Challenges of urban planning in Palestine

Taher J.T. Moghayer[1], Daget Yidnekachew Tesmamma[2], Wang Xingping[3]*

School of Architecture, Southeast University, No.2, Sipailou Road, Nanjing, 210096, China

E-mail: Tmct_1990@hotmail.com, tesmammay@gmail.com, wxpsx2000@sina.com (Corresponding Author)

Abstract. For the last two centuries, Palestinian territory had faced several changes. This is due to historical precedents and the unstable political situation in the area. This has resulted in mutli-faced challenges in Palestine. The objective of this paper is to analyse and understand the major factors that had impacted the urban planning, urban form and urban development of the Palestinian territory. The findings showed that the lack of available land, rapid urban population growth, failure in urban planning policy decisions, the unstable political situation on the ground, fragmented urban developments in the west bank area, and also diffusion of urban sprawls within the landscapes and around the cities are the major factors that caused challenges in Palestine's cities.

1. Introduction

During the last two centuries, Palestinian cities experienced planning and regulation of its urban development under five different rules. These rulers are the Ottoman Turkey rule, the British Mandate, Jordanian rule, Israeli Occupation and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Each ruler left their footprints on the land and contributed to the recent shape and physical spatial structure of the Palestinian cities. It had also substantial impact on the growth pattern and the quality of life for its population.

As of 2006, there were about 4 million people living in the Palestine territory. Out of the total population, 2.5 million of them were in the West Bank areas whereas the rest 1.5 million were in Gaza Strip. In, 2015, the population became nearly 5 million. It is estimated that in the year 2020, the total population of the West Bank and Gaza will be nearly 6 million. Gaza and Hebron are the largest cities along the Gaza strip and West Bank areas respectively [1].

2. Back ground

Historically, the various political systems under the former ruler of the Palestine land had influenced the urban planning policies. Since the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman had ruled the Palestine land until the British took control of the land in 1917. From 1948-1967, the Jordanian Kingdome had controlled areas in the West bank, and the Egyptian had also conquered areas along the Gaza Strip. In 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in addition to Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula [2]. After the Israeli occupation in 1967, local authorities were formed with in the existing inter-mix community. This led the authorities to be under the framework of the political and directorial dependency of the central authorities. This reduced the mandate of the authorities in the provision of services including preparation of urban development and structural plans. In addition, the authorities failed to fulfill the needs and desires of the Palestinian community to get a quality service.

Content from this work may be used under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 licence. Any further distribution of this work must maintain attribution to the author(s) and the title of the work, journal citation and DOI.
Published under licence by IOP Publishing Ltd

In 1993, as a result of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) started to gradually occupy and rule some cities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But, in 2000, the West Bank came under Israeli control once again after the second Intifada. Generally, from the Ottoman rule to the present, the planning and political processes of each regime has left its foot print on Palestine land with regard to land use, urban form, urban morphology, and in its urban development of the urban areas in the Palestine land [3].

3. The Ottoman Period (1850-1917)

In 1858, the ottoman had prepared and enforces a tax code on every piece of land. It was achieved by clearly establishing the title to the land by registering its legal owner. Most of the land was owned and managed by the state. Large proportions of the area were used for religious and charitable activities and the rest was controlled by the regional commander.[2] The boundary of many towns and villages were expanded through the sprawling and annexation of farming places from the surrounding areas. In 1923, nearly 75 percent of the lands previously owned by the state were controlled by individuals who lived in towns. However, building and road development permit regulations were established for towns and regional development, the physical regulations did not give proper consideration for the physical, economic and social aspects [4].

4. The British Mandatory Period (1917-1948)

The term "urban planning" first appeared in 1906, with the establishment of urban planning system in Britain in 1909. It was a result of the environmental and social problems caused by the industrial revolution. The British town planning was implemented in all British controlled colonies such as India, Nigeria, Malaysia and Palestine [5, 6]. The first urban plan for Palestine was in Jerusalem city, developed by William Mclean in 1918. He divided Jerusalem city into four zones [7, 8]. During the British Mandatory period, new rules were established regarding municipalities of the Arab councils similar to other British colonies. The new rules had set choices for the head of the councils, budgets and the application of projects in high central administration for municipalities [3, 4, 7]. The rules for urban planning development were adapted based on the Britain's urban planning experience.[9]

In 1948, the British Mandatory divided Palestine's land to create Israel with in the territory and areas around the West Bank were annexed to Jordan. Moreover Gaza was placed under Egyptian administration, as for the planning process. The structural plans established under the Mandate remained in force. In 1966, Jordan was entrusted with full planning authority for the West Bank and Gaza remained in force to implement the British system [2, 6, 10].

5. The Jordanian Period (1948-1967)

When Jordanian's period started in the West Bank, the boundaries of some villages were expanded and several villages adopted municipal status. The urban settlement experienced building sprawl and changes in the general layout and size of these settlements in accordance with the expansion of the municipal boundaries under Jordanian policies.[5] The armistice line between Jordan and Israel and the new security routes in the West Bank brought about several changes to Palestinian's city growth pattern and trends [3, 11].This period is characterized as follows:

- The Jordanian authorities kept implementing the British planning system.
- They developed new plans for few villages.
- Jordanian's structure plans ignored the demographic development and needs, and also the economic and social requirement of the future of the population.
- They also failed to assign sufficient land for public buildings and economic activities. Thus it limited the economic and industrial developments in towns and the planned network of roads disregarded the future needs.
- Appropriate consideration was not given to develop any structural provincial plans or regional plans.

6. The Israeli Period (1967-1994)

In 1967, Israel occupied the areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This affected the urban planning and urban form of Palestinian settlements, the Israeli authorities issued much military regulation to control and reduce urban growth and expansion in the Palestinian habitation. The procedures for building permits request for all construction were very complex.[5] It also brought the third transformation to the system of the Palestinian settlements in the West Bank. The physical, social, and cultural systems began to display the impact of the Israeli's administration on the traditional core of Palestinian settlements [2,11,12]. In general, this period is characterized as the following:

- The focus was on security aspects and the building planning processes was controlled by the military.
- Heavy restriction on Palestinian urban development, limiting construction by rejecting building permits and by reducing the land set aside for industrial and economic developments. In addition, it negatively affected the functioning economy of the land.
- Urban Planning became a way for the Israeli military government to prevent the expansion of construction in the Palestine cities, whereas they reserved vast areas of land for Jewish settlements in areas around West Bank and Gaza strips.
- Dependency of Palestinian's economy on Israel. Palestinians were prevented from participating in decisions concerning the development plans of the land within the Palestine territory.
- Planning and building permits were used technically to prevent the provision of basic services, infrastructure and housing for the increasing population in the Palestinian's towns and villages .

7. The Palestinian National Authority Period (Since 1994)

In 1994, as a result of Oslo Peace Agreement, the Palestinian Authority (PNA) was established. The planning responsibilities as well as other civilian issues and services were transferred to the related Palestinian ministries and institutions. When the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) started self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza, it faced with the multiplied task of planning for its future needs and at the same time having to accommodate the planning needs generated by donor projects. For the Palestinians, neither the existing regional planning schemes nor their attributed regulatory framework within the occupied territories constituted an appropriate and relevant approach for meeting the overall political, socio-economic and physical needs of the population generated through the contemporary developments [11,13].The planning apparatus or administration in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), as stated by the Jordanian Law of 1966, consisted of three levels:[5]

- Higher Planning Council (HPC).
- Regional Planning Committees (governorates level).
- Local Planning Committees (municipal and village councils).

8. Factors that affect the urban development and urban planning

Palestinian territory is decorated with numerous elements such as an environment of great ecology, diversified topography and landscape, religious values, culture, and history. The responsible Palestinian institutions, governmental, NGOs, and private companies, for implementing the physical planning process has lacked the required capacities and experiences to manage, control, and monitor the rapidly ongoing development and expansion of Palestinian towns. The Ministry of Local Government (MOLG) has failed to prepare a successful master plan for local communities, municipalities and villages. This is mainly due to lack of skilled professionals particularly in urban planning issues.[5] Furthermore, neither the municipalities nor the private sector have the required qualified staff, and the numbers of qualified private consultants are few. With regard to the changing and unstable political issues, and also the rapid urbanization, Palestinian National Authority lost any sort of management and planning which resulted in random and uncontrolled city expansions and diffusion of urban sprawls within and around the cities. This is also flanked by a significant increase of

scattered villages and rural communities. These further highlighted in the inefficiency of public transport sector, a consequent increase in the congestion and environmental pollution is seen with the prevalent use of private cars (67% of the total transport system) [14,15] .

8.1 Division of West Bank area in to A, B and C categories

Such classification of land has resulted in the fragmentation and limitation of urban expansion of most Palestinian's cities adjacent to areas of category (C). In fact, the Palestinian does not have any planning authority over the areas due to military orders to build in this area. Therefore, we are likely to observe irregular urban forms or even fragmented forms especially when the land is reserved for future development. In many cities and towns, their master plans will cover all the areas or land categories labeled as (A) and (B), and (C) [16].

- Area (A) is about 1005km^2. It covers 17.7% of the total land area. It is located around the west bank area, where the Palestinians have a political and security control as well as the responsibility for planning and development issues.
- Area (B) is about 1035km^2. It covers 18.3% of the total land area. It is also located in the west bank area, where the Palestinian has only the responsibility of planning and development. But Israelis control the political and security issues in the area.
- Area (C) including the bypass roads is about 1346km^2. It covers 23.7% of the total land area. The Palestinians neither have a political and security control nor having the responsibility for planning and development issues in such areas.

8.2 Israeli settlements

Since 1967, Israel has pursued a policy of building Israeli settlements on the west bank and is linked by Israeli-controlled roads, or natural reserves. There are also large tracts of Israeli-controlled land designated as military areas. The building of several Israeli settlements within the West Bank, contiguous to Palestinian cities and towns, had also impacted the development and expansion of these Palestinian's towns. The allocation of Israeli settlements closed with Palestinian towns imposes restrictions and impacts on the expansion of these towns as well as extracting their lands for the expansion of the towns. In addition, it is even a threat to the landscapes, cultural and archaeological heritage, agricultural lands and environment of the Palestinian's land [17].

8.3 Separation wall

In 2000, due to the new political situation of the time, Israelis re-occupied all the Palestinian cities and towns, including those located in areas A and B, and took the decision of constructing the separation wall along the green line in the West Bank. This has also affected the development of Palestinian cities, where large portions of their land (mostly land reserved for future expansion in addition to agricultural land) were taken due to the border wall construction. This wall will extract additional land area of 1328 Km^2, which is 23.4% of the total area of West Bank. In addition, the new wall construction will also extract an area of 1237 Km^2 (21.9% of West Bank) [18-20].

8.4 Historical factors

Historically, urban planning in Palestine is influenced by different political rules. The ruling power is behind the formation of local authorities with existing inter-mix community. These authorities failed under the central authority's framework of political and directorial dependency which limited their ability to provide quality public services [4, 9, 11].

9. Conclusion

Finally, the urban planning in Palestine is a result of the historical precedents and the unstable political situation on the land. The situation has created many challenges. This paper tries to analyse and understand the major factors that had impacted the urban planning, urban form and urban development of the Palestinian territory. The main challenges are the following: rapid population growth, limited

availability of land, improper allocation of land used, urban development pressure, and failure in planning policy decisions, and unstable political situation. The political situation in the country played a major role in relapsing the landscapes, cultural and historical sites, and natural resources and environment. The spread of uncontrolled and fragmented urban developments with in and around the cities had impacted negatively the urban form.

Acknowledgment
These two professor, Professor /Zhang Hong , Professor Ali Abdelhamid , have helped in sharing information to this paper.

References

[1] State of Palestine Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2016 .Palestine in Figures 2015. Available at http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2188.pdf.
[2] Khamaisi R 1997 .Israeli Use of the British Mandate Planning Legacy as a Tool for the Control of Palestinians in the West Bank. Planning Perspectives, 12, 321-340.
[3] Thawaba S A 2008 .Urban Growth of a City under Siege: Tulkarm, Palestine over the Past Century .Journal of Planning History.
[4] Fruchtman, J 1986 .Statutory Planning as a Form of Social Control: The Evolution of Town Planning Law in Mandatory Palestine and Israel 1917-1980's. University of London.
[5] Abdelhamid A 2006 .Urban development and planning in the occupied Palestinian territories: impacts on urban form. Conference on Nordic and International Urban Morphology: Distinctive and Common Themes.
[6] Mccoubrey H 1988 .The English Model of Planning Legislation in Developing Countries. Third World Planning Review, 10, 371.
[7] Roberts N E 2013 .Dividing Jerusalem. Journal of Palestine Studies, 42, 7-26.
[8] Gitler I B.-A 2003 .Marrying Modern Progress with Treasured Antiquity: Jerusalem City Plans During the British Mandate, 1917-1948. Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review, 39-58.
[9] Martin C 2017. Echoes of Empire: British Mandate planning in Palestine and its influence in the West Bank today.Planning Perspectives 32(1): 87-98.
[10] Kretzmer D .1990 The Legal Status of the Arabs in Israel. Westview Press.
[11] Khamaisi R 2006 .Published .Planning and Developing a New Palestinian Urban Core under Conditional Israeli Occupation: Ramallah City Case Study .Paper to the 42 th Conference of IsoCaRP. International Society of City and Regional Planners Istanbul,.
[12] Abdulhadi R S 1990 .Land Use Planning in the Occupied Palestinian Territories Journal of Palestine Studies. 19, 46-63.
[13] Allaert G 2007 .Potential Lands for Urban Development and the Challenge of Population Growth Conservation and management of landscape in conflict region. 78-89.
[14] Shaheen L 2013 .Published .Rapid Urbanization and the Challenge of Sustainable Urban Development in Palestinian Cities, Proceedings of World Academy of Science Engineering and Technology, World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology (WASET), 260.
[15] Falah, G 1989 .Israeli 'Judaization'policy in Galilee and Its Impact on Local Arab Urbanization. Political Geography Quarterly, 8, 229-253.
[16] Arij A 2007 .Status of the Environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory .Jerusalem Applied Research Institute (Arij)
[17] Yüksek E 2010 .The Israeli Settlements in the West Bank Territory before and after the Peace Process, Middle East Technical University.
[18] Raddad S Salleh, A G.and Samat N 2010. Determinants of Agriculture Land Use Change in Palestinian Urban Environment: Urban Planners at Local Governments Perspective. American-Eurasian Journal of Sustainable Agriculture, 4, 30-38.
[19] Taraki L 2008 .Enclave Micropolis: The Paradoxical Case of Ramallah/Al-Bireh. Journal of Palestine Studies, 37, 6-20.

[20] Isaac J Rishmawi K and Safar A 2004. The Impact of Israel's Unilateral Actions on the Palestinian Environment, Applied Research Institute- Jerusalem.