# The Characteristics of Immovable Heritage Values in Palestine

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## ABSTRACT

The current criteria for evaluation in Palestine are driven by the informational value of the resources available. A re-evaluation of the significant criteria is needed in order to address both inherent and assigned values of the heritage resources. This re-evaluation is also crucial to take into consideration the different types and categories of the immovable heritage of all periods. The purpose of this research is to gain understanding of the heritage values in Palestine and to develop a characterization of Palestine's immovable heritage. Such values will result in a wider comprehension of the past, which shaped the identity of Palestine as a nation-state. The researcher followed thefield reconnaissance survey through observation and documentation of sixty-six sites to obtain valuable information about the current situation and to build the basis of evaluation criteria of the cultural properties through three case studies. The result of this study is useful to establish a nucleus for exclusive inventory in the future and thus, increase the benefits for the local population and tourists. Simultaneously, the results strengthen the awareness of the Palestinian heritage and identity.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Heritage resources in Palestine are under a continual threat. The military occupation poses an obvious danger to the immovable heritage through deliberate attacks. The continuous expansion of the illegal settlements in the West Bank as well as the illegal separation wall causes direct damages to the heritage sites (Sharif, 2017). In 1993, the Palestinian Authority was established in accordance to the Oslo accord. However, the destruction of heritage resources has continued in the name of development. Almost 50% of the buildings were constructed in the Palestinian towns and villages at the expense of the protection of the heritage buildings (De Cesari, 2008).

Since its establishment, the Department of Antiquities (under the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities) has largely concentrated on archaeological projects, which consist mostly of salvaging excavations, providing basic protection and maintenance of archaeological sites dating before 1700 AD. The evaluation of the heritage resources in Palestine focuses on prehistoric and classical settlement archaeology (Khirfan, 2016). This generates a bias in the evaluation criteria of the significance of heritage resources. Consideration of other values, such as the contribution of these resources to national identity as well as associative or aesthetic and architectural values has recently begun through only a few isolated conservation projects (Shehada, Yaacob, & Keumala, 2015).However, the informational value of the cultural resources, embodied in the archaeology/tourism paradigm, is still the main driving force in evaluating the significance and defining the immovable resources of the country.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher has an important role in determining the method of inquiry that is appropriate to the nature and type of data collected against the character of the research, community dynamics and local context. The

researcher followed the field reconnaissance survey to conduct in-depth fieldwork. The field reconnaissance was adapted from other precedents and similar windshield surveys normally used in inspecting architectural heritage in a particular region (Kumar et al., 2020).

The National Park Service in the U.S. Department of the Interior identified two kinds of surveys for historical and cultural heritage of a certain region. The National Park Service defines surveys that are conducted for the purposes of conserving a community's architectural heritage as processes of recognizing and collecting data on a historic resource of the community. These include not only recording and physical research of heritage in the ground and field survey, but also a background search and planning before the survey starts. It further includes preservation and organization of data survey and improvement of inventories. The first was an "Intensive Survey" which is "a close and careful look at the area being surveyed. It is designed to identify precisely and completely all historic resources in the area. It generally involves detailed background research, a thorough inspection and documentation of all historic properties in the field" (McCarthy, 2009). The second kind of survey is known as the "Reconnaissance or Windshield Survey"; wind-shield is a common method of reconnaissa- nce survey. "It is an inspection of an area which is most useful for characterizing its resources in general and for developing a basis for deciding how to organize and orient more detailed survey efforts" (Anfinson, 2018). Reconnaissance might involve activities such as driving around a community or a region while noting the general characters of its historic and cultural resources or studying aerial photographs, historical or recent maps or historical photographs of buildings and sites.

When conducting field reconnaissance of the heritage resources, an oral historical and ethnographic component should be included because in many cases, it might be the only or the most accurate source of information about the history or evolution of a certain building or site. When researching the values and significance of the cultural heritage, the common archival research will be inadequate in such surveys since the actual or "Cultural Truth" will be found in the minds and thoughts of the inhabitants (Tomaselli, 2012). The objective of the Windshield Survey in this research was inspection, identification, initial reconnaissance and direct observation of the sites.

## III. DATA ANALYSIS

This research is exploratory in nature based on analytic induction (working with the pieces to get the general picture) rather than using the hypothetico-deductive model. The generated data from the field reconnaissance is called immediate inferences. Inference comes from the Latin "In" and "Ferre" (to carry or bring) (Maynard, Gilson, & Mathieu, 2012). In logic, the inference is the procedure of deriving conclusions from premises. If the conclusion follows from a single premise, the process is said to be one of immediate inferences. If the conclusion follows from two or more premises jointly, the process is said to be one of mediate inferences (O'Shaughnessy, 2012).

In Palestine, there are almost 6620 immovable heritage resources geographically distributed along the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (Brebbia & Boquera, 2016). The study sample comprised 1% of the study population, as it was difficult to visit such a large number of sources, exhausting money, time and effort. That ratio represents 66 buildings of the heritage resources in Palestine. These sites have been selected randomly with consideration given to the geographical distribution and number of resources in each city. The reconnaissance included 19 cities: Hebron, Nablus, Jenin, Ramallah, Al-Birah, Tulkarem, Salfit, Btelehem, Qaqilya, Beit Jala, Tubas, Jericho, Gaza, Beit Hanoun, Rafah, Tell Al-Ajoul, Deir Al-Balah, Khanyounis and Jabalia. The list of cities is, by no means, exclusive; it forms a representative sample from all over the country. Figure 1 shows the locations of the cities visited.

*Figure 1:* Map of Palestine shows the cites visited by the researcher

The number of visited resources follows a particular criterion according to Table 1:

| Table 1: Criterion of the Number of Visited Resources | |
|---|---|
| Number of resources in the City | Number of visited resources |
| More than 1000 | 6 |
| Between 200-999 | 5 |
| Between 100-199 | 4 |
| Between 50-99 | 3 |
| Between 10-49 | 2 |
| Less than 10 | 1 |

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NUMBER OF SITES VISITED IN EACH CITY

*Figure 2:* Number of sites visited in each city

## IV.  CASE STUDIES

The researcher selected three sites from the sixty-six sites visited as case studies. They were selected on the basis of their values and significance in addition to being successful conservation projects in Palestine. These sites shed light on some important conservation issues in Palestine. The study understanding of these successful projects enhances the value of immovable heritage in Palestine and contributes in advancing the country's progress from the economic, tourism and cultural aspects. This trend should be considered by the relevant ministries in the Palestinian Government and by decision makers in the State.

### 4. 1  The Ottoman Court, Ramallah

The Ottoman Court or Al-Khan (Caravanserai) is one of the most important buildings in the old town of Ramallah. It was a residential house and built at the end of 18th century for *Habash* and *Qisis* families. The building was converted into a caravanserai in the 19th century (Awad, 2016). The building was used for hosting travellers in the upper floor and animals as well as goods on the

ground floor. However, it was believed that the building was converted into an Ottoman Court, where the upper floor was utilized by the Ottoman Judge and the lower floor was stables for the horses of the soldiers. The site's historic context is very rich and diverse. Excavations showed that the site served as an ancient burial place. Later on, a Byzantine church was built there on the top of a Roman temple dedicated to Hercules (Muhawi et al., 2012). The existing court was built near the Byzantine church, replacing other houses built in the area. During the 1930's, the site became famous for its association with Ahmad Murad Pasha (Ottoman Alderman of Jerusalem) who visited the building and ordered it to be converted to a court (Meskell, 2018). The most definitive use of the building dated back to 1883 when the building hosted the first and sole health clinic in Ramallah, before the clinic was moved to the newly opened hospital in Ramallah's urban expansion of the 1920's. The building was returned to the owners who witnessed the 1927 earthquake, which struck the building causing substantial structural damage that called for structural intervention (Wagemakers, 2014). After 1948, the building was used as the premise of an

olive oil press that was proven by the reinforced concrete base of the press. For the last 30 years, the building has been deserted.

The Ottoman Court was built of limestone walls supporting cross-vaulted rooms. The two-story building was found to have front and back yards. The ground floor area was 300 m² consisting of three cross vaults and the upper floor (area 200 m²) was set back to allow for a covered gallery in addition to rectangular cross-vaulted rooms (De Cesari, 2019). There was a total of six rooms, a gallery and two yards. Two stone-faced thick walls (about one meter thick) supported cross-vaulted huge rooms (the middle room on the ground floor was about 8 by 8 meters). Doors mounted with flat lintels and semi-circular windows, similar to those of the gallery, were associated with semi-circular arches. The interiors were plastered, and lime washed. The exteriors were pointed. The rough topography did not allow the researcher to take panoramic photographs. The court was of particular significance due to its distinctive architecture, fine stone craftsmanship and ironwork (Büssow, 2011). The court's location on the mountain accessible through steps that connect various houses contributes to a sense of place in the city. In addition, the site is associated with significant persons as previously mentioned. The court was bought in 2000 by the municipality of Ramallah to conserve (adaptive use of the court into a museum and cultural centre for children) and protect the site (UNESCO, 2014). The objectives of the adaptation project were to create a dynamic, multi-disciplinary entity dedicated to promoting the fine arts while also fostering cultural and creative dialogue. The project demonstrates the role played by private organizations in the conservation of architectural heritage.



*Figure 3 & 4:* Ottoman court before and after restoration

The conservationist idea was to keep the character of the court by retaining the 2-bay plan and closing the windows from the inside only for exhibits. After completion, the centre included a library for children with 5,000 books on Palestinian and Arab, an international art and a gallery. It also has a cultural café, open studios for painting and sculptures as well as lecture rooms. The centre receives about 600 children daily with their families. Children under 18 years old constitute 44% of the total population of the city (Beshara, 2002). The total cost of rehabilitation was $180,000. This was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and implemented by *Riwaq* Centre for Architectural Conservation. The building was rehabilitated to host the Ramallah Cultural Museum in 2003 and is managed by the Ramallah Municipality (Kanaaneh et al., 2013). The spaces on the ground floor were adapted with the function of including exhibition or multi-purpose halls, administration and services. The front yard and back yard have an open-air amphitheatre and the first floor is equipped with a library, computer rooms, an open gallery and services.

The interventions varied according to the problems. Stability measures were taken into

consideration, whereby a system of ties and anchors were employed to overcome the deteriorating situation. The missing or badly deteriorating stones were replaced with stones from the site or with new stones. Services for the ground floor, the back garden and the upper floor were integrated within the project. Light facades were adapted. Double glass with thin steel sections was used for the windows. Similarly, the doors were furnished with steel and glass with protection bars for the ground floor while wooden coffer doors were used for the upper floor. Glass and steel handrails were also added while new stone steps were installed. The walls were plastered, and lime washed (Sharif, 2017). The rooms were tiled with golden desert polished local stone that recall the stone tiles of the past and yards were paved with cement coloured tiles framed with stone grid. Electricity, the first central heating and a computer network as well as sanitary and water supply systems were installed in the backyard.

The restoration enhanced the environment after being a dump place for years while the rapidly growing trees converted the area into a green island. The structural elements of the project did not change for the adaptive use. The spaces remained the same. Only two windows were converted to doors to connect the old building with the service area in the backyard. The use changed dramatically from being a residence, khan, court and clinic into a cultural museum with activities dedicated mainly to children (Sinclair, 2012). The building currently stands in a good state of conservation; protected, used and closed properly. The building is usually fully occupied by children and their activities and sometimes is used for art exhibitions. The project is, for several reasons, considered one of the very few successful conservation projects in Palestine. It is a perfect example of the adaptive use of the modern architectural heritage for the needs of the local community.

## 4.2 Monastery of the Temptation (Dair Quruntul)

This Monastery, which dates to 1892 AD, is located on the Mount of "*Quruntul*" (5 km North West of Jericho). The word "*Quruntul*" is derived from the Latin word "*Quadraginta*" which means "forty". The crusaders gave this name to the mountain in the 12th century as a mention to the forty days that Christ spent fasting and worshipping there (Pringle, Pringle, Leach, & Press, 1993). The Mount in general and this Monastery in particular are associated with religious significance for Christians. According to the Gospel of Luke, the devil (Satan) followed Christ to this location and Jesus said to Satan, "Man does not live by bread alone" (Press, 2018). The first monastery was built at the site in the 6th century above a cave. The hills or mountain is known as Mount Temptation. The cave was identified as the traditional site of the temptation experienced by Helena of Constantinople in 326 A.M., but the current monastery was founded by Archimandrite Aframeos in 1892 and restored several times (Wareham & Gill, 2011). There are about thirty to forty caves on the eastern side of the mountain that were previously inhabited by monks and hermits in the years when Christians were persecuted. The caves were later turned into storage rooms, chapels and cells. An advanced system of channels transferred rainwater to five caves, which were used as water tanks.

Although Jericho is 413 meters below sea level (the lowest spot in the world), the *Quruntul* Mount rises about 350 meters above the sea (Lemire, Tihanyi, & Weiss, 2017). This demonstrates the magnitude of the mountain's height from which cities and mountains in Jordan can be seen. Due to its presence at the foot of the mountain, the Monastery looks as if it is hanging in the air. The path leading to the mountain used to be off-road but network cable cars in front of Tel Jericho (1 km length) was created in 1998 by the private sector and 180 steps were built to reach the Monastery (Andree, 2013). The Monastery of the Temptation is an architectural masterpiece for having some parts suspended in

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the air and others carved in the rock. The Monastery consists of two levels built of masonry in front of a cave. It contains several different types of spaces including a relatively small church (15×12m), thirty rooms for monks and five

cantilevered balconies. The number of tourists doubled after the establishment of the cable cars whereby the Monastery of *Quruntul* is now the most important tourist destination in the province of Jericho.



*Figure 5:* Monastery of the Temptation



*Figure 6:* Dome of the Monastery

The Monastery is significant because in addition to having religious values, it stands as witness to Roman architecture with Ottoman influence. It is the only Monastery in Jericho that dates back to that era and has retained its integrity. The stone detailing around the doors, windows, at the corners and entrances exemplify local craftsmanship with clear Ottoman influence. The Monastery's location and its domes contribute to a sense of place in this city by serving as an orientation device for locals and visitors. Briefly, the areas of significance this resource falls into are architecture, ethnic heritage and religion.

The Monastery has been subjected to an insensitive addition during the early 1980's to expand its size. This addition did not take into consideration its character, period of significance or any of its architectural features. Unplanned and poorly researched additions to historic buildings constitute a problem faced by many of the architectural heritage in the country (Wild, 2018). The Monastery of Temptation presents a significant exchange of humanitarian values within the Neolithic Era in terms of architectural development, especially urban planning and architecture, and structural technology. It spreads exceptional and unique evidence for disappeared cultural civilizations, customs, and traditions until the 6th century BC. A significant example is its

familiar skulls with inlaid eyes, the earliest instance of old worship in the past. Furthermore, the site disseminates considerable information about craft and architectural development, predominantly through the Neolithic Era, including the evolution of the building layout from circle to rectangular and the development of different handicrafts like basketry, pottery, masonry, using unbaked mud bricks and natural stones for construction. The information explains valuable periods in humanitarian history.

### 4.3 The Clock Tower, Nablus

According to the marble inscription on the south entrance, the Nablus Clock Tower was constructed in 1901 by Sultan Abdul Hamid II on the 25th anniversary of his ascension to the throne. He ruled the Great Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1909 for almost 33 years (Szepesi, 2012). Many clock towers were constructed all over the Empire during Sultan Abdul Hamid II's rule. Seven were built in Palestinian cities (Nablus, Nazareth, Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, Safed and Jerusalem). The clock towers in Nablus and Haifa are identical. In 1922, exactly five years after the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate, the Jerusalem Clock Tower was destroyed (Abujidi, 2014). The Nablus Clock Tower is considered a symbol of Municipality of Nablus and is situated at the centre of the main

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Old City square, adjacent to Masjid An-Nasr. It is a square high-rise building consisting of five levels. The entry of this Tower is located on the first level with two windows on each side of the second level. The third level has stone balconies. A clock on each side of the fourth level has been in existence since the tower was first built. The function of the windows on the fifth level is to balance the clocks' weights. It is possible to reach the top of the tower using the internal stairs. At the top, there is a view of the city. The lower room was used in many reigns as a police department. The area where the clock tower was built was named the door of the Saraya (palace) because its buildings included the Turkish Government Palace. However, the name was changed after Nablus fell into the British hands in 1918 (Tütüncü & Azerbaidzjan, 2006). The Clock Tower withstood the massive earthquake that shook Nablus in 1927. Nevertheless, neighbouring vendors said the upper parts (fallen in the earthquake) were restored. The restoration and rehabilitation project of the Nablus Clock Tower started on 23rd December 2012 by TIKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) while the supervision of the project was concluded by the technical team of Nablus Municipality. The total cost of the project was $38,000 and all the works were completed according to contemporary conservation and restoration principles within three months (Akgunduz & Ozturk, 2013). Newly installed ground and interior lighting now highlight the Clock Tower at night. Sky search lights were also fixed with the light pack focused perpendicularly to the north to highlight the centralization of the Tower.



*Figure 7 & 8:* Nablus Clock Tower before and After Renovation

The Clock Tower has played a major role in time-control for the people and is considered nowadays the slogan as well as the symbol of Nablus city. This resource is significant mainly because of its contribution to a sense of place and to the urban character of the city. This building provides a certain feeling of time when the bell is heard sounding twice each hour and once each half hour (Books & LLC, 2010). This Tower perfectly illustrates the need to conserve whole areas rather than mere isolated monuments. It is disturbing that the current building codes implemented by government authorities (setback from all sides, building height, floor areas) do not

take into consideration the historic character of such resources. It is important to implement a grading system of historic and cultural resources that would be most useful for architectural heritage like the Clock Tower for two reasons; firstly, as the resource lies in a heavily populated residential area, its importance lies in the relationship of the parts to each other. Examples are the relationship between the Tower and the entrance of the city, between the Tower and the Turkish Government Palace, between the openings, balconies and the open public space of the surrounding houses. Residents should be allowed to make certain balanced changes to their homes. Otherwise, they will develop negative feelings towards their historic environment and the concept of registration of historic resources. Allowing a certain level of freedom that does not compromise the overall character of this resource is acceptable. This can be accommodated by the grading system wherein this resource can be registered under a lower grade or rank that allows certain levels of intervention. Secondly, this particular resource covers a large area.

## V. RESULTS

When designing the survey form, the researcher did not anticipate the importance of such values in evaluating the significance of the immovable heritage (armchair vs fieldwork researcher). Even though the researcher has taken into consideration the contribution to the national identity in the research design, the fieldwork showed that the contribution to community (neighbourhood)

identity was as important and existed in many of the visited resources.

The immediate inference indicated the existence of both inherent values and assigned values in the heritage resources in Palestine. The inherent values are architectural type or style, contribution to sense of place, detailing and fine craftsmanship, utilitarian and potential added value through conservation including information values. Meanwhile the assigned values are religious, contribution to community and national identity, collective memory as well as association with significant events, persons and groups (Figure 9). The immediate inferences also elaborated two significant criteria: contribution to a sense of place, which was observed in more situations during the visits than anticipated and contribution to local as well as community identity, the existence of which was revealed during the visits but was not included in the research design.

It is notable from Figure 10 that the highest ratio of immovable heritage in Palestine is residential buildings (almost 30%) because the private property encourages the owner to take care of his building that has been inherited from the past to be transferred to the future generations. In addition, the loyalty towards the Nation provokes pride in the history and national monuments especially in Palestine where the civilizational and cultural conflict has been intensifying between Palestinians and Israelis since 1948.
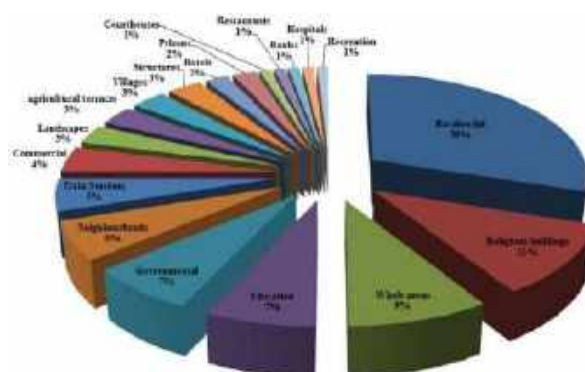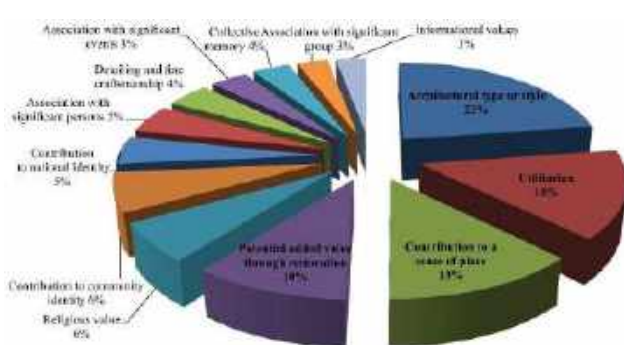


*Figure 9:* Different values existed in Palestine



*Figure 10:* Categorization of the resource

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Historical associations with little consideration to other merits currently dominate the evaluation criteria. Hence, the researcher revised the evaluation criteria to include structures and the acknowledgment of distinctive features of other styles through the adoption of a visual approach focusing on architectural aesthetics rather than on history alone. Even though the sixty-six sites and buildings visited do not represent all immovable heritage, the value occurrence frequency gives a characterization on the kind of values that are either inherent or assigned to the heritage resources in Palestine.

The researcher proposed evaluation criteria of the immovable heritage in Palestine that could make a major shift in evaluation criteria from emphasis on historical associations to prioritizing architectural, community aesthetics and quality of the physical environment. Such evaluation criteria will increase the value of immovable cultural heritage and will set up methods for protection. (Figure 11).
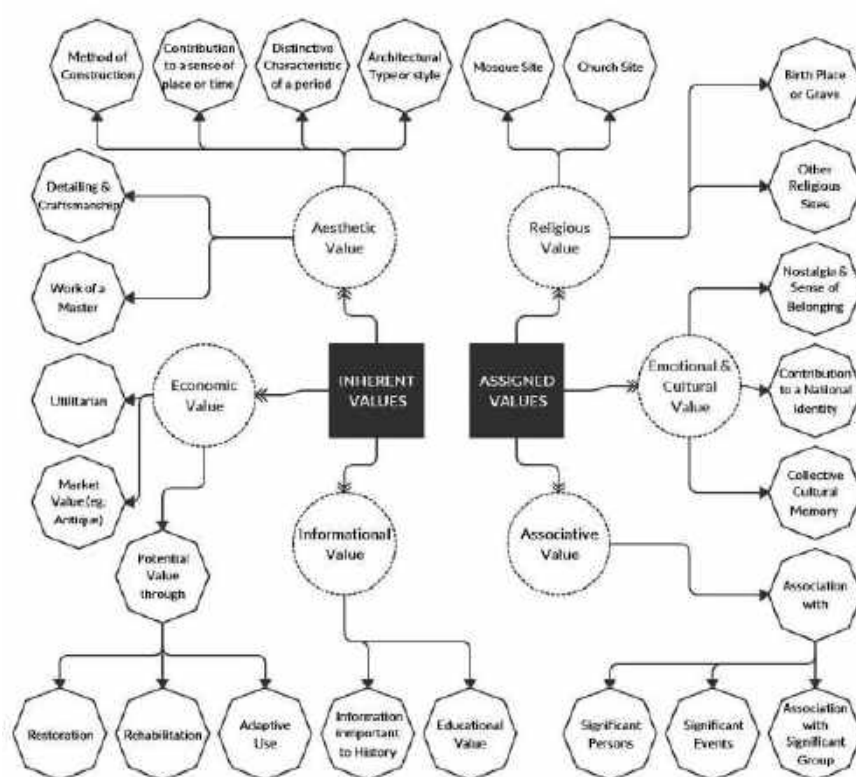


*Figure 11:* Evaluation Criteria of the Immovable Heritage in Palestine

## VI. CONCLUSION

The most common values in the visits were architectural type or style, contribution to a sense of place, utilitarian, potential added value through rehabilitation, restoration or adaptive use as well as religious and contribution to community identity. The relevance of the value (contribution to a sense of place) is a crucial evaluation criterion of the architectural heritage significance. The researcher in many situations (urban links, street facades, understanding city context, landmarks and orientation devices) observed these criteria.

The evaluation criteria in Palestine are abstract and less developed than other countries. The approaches of heritage value definition and the existing significance assessment process in Palestine do not reflect the multi-cultural characteristics of the community. Reassessment of the evaluation criteria for significance in order to address both inherent and assigned values of the Palestinian immovable resources is indispensable,

taking into consideration the different types and categories of the heritage in all periods of Palestine's history. The research takes into account the various reformulation modes more appropriate and relevant paths to the requirements of future generations and contemporary communities. The anticipation is that such an evaluation will contribute in defining and developing an effective agenda for immovable heritage in Palestine.

The researcher included evaluation criteria that emphasizes the significance of harmonic resources as methods of approaching issues of immovable heritage values. It challenges preconceptions; advances understanding and motivates a constructive debate about matters relating to the assessment and value of Palestine's immovable heritage. Such criteria will assist the decision makers in deciding whether the resources are considered a heritage resource. These criteria help the Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism plan integrated guidelines of selecting the immovable heritage resources and opens the door widely to include more resources while re-evaluating previously neglected resources.

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