the process of colonizing the lands of the W.B. has been transformed from a communal setting (kibbutzim and Moshavim) into suburban settings with private household and commodified land as a market-based strategy (Clarno 2018; Schwake 2020).

Rawabi

Rawabi represents the first pre-planned Palestinian suburb. The idea was initiated in May 2008 in the Palestinian Investment Conference, which focused on large developmental initiatives. Construction began in 2010 by a real estate company (Bayti) owned partly by the Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company and the Palestinian company Massar.

Rawabi is located 20 km north of Ramallah. The total area of the project is 6,300 dunums (1,557 acres), and the planned site area is 850 dunums consisting of 22 neighborhoods, a commercial center, and public facilities (Table 1) (Figure 10). It is designed to accommodate 40,000 inhabitants in its final stage Rawabi is surrounded by the villages of Ajjul, Atara, and Obwayn.

https://www.thisweekinpalestine.com/rawabi-municipality/

Alessandra (2014), describes Rawabi as "a purely commercial project, based on planning principles which are strongly linked to the private sector way of thinking." Built space occupies a hilltop with row houses and apartment buildings organized in a spiral on terraces. Alessandra compares Rawabi to the Israeli settlements: "The architecture of Rawabi represents the colonized imitating the colonizer." Sh (2012) adds that " … we copy the colonizer and use the same destructive methods that ruin our land and its natural heritage." In this regard, a dramatic change in land ownership and the process of land accumulation was conducted in order to initiate the idea of a new suburb. Where Rawabi represents a large scale reparcelization project for the benefit of the private sector, capital accumulation and market by ignoring the identity and organic nature of the area's

Figure 10. Land individual owned parcels (Rabie 2021).

traditional rurality (Rabie 2021). Figures 11(a) 11 (11), shows the process of reparcelization for the lands bought from the inhabitants of the surrounding villages. Creating suburbs on hilltops of the W.B. started in early 1970s by the Gush Emunim settler groups where this was considered as a shift in the way of thinking and way of living. As described by Schwake (2022), "what began as small-scale rural-oriented projects, focusing on pioneers and their dwelling units, gave way to suburban settlements and their homeowners and private houses, which were eventually replaced by investors and their assets."

The land was purchased by a real estate company (Massar) that annulled the old property lines. The old parcels were consolidated and reparcelated in a "modern" layout taking economic/profit-seeking/topographical dimensions into consideration (Figures 11 (a) and **(b)**). By doing so, a new urban form was constructed a form that lives between vernacular and traditional rural settings (Figure 12(a)).

In the master plan, lots were unified in each zone for marketing purposes, and different building typologies were proposed to meet the market's needs. Apartment buildings were designed and planned in a unified style to minimize construction cost (mass production).

The master plan showed a hierarchical road network that included pedestrian walkways, access roads, and link roads connectors. The streets were laid out in rings around the center, spacing out buildings and providing maximum connectivity and comfortability (Figure 12(b)). The plan also defines a hierarchy of open spaces, starting with pocket gardens in each neighborhood, to the city park, which includes an amphitheater, playground, and hiking trails. This hierarchy and organization of open spaces intended to fulfill the lifestyle of small, middle-class families to whom the project targeted. The main public area is the 'city center, called *Q center*, a space surrounded by commercial stores and coffee shops. Streets have been transformed into transportation infrastructure that disregards the conception of streets as public spaces. Constructed spaces no longer correspond to the original plot layout, and open spaces are confined to the small areas in-

a)
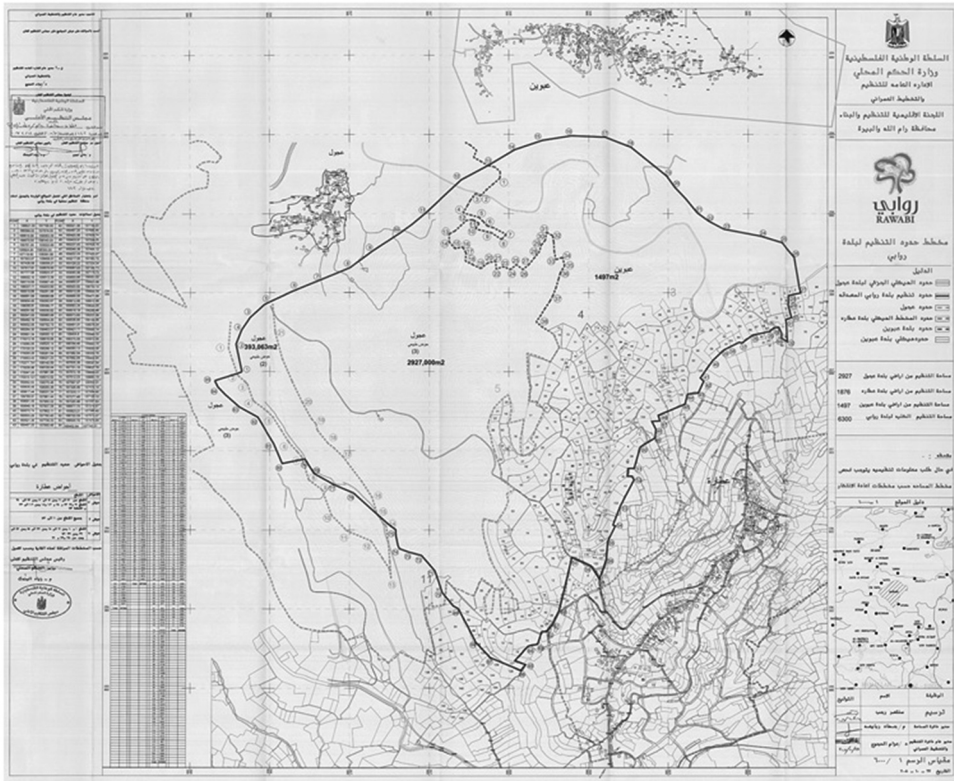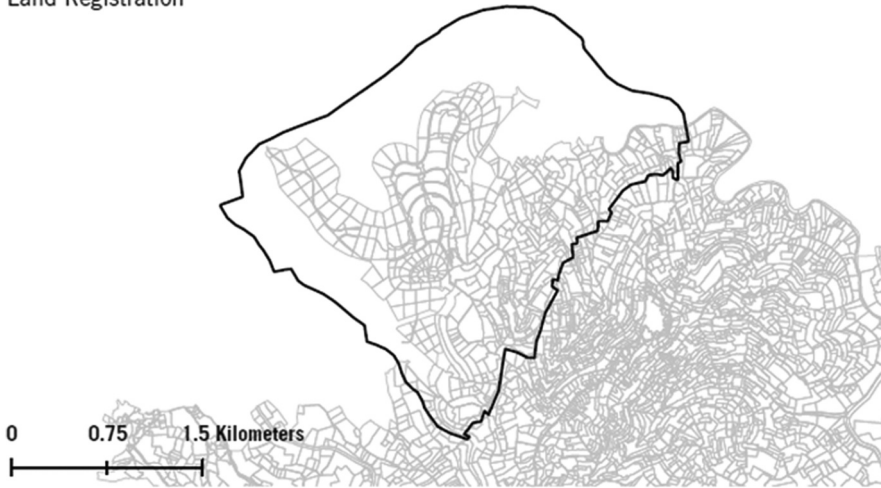
b)

Figure 11. (a) Land reparcelization-commodifying (Rabie 2021). (b) Land reparcelization-commodifying (Rabie, 2021).

Illustrative Housing Typologies

Type 1
Type 2
Type 3
Type 5
Type 4
High Rise
Landmark
Villas
Commercial Centre
residential (part of
mixed use area)

Figure 12. (a) Rawabi constructed space. (b) Rawabi road system.

Figure 12. (Continued).

between buildings, where grounds are elevated above parking garages in the form of walkways, platforms, and shopping centers. The city now has a densely built residential infrastructure, with apartment buildings of seven floors on average.

Rawabi is a new, local, pre-planned suburb with a geometry of stepped terraces arranged in a circle around one of the mountains. Land parcels are laid out along the circled streets, where multi-story apartment buildings sit. Rawabi was a new model introduced into the Palestinian urban landscape: defined by a clearly modern style, a project driven by investors, and spaces designed and intended to be rented or sold. Its center is a commercial area as opposed to a community center, and the built-up area is dense. All these characteristics represent a neoliberal project that uses land for profit, regardless of local community ambitions and needs, where inhabitants do not participate in the planning process. Rawabi imported most of its material and expertise from Israeli suppliers and planners.

According to Rabie (2021), "Rawabi is a site where Palestinian politics and general forms of state-economy relations are visible." It might represent greater integration of Palestine into global markets by accommodating the current conditions of occupation with the imperatives of global capital. He adds that this project has the potential to create widespread and intertwined political, cultural, and economic shifts.

Rawabi is surrounded by many Palestinian villages that grow in line with the contours of the hills without the need to chop off the tops of the hills and destroy the landscape. The surrounding villages spread along the ridge of the terrain and undulating with the natural landscape settings. The villages are surrounded with agricultural lands which 15% of the people depend on as a source of income. Whereas most of Rawabi inhabitants work as employees in Ramallah city and nearby institutions where they commute on a daily basis. Rawabi has a commercial center consisting of retail and coffee shops surrounded by multistory buildings. Rawabi is designed to attract middle-class Palestinians to live in a newly pre-planned built environment, where this approach is totally different to the traditional way of building in the surrounding villages. This represents the contradiction between privatization and tradition, social stratification and homogeneity/integration, modernization and imagined past, corporate and privately owned property, top-down and bottom-up planning approach, young families, and extended clans. Rawabi hosts the middle-class families who decided to leave the urban centers and fortify themselves in a neat suburb as an economic homogenous enclave. The morphological elements of Rawabi were designed to facilitate all the above-mentioned socioeconomic characteristics: densely built-up area, commercial center as an open space, and architecture style of multistory apartment buildings as a new approach for commodifying the land.

'Atara

'Atara is a Palestinian village located 2 km to the east of Rawabi. The total area of 'Atara is 9,674 dunums; 5,897 dunums of arable land, 431 dunums for residential development (ARIJ 2102). According to PCBS (2017), the total population is 2,492 (Table 1). 'Atara represents a typical Palestinian town with its old buildings in the center, rich with vernacular style and rural settings surrounded by olive groves (Figure 13). The old town consists of residential blocks for different families who used to live there. Those blocks

Figure 13. 'Atara town.

formed the traditional architecture fabric of the historic town such as buildings, court-yards, alleys, streets, and entrances. Most of these buildings are abandoned and destroyed by time but their footprint is still there. The old buildings were designed and constructed by the inhabitants themselves using existing materials from the surrounding areas (stone and hay), they constructed bearing walls on the surrounding and domed ceilings. Most of the plots are privately owned except for the mosque and its yard it is *Waqf* (charity). Inhabitants used to live on agriculture where it was surrounded by fruit and olive trees (Figure 1)

The village expanded outwards from its traditional center along the main road (infra-structure: water and electricity) leading to the nearby town of Birzeit. The economy of the village is dependent on agriculture (15%), trade (10%), employee in the government and private sectors (60%), industry (5%) and Israeli labor market (5%) (ARIJ 2102). According to the Oslo agreement, 'Atara was divided into: 40.8% as area A, 43.8% as area B and 15.4% as area C. In 1982, Israeli authority confiscated 163 dunums of the town's land and con-structed *'Ateret* colony, and in 1980s confiscated more lands to construct a bypass road # 465 (ARIJ 2102).

As with any typical Palestinian community, divisions of land in 'Atara followed the property lines, due to the land tenure system. These lines were irregular, and the size of the plots were determined by Palestinian land ownership and inheritance systems. The plots were demarcated (with title deeds) and the built-up area was integrated into surrounding rural landscapes and green orchards, following an organic layout.

The constructed space in "Atara grew incrementally with time according to the inhabitants" needs. The growth process started with attaching rooms to existing houses when needed. Most of the houses in the village were and are constructed from local material (stones). The core of the village is dominated by old domed houses around the mosque. Built-up space follows the main paved road and infrastructure (power, telephone and water lines). The dominant building typology in 'Atara consists of family houses with
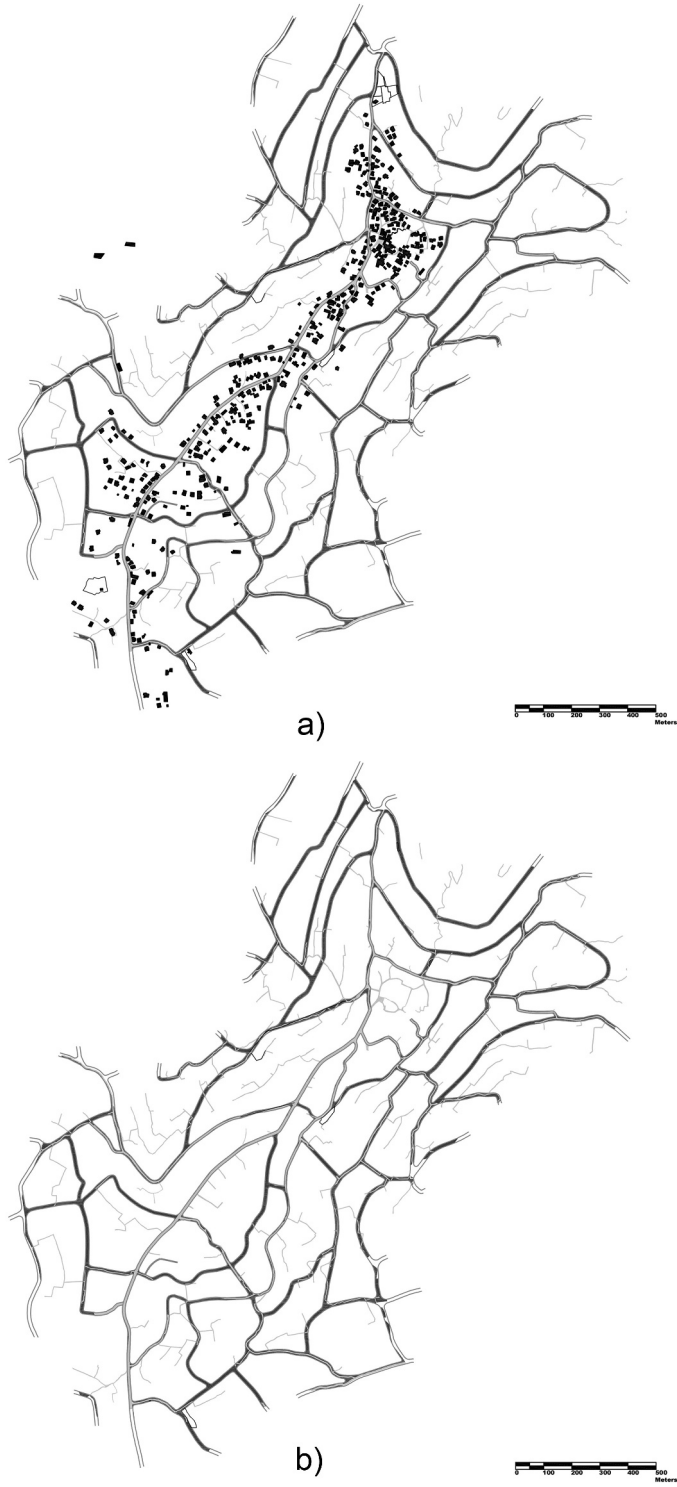
Figure 14. (a) 'Atara constructed space. (b) 'Atara road system.

Locality name	Atara	Beit El	Rawabi	AlJalazon
Figure ground				
Type	Village	Colony	Suburb	Refugee Camp
Area(Km²)	9.674	1.163	0.85	0.248
Population	2,492	6,101	6,300	8,201
Density	258	5,541	7,411	8,201
Land ownership	private	World Zionist Organization (WZO)	Corporate	Leased by UNRWA
Parcells	Land is parceled according to ownership	According to the planned layout (commodity)	According to the planned layout (commodity)	Divided according to family size
Open space	Limited and scattered (public owned)	Planned at the center (WZO owned)	Planned at the center (Corporate owned)	No assigned open spaces
Built up	Grows incrementally By individuals	Pre-planned	Pre-planned	Grows vertically by inhabitants

Figure 15. Comparative layouts.

two floors height in average (Figure 14(a)). Olive groves spread around houses, forming front and back yards. Public open spaces are limited to the mosque front yard and school playgrounds.

In Atara village, no clear road hierarchies are found. A random layout gives the streets an organic ribbon style, i.e. the constructed space grows organically along the main street starting from the core (near the mosque). The main street links the village with the neighboring town of Birzeit to the south. In the 1980s (Figure 14(b)), a major bypass road that crossed the main street was constructed by the Israeli authority where a tunnel was used on the junction area to ease movement of Israeli settlers to the adjacent colony ('Ateret).

'Atara represents an indigenous Palestinian village with its old town as the core of the land. The village follows an organic form, beginning with a developed hilltop that is integrated into the surrounding environment. Morphological elements in the village follow a different pattern (authentic), plots are of an irregular, organic form, and the main street follows the mountain ridge with limited open spaces.

According to Oliveira (2016), socioeconomic factors' impact on morphological elements within urban context could be related to density and centrality. These elements are interrelated with sprawl and compactness. In the case of Atara, the implications of socioeconomic factors on morphology can be linked to its origins as an old village with its

traditional approach of slow pace urban growth. Taking into consideration that it is a remote area away from the central city, and a dormitory town with minor job opportunities. The village is sprawling in a linear form following the major road leading to Ramallah where utility lines are available. The absence of centrality is due to the absence of commercial space or a plaza, where inhabitants buy their necessities from the city of Ramallah. The mosque yard is the central open space where roads and alleys radiate from, and it represents the only major public space in town. Building activity is conducted according to the inhabitants' needs on their own lands, and not in accordance with the market's needs.

Conclusion

Socioeconomic, geopolitical, and modern life requirements have drastically altered the conception of "urbanity." This study examines the changes in morphological elements from colonial and neoliberal projects in the W.B. It is evident that new urban forms (Colonies, new suburbs, refugee camps) introduced into the study area are losing the vernacular\traditional character of the spontaneous settlements that harm the natural and cultural landscape.

This paper presents a mosaic of different urban forms where local planning was affected by the newly-emerged Israeli settler colonial project. Similar geometry can be found in neoliberal local projects with different motivations driving these similarities. Al-Jalazon camp is a byproduct of colonial actions and geopolitical constraints, which introduced a different layout into the Palestinian landscape, characterized by its irregular and dense form. The only example that represents an authentic "unspoiled" morphology was 'Atara village, which maintains the original vernacular Palestinian form.

The planned layout of Rawabi shares most of those colonial/neoliberal footprints of Beit El, which include the street-layout, the division of plots, availability of open spaces, and street hierarchy. Rawabi is a real estate/corporate project with high density and a mixed use-center that achieves the idea of commodifying the land. Similarly to Israeli community settlements in the W.B. which are turned into suburban ones by commodifying space. By doing so, developers created an inviting suburban environment to attract upper and middle-class families to move to these areas. Schwake (2020), described this transformation as a "new financiallised environment completed the transition from the state-led reproduced urban environment of the 1950s and 1960, to the reproduced corporate-led quasi-urban landscape of the 2010s."

Figure 15 shows the four cases with their different morphological elements: i) Atara represents a traditional Palestinian village expanding from the center along the main road following the infrastructure lines with an organic form, land plots are irregular, streets follow the layout of the parcels, the town core consists of residential clusters around courtyards and the town is surrounded by agricultural fields. ii) Al jalzone represents a typical layout of refugee camps, which was created as an emergency solution for the displaced people, roads followed the plots assigned to the residents, irregular layout, piecemeal urban development with minimal open spaces. iii) Rawabi and Beit El represent another form, preplanned development, regular geometry, street hierarchy, commercial and semi-public spaces in the center, new layout among the surrounding urban and rural settings with intensified land use (Table 1).

Different colonial experiences in many nations show that colonialism has left its foot-print on the indigenous urban morphology. In this context, the rural/urban fabric within the selected cases varies drastically, as the land is constantly transformed from a productive element into commodity. The combination of neoliberal policy and the colonization of the W.B. led to the production and reproduction of a new urban landscape.

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