

DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY FOR MANAGING THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES IN PALESTINE

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ABSTRACT

Heritage conservation in Palestine, through still in its early stage of development, is a growing area of interest to Palestinians. Success of the conservation of cultural resources is challenged by the absence of a defined mechanism for conservation and the lack of an infrastructure that supports conservation practice.

The objective of this research is to develop a comprehensive-regional approach for the identification, evaluation, and management of historical and cultural resources in Palestine; taking into consideration local culture, values, dynamics, and context. This comprehensive approach recognizes and incorporates the significance of a broader range of historical and cultural resources with diverse meanings and significance to different individuals and the broader range of the population, and which are important for Palestinian national, local, and place identity and sovereignty.

Depending on four sources of information (field reconnaissance-level survey, public meetings and workshop, conservation questionnaire, and case studies), the researcher divides the methodology for conservation in Palestine into three interrelated and overlapping parts; part one deals with establishing a strong knowledge base, part two involves creating a pro-conservation infrastructure and environment, and part three implements different levels of interventions and management.

Keywords: *comprehensive-regional approach, Conservation, Historical and Cultural Resources Management, Palestine*

INTRODUCTION

The present process to conservation considers the world as a universal system that covers both built and natural environments. Under this comprehensive concept of the world, conservation could be better defined as a "dynamic management of change" so as to guarantee the welfare of humankind. (Stylianidis et al., 2011)

Throughout a 200-year period and in various parts of the world, the popularity and spread of conservation practice was linked to changes in the environment and the evolution of society. Conservation served as an antidote to the ills of society and to the creative destruction of the urban environment. The environmental movement and the growing concern for community aesthetics came as reactions to the destruction of historical monuments and whole neighbourhoods in the name of planning and order. This creative destruction caused social and economic segregation and the obliteration of visual landmarks and historic monuments. Alarming environmental and cultural problems have motivated researchers to look for a more sensible approach to managing natural and cultural resources. The new framework is guided by an adaptation and recycling

philosophy (aimed at cultural continuity rather than mere aesthetic preservation which results in pseudo-cultural settings) that forms the substructure of environmental ethics and conservation practice today. (Bautista, 2003, Robbins et al., 2003)

In Palestine, there is no clear definition of historical and cultural resources. Many such resources are being sacrificed daily, causing a continuous diluting of the character of the modern (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) period. Cultural resources are faced with widespread destruction and neglect, often resulting from Israeli occupation, lack of awareness among the different strata of society regarding conservation issues, and from a limited view of conservation practice that considers salvage and settlement archaeology of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Classical Islamic ruins (main generators of tourism revenues) the ultimate objective of cultural consultation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conservation should be undertaken as an excellent opportunity for upgrading the conditions of whole quarters and neighbourhoods rather than just mere restoration of isolated monuments as it is usually the case. Fitch presents an interesting argument for conservation based on enhancing the civic and aesthetic experience of the public. He adopts a comprehensive approach to conservation, taking into consideration cultural, economic, and social aspects for the ultimate purpose of "enhancing the experience of the public" (Sullebarger and Fitch, 1989). The main value of conservation according to Fitch is to enhance the aesthetic experience of future generations by public participation in the built environment (especially the historic urban environment) which is part of the overall culture.

(Stipe, 2003) offers different reasons for the conservation of historic resources; The first deals with history. The second reason deals with the psychological relationship between such resources and our own personal needs. We have lived with such resources; they have become part of us. Patriotism and nostalgia are significant motives for conservation, and should be cared for. Stipe's third reason for conservation has to do with maintaining difference, for we live in a time of increasing the cultural homogeneity. In this situation, we reach out subconsciously for any chance to preserve the uniqueness and difference. Ultimately, we conserve cultural and historic resources for their aesthetics and pure intrinsic-artistic value.

Frampton, an architectural historian and theoretician, offers an argument for conservation of regional architectural forms and characters. He believes that society should depend on particular characters in any region to resist popular commodification of the built environment and social life. The region becomes the place of resistance against late capitalism and flexible accumulation (Ercebeci et al., 2001). Regional form becomes the instrument for that resistance when not only the architectural form, setting, and structures are conserved, but also the technologies and the know-how as well.

(Mynors, 2006) presents a five-step methodology for reuse and conservation; The first step consists of producing inventories of historical and cultural resources in any country interested in conserving its cultural heritage. Steps two and three, which become possible only after the inventory, consist of "identifying" and "listing" particular buildings or groups of buildings for identifying, protection, and declaring the areas of conservation. "The concept of conservation areas, or area conservation, is an important one because it helps

to make conservation part of planning policy." The fourth step provides "financial encouragement" in the form of grants, subsidies, and tax incentives. Providing financial support channels for conservation is essential, especially in economically underdeveloped countries where conservation might not be a priority. Finally, the last step discussed by Mynors involves the setting up of "voluntary amenity societies," both at national and local levels.

METHODOLOGY

This research incorporates between-method triangulation by using different methods to increase the internal validity of the study and to generate different types of data during the inquiry process. Triangulation will enable the researcher to conduct in-depth fieldwork in Palestine using different methods and to incorporate case studies of conservation movements from different countries and diverse cultural and geographic contexts. (Figure 1)

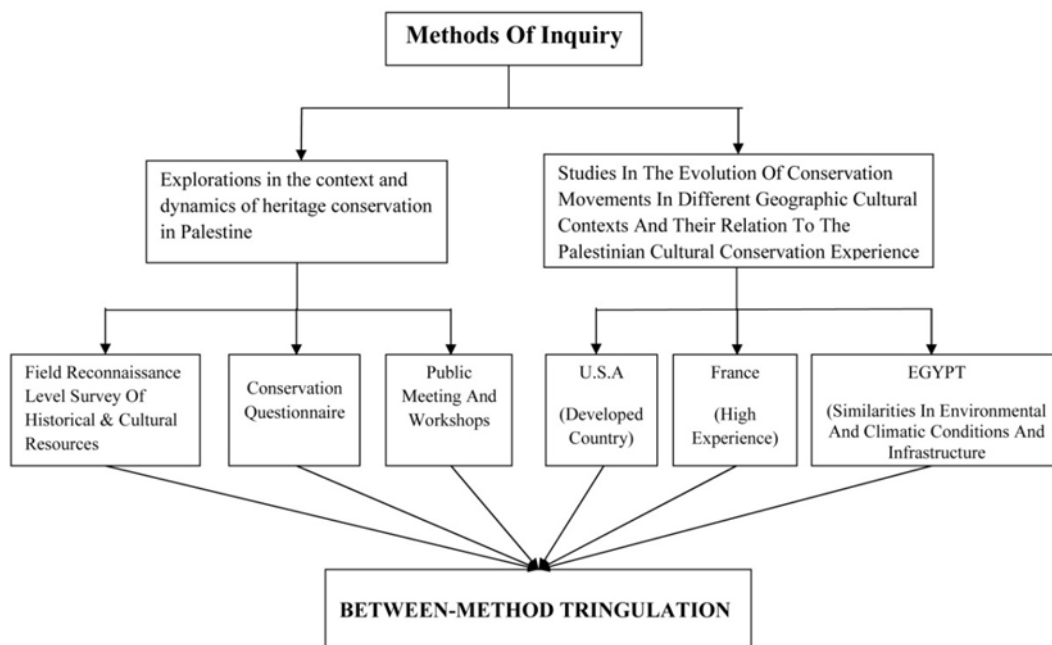


Figure 1: Methods of Inquiry

Explorations in the Dynamics and Context of Heritage Conservation in Palestine

The first method incorporated in the research is a qualitative survey of Palestine's historical and cultural resources. The survey examined different value systems and attitudes concerning conservation in Palestine. This method took expedition form to Palestine during the summer of 2013.

Field Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historical and Cultural Resources

The survey developed a characterization of Palestine's historical and cultural resources and established a nucleus for a thorough and exclusive inventory in the future. The study population was the historical and cultural resources of Palestine after 1700 A.D. which are not included in the current legislation and laws. During the expedition, the participants

researched the different kinds of values (inherent and assigned) of the cultural heritage while testing certain significance evaluation criteria. Such criteria were developed during the preparation phase and are depended on review of the literature and different critiques of the approach used in the evaluation of significance currently present in Western conservation practices. Figure 2 illustrates the evaluation criteria tested and researched during the expedition. Participants included three conservationists, five architects, two archaeologists, one Cultural Resource Management (CRM) archaeologist, two anthropologists, and one historian. Sixty six sites were visited on the expedition, spread throughout nineteen Palestinian cities, towns, and villages; seven in the Gaza strip and twelve in the West Bank.

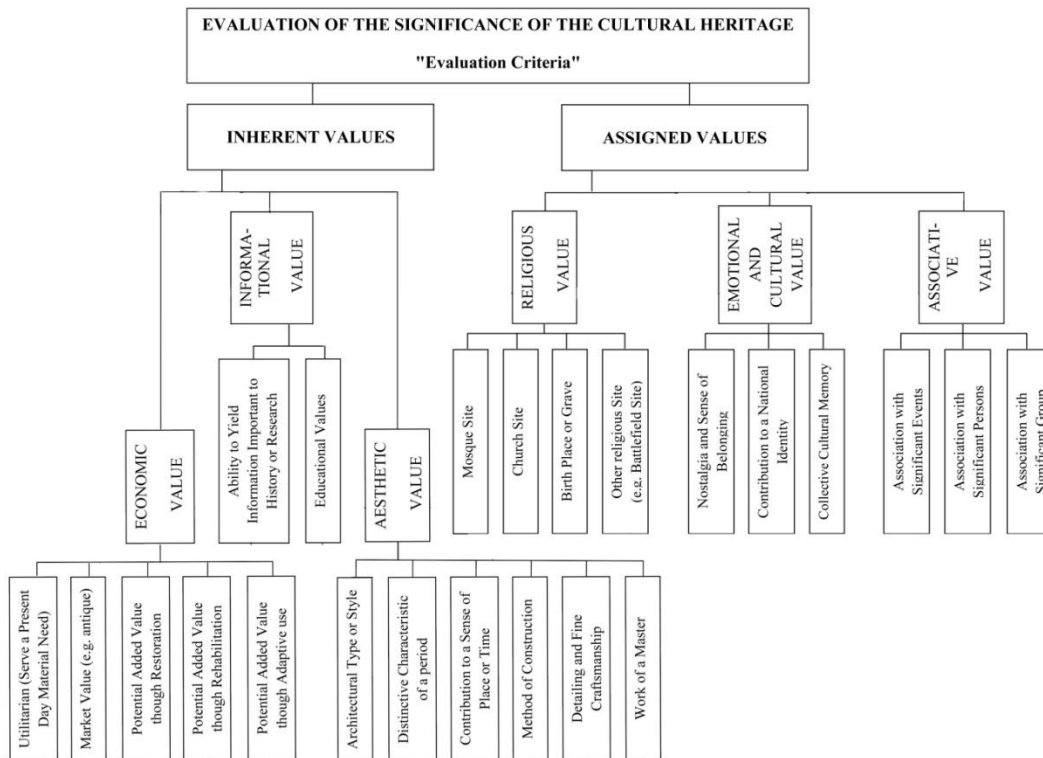


Figure 2: Evaluation Criteria Researched in the Expedition

Public Meetings and Workshop

Informal public meetings were held with locals who inhabit the historical sites or live in the vicinity. People's attitudes towards such historic sites and towards the practices of the Department of Antiquities and other private conservationists were solicited and recorded. In addition, several formal meetings between expedition participants and members of the general public interested in conservation were organized at different locations. The concluding event in the expedition was a one day workshop. This workshop provided confrontation with and information about different approaches and attitudes related to conservation issues. In this way channels of discussions and a dialogue between opposing ideologies and paradigms were opened.

Conservation questionnaire

The conservation questionnaire self-administered and targeted key informants representing government officials. Informants were selected according to a "purposive" or "judgment" criterion that depended mainly on salient characteristics and the informant's role in the community through which he/ she was exposed to pertinent information (Rubin and Babbie, 2008). In general, the objectives of the questionnaire were to elicit from such key informants their opinion on issues related to cultural conservation in Palestine, to secure participation in the definition of the historical and cultural resources, to obtain people's reaction and attitudes towards current antiquities laws and regulations, and finally, obtain their opinion on the adaptive use of the modern architectural heritage. Twenty two people completed the questionnaire (15 males and 7 females). They included four conservation architects, seven architects, two historians, six archaeologists (among who was the Director of the Department of Antiquities), one CRM archaeologist, and two planners (including the Minister of Planning). The information collected is very qualitative in nature. Even though only 22 out of 40 questionnaires were returned to the researcher, the data provides adequate local input about conservation related issues in Palestine.

Evolutionary studies of Conservation Movements in various Cultural Contexts

Three case studies (United States, France, and Egypt) were selected after reviewing different conservation movements in many other countries. The U.S. and France, as a developed country, were selected because they have established an advanced and mature conservation process, and implemented many archaeological and architectural heritage projects in Palestine, also they provide contrasting examples in their approach to conserving the cultural heritage (Cleere, 1984). Egypt was chosen according to its cultural contexts that are similar to Palestine's. The Egyptian conservation movement, even though much more advanced than Palestine's, is still in its early stages of development.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was interpreted through an analytic construct which started with the generation of immediate inferences, each based on one method of inquiry. When applying the between-method triangulation, it is important to link data at the level of immediate inferences rather than at the descriptive level. The immediate inferences were generated from the field reconnaissance-level survey (FRLS), the public meetings and one-day workshop (PMW), the conservation questionnaire (CQ), and the three case studies (CS). The linking process joined two or more immediate inferences together to generate mediate inferences. (Figure 3)

The objective of this analytic construct is to arrive at theory-driven knowledge by entering into a dialogue with different sources of data made possible by the between-method triangulation. This interpretive-hermeneutic approach to data analysis will provide the chance to look at the pieces of data individually and all together at the same time.

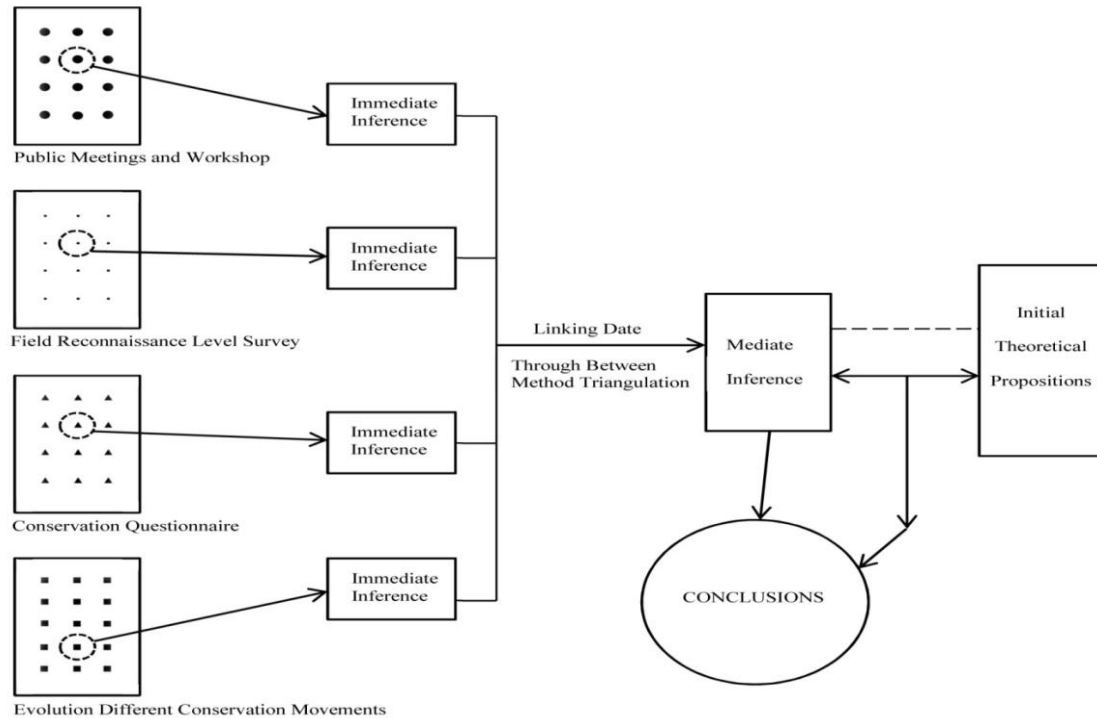


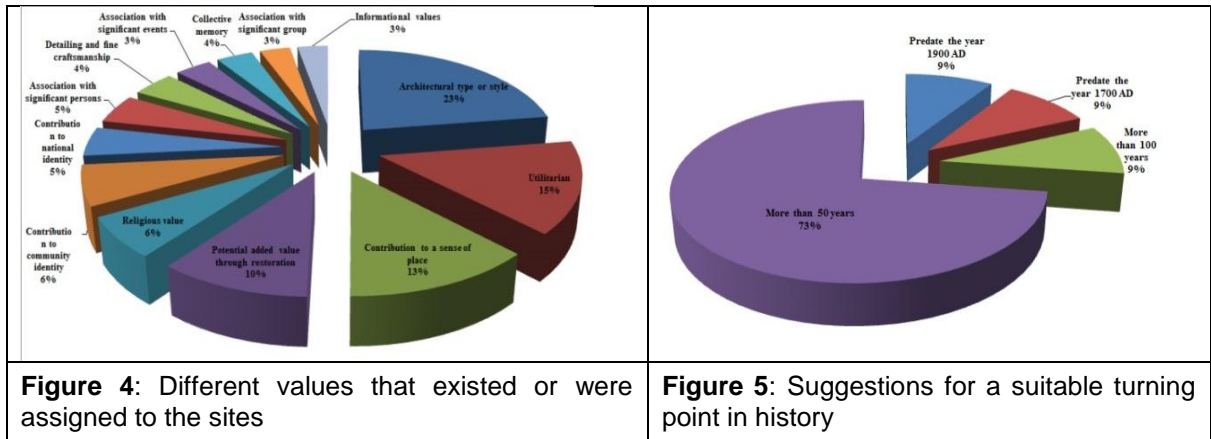
Figure 3: Mechanism of Analytic Construct "A Model"

The Value of a Comprehensive and Triangulated Method for Conservation in Palestine.

One of the immediate inferences (PMW) indicated that identification, evaluation, and registration are important steps in any conservation methodology and are needed in Palestine to redefine the cultural heritage to include not only archaeological sites but historic buildings and sites as well. Another immediate inference (CS) stated that a comprehensive methodology for conservation aims at arriving at a broader definition of historical and cultural resources and has provisions for conservation management. This method also includes developing protective strategies to ensure that interventions in old settings do not compromise historical integrity and characters. The mediate inferences from these two sources of information demonstrate that a comprehensive and triangulated method for conservation in Palestine is needed to better define and manage the historical and cultural resources of the country.

The Significance and Values of Historic and Cultural Resources.

An immediate inference (FRLS) indicated the existence of both inherent values and assigned values in historical and cultural resources in Palestine (Figure 4). An immediate inference (CQ) indicated that cultural resources 50 years old and older are chosen by most of informants to be at the threshold after which resources will not be considered historic; this is a dynamic turning point that addresses the modern history of Palestine (Figure 5).



Two immediate inferences from (FRLS) elaborated on two criteria: contribution to a sense of place, which was observed in more situations during the expedition than anticipated, and contribution to local and community identity, the existence of which was revealed during the expedition and was not included in the research design. An immediate inference (CQ) showed that according to people surveyed, age of a property is critical when deciding whether or not it is a historical and cultural resource. (Figure 6)

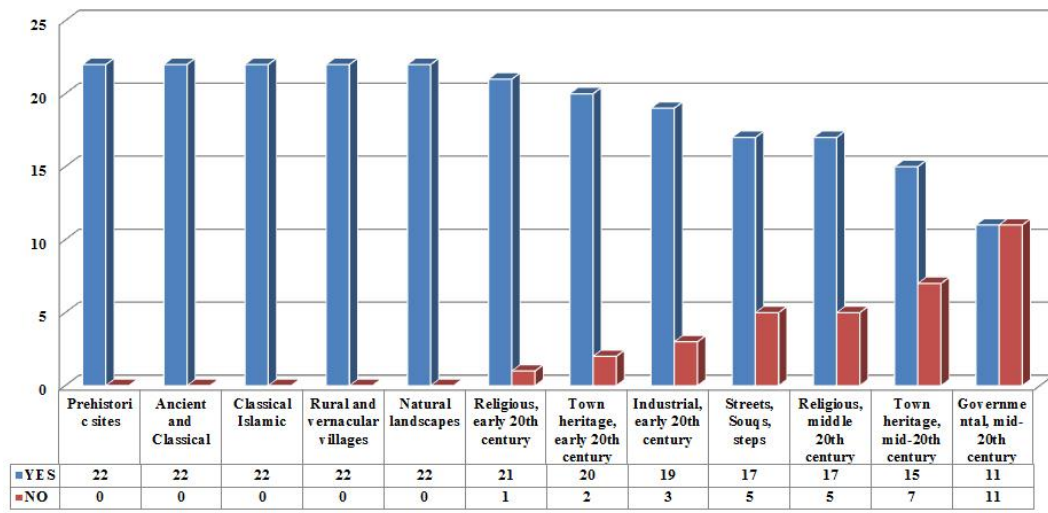


Figure 6: Definitions of the historical and cultural resources by the specialists surveyed

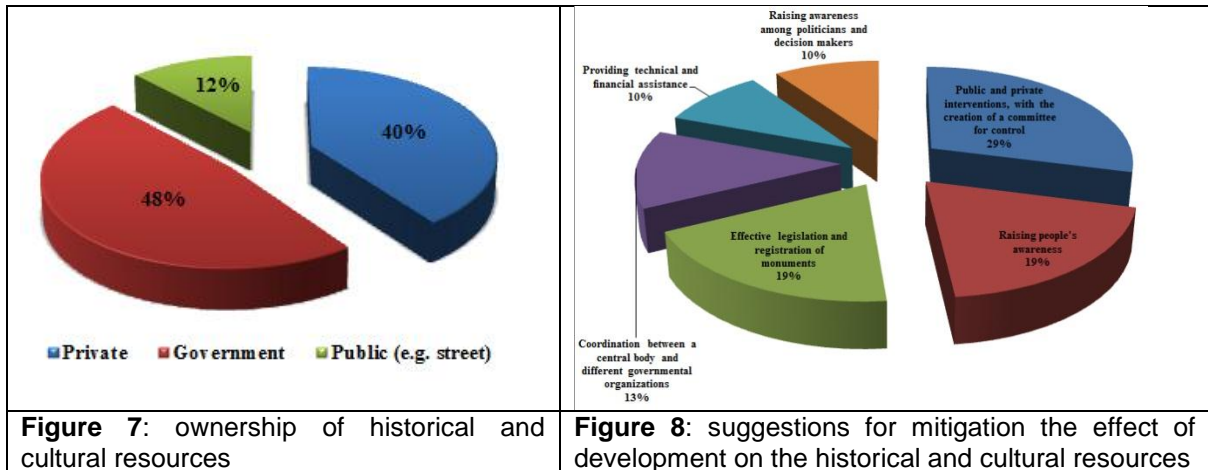
An immediate inference (CS) addressed the evolution of the significance of historical and cultural resources through time and how this affects the evaluation criteria. Any evaluation criteria for the significance of historical and cultural resources should take this dynamic concept of significance into consideration.

The mediate inferences from all these sources demonstrated that the significance of historic resources is a dynamic concept, subject to variation between individuals and to change through time. In conservation, the period of significance could be a point in time, a period, or two or more separate points or periods of time. Understanding such a concept means that there should always be re-evaluations of the evaluation criteria for significance. As far as Palestine is concerned, a suitable point before which cultural

resources can be considered historic is ascribed to historical and cultural resources more than fifty years old. The reason for this choice is that the point in time should be dynamic, and pinpoints the modern history of Palestine, important in its overall evolution.

The Coordination between Different Governmental, Public, and Private Parties.

An immediate inference (FRLS) revealed that many historical and cultural resources in Palestine are owned by the government; therefore, coordination between a central body and the governmental agencies is crucial for a successful methodology for conservation due the important role played by those agencies affecting the cultural heritage.



An immediate inference (FRLS) stated that conservation is not being incorporated into the planning practices of different governmental agencies. An immediate inference (PMW) indicated that governmental agencies in Palestine have a negative, even destructive impact on historical and cultural resources due to insensitive planning schemes. An immediate inference (CQ) stated that one measure suggested for the mitigation of the effect of "development" is successful coordination between different governmental agencies and a national body for conservation (Figure 8).

The mediate inference is that coordination between different parties and a central conservation body is essential for a comprehensive methodology for conservation, particularly in a country like Palestine since many historical and cultural resources are owned by such governmental agencies that play an important role in the development and since conservation is not being incorporated into planning practices.

The Role of Advocacy in Historic and Cultural Conservation

An immediate inference (FRLS) revealed few conservation projects in Palestine; yet those attempts that succeed work to promote future projects. Promotion projects and case studies help to spread the idea of conservation and convince the people of its many benefits. An immediate inference (PMW) stated that conservationists should seek uses for old buildings that meet the needs and values of the local communities. An immediate inference (PMW) revealed that the power of writing can be used to develop support groups for conservation and to constructively critique different development projects. Such writings and critiques should be as diplomatic as possible so as to respect the power

structure in Palestine. An immediate inference (CQ) stated that conservation advocacy helps mitigate the effect of development on the cultural heritage. An immediate inference (CS) indicated that promotion, advocacy, and public awareness are important bridges between government and private efforts for conservation as demonstrated in the U.S. and France.

The mediate inferences from all these sources show that advocacy for cultural conservation is part of a conservation methodology. Advocacy in a society like Palestine, with very few conservationists, implies that these individuals must play an interactive role in the overall process. Their responsibilities include publicizing the few examples of successful rehabilitation or adaptation projects, promoting the rehabilitation and adaptive use of the historical and cultural resources, and using the power of writing to develop support groups for conservation and to constructively and diplomatically critique development projects.

The Role of Pro-Conservation Legislation in the Conservation Movement

An immediate inference (FRLS) divided the disturbances affecting the cultural heritage into two main types: irreversible and reversible. An immediate inference (FRLS) stated that current building codes are in some cases inappropriate for historic settings. Two immediate inferences (CQ) stated that current antiquities laws and regulations in Palestine carry certain biases: adoption of 1700 AD as a turning point, lack of selection criteria, and the limitations of defining antiquities rather than historical and cultural resources (16 out of 22 considered the 1700 AD threshold to be a major bias).

An immediate inference (CS) indicated that pro-conservation laws in the U.S. and France progressed from ones supporting the conservation of national, singular monuments to ones supporting the conservation of ordinary historic resources and whole settings. Meanwhile, another immediate inference (CS) indicated that even though there is strong legislation for protection and conservation in Egypt, it is not implemented because of the many problems facing the conservation of historic properties in the country.

The mediate inferences generated here conclude that even though developing pro-conservation legislation is important to the success of conservation in a country like Palestine, it alone is not enough to counteract the many disturbances to the historical and cultural resources.

Archaeology/ Tourism VS Historical/ Cultural Conservation Paradigms

Two immediate inferences from (FRLS) indicated that 83% of Palestine's historical and cultural resources are currently in use or have been deserted recently. This means that such resources can be easily reintroduced into the community as viable resources. They can add greater cultural meaning in addition to their human use value.

Two other immediate inferences from (FRLS) indicated that the archaeology paradigm dominates over the cultural conservation paradigm in the Department of Antiquities of Palestine (DAP); specially that most of the DAP staff are archaeologists as an immediate inference (PMW) stated. In addition, settlement archaeology and large scale tourist conservation projects promote the relocation and evacuation of villagers from agricultural land; this led to rapid deterioration and dramatic change of traditional life. In Palestine, the dominance of the archaeology paradigm leads to a narrow definition of historical and cultural resources, restricting it to antiquities rather than including all resources.

The mediate inferences generated from the preceding data show that the differences between the ancient monuments of the distant past and the historic and cultural resources of the recent past is the latter's receptivity to rehabilitation and adaptation. These resources are very diverse in nature and function. The monuments of the recent past can be easily reinstated and reintroduced in the daily lives of Palestinians as liveable resources; the monuments of ancient times cannot. Both paradigms treat the cultural tradition and the people associated with such a tradition differently.

Recognition of the Fragility of Character and Historic Integrity

An immediate inference (FRLS) stated that historic character is very fragile and can be compromised by a number of simple interventions, let alone those disturbances affecting the historical and cultural resources in gentrification. An immediate inference (FRLS) indicated that stone is the common dominator among all the architectural styles; technical efforts in conservation should concentrate on restoration of stone. An immediate inference (CQ) stated that one of the disadvantages of current conservation projects is unsuitable conservation treatments such as using harmful chemicals or sandblasting to clean stone facades.

The mediate inferences generated show that interventions, no matter how trivial, can compromise historical character and integrity. Historical character and integrity are often compromised in Palestine due to the mistreatment of stone either during conservation projects or regular maintenance works.

The Environment and the Popularity of Cultural Conservation through Time

In the United States, urban renewal programs, large-scale planning projects, and transportation networks caused much of the destruction of historic environments. As a reaction to the destruction of the 1950s and 1960s, conservation became very popular, and the idea of conserving whole settings rather than isolated monuments culminated in the phenomenon of returning to old city cores, warehouse districts, and historic waterfronts in the form of festive markets.

In 1789, the political and social upheaval of the French revolution led to the destruction of many historic buildings and whole areas and neighbourhoods. Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris between 1853 and 1870 caused the severe clearing of historic monuments and districts. During the urban renewal period of the 1950s and 60s, many of France's historic monuments were demolished and bulldozed. This triggered concern for the quality of urban life, which culminated in 1962 with Malraux's law calling for integrated conservation of whole districts and neighbourhoods including the 1974 plan for 100 historic city cores.

In Egypt, between 1860 and 1880, several projects gave rise to a prestigious urban center on a Haussmann type-plan. The consequences of such plans were tremendous: destruction of historic environments, changing the historic character of the city, social and economic segregation, and breakdown of social and economic structures.

In Palestine, as well as in Egypt, governmental agencies and private developers play a role in the destruction of historical and cultural landscapes and environments due to insensitive planning schemes and highway construction. Planning projects do not have any provisions for historic conservation, and, if they do, "enhancing the environment" usually involves clearing historic city areas based on superficial evaluation. Unfortunately,

effective reactions to environmental destruction in Palestine have not been organized into a collective effort.

RESULTS

Depending on four sources of information, the researcher divides the methodology for conservation in Palestine into three interrelated and overlapping parts:

Establish a Strong Knowledge Base

- **Identification:** Identification can be achieved through field reconnaissance-level surveys to develop a characterization of the historical and cultural resources in a certain region prior to intensive surveys of all resources. Categorization of function, type, or use of the resources is necessary to complete the information used in the evaluation of the resources. Categorization is aided by knowledge of different architectural types and historic contexts.
- **Evaluation:** The study concluded that, as far as Palestine is concerned, the historical and cultural resources are significant because they possess an inherent value and assigned values.
- **Eligibility, Grading, and Registration:** When listing historical and cultural resources in national registers, it is expected that such resources will have different levels of significance depending on the values they possess and on the level of interest in such resources expressed by public groups and governmental agencies. It is therefore useful to have some method of ranking or grading national register listings. Such grading can affect the level of intervention allowed in a certain historical or cultural resource; it also can be helpful in determining the resource's degree of legal protection in identifying the parts of the resource that are most significant.

Establish a Pro-Conservation Infrastructure and Environment

- **Awareness:** Awareness should target all levels of society, including employees in different governmental agencies, public works, and development, and the political decision makers. It is important for conservationists to capitalize on this sentiment and direct such emotions in favour of conservation.
- **Architectural Pride through Education:** This can be done through pro-conservation school programs and activities and through graduate programs in architectural conservation at different Palestinian universities.
- **Coordination:** Coordination between governmental agencies and a central conservation body to ensure the protection and conservation of the cultural heritage is essential for a successful Palestinian conservation method. (20 out of 22 respondents felt the need for creating a national organization for historical and cultural conservation to address post-1700 AD cultural heritage).
- **Pro-Conservation Legislation:** Developing and improving pro-conservation legislation for the protection of the historical and cultural environment ensures the continuity of an uninterrupted evolution of the cultural heritage, especially in a country like Palestine where antiquities and environmental protection laws are limited and biased.
- **Financial Support:** Due to a lack of funds for conservation and the unavailability of budgets in Palestinian agencies, searching private channels for financial support is essential in order to develop a comprehensive conservation method.

- Advocacy: Conservation advocacy in a society like Palestine with very few conservationists implies that these individuals should play an interactive role in the conservation movement.

Implement Different Levels of Intervention and Management

Possible options for managing and conserving historical and cultural resources include the following:

- Do Nothing: The management decision might be to leave it as is for the time being. At this level of management, a record of the existence of the resource is made for future exploration of its significance.
- Documentation: A thorough documentation of the historical resource involves the production of measured architectural drawings, text based on oral and written history to explain historic contexts, and large format photography.
- Intervention Guidelines and Protective Strategies: standards and guidelines for conservation projects in Palestine should regulate conservation work but at the same time not so restrict the imagination as to inhibit the creation of architecture and the incorporation of modern technologies in the building industry.
- Legal Protection: Protection implies that any future interventions, if permitted, should be conducted according to certain guidelines and standards. Legal protection, together with registration work can protect the historic and cultural environment for future generations.
- Conservation Treatments: One of the differences between the settlement archaeology paradigm and the cultural conservation paradigm is the latter's incorporation of different conservation treatments.

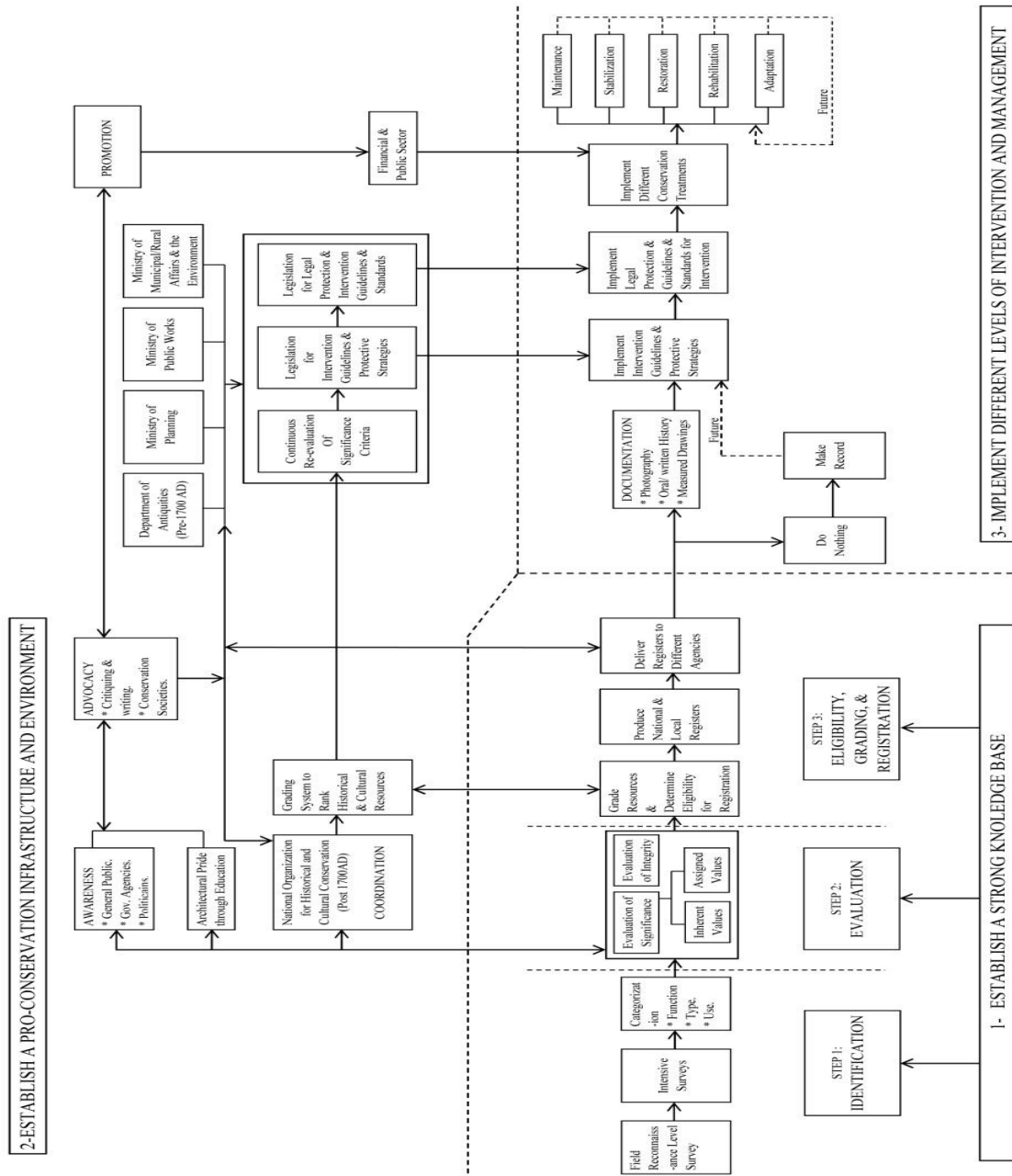


Figure 11: Methodology for Historical and Cultural Conservation in Palestine

CONCLUSION

The outcome of this research is a comprehensive-regional approach for the identification, evaluation, and management of historical and cultural resources in Palestine; taking into consideration local culture, values, dynamics, and context. This comprehensive approach to conservation addresses the realistic situation of cultural conservation in Palestine, and offers recommendations that consider the significance of historical and cultural resources dating from all periods of Palestine's history, including the modern period which has been neglected as far as conservation practices are concerned. This comprehensive approach recognizes and incorporates the significance of a broader range of historical and cultural

resources with diverse meanings and significance to different individuals and the broader range of the population, and which are important for Palestinian national, local, and place identity and sovereignty.

The research represents an alternative approach to cultural conservation that bears in mind the conservation of the cultural heritage of the 19th and 20th centuries and brings a societal and cultural perspective to the practice of heritage conservation in Palestine. The significance of this research is its attempt to go beyond a nostalgic historical study and documentation of the historical and cultural heritage, to reject the dominance of the archaeology paradigm in conservation practice, and to establish a model for an alternative approach to conservation. This new approach to conservation will cause a shift from antiquities preservation to cultural conservation.

This research also goes beyond being an intellectual exercise or an advocacy to save monumental and appealing architecture. This research could be considered a rhetorical argument (a scientific, methodological, and historical argument), based on maximizing the voices of authority and understanding the key player in conservation in Palestine, and to build a broader understanding of Palestinian local, national, and place identity. It offers a method to reveal how Palestinians understand the significance of the past, including the recent past which shaped the identity of Palestine as a nation-state, and how that knowledge is placed in the perspective of the overall history and evolution of the country.

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