

City Image And Sustainable Urban Development (Case Study Ramallah): The Challenges For Urban Planer And Designer

¹Dr. Muain Qasem Jawabrah

Assistant professor of Architecture, Birzeit University

Abstract—Ramallah is a main medial city in the West Bank. It is considered as the administrative capital for the Palestinian authority areas in the current political situation; which has put an increasing extra pressure on its center that serves on a regional level and also national levels. The urbanization of Ramallah also the main cities in west Bank and Gaza strip seem to be "generative" rather than "parasitic." That is, the growth of Ramallah has been more of a stimulus than a hindrance to the economy. Residents of Ramallah have also been able to preserve familial ties and connections and Ramallah has been able to retain much of the cultural summer tourist Cal flavour it is famous for. This paper, on the one hand, offers a critical review of these images, plans, and the liminal spaces that they produce based on conceptual themes of perception and r e p r e s e n t a t i o n as a v i s u a l arrangement/control of knowledge. On the other hand, positioned upon the ideological representation of the city centre floats an informal and transient city of culture and public space whose tensions criticize the formal scheme of current urban planning and Design. Historical Overview shedding light on the current urban planning and design in the Ramallah City Center (RCC), in concerned with the problem of city image and city identity in urban planning and Design. This paper is intended to present how planning and urban design assessment and urban structure investigation might be articulated to provide an urban atmosphere that is beautiful, attractive, environmental, functional and able to hold the Palestinian life in a more descent appropriate way.

Keywords—City image, Cultural, Rapid urbanization, historical urban planning and Development.

1 Ramallah, location, climate, demography

Location

Ramallah is located in the approximate middle of the west bank of Jordan, between N31 52- N31-56 longitudinal, and E35 09-E35 14 laterally. it is elevated 870 m above sea level. The city of Ramallah is bounded by the town of Birzeit from the north, Jerusalem from the south, and its twin city El-Beireh from the east.

Climate:

The Ramallah district is influenced by the Mediterranean climate, a rainy winter and dry summer. Ramallah is a part of the hill region which have lower temperatures than other places in the west Bank. The mean annual rainfall on Ramallah district is 694 mm. this amount is distributed over 59 days, most of them is between November and February with infrequent snowfall. The city is influenced by western, north western wind.

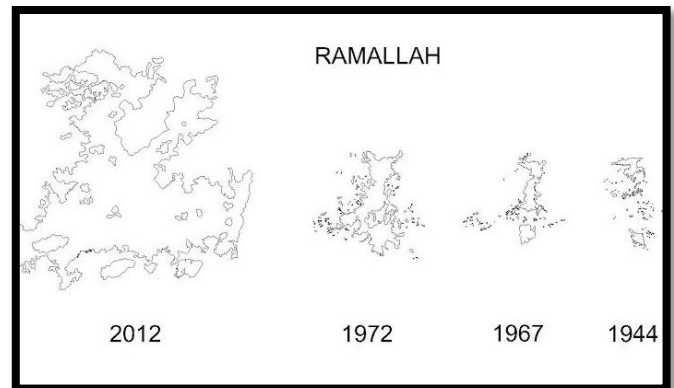


Fig. 1.: development of Ramallah rapid extension



Fig. 2: Ramallah 1948

a) Demography

According to the Palestinian central Bureau the population of Ramallah and El-Bireh in 2016 is approximately 72143 citizens, the centre of the city also serve a govern orate with 276 636 citizens according to the Palestinian ministry of planning. Many factors such like the immigration from city that began in the mid of the twentieth century, and the urbanization process that occurred after the

establishment of the Palestinian authority, contributed in creation a social mosaic community in the city.

(Palestinian Center Bureau, 2016)



Fig. 3: the location of Ramallah
(source, Google Earth)



Fig.4 Arial photo of Palestine (source, Google Earth)



Fig. 5 arial photo of Ramallah City
(source, Google Earth)

Ramallah, Physical morphology

1 Ramallah is located in a mountainous area. This had direct impact on the direction of the physical development of the city. The development and urban expansion in Ramallah follows the main regional road system connecting the city with surrounding roads such as the road to Birzeit in north. The core of the city began to grow from a flat area in the beginning eastward, connecting Al-Bireh city by Al-Manarah which consist the main center of Ramallah. This consist the central business district CBD of the twin cities. (Khamaisi, 2006)

2 c) Ramallah, Development

until 1960s Ramallah was a small christian locality, developed organically from a built up core, this village core was located about two miles west from the historical main road connecting north west-Bank through Jerusalem to south west-Bank. Historical Ramallah war built to the west- south of the curre.



Fig. 6 photo of Ramallah City Manara

3 "Ramallah Eltehta", where the old city complex and the old center acted as a main center for commercial, residential and later on some administrative activities,. At that time, the current location of the center was originally a newer residential extension with a small number of separated houses that build at the beginning of the 20th century.

4 In 1908 the municipally of Ramallah was established, while its population reached 3300 persons. The town expanded slowly without any official outline. In the mid 20 th Century the city suffered from negative immigration to the States, Europe, and Australia. During the Jordanian rule (1948-1967) Ramallah became a tourist destination. After 1950, and as a result of the continuous immigration, some houses were left empty in the current center area. These houses made an environment fro a new mixed use node to develop. This node was later developed to become the main CBD of Ramallah city. Citizens continued to evacuate the residential buildings to become commercial and offices buildings.

5 1 Since 1967 and until 1994, Ramallah came under the Israeli occupation. During this time Ramallah developed according to the master plan prepared during the British mandate and Jordanian period. The Israeli occupation planning policies, restriction, and limited resources decreased the possibility of rapid development. and it also prevented city expansion.

6 2 Following the pace process between Israelis and Palestinians in Oslo, the case of Jerusalem was delayed to the final stages. Ramallah as a result was developed as a temporary governmental center. Official institutions were founded in Ramallah imposing a rapid transformation and changes in the commercial, financial, and social fabric of the city, that lead to changes in th from of the CBD. There was no planing process that was ready to embrace these developments, a case that created many problems int central area. If we wand to write about the planning process of the city, we can start in 1997 when Ramallah municipality prepared a new outline plan for the city including the city center, this planning process was opened to the public. Public hearing session and discussion workshops were prepared to involve the

public participation. some of the problems this plan suffers were that the planning staff didn't adapt a systematic methodology for public participation. This plan was named Ramallah incremental outline 2005. The main principles of this plan were to a void the creation of another center that may compete with the current one, and to create a hierarchal transportation system between the center and the neighborhoods.



Fig. 7 f Ramallah City Block structure

A. City Centers, Definition, History, and types

7 Central business districts (CBD), downtowns, city centers or central areas, is the heart of the city where are the main administrative, shopping, business, and recreational activities. It's the main focal point to the community and it expresses its identity and culture. It's where the community meets, interact, and express their way of daily life. A CBD land use usually includes retail shopping areas, office buildings, hotels, theatres, and restaurants, financial institutions and governmental buildings. (Clair, 1969)

8 History and development

9 Since the first history, people tended to develop central places in where they met and performed the daily activities. Starting from the Greek time (800-300 B.C) central areas were represented by Agoras. The agora was mainly a marketplace and a place of assembly. Between (44 B.C- 476 A.D) the Roman cities developed around the central forums, in which commerce, business, cult and the administration of justice took place. Reaching the renaissance stages (14th- 16th) century central areas were represented by major piazzas surrounded by commercial, administrative, communal and religious buildings.

10 In the twentieth century, through World War I and World War II, most of European large city centers were severely destroys. As a consequence, residents left those centers looking for a safe appropriate place to live and work, as a result central areas were left evacuated. Following the wars, and as a part of the reconstruction process some of cities destroyed by wars decided to begin, centers were developed as commercial, offices, administrative and culture centers. Prior to the 20th century. Centre urban planning was centered on beatification and social reform. But as the century progressed and after was planning began to embrace the whole range of human geography; physical, social, economic, political and environmental. And with the rapid rise of the use of

automobiles the need appeared to start big schemes of roads networks to serve downtowns. These centers continued their development, reaching the twenty one century, central areas functions were becoming more and more complicated.

11 Due to the rapid development process that sometimes is not accompanied with planning processes, Modern Central areas re suffering major problems such like pollution, high traffic jams, and lack of organization in the same time they represent the economic core and the center of community activity, beside that they still represent the image of the city. From this, Authorities started to become more and more aware of such problem. New trends started to appear of what concerns solutions to the central area problem. They range from simply improving the facades and streets to a full range of revitalization and rehabilitation programs. And in some cases a total removal. (Burke. G, 1979) rise

12 From reviewing the history of central areas development, it's evident that central area most important role was always a place for people to meet, interacts and socializes. It always reflected the identity, culture, history, and power of cities and countries.

13 In terms of form, centers could be found in different forms, radial, centralized and grid based center. A linear form is also a familiar form.

14 In terms of function city centers could be classified as specialized and all-purpose centers. The classical idea of an urban center usually included the idea of specialization; concentrations of different activities could be separated in space: a commercial center, a civic center, an office center, and so on. The assumption behind this spatial segregation of central activities that each use will then have its most appropriate setting, not restricted by conflicting activities. But what if a user wanted to visit activities of different types? Travelling between separated specialized centers will leave him inconvenienced. Moreover, this separation will leave certain areas dead at certain hours while other areas are overcrowded. (Lynch, 1981)

15 Another concept suggests that the best center is one that is thoroughly mixed in uses where streets are full of people from all types seeking various services. Still this concept may run into realistic use conflicts in center area. (Lynch, 1981)

16 Most city centers exhibit both characteristics. The center as a whole is mixed in use, but is internally specialized, with transitions of mixed use between specialized areas. Uses can be packed in three dimensions, to improve both types of connection. (Lynch, 1981)

If we are going to criticize both types we could say that specialized centers makes using process easier, saves users time, and gives more competition among suppliers of the same good. But in the same time it

makes harder for the user to satisfy his needs from various different activities. It also lead centers to become dead and empty in particular times and seasons, while become more crowded in other hours and seasons. The mixed use centers are used through all the time and provide various different goods in the same place. But in order to make them function properly and avoid disorders and conflicts in supplying, there centers need to be thoroughly planned and carefully applied.

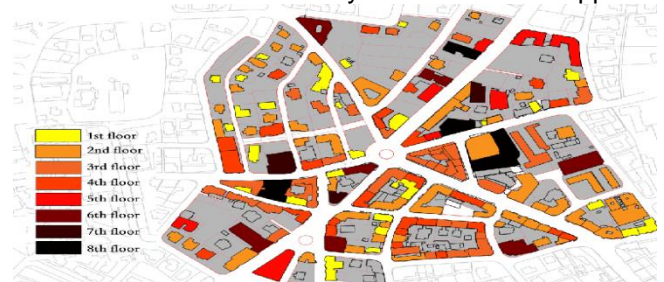


Fig. 8 Ramallah City floor structure

B. City Centers, Problems

Due to large development processes, high technology application in cities, and the increase of the number of world's population, cities are growing and so are its centers. If this growth is not accompanied with planning processes centers would start to suffer major problems. This case was experienced mostly in third world cities where centers are either becoming over crowded or totally evacuated. The following is a summary of some of these problems;

City center are narrow and inadequate for accommodating the great volumes of traffic and pedestrian going to it all the time, which lead a plenty of services and activities to be transformed to other parts of city. Land values in city centers are high and it's costly to provide adequate off-street parking and loading facilities. There are many different property owners that make it difficult to secure coordination in the development process. The modern outlying shopping centers with much free parking, attractive design, new technologies and proximity to residential sections are providing a great competition to the city center. City centers are too noisy, too confusing, and dangerous to pedestrians. Some enters are lacking open public spaces for people to rest and meet. High intensity uses are currently moving outward from the central area to follow the movement of population. In this process we are losing social meeting points. And the functional advantage of supporting interactivity in the center is disappearing. Approaches are confused, rarely any center have any visible connection to its surroundings. (Clair, 1969; Lunch, 1990; Robertson, 1999)

C. City Centers, Spaces and Elements

Public squares, parks, streets, pedestrian paths, shopping facilities, offices, residencies, etc. are some of elements among others that could be found in city

centres. In following some of these elements that are related to this study are discussed.



Fig.9 Ramallah City street structure

C.1. Public spaces in city centers: A square OR plaza

A square of plaza is an open urban public space; it's framed by buildings and designed to exhibit its buildings to the greatest advantage. Activity in square is important for its vitality and also for its visual attraction. The square of plaza is intended as an activity focus, at the heart of some intensive urban area. Typically, it will be paved, enclosed by high density structures, and surrounded by streets, or in contact with them. It contains features meant to attract people: fountains, benches, shelters, and alike. In some city centers, where the density of people in center is high enough, public squares and plazas have succeeded handsomely as places for meeting, resting, interacting, and socializing. (Moughtin, 1999; Lynch, 1981)

The public square is a culture and social destination for citizens and visitors, with a full range of dynamic activities available both during the day and the evening. It is supposed to be inviting, aesthetically pleasing, to human scale, and the pedestrian oriented. It's also invented to have a unique identity, and retain a sense of history. (Austin city connections, 2006)

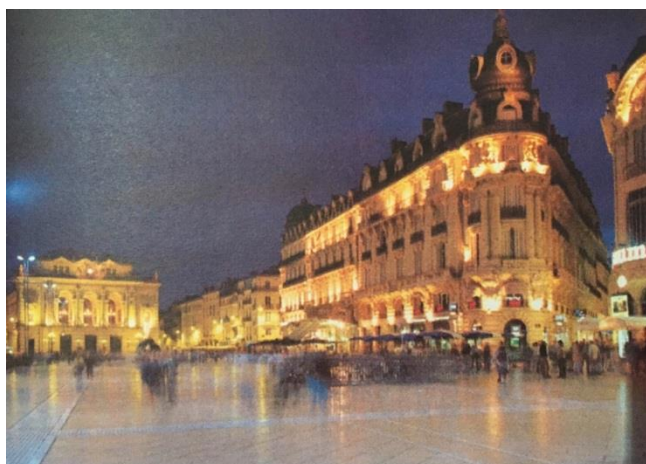


Fig.10 A square in London (Source: Corbis photography)

C.2. Traffic within CBD: Pedestrians and Automobiles

Due to the high importance of central areas, Center area must be highly accessible from all over the region. A major network of public transport must cover the entire region and also serve the center.

A variety of transport modes are in use in city centers. There are trains, moving walks and seats, escalators, buses, minibuses, tunnels, trucks, group taxis, horses, carts and wheel chairs; More often than not, people walk, cycle, or skate, using their own energy to get to their destinations. (Lynch, 1981)

Modal separations

As mentioned above, Modern cities use a very wide range of modes of transportation in central areas, Most of which travel together in the street channel. One idea had been to set up bounded areas within which motor vehicles would not be allowed to go through; pedestrian areas. Such areas are frequently created in historic city centers. The privacy, quiet, and safety of such zones are much valued. Accompany this scheme some standard problems always arise: the carriage of goods, the entrance of emergency vehicle, the relation to transit, and the relation to the parked vehicle to its owner.

A compromise concept is to allow autos to intrude at very low speeds, while giving the pedestrian an unrestricted right-of-way in the entire street space.

The other form of modal separation is linear. A path is restricted to one form of movement: the park way, bus lane, railroad line, the bike way, the foot path. Once specialized, a channel can be efficiently designed to fit its mode, and many conflicts can be avoided. (Lynch, 1981)

“A good public path or channel will Support the normal behavior of people: it will allow them to move and act with ease, to have access to what they need, and permit them to behave, if they wish, in a sociable manner. Promote their health, comfort, and safety; by protect them from an adverse climate, noise pollution, danger, and other types of stress. Engage and delight them by providing visual rhythm and continuity, express natural features, dramatize light, form, and view, create sequences, and exploit the esthetic potential of common street elements”. (Lynch, 1990)

C.2.1. The CBD pedestrian Environment

Pedestrian area is a safe, comfortable, and interesting environment that is particular placed for pedestrian uses where no autos are allowed to penetrate. Planners realized that pedestrian environment was needed to attract people back to the city center; downtowns without pedestrians look lifeless and boring. Whatever the quality of the built environment is. A complete separation of pedestrians and vehicles is desirable in high-density areas and in the center of a town where traffic is intense. Centers sidewalks and pedestrian paths are not just a road for

pedestrians; they function as social places where people gather to talk or meet friend, to stroll a window shop, or just to watch others pass by. It's also important to provide amenities that enhance these pedestrian activities. A sidewalk may be wide enough to accommodate pedestrian movement; it should also be wide enough to simultaneously accommodate seating, trees, bus shelters and other appropriate amenities. (PPS, 2006; Golany, 1976; Robertson, 1993)

C.2.2. Pedestrian friendly

Pedestrian friendly roads are roads where no other traffic is allowed of low speed limit for other traffic, possibly combined with priority for pedestrians over other traffic. These roads are characterized by wide sidewalks, narrow roadway, frequent pedestrian crossings, especially with priority for pedestrians, restrictions on

advertising material cluttering shopping streets, a partial of full roof to protect form precipitation. Pavement cafés that still leave enough room for walking are encouraged along these roads. Also, pedestrian-oriented retail buildings built to the edge of the sidewalk, transparent windows in buildings at street level, absence of parking between the sidewalks, sufficient shade. All these measures encourage street life. (Wikipedia, 2006)



Fig.11: A pedestrian friendly road in Lisbon. Portugal (Source: Corbis photography)

C.2.3. Parking in CBD

Providing adequate parking space is a challenge for towns planning especially in the center area. It is difficult to forecast the amount of parking space required for the center, which needs many parking facilities in order to function effectively. Parking garaged are needed in most central business districts, either as independent structures or combined with office buildings and commercial buildings. In consideration of downtown parking facilities, it is sometimes appropriate to include several different aspects of transportation in one building to obtain maximum use of area land. These facilities are known as transportation centers; they encompass several levels of parking, bus terminals, taxi stands, perhaps

underground rail transit, and several types of commercial shops available to patrons of facility. Thus, parking in the center area could take two forms: Street level parking: off street parking and parking bays. Multi-level car parks: multi story parking buildings and underground car parks. (Golany, 1976; Clair, William H. 1969)

But what if we see the problem of CBD parking spaces for another way; in some American cities, so much of the center had been cleared to make way for parking that there is more parking than there is city. Some cities have gone so far as to reach a tipping point. If they clear away any more of what's left, there would not be much reason to go there and park!!! (Tyler, 2005)

So, what will happen of no more parking is provided? This happened in some other American cities, in that case people tended to use public transportations, buses and trams, while others tended to walk. (Tyler, 2005)

"In cities most dominated by parking lots and parking garages a key civic issue is the lamentable lack of parking. Let me cite Dallas. It had the highest ratio of parking spaces to office space in the country. But studies continually call for more parking. supply has so conditioned demand that parking had become an end in itself, with people in a bondage to it more psychological than physical." (Tyler, 2005)

C.3. Commercials in Downtowns

Cities have discovered that shopping facilities can be an essential component of redeveloping this center. By using them as a way to generate more activity in nearby parks, streets, and buildings, public markets and shopping centers broaden the potential for public spaces beyond their own settings. Seeing other people, opportunities for spontaneous conversations, the unexpected sensory delights, this is what draws people back, again and again, to this favorite markets. But these qualities of spontaneity and sociability don't just happen; a good marked must be carefully planned as a public gathering place and managed within a sustainable business structure. (PPS, 2006)

Downtown shopping centers are generally vertically constructed – due to higher land costs – and the lack of free parking. Through time many types of downtown shopping centers emerged: vertical commercial buildings, horizontal commercial streets, commercial plazas, closed malls, pedestrian malls, and etc. (Robertson, 1995).



Fig.12

A one type of commercial facilities that have proven a success in downtowns where it was implemented especially in the United States is the pedestrian mall. Pedestrian malls are shopping spaces that provide convenience, access and safety; they also provide a comfortable pedestrian environment that separate people from automobiles. Three basic types of pedestrian malls were generally known, the most common being the traditional pedestrian street where automobiles are strictly forbidden. Most malls constructed during the 1960s and 1970s were for pedestrians only. When pedestrian volume was light, however, these malls lacked vitality. To increase activity levels, some centers implemented shared malls or transit malls. A shared mall permits limited automobile use, usually one lane of one-way traffic; the remainder of the right-of-way is for pedestrians. A transit mall features a pedestrian corridor that also allows transit vehicles. (Robertson, 1993)

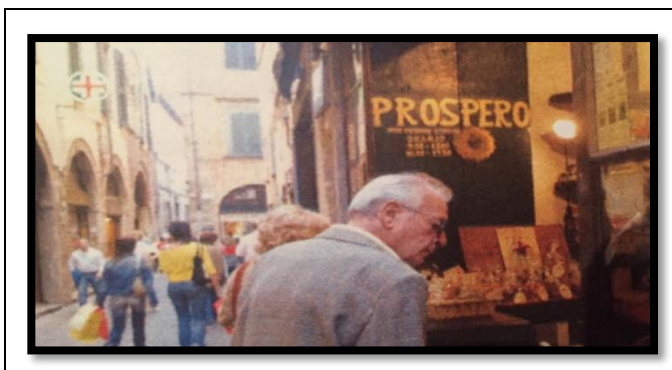


Fig.13 Window shopping is a great leisure in downtowns. (Corbis photography)

Site study and analysis

The center of Ramallah is located to the Northwestern edge of Ramallah City – on the top of a hill, nearly on a flatted area – on a node that kinks three main and regional roads “Nablus -Jerusalem Street Betunia and Al-Bireh main Road” and it is also connected with direct streets for nearly all the city neighborhoods. In fact, that leads to cross circulation through the center that causes in rush hours. “See figure (Analyses. 1)

There are many nodes appeared around the center, either administrative like ministries and Al-Muqata which have been existed since the British mandate, or commercial nodes which appears around the center to serve the neighboring residential districts, and this reflects a new trend of spontaneous responding to the central area problems and the nodes expansion, which in the same time is competing with the center itself. See figure (Analyses. 2)

Ramallah CBDs fabric is an ordinary city center fabric; it is denser in the central nodes (around Al-Manara, Rukab, and Yaser Arafat squares) and defragment around them. It also has some gaps near Al-Manara, because the random development in this center and the new building boom that started in 1995, which now is reduced under the shadow of al-Intifada in 2002. Another problem is the high land value in the center that affects the gaps in the fabric around Al-Manara area, and increase building heights and the concentration of development especially on the edges of CBD and the sounding nodes See figure (Analyses. 3).

The land use in the CBD is misleading; there are many contradictions between the functions, like handicrafts are alongside clothes markets. etc. Also the use of the center vegetables market located in front of the Central Mosque and in the heart of the center is not suitable. In addition to the bad residential units above the street level, and bad image of the shops and old residential buildings, this almost seem as slums Area See figure (Analyses. 5,6,7)

The transportation system in the center is currently vehicular, depending mostly on one way street system which gives more organization for the flow and less congestions in the junction.

But this system is ignoring the pedestrian to the maximum; also the main arterials of the city are crosses through the CBD, which initiates more traffic pressure on the center. See figure (Analyses. 8)

The transportation network in the center is mainly vehicular, the center naturally experiencing a heavy pedestrian load, that leads to uncomfortable environment for the users and losing the leisure from the shopping event. See figure (Analyses. 9)

Most of the transportation problems in Ramallah's CBD are an effect of the bad management of this system. For example, the area of the parking lots and parking buildings seems sufficient See figure (Analyses. 10). But many of them are not easily accessible and used as stations for the Collectable taxis as public transportation at the same time. Also a large number of side street parking and the parking area inside the CBD which is supposed to serve the customers and visitors of the center is used by the shopkeepers and the employees.

Another main reason for the transportation system failure in the center is the own street taxi station,

behind the national and regional transportation station, which is located in key location inside the CBD. See figure (Analyses. 10)

Other major issue of Ramallah center is it lackness of any open public space for people to meet and relate. The green structure is also absent, the downtown main importance is to present he image of the city; this doesn't happen in the center of Ramallah.

Conclusion Concepts and guidelines

1. Use vertical zoning in CBD to increase the efficiency of space usage.
2. Reduce the traffic jam and congestions in the CBD
3. Create efficient parking system
4. Developing the public transportation
5. Create a pedestrian friendly CBD, where pedestrian are a priority.
6. Provide a better management of uses in CBD
7. Create public places and green areas in CBD
8. Develop "development and building regulation" that are based on contextual design concept; to enhance unified identity in cent.
9. Framework and strategies
Resolving the transporting problems in the centre
10. Collecting the regional and national transportation station in to two main stations
11. Changing many sections of the BCD streets to pedestrian paths, shared surfaces and a like.

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