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1. Introduction

The rapid transformation of the built environment in the contemporary city in developing countries has had a significant effect on public life as well as on the language of co-existence between the city and its people and between the people themselves.

This research discusses the case of Ramallah, the Palestinian city which is now going through an accelerating development after the signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1994 and the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). This significant change has been reflected on its physical and social environment.

According to Hassan and Zetter (2002) the speed of urban transformation in developing countries is distinctively different from the one in the industrial countries where it is gradual and within “a highly urbanized national framework”.

Bernardo Jiménez-Deominquez (2007) argues that the speed of urbanization in the case of Latin American cities, for example, creates a “process of disappropriation” which leads to a tightening of the public spaces where many people, mainly the poorest, become detached.

However, this is not a study of the urban product of modern functional planning, the well-ordered and predictable spaces that are easy to control. It is rather an exploration of emerging boundaries and existing constraints in a heterogeneous urban space which is now going through a process of transformation, organization, and polarization. And consciously or not, there is a great possibility that this will create fragments of “distinct and homogenous life-styles attributed to fixed locations”. When social polarization becomes spatially reflected, or when spatial

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4 Cupers, K & M. Miessen (2002) Spaces of Uncertainty, Wuppertal: Varlag Müller + Busmann | Wuppertal
transformation becomes socially reflected, certain classes of society, mainly the poor, become excluded; their mobility becomes restricted and they feel confined to the leftover static space⁵.

However, for some, these slow marginalized leftovers are the city’s uncontrolled loose spaces which allow the existence of difference. There, in the “ill-defined” spaces and margins, everyday life is the generator of activities that are highly creative and of a heterogeneous character⁶.

This research investigates all this in the rapidly changing city of Ramallah, particularly in its public realm where a comparison is drawn between the organized and the loose, the fluid and the static.

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Figure 1: Fluid space vs. slow space
Above: Blackstock Road, London (by Joanne Valasidis)
Below: City center, Ramallah (by Eyas Jaber & Reem Jodeh)
2. Context and opportunity

The complexity and the contradictions accompanying Ramallah’s recent urban development, which will be shown in this thesis, might be an opportunity to create a more complex approach to understanding the relation between social-spatial change and the maintenance of moments of coexistence that could hold the city together and avoid its fragmentation. In the research I explore the public space in Ramallah as the main tool for preserving a still-existing social tolerance and heterogeneity. A shared urban space that could be appropriated by different users. A space for new opportunities and possibilities for change.

Many of the studies which I found relevant to my subject area highlight unconventional public spaces in western cities with activities that could be described as unplanned, temporary, disruptive, unfamiliar and sometimes socially unacceptable. In other words, spaces which are not “aesthetically and behaviorally controlled and homogeneous”\(^7\). Other studies looked outside the western realm in the chaos and disorder of many cities which modern urban planning hasn’t reached\(^8\).

Generally, the cited studies engage in the discourse of the resistance by informal socio-economic everyday practices against the capitalism. In the case of Ramallah the discourse goes beyond this into another form of resistance against another form of power. The research also highlights the existence of cultural codes controlling the spatial practices even in the urban spaces which could be seen chaotic.

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\(^7\) - Cupers, K. & M. Miessen (2002) *Spaces of Uncertainty*, Wuppertal: Varlag Müller + Busmann|Wuppertal –

While many cities in developing countries with high population growth and low incomes could not cope with this rapid urbanization, in the case of Ramallah, the socio-political transformation has been going in parallel, possibly even ahead, of the physical one.

Ramallah, since the beginning of the 20th century, has been a point of arrival and departure for Palestinians. Even before the 1948 catastrophe (the turning point in the history of Palestinians), Ramallah was not a homogenous community. However, social differences began to appear after the arrival of thousands of Palestinian refugees who fled their homes following the 1948 war. According to Lisa Taraki, The immigration of Ramallah’s natives and the arrival of the refugees and other immigrants over the last century did not contribute to establishing local elites; instead, there was a continuity of middle class which articulated the openness of the city and its modern and secular outlook. Many of the diverse influences that have come together to make the present reality of Ramallah/al-Bireh were thus in place by the 1970s.

After the formation of the PNA, Ramallah became the Palestinian administrative and cultural center. Now, and despite the small population of 60,000, Ramallah “shares critical features with much larger Arab metropolis, most notably the heterogeneity of the population; the growing social disparities and their normalization; and the globalized, modernist urban ethos articulated by a new middle class.” Taraki claims that the arrival of the “returnees” who brought with them modern outlooks and lifestyles from Arab capitals have made their imprint on the cultural and social scene in Ramallah in a way that clashed with the existing culture of resistance against a still-existing occupation.

Mourid Barghouti (2000), whose name will appear repeatedly in this document, gives an insight about those returnees and the uncertainty that always accompanied all events in the history of Palestinian:

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12 A returnee is a Palestinian who came to the West Bank and Gaza after 1994 under the terms of the Oslo Accords. Most of the returnees are refugees who were expelled from their cities and villages in 1948 and joined the Palestinian Liberation Organization.
“In the disaster of 1948 the refugees found shelter in neighboring countries as a ‘temporary’ measure. They left their food cooking on stoves, thinking to return in few hours. They scattered in tents and camps of zinc and tin ‘temporarily’. The commandos took arms and fought from Amman ‘temporarily’, then from Beirut ‘temporarily’, then moved to Tunis and Damascus ‘temporarily’. We drew up interim programs for liberation ‘temporarily’ and they told us they had accepted the Oslo Agreements ‘temporarily’, and so on, and so on. Each one said to himself and to others ‘until things become clearer’.”

Parallel to this social change, there were also mass construction activities that took place following the slow pace of urbanization due to the restrictions imposed by the occupation. For Palestinians, time has always been a card played against them. For decades, their villages remained static and their cities were turned back into villages. Many Palestinian intellectuals, from cinematographers like Elia Suleiman, to poets like Mourid Barghouti, to writers like Raja Shehada have discussed in their works the statics of time in the Palestinian built environment in comparison to a vanishing surrounding landscape taken by the other side.

Mourid comments on that:

“Let us be frank: when we lived in the village did we not long for the city? Did we not long to leave small, limited, simple Deir Ghassanah for Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Nablus? Did we not wish that those cities would become like Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, and Beirut? The longing always for the new age…The occupation forced us to remain with the old. That is its crime.”

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14 In his trilogy chronicle of a disappearance (1996), Divine Intervention (2002), and The Time That Remains (2009) Suleiman plays on the notion of an elongated vertical time by many Palestinians such as the ones in his hometown Nazareth as being entrapped in a non-changing socio-political situation. On the other hand, Ramallah shown in his two latest films was always an example of resistance. In his cinematography, he depicts the “pleasure and everyday life” in the city as a form of resistance against occupation. Interview with Elia Suleiman in Cannes 22 May 2009, Er, At, Salut l’Artiste prod retrieved from http://vimeo.com/4846805

Figure 2: Time-urban morphology – Social and urban change in Ramallah in the last 100 years.
3. Theories

My theoretical framework basically looks beyond the conventional notion of open space as a publicly owned space, designed and maintained to serve particular kinds of activities, which will be seen soon in Ramallah. Many theorists are now trying to define another type of public space which Karen Frank and Quentin Stevens (2007) call “loose space”. Loose space is a space that has been appropriated by citizens to pursue activities not set by any predetermined program. This perception of public space suggests that a certain amount of uncertainty and spontaneity can break the monotony of modern urban spaces and encourage new and inventive uses and new social encounters. More importantly, it brings to attention the hidden potential of forgotten places in the city tagged as chaotic and disordered.

Loose spaces could exist anywhere; they could be leftover spaces, usually publically owned but without any assigned functions. They could be abandoned spaces lying outside the “rush and flow” as well as the control of regulations and surveillance. They could also be spaces that possess particular physical features that invite people to appropriate them for their own uses. They are usually free of symbolism.

The activities carried out in such places are also loose and temporary with no assurance of continuity; they could be disruptive, unfamiliar, unexpected, ambiguous, confusing and sometimes socially unacceptable.

In their article ‘Urban Slippage: Smooth and striated streetscape in Bangkok’, Kim Dovey and Kasama Polakit presented three levels on which a space could be described as loose: looseness of forms, of functions and of meanings.

In the looseness of forms, a blurring between the architecture and the furniture and the loose parts which move with a high level of flexibility, create visual complexity in culturally specific streetscapes. In the looseness of functions, a multiplicity of functions for a space, either at the same time or at different times, where one function may slip into another or be camouflaged within it, also creates a certain amount of open-endness for the space.

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The last level, the looseness of meaning, is the most important one because it creates tension between the spatial practices and the codes of control due to “instabilities of symbolic connotations and identity”. The shifts between the sacred and the secular, the formal and the informal, or the public and the private could be examples of how the spatial practices could defy existing cultural codes.

Play is a key practice in the public space in general and in the loose space in particular. Stevens introduces play as a social practice which is non-instrumental and contrasted with productive work and long-term purposes. It often involves encounters with the different. One form of play is described by Lefebvre as the “non-everyday in the everyday”\(^{18}\). Whether this type of play is highly visible in the urban scene in Ramallah or not, a large number of private places for entertainment is emerging in the city. This is a current controversial topic of discussion among Palestinians who have started to see Ramallah as a bubble city living the concept of normalcy in an abnormal context.\(^{19}\) The play and pleasure in everyday practices, which had been considered as a form of resistance against occupation, has been recently overshadowed by other forms of play assigned to new fixed, determined locations, by a new emerging middle and upper class which has adopted a more modern and secular ethos.

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\(^{19}\) See Ramallah Syndrome: a sound installation by Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti which was part of the collateral event Palestine c/o Venice in the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009 According to Hilal and Petti: “Ramallah Syndrome is the side effect of the new spatial and social order that emerged after the collapse of the Oslo ‘peace process’. It is manifested in a kind of ‘hallucination of normality’, the fantasy of a co-existence of occupation and freedom. It is as if the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state – in effect, indefinitely postponed – will be achieved through pure illusion. The consequence of this perpetual persistence of a colonial regime has not been sufficiently discussed. The colonial legacy is a vital link in national identity, and it must be resolved. Ramallah Syndrome is ultimately about the critique and potentiality associated with forms of resistance and subjugation in a colonial context.”

Figure 3: Mapping looseness in Ramallah
College students at their high school yard making a model of a flotilla to participate in a demonstration at al-Manarah Square against the flotilla attacks on 31 May 2010 and siege on Gaza. Afterwards, they walked through the city center to the Turkish International Cooperation and left the ship there.
Photos by: Yara Abbas
Figure 4: Mapping looseness in Ramallah
Friday Prayer in Abdul Nasser Mosque near the vegetable market where boundaries between the mosque, street, and shops disappear Friday noon
Photos by: Farah Jodeh
Figure 5: Mapping looseness in Ramallah
Looseness of forms in the city center
Photos by: Eyas Jaber and Reem Jodeh
4. Design methodology

The design in this thesis is not a physical one; it is instead a representation of parallel narratives which explores the notion of public space in Ramallah. These narratives are spatial stories told by characters, real and imaginary, about their search for loose moments and spaces in the transforming city. The work itself is not objective; it is rather a collection of subjectivities which could come together to form an existing or a desired image of the city. It is a search into memory, experience and identities which could also reveal a more proactive response to the city such as appropriation, domination and resistance. These are the filters and tactics described by I. Borden, J. Rendell, J. Kerr, and A. Pivaro as “ways in which we negotiate the distance between the city and the self”20.

To tie down the loose document, three characters are chosen who in one way or another, experience the city transformation and are affected by it, directly or indirectly:

- Emad, a character from the film “Salt of this Sea”, a refugee living and working in Ramallah whose ultimate ambition is to go study in Canada.
- Myself, as someone who came from an Arab capital (Amman, Jordan) to live in Ramallah after the creation of the PNA at the age of 15.
- The poet Mourid Barghouti who was born and raised in Ramallah then left it for 30 years to come back right after the creation of the PNA.

The characters are being developed in this research within the above theoretical framework in order to serve the aim of this project. Their original contexts are important for revealing their existing situation, but they might also be dislocated from their original settings in order to explore or tackle issues closely relevant to the research subject area.

4.1 Emad

This fictional character in the film *Salt of This Sea* by Anne-Marie Jacir is a Palestinian refugee born and raised in al Am‘ari refugee camp in Ramallah. Although Emad is not the main character in the film, Jacir tries to capture through his eyes a growing frustration and bitterness of the ordinary people in Ramallah, firstly, from the open air prison created by the occupation, and secondly, by the paradox of a city prospering at the expense of other marginalized places in the Palestinian Territories and in Ramallah itself. In the film, Emad feels excluded from the new cultural and social life that only certain sections of Ramallah’s society enjoys. In one scene, he and his friend are trying desperately to get into a private cultural event at the only theatre and cinamatheque in the city.

In his spatial story I try to highlight what Lisa Taraki called “a changing of relative coexistence” between him and the city. His narrative is presented through series of scenes of key moments from his childhood in the camp from the early 90’s until the present time. In going back to the past, I try to give a glimpse of the small town with a small heterogeneous community living under a military administration with no local municipality governing the city’s public services.

His narrative is presented through series of scenes. These explore his experience in the public spaces in the city. In one scene, Emad and his friends are playing football in one of the streets inside the refugee camp; the scene shows their negotiation with the passing cars. In the following scene, expressing their desire to play football in a proper playground, Emad and his friends start their journey sneaking into the private schools in the city. During their search for a playground they realise that all the kids and teenagers in Ramallah, from all backgrounds including students from those schools themselves, have the same problem. A few of them join him and his friends in their hunt. Being only 10 years old, Emad and his friends give up searching as all the playgrounds are taken over by teenagers. They end up making their own playground in some empty neglected land somewhere far from the city center.

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21 The film tells the story of Soraya, born into a working-class community of Palestinian refugees in Brooklyn, who discovers that her grandfather’s savings were frozen in a bank account in Jaffa when he was exiled in 1948. Stubborn, passionate, and determined to reclaim what is hers, she fulfils her life-long dream of “returning” to Palestine. Slowly she is taken apart by the reality around her and is forced to confront her own anger. She meets Emad, a young Palestinian whose ambition, contrary to hers, is to leave forever. Tired of the constraints that dictate their lives, they know that in order to be free, they must take things into their own hands, even if it is illegal.


Like many cities in the Middle East like Amman, Beirut and Damascus, and being a Christian village since the 16th century, Ramallah has several private schools which were established by the Western church for missionary purposes after mid 19th century. These schools played a role in enhancing the educational life in the city. Regardless of the fact that they are private, these schools, in addition to few other public ones, have the largest open spaces located in the heart of the city. Their closeness to the city center is a main factor for the social heterogeneity in the center, in spite of the fact that many of these students, coming from different parts of the city, are from the middle and upper class.

Later on, the character will be followed in his current life in Ramallah in order to show other forms of space appropriation and his response to the certain forms of exclusion.

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The sea is over there
Over there, where the houses and the buildings are.
Not the settlement, forget it
It’s far over there
That’s Tel Aviv
And the sea is behind it
I haven’t been to the sea for 17 years

Figure 6: Film stills and dialogue: Emad and Soraya in the outskirts of Ramallah looking west at the coast.
Source: Salt of This Sea 2008, film, Augustus Film, Clarity Productions, JBA Production, Louverture Films, Mediapro, Philistine Films, Tarantula, and Thelma Film
Figure 7: Going back to Emad’s childhood to search for loose moments and spaces like the playground they created in a neglected land plot.
4.2 Lana

Lana’s spatial story starts in Amman, the city which she always felt divided into two parts: an eastern part for the poor and a western one for the rich. The fragmented experience where clear boundaries are drawn between social classes changed once she moved to Ramallah in 1999 (5 years after the Oslo accords and the formation of the PNA, and at the age of 15. For her, the heterogeneity in the city was an opportunity and a possibility for change and progress, or so she believed as a newcomer before realizing that boundaries, although being blurred and hard to define, also exist in this small city.

Her urban experience in Ramallah is reflected through a series of daily or weekly walks from certain places to home. The chosen places are: her first school, her second school, the French Cultural Center, First Ramallah Group²⁴, Sakakini Cultural Center, and Riwaq, a Center for Architectural Conservation where she worked for 2 years. Those places are chosen for their role in exposing Lana to the cultural and the social life in Ramallah.

The walks themselves are in chronological order, as are Emad’s. They show how the character’s perception of the city developed over time. The walking experience itself was something new, coming from a city where people became inseparable from their cars. For her, this closeness to the bustling street life of the city center, then the intimacy of the residential neighborhoods and orchards, was all new. Slowly, the walks start to reveal a complexity in three levels, visual, functional and social, and examine the “open-endness” and looseness mentioned before in the theoretical background.

Lana’s walks show a progression in exploring part of the cultural and social life in the city on the one hand, and a disconnection from part of the everyday public space on the other. The linear expression of these walks is a statement of a fluid urban experience but one which has no places for her to stop in the public space because she finds it socially inaccessible due to the masculine domination there.

Therefore, after few walks one notices that she avoids certain places, or she walks on the margins of certain spaces. She starts exploring a new type of social space: the one provided by the emerging cultural centers of the city.

²⁴ First Ramallah Group is a Palestinian NGO which was founded in 1930 interested in social and community work.
Figure 8: Mapping Lana’s walks
Figure 10: Section of Lana’s walk from her school walking through the city center. This scene shows two different types of urban space, the school yard and the street corner a 100m away from the school.
4.3 Mourid

The third character is the Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti who was born and raised in a village close to Ramallah. He also lived in the city for a while before leaving to study in Egypt in 1966. After the 1967 war, it was impossible for Mourid to get a permission to go back the West Bank. From that moment, he became part of the Palestinian Diaspora until he managed to get back after 30 years right after the creation of the PNA\textsuperscript{25}. One of the reasons for choosing this character is the transiting phase from the rule of military administration to the rule of the Palestinian authority which he describes. Many of his reflections on how he found Ramallah in 1996 after 30 years of absence try to foresee the present Ramallah in which Emad and I live today.

In his book \textit{I saw Ramallah} he considers himself a stranger in his own city. His position as an insider and an outsider at the same time makes his spatial story more reflective rather than proactive. In his book, Mourid repeatedly blames the occupation for being an obstacle to the development of Palestinian cities. Finding parts of the city the way they were 30 years ago could be comforting for someone who is looking for traces for a previous life in the city. But for Mourid, he was more concerned in seeing the city moving forward after 30 years of stillness.

“...This, then, is Ramallah of the nineties, not Ramallah of the sixties. I would not have understood its new details without my friends’ explanations. It is natural that the look of the city should change in the eye of one who has been absent for a long time. My friends are troubled by the concrete high-rises that have appeared everywhere. Ramallah, for its people, is the houses roofed with apricot-coloured tiles and the gardens surrounding them, the parks with their fountains, Broadcasting street (or Lovers’ Street, as we used to call it) with its high trees on either side, looking over green hills that ended on the Palestinian coast, whose lights twinkled on clear nights. I did not share their troubled feelings – this is the way of development and the price for the growth of the city. In fact, our hatred of the Occupation is essentially because it arrests the growth of our cities, of our societies, of our lives. It hinders their natural development.”

The distance between him and the city, unlike Emad and Lana, allows him to have a more comprehensive view of the city which backs up the historical urban and social changes in the city already described:

“…Ramallah is odd. Many cultures, many faces. Never a masculine or a solemn city. Always first to catch on to some new craze …Ramallah, distributed over these green hills, has a feel of a village… Families know each other individually. Most passersby in its streets call each other by name. When large numbers of people who had returned with the new Palestinian Authority gathered here, it started gradually to take on one feature of the city, which is by its nature the meeting place for strangers. But the interesting thing about Ramallah or Bireh is that strangers here are not strangers at all. They are the absent sons afflicted by displacement, the sons of the cities.”

Mourid’s personal experience in the city shows one similar to Lana’s in that he explores new activities in different places. His photographic memory is a window to urban memory of lifestyle, culture and place:

“In Ramallah I saw the dabka as though I were in Deir Ghassanah. And there, in my teenage years, I learned to tango. In al-Anqar billiard hall I learned to play snooker. In Ramallah I started to try my hand in poetry, and in the Walid and Dunya and Jamil Cinemas I grew to love movies. In Ramallah I grew used to celebrating Charismas and the New Year…And in Ramallah I came to know demonstrations for the first time in my life.”

4.4 Document layout

The document is a set of narratives that are interwoven around places rather than times. Emad and Lana’s narratives are in chronological order while Mourid’s descriptions and reflections jump between the past and the present as remarks supporting or contradicting their stories.

The narratives are divided into 8 parts:

- ARRIVAL, DEPARTURE, AND IMPRISONMENT
- URBAN EXPLORATIONS
- URBAN NEGOTIATIONS
- EMERGING BOUNDARIES
- PLAY
- GROWING DISPARITIES
- HE WHO IS LEFT BEHIND
- RESISTANCE IS THE QUEST FOR DIFFERENCE?

In this document the three characters wander all over the city experiencing different types of public spaces where they feel included or excluded or neutral. From streets to orchards to the refugee camp to school yards to the outskirts of the city to street corners, to taxi stations, to the...
vegetable markets, to cultural centers, to commercial building entrances, to al-Manarah square, to the old city of Ramallah, to parks and to fancy restaurants and coffee shops. Some of these spaces would have not been so visible if designed public spaces existed in the city.

The shift from one character to another is a way to show the complexity and contradictions of the fourth invisible character that is Ramallah. While Lana’s character is shown as progressive, although feeling excluded from the everyday public space, Emad’s is shown as being stuck in this everyday space and excluded from the new emerging cultural and social spots. Both in the end decide to take a more proactive role in the urban space where they feel excluded.

5. Media

The document is a collection of drawings, text, film stills, and photographs. Different representational techniques are chosen to present the three characters.

Mourid’s narratives and reflections are represented by text to show a more “visually-neutral” character.

Lana’s walks are represented through 2-dimensional streetscape drawings of different scales depicting certain moments of the walk which she finds significant. Her drawings are more subjective portrayals than accurate drawing of existing streetscapes. Sometimes, the architecture is dominant, and sometimes the details of the people and the street furniture overshadow the buildings to highlight space appropriation rather than the built environment.

Maps on the other hand, are also used in Lana’s narratives to give a more objective insight on the urban context of the city. While in most figure-ground maps the white colour represents the void and the black colour represents the solid, in Lana’s case it is the opposite. In her walks, voids lying on both sides of the streets were coloured in black to show the amount of void the city despite the on-going rapid urbanization. Openness is still what characterizes Ramallah and the need for public space goes beyond the need for an escape from a dense urban fabric. In the walk maps, one also notices big chunks of land property which themselves reveal sides of the urban stories.

Lana’s drive in the last chapter is represented by video stills compressed in a linear arrangement not only to create a complete streetscape but also to show the human body language in response to different spatial situations; proactive and reactive, moving and static.
Emad’s early scenes are more of an insertion of the character into a three dimensional space where he appropriates the space with his activities and objects. Most of the background scenes are existing ones in different parts of the city. Dialogues are also added to highlight a more proactive role than Lana’s and Mourid’s. Later on, film stills replace the drawings to show his current struggle and feelings of frustration. In his last scene Emad goes back to the three-dimensional scenery to intervene in an urban space which through its surrealism portrays the absurdity of reality.

The text, which takes up a large amount of the document, is divided into three levels; the personal, the descriptive, and the reflective. The shift between the three levels is an attempt to link the subjective and a more objective portrayal of an urban and social context. Most of the theories and concepts which are mentioned in this report are brought up in the document.
6. Conclusion

In identifying public space, accessibility is a key issue. In this thesis, social, political, and economics boundaries are looked at to point out that physical accessibility is not the main element in defining a space as public.

In exploring the spatial activities taking place in the public space, different forms are found in relation to production, consumption and entertainment. The relation between the three forms is also a key issue in identifying the role of public space; how entertainment is related or separated from the everyday, how some forms of it could be site-specific or only linked to consumption, or how it could be hardly seen when people are imprisoned in a certain social, political and economic conditions.

Play in the public spaces of Ramallah is explored in the context of resistance and normalcy. The ‘loose space’-type play, which is highlighted in the spatial stories, is an important political and social outlet which breaks the monotony of an unchanging past, present and probably future. However, the pursuit of happiness or the “joie de vivre” was not always a manifestation of resistance against occupation. It became so when new life-styles and social values emerged in Ramallah after the post-Oslo urban and social changes. The problem is not the new form of resistance itself; it is rather who does it, how and where. The phenomenon in Ramallah indicates that play is becoming another reason for growing disparities between people who are still struggling for the same cause.

There is a clear emphasis on exploring an existing urban life through spatial practices rather than the physical setting. This is not to undermine the importance of the physical space in the urban experience. However I believe without understanding the socio-political and the socio-economic dimensions of the spatial practices taking place in the urban space, it is not possible for planners and architects to enhance the quality of such context. Would Lana feel more included in the street if the municipality provided benches and vegetations at al-Manarah Square? Or would Emad feel less excluded if the cinema-tech’s doors were open in that private-show night?

Last, I believe that the levels of complexity in such a small urban context like Ramallah are reflected on the public space there and on the perception of its users. Physical disorder, openness, and sometimes vagueness of cultural codes in some of the spaces mapped in this work show that there are traces of looseness in the public scene in Ramallah.

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