

Palestine's Spatio-Temporal Fragmentation: Mapping the Narrative Hebron's Division

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Abstract: The Israeli occupation has divided the Palestinian land into various layers and scales shifting the landscape through time and space. The old city of Hebron constitutes a peculiar condition where the colonization has taken place inside the city, producing a highly militarized and divided terrain. The city presents a palimpsest where ancient built heritage overlaps with checkpoints, military posts, and settlements. This paper investigates the division of the Palestinian landscape at different times and scales. It tracks the history of segmentation, starting from the national division of 1948 to the urban fragmentation of the West Bank, and finally the division of the built space in the old city of Hebron. By analyzing the building use change in the old city of Hebron from its original use to the usage in 2014, this paper uncovers the impact of the colonial powers on the city. Delving into the question of separation as an apparatus of control, the paper presents a spatial-time scale through the history of Palestine and argues that the incremental division of the country in general and the fragmentation of the old city of Hebron in particular, are tools used to control the land and terrorize its people.

1. Introduction

Since 1948, and under the powers of Israeli occupation, the Palestinian terrain has been one of constant change, fluctuation, and fragmentation. The multiple divisions and spatial planning mechanisms created by the Israeli State have become a tool employed to slowly shift its boundaries and expand its dominance. This strategy of division has been adopted on multiple scales; from colonizing and dividing historic Palestine into two states controlled by different governments, to imposing the Apartheid wall to separate the West Bank, to further fragmenting the West Bank into archipelagos of different levels of governance, and even to the finite division of buildings, homes, and religious edifices. Hanafi (2009) noted that these actions represent more than mere attempts to divide the terrain but to abolish it; an act of '*spacio-cide*' which aims at the '*voluntary transfer*' of the Palestinian population whether internally or outside the fluid state borders. This paper analyses the impact of the fragmentation and division mechanisms on the old city of Hebron. First, it addresses the main moments in the Palestinian history in which the land was further divided either by laws or by physical barriers. Second, it focuses specifically

on the old city of Hebron, analyzing the change in its building uses in 2014 in relation to the political forces exerted onto the city.

Moudon (1997) noted that urban morphological analysis is based on three main principles. The first is that urban form is defined by three fundamental physical elements: buildings and their related open spaces, plots or lots, and streets. The second principle is that urban form can be understood at different levels of resolution of which four are commonly recognized: the building/lot, the street/block, the city, and the region. The last principle is that urban form can only be understood historically since its comprising elements undergo continuous transformation and replacement. Based on this argument, this paper investigates the division of Palestine as a Zionist strategy of fragmentation on different scales and in different time periods. The analysis traces the division beginning with the country as a whole by shedding light on the fragmentation of historic Palestine, the partitioning and segmentation of the West Bank, and the spatial planning mechanisms of land division and confiscation. The analysis then focuses on the city, through the lens of the old city of Hebron. At this scale, building use change is analyzed at two different timescales (the original use and in the year 2014) in order to examine the effects of the Israeli colonization and the power of division on the city.

2. Fragmented Territories

The narrative of the colonization of Palestine, while expanding to more than a century, became clearer in 1948 with the establishment of the state of Israel on more than 78% of the total area of historic Palestine, setting a permanent ethnonational and colonial system to establish an exclusively Jewish State. In 1949, the armistice line (also known as the Green Line) was drawn along the boundary between the land occupied by Israel and the remaining Palestinian land in the West Bank (which came under Jordanian control), and Gaza Strip (which was left to the Egyptian Administration). During this period, at least 418 Palestinian villages were demolished, and about 80% of the Palestinian population was exiled from the newly created Israeli State, banned from returning to their homes and lands (Issac, 2007).

On the 5th June 1967 war erupted and the Israeli State occupied the West Bank including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, and the Syrian Golan Heights. After the war, the Israeli State annexed East Jerusalem along with an additional 64 km², most of which belonged to twenty-eight villages in the West Bank (figure 1, top). The colonial project continued to expand and in September 1967, the first Jewish settlement was built in the West Bank (Felner, 1995). By the time the first Intifada had erupted in 1987, Israel had appropriated about 40% of the remaining Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza, establishing 125 settlements, and transferring about 60,000 Israeli citizens to the two regions (Gordon, 2008).

Israel's efforts to dominate the West Bank escalated with the signing of Oslo II Interim Accord in 1995 between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Israeli State. The Accord led to the division of the West Bank into three land designations distinguished by different levels of control (figure 1, bottom). Area A, which is deemed under the PA's control, amounted to only 3% of the West Bank and 26% of its population. Area B comprised about 24% of the West Bank and 70% of the population. For this area, the PA was given the responsibility of the public order, but the Israeli State maintained an overriding responsibility for control and security. And finally, in area C, which included 73% of the land and 4% of the population, the Israeli State retained full control, both relating to security and civil issues (planning and zoning, archaeology, etc.) (Gordon, 2008). Area C also serves the Israeli purposes of constructing their settlements

and military infrastructure. In fact, it holds many valuable natural resources and is rich with cultural heritage, which makes it important for any spatial development. Therefore, while the Oslo Accords made it seem that PA had been given sovereign rule over the West Bank, in reality, they only had full control of 3% of the West Bank's land. Hence, as Gordon (2008) noted, the Oslo Accords managed to normalize the occupation, undermining the first Intifada's most important achievement which was to expose the occupation for what it was – a military rule upheld through violence and violation.

The fragmentation of the Palestinian land is one of the Israeli tactics of land confiscation and spatial control that disrupt and constrain the urban development and growth in the Palestinian landscape, disabling any possibility of a geographically connected Palestinian state. This disconnection was intensified by the constant production of settlements and colonial infrastructure, aiming to distribute the Israeli citizens within the West Bank and further divided the terrain into smaller entities. The decision to construct the Apartheid wall in June 2002 expanded the boundaries of the Israeli State. Seeping around the Palestinian villages, the Wall led to the annexation of around another 10% of the West Bank to Israel (B'Tselem, 2017). As Weizman noted, “[These linear borders of the Occupied territories] are dynamic, constantly shifting, ebbing and flowing; they creep along, stealthily surrounding Palestinian villages and road” (Weizman, 2017, p. 6). Moving around the Palestinian villages and challenging the Green line, the Wall was hence laying the groundwork for the de facto annexation of most of the settlements and much land for their future expansion (figure 1, bottom).

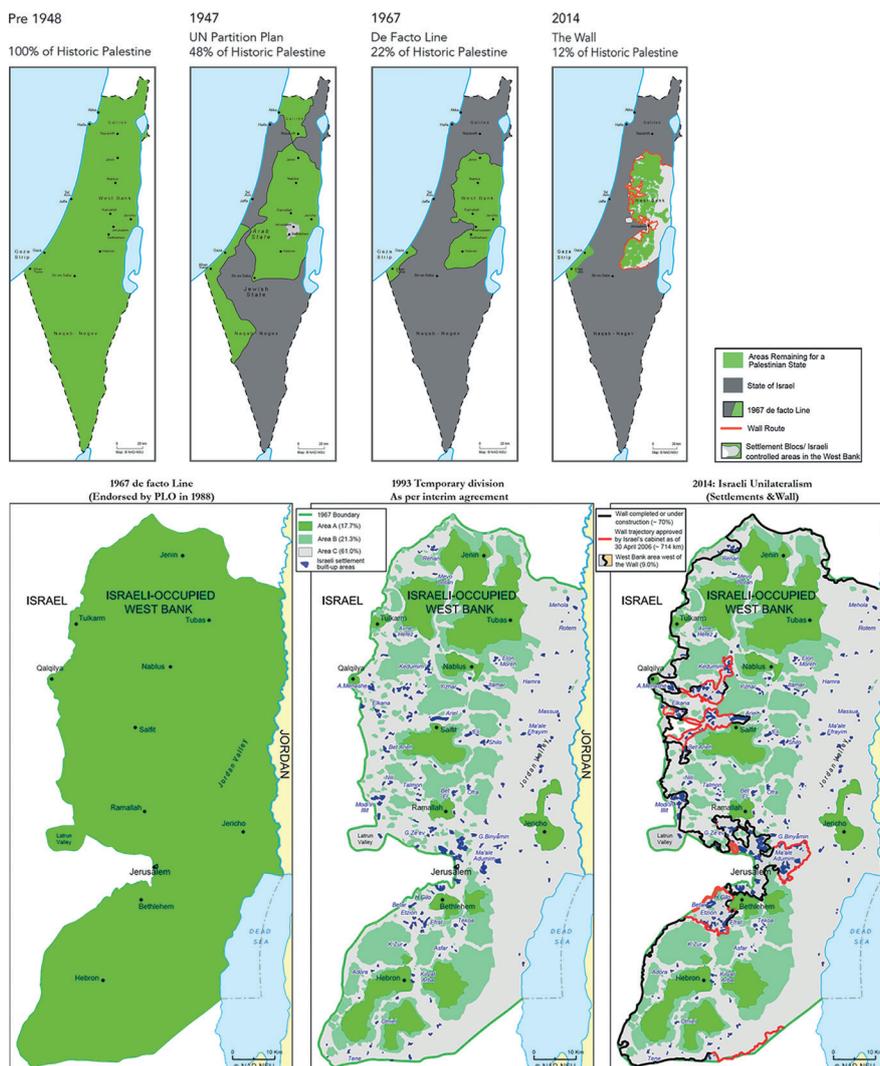


Figure 1. The division of Historic Palestine (above), and the fragmentation West Bank (below). Source: Above: NAD, 2014a., Below: NAD, 2014b.

Under this condition of colonization, Palestine is a constantly shifting landscape controlled by the politics of crafting space. Hence, rather than considering contested spaces through a static condition of momentary conflict, Weizman (2017) argued that space in Palestine has to be conceptualized as “constantly transformed, morphed, and claimed by action”.

3. The division within the old city of Hebron

In Hebron, the colonial strategies are further intensified by religious/ethnic charges. Whereas colonization in the occupied territories usually occurs on the outskirts of the Palestinian towns, the old city of Hebron constitutes a peculiar condition where this process has taken place inside the city, producing an extremely contested, highly militarized, and divided terrain. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the city of Hebron presents an odd palimpsest – an old city where ancient built heritage overlaps with checkpoints, military posts, and settler colonies. The old city contains architectural monuments which date to Biblical times and have religious significance to all the Abrahamic religious traditions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Of special importance is Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi, where some buildings in the compound date back to the 1st century AD (UNESCO, 2017). In the past half-century, the old city has become “dotted with black holes, no-go and danger zones, a patchwork” – according to De Cesari (2010) – becoming “an unstable geography”. In 1997, under the Hebron Protocol agreement, the city was further divided into H1 and H2 areas (figure 2). In H1, which covers approximately 80% of Hebron and where the majority of the Hebronites now reside, the responsibility for security and civilian

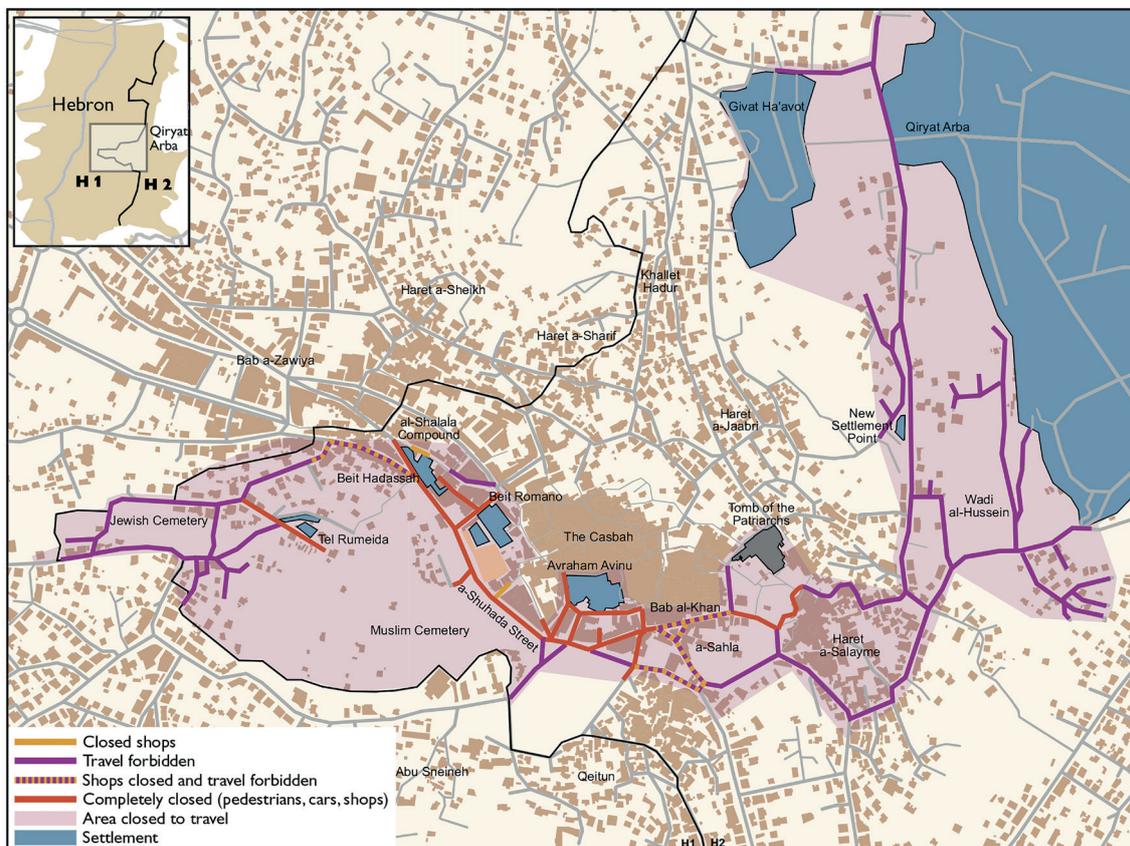


Figure 2. Hebron old city center. Source: B'Tselem, 2007.

matters was given to the PA. On the other hand, in the H2 area, which includes the old city, the Israeli State has kept security control while the PA received authority over civilian matters.

This process of division has been pushed even further into Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi. On February 25, 1994, an Israeli settler attacked Muslim worshippers during dawn prayers causing havoc and killing 29 worshipers. This massacre allowed for the opportunity to fully implement the Israeli colonial strategy of control and division. After the incident, the Palestinian residents were placed on a 30-day curfew during which they were not allowed to leave their homes. The Israeli powers then closed the mosque for 10 months, at the end of which the mosque was divided into two sections, one for Muslims and the other for Jews, with two separate entrances (Al-Jubah, 2009). From that day, Palestinians must undergo very complex security measures on their way to the mosque, they also only have access to certain sections of the complex. This religious monument which was once a public place of reverence has been shifted into a divided, controlled space where Muslims and Jewish spaces of worship are scrutinized and defined through barriers, watchtowers, and specific entry points.

4. Methodology

4.1. *Study method*

The research assesses issues related to buildings use and built up transformation and development. However, taking into consideration that the old city of Hebron is a historic area, building use change analysis was adopted rather than building typology change since the later has not gone through a measurable change. The analysis traces the built-up and building use change in the city and investigates the change over time as a measure of division and spatial mechanisms of control enforced by the Israeli occupation in the old city. The building use change was examined using GIS mapping and statistical analysis in order to produce an overview of the evident measurable changes. Thus, ArcMap 10.3 was used to analyze the change from the original building use and built up of the old city of Hebron to the usage and built up in 2014.

The building use classes database for the original use and the year 2014 was provided by the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC) and used in order to investigate the actual physical changes of the buildings of the old city. The number of units for each building use class was calculated for both dates, and the change was quantified by calculating the number of units for each building use class for the two periods and calculating the losses and gains of each class. This provided a quantitative comparison of the changes in building use. The classification of the original buildings use was compared with the uses of 2014 and a matrix was derived (table 1). The matrix made it possible to identify building use dynamics over time and determine the spatial and temporal patterns of change. To examine the relationship between this change to the political context, the five most prominent changes were mapped and overlaid on top of the conflict infrastructure (street closures, locations of checkpoints and barriers) placed by the Israeli State within the city. The database for the conflict infrastructure was derived from a map provided by the HRC which documented the checkpoints and closures in the old city in 2014 (HRC, 2015).

4.2. *Study Sources*

Before 1996, the urban and architectural documentation of the old city of Hebron was fairly minimal. In 1996, the HRC was created in order to document and preserve the old city and

the first master plan began in 1999-2000 to manage the architectural heritage in the old city. In 2015, the original master plan was amended, and a database was created to document the architectural, socio-economic activities, and political restrictions within the old city of Hebron since 2014. The following analysis is based on GIS shape files of the database produced in 2015 by the HRC which documented the original buildings use based on oral history and the usage in 2014.

4.3. Study Area

The city of Hebron is located in the south of the West Bank, about 30 Km from Jerusalem. At the edge of the city is the old city of Hebron, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world and the largest old city in Palestine (HRC, 2011). The old city has witnessed many different conquest periods and therefore has buildings from a variety of architectural styles, including the Ottoman, Mamluk, and Abbasid styles. Historically, the city reached its prime development during the Mamluk era. Therefore, it is believed that many of the old city's dwellings, especially at least the ground floors, date back to the end of that era, while the rest were built during the Ottoman period (Al-Jubah, 2009).

Morphologically speaking, unlike the usual Islamic city where the mosque and the governor's palace were located in the center of the town, Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi was originally located on the edge of the town, where '*Tal al-Rumaida*', an archeological site dating to around 1700 BC, existed (Al-Jubah, 2009). While the city developed in all directions, it is believed that all the streets were planned to have access to the Haram. Of main importance is '*Al Shuhada street*' which serves as a main thoroughfare in the old city, linking Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi to the rest of the City (HRC, 2011). The layout of the city follows the Islamic city plan with a grid of open streets, but also dead ends, most of which lead to a small square in the center of the neighborhood (Al-Jubah, 2009).

Throughout the Israeli occupation, the old city of Hebron has been under numerous attacks in an attempt to colonize and Judaize it. Those strategies were intensified after the 1967 war and the subsequent occupation, which transformed the old city into an arena of direct conflict. In 1970, '*Qiryat Arba*' Settlement was created in the eastern part of Hebron (figure 2), and the colonization of land continued to seep into the old city. As a result, certain parts of the old city were taken over and transformed into Jewish residential neighborhoods. Later, in 1979, a group of settlers occupied the '*Dabboya*' residential units, creating '*Beit Hadassah*' settlement within the old city fabric. In 1980, two more settlements were approved by the Israeli state to be built within the city; the first '*Avraham Avino*' settlement, and the second '*Beit Romano*' settlement (Hebron Apartheid, 2018 & Al-Jubah, 2009). However, it must be noted that during the 1980s, the Israeli strategies of spatial control and colonizing the city did not only include land confiscation to create settlements, but also the imposition of many repressive measures such as the closure of streets, alleys, markets, and shops.

Following the Oslo Accord, the Hebron Protocol was signed on January 17, 1997, between the PA and the Israeli State. The Protocol led to the earlier mentioned divisions of the city, producing two distinct political regions known as H1 and H2, with different levels of control (figure 2). After the second Intifada in 2000, the level of aggression against the Hebronites increased with harsher security measures, restrictions on movement both by foot and car, closures of main streets while allowing Israeli settlers to use it, and shutdown orders for hundreds of stores and commercial establishments. Today, the old town lives under a full apartheid system, with checkpoints, roadblocks, and restrictions of movement, leading the Hebronites to struggle to

continue living in the old city. In some houses, where the residents are prohibited from using their front doors, new doors had to be opened or windows were transformed into doors. In other cases, where one can only reach their houses via the roads of the neighboring buildings, people began to walk through private houses to reach their own (Al-Jubah, 2009).

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Building use analysis

The old city of Hebron was first studied by assessing the change in building uses. The buildings use classes for both the original use and the usage in 2014 were mapped (figure 3) and a transition matrix was generated to quantify the overall gains and losses of units for each building use class between the studied years (table 1). The matrix illustrates the gains and losses of the respective building use classes. It also shows the number of units each class had gained or lost, to which class the units had passed, and the number of units which remained unchanged. Residential buildings maintained to be the dominant class in both the original use and in the usage in 2014. After looking at the main gains and losses for the building classes in table 2, it was important to focus on the four main classes that showed a considerable change. The four main classes that were analyzed are; abandoned buildings (15.5% increase of total units), residential buildings (with a 6% decrease of total units), commercial functions (2.1% increase of total units), and buildings demolished by the Israeli forces (with 1.5% increase of total units). Along those, the change in the settlements building class (0.7% increase of total units) is also discussed since it can shed a better light on the political condition of the city.

By the year 2014, the main increase in the building use classes was found in the abandoned units, while the main decrease was in the residential units. While there were no abandoned units in the original use, those amounted to 284 units in the year 2014, which formed 15.5% of the total number of units (table 2). This increase was gained mainly from residential units where 253 residential units and 17 mixed-use units became abandoned by 2014. On the other



Figure 3. Original building use in the old city of Hebron (left), Building use in the old city of Hebron in 2014 (right). Source: Researchers.

hand, the noticeable decrease was in the residential units where 110 residential units were lost, which amounted to a reduction by 6% of the total units (from 71.5% of the total number of original units to 65.5% in 2014), with the most significant loss going to the abandoned units which amounted to 253 units. The residential units were also transformed into a multiplicity of other functions which include commercial, demolished, mixed-use, settlements, and services. Over

Table 1. Transition matrix shows gains and losses for each building use class between the original use of the building and year 2014.

Commercial	Year 2014 building classes												Original totals
	Services	Religious	Residential	Mixed use	Touristic	Handicraft	Settlement	Cultural	Governmental	Demolished	Abandoned		
Commercial	6	1	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	9	27
Services	2	7	3	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	18
Religious	0	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	19
Residential	38	22	2	887	56	1	12	7	4	3	26	253	1311
Mixed use	15	2	0	13	77	0	7	1	0	1	0	17	133
Touristic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Unknown	5	4	0	294	12	0	3	4	0	1	0	1	324
Year 2014 totals	66	36	23	1201	150	2	22	13	4	5	27	284	1833

Table 2. Summary of the change in the building uses between the original use of the building and year 2014.

	Original units	Percentage of Original units	Year 2014 units	Percentage of year 2014 units	Change	Percentage of Change
Commercial	27	1.5%	66	3.6%	39	2.1%
Services	18	1.0%	36	2.0%	18	1.0%
Religious	19	1.0%	23	1.3%	4	0.2%
Residential	1311	71.5%	1201	65.5%	-110	-6.0%
Mixed use	133	7.3%	150	8.2%	17	0.9%
Touristic	1	0.1%	2	0.1%	1	0.1%
Handicraft	0	0.0%	22	1.2%	22	1.2%
Settlement	0	0.0%	13	0.7%	13	0.7%
Cultural	0	0.0%	4	0.2%	4	0.2%
Governmental	0	0.0%	5	0.3%	5	0.3%
Demolished	0	0.0%	27	1.5%	27	1.5%
Abandoned	0	0.0%	284	15.5%	284	15.5%
Unknown	324	17.7%	0	0.0%	-324	-17.7%

the years, 38 units were lost to commercial, 22 units became services buildings, 56 units were lost to mix-use, 7 units became settlements, and 26 units were demolished.

The analysis also showed an increase in commercial units by 2.1% of the total number of units. This is evident by an increase from 1.5% of the total units to 3.6% in 2014. The main change was the transformation of 38 residential units and 15 mixed-use units to commercial function. On the other hand, the demolished units class, which did not exist in the original use, became 1.5% of the total units in 2014, with the destruction of 26 residential units and 1 commercial unit.

The other building uses, on the other hand, did not reveal as much change as the classes above. Some of the classes registered an increase, such as the services class by 1% of the total units, and the handicraft class by 1.2% of the total units. However, regarding the settlements in the old city of Hebron, in 2014 those formed 0.7% of the total units, a total of 13 units. Of the 13 units, 7 were originally residential units, 4 were unidentified, 1 was services, and 1 was a mixed-use unit.

5.2. The effects of the division on the city

Focusing specifically on the destructed and abandoned units, while considering the settlements, a map of the built-up change was produced (figure 3). This map was then overlaid with the locations of the Israeli techniques of segregation including checkpoints, barriers, and closures, as to further examine the relationship between the division of the city and the building use (figure 4). Looking at figure 4, it is clear that the city has been divided into four main regions of restrictions and prohibitions. The first region, which holds one of the most restrictions of access for Palestinians, is found in the heart of the old city and specifically in the main street (*Al-Shuhada street*). This area also correlates to where most of the Israeli settlements are located, therefore, most of the Palestinian homes had to reorient their entrances to the backside of the houses so they may access their homes. Moreover, because of the restrictions placed by the Israeli forces, many of the abandoned residential units are also located in this area. The second region, which is south of the main street, includes '*Tal al-Rumaida*' neighborhood, the Islamic and Jewish cemeteries, and an archeological area dating to around 1700 BC. Palestinians not residing in this area are restricted from entering the area or visiting the site. North of '*Al Shuhada street*' is the current Palestinian old city center in which movement is allowable while still under surveillance. Finally, in the last region east of the old city which includes the area surrounding Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi, Palestinians are only permitted to access it by foot (HRC,2015).

Figure 4 also illustrates the cluster of demolished units east of Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi. These houses were demolished in 2002 by the Israeli forces in order to create a new 6 to 12 meter-wide street which would link Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi with '*Qiryat Arba*' settlement while being restricted from Palestinian use. Not only did the destruction of the buildings under military order manipulate the morphology of the city, but it also erased an important historical layer. The demolished buildings included historical and archeological edifices dating back to the Mamluk and Ottoman eras (1250-1916), thus, erasing sections of the architectural fabric of the old town and wiping off parts of the Mosque's historical surroundings (Al-Jubah, 2009).

While checkpoints, blockages, and closed areas are a typical tool of segregation by the Israeli state, the large number of blockades have rendered the Old City a 'ghost town'. By 2015, 95 physical obstacles were placed within the old city, 19 of which were permanently staffed checkpoints (OCHAoPt, 2015). These colonial actions of aggression and segregation have mainly affected the residents of the old city where the infrastructure has been neglected. Between the years 1967 and 1990, the population in the old city of Hebron declined by 80%, reaching a low

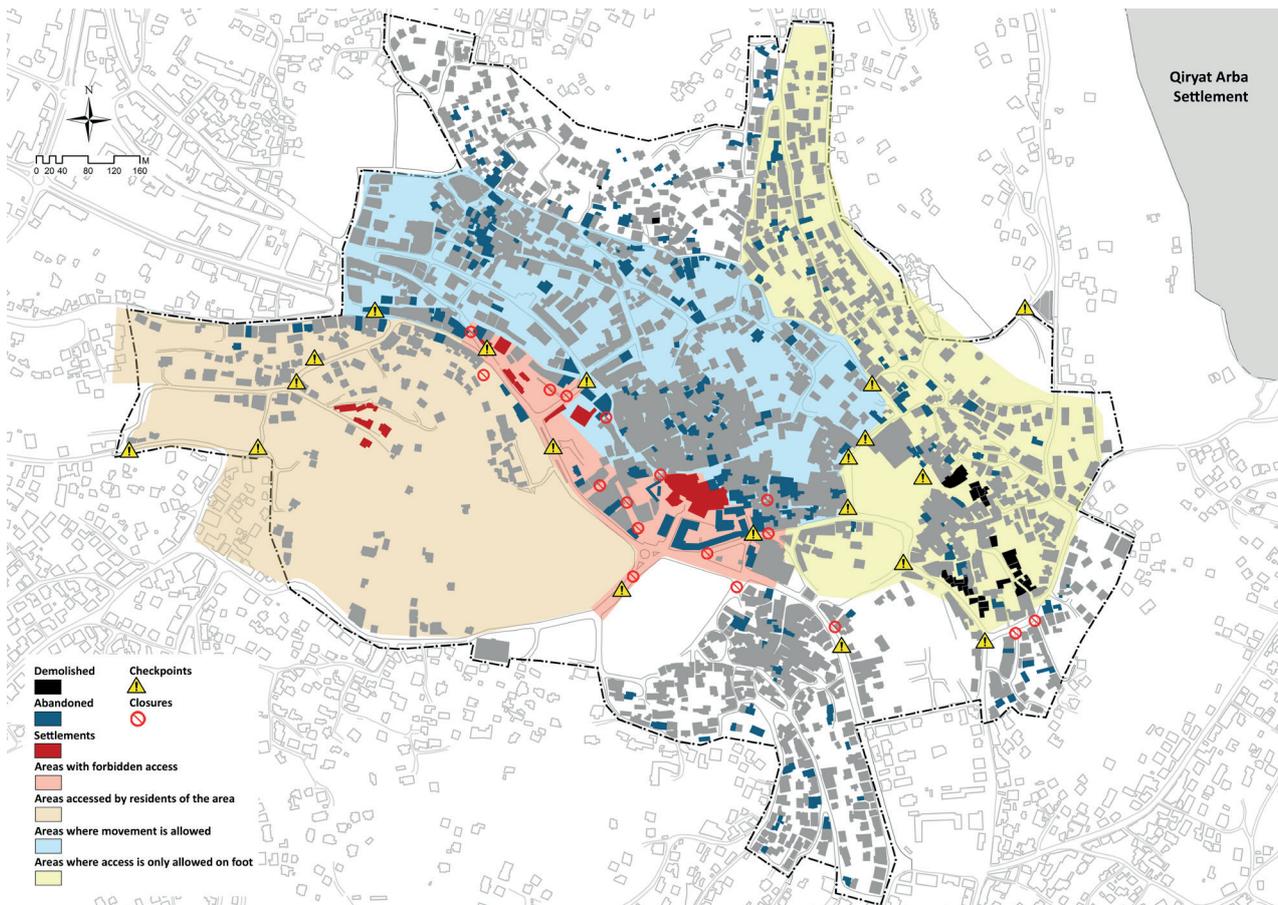


Figure 4. Analyzed building use and Israeli techniques of segregation in 2014. Source: Researchers.

of 400 residents in 1996. It is important to note that the biggest drops in population correlate with two major political events; the first around 1969 when the first settlement was created, and the second in 1994 after the massacre and the subsequent Israeli restrictions imposed on the Palestinian residents. After the second Intifada, further collective punishments on the residents of the city were imposed; during this period, 21 military orders led to the displacement of 6000 residents from their homes (HRC, 2014). With the support of the HRC, who have been rehabilitating the old city and connecting the city with municipal services, the city has started to regain its population, with an estimation of 6500 residents in 2015 (Alazza, 2016).

The colonization and terrorization of the old city have also led to a larger mode of division. The mass departure of residents from the old city, specifically those who can afford to move, has led to an economic divide between the old city of Hebron and the new city (De Cesari, 2010). This economic fracture has mainly been a reflection of the colonial strategies which obliterated the old city as a thriving commercial center. The HRC (2014) noted that in 2009 the unemployment level in the old city had reached to about 43% of the residents. After the second Intifada, the occupation issued military orders to close down 22% of the commercial shops, while 48% of the commercial business closed down as a result of the restrictions, closures and the deterioration of the situation in the Old City (HRC, 2014). This is reflected in table 1, where 9 commercial units have become abandoned, while 17 mixed-use units were also abandoned. However, with many residential units still being abandoned, the HRC has taken it upon themselves to occupy those spaces with commercial and service uses in hopes to reinfuse the old city with life.

As noted above, while by the year 2014, 253 residential units were abandoned and 26 were demolished by Israeli forces, 38 units were transformed into commercial units and 22 into services (such as schools, a guest house, and hammams).

Whereas the city has been drastically affected by blockages and checkpoints, those are an outcome of a larger colonial project which includes land confiscation and dispossession. The four Israeli settlements created in the old city have become the driving force to further divide and terrorize the area (figure 4). The strategic location of those settlements and the original function of the buildings/areas which were occupied must be noted. While 'Beit Hadassah' Settlement took over residential units, 'Avraham Avinu' Settlement and 'Beit Romano' Settlement took over public spaces and buildings; the second occupying the central vegetable market, while the third taking over the Palestinian Usama Bin Munziq school and the bus terminal. The fourth settlement in 'Tal al-Rumaida' occupied an area near a major archeological site. The colonization of these prominent sites which were vital for the survival of the city as a thriving center has been a strategy implemented to further expand the spatial control on the city, turning it into a ghost town. Moreover, the central location of those settlements, three of which are directly connected to al Shuhada street, has aided the occupation forces in taking over this main street and restricting the Palestinian access to it. This has divided the city into two sections, one north of the street and the other south of it, disconnecting the residents from each other and from needed services and affecting family and social life significantly, as many Palestinians are unable to visit their relatives or friends.

6. Conclusion

While the Zionist strategies of colonization and division are not particular to the old city of Hebron, those are intensified within a city that is overlaid with historical and religious heritage. Looking specifically at the Israeli settlements within the city and the apparatuses of occupation placed on the Hebronites, one can deduce a clear colonial methodological strategy which aims at controlling the city by dividing it and, hence, obliterating its thriving core.

By analyzing the building use changes in the old city of Hebron, it is clear how this strategy has affected the city, with the number of residential units dropping extensively, and the number of abandoned units, demolished units, and settlements increasing. The HRC has been attempting to resist those colonial powers by rehabilitating the old city and inviting Hebronites to move back to the residences, providing free access to multiple services such as electricity, water, and health insurance. Moreover, the HRC has been trying to reignite the life within the old city by rehabilitating the commercial units and reusing some of the abandoned residential units for public use. Those measures have also been coupled with events and activities hosted in the old city hoping to attract visitors from around the area. However, with the Israeli grip becoming tighter and the control and division intensifying, the actions by the HRC and the residents of the old city cannot sustain. Hence, to counter those strategies of division, a comprehensive planning project must be created. Similar to the Israeli plans which connect settlements and occupied areas, this counterplan must not only consider the old city of Hebron but also connect it with the surrounding areas, including the larger Hebron governorate which supports a bustling commercial life. While this may seem difficult since the Israeli occupation has also divided the whole Palestinian terrain into smaller entities, it is believed that the old city can only survive with the support of the Hebronites and Palestinians from around the area.

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