

Abstract

This study focused on the impact of demographic characteristics on people perception of landscape change in Ramallah and Al-Bireh governorate. The researcher used a comparative approach to carry out the study and to make a comparison between city, village, and refugee camp.

In order to achieve the study objectives and to study people's perspectives of the landscape changes, the researcher selected a representative random sample consisted of 224 persons. A closed ended questionnaire was carefully designed to meet the objectives of the study and to provide the researcher with necessary data for analysis.

The study depended also on the analysis of chronological series of aerial photos of the targeted areas, specifically for three time periods (1943, 1997, 2007). The analysis of aerial photos aimed at tracing out the physical changes in the landscape.

The study showed that single people are more aware of the importance of the landscape, and they are using it more frequently than others, especially for picnic and to visit historical places. However, and due to its extensive use of landscape, this group might has a larger role in the physical deterioration of the landscape elements.

Analysis of the questionnaire revealed an inverse relationship between the educational level and different activities of inhabitants in the landscape such as picnic and visits to historical places.

The analysis also showed that the people perception on the negative impact of agricultural activities on landscape elements is small, with only 0.7% of respondents assured that agricultural activities is negatively affecting the landscape elements.

In terms of economic factors, the analysis showed that unemployed people tend to work in agricultural activities, that is closely related to preserving the landscape characteristics. On the other hand, the results of the analysis showed that social factors (education, age, etc.) affect the level of awareness and understanding of different landscape elements and changes, hence, affect the way with which people deals with the landscape components. In this regard gender was found to be the least factor in terms of impact on the level of awareness.

In term of political factor, the study showed that 88.9% of the respondents are aware of the negative effects of Israeli colonies on safety in landscape. This indicates the presence of threats to landscape visitors due to these colonies

As for the awareness of people to urban expansion, the analysis showed that only 7% of the respondents are aware of such negative effect, especially on landscape beauty, biodiversity, identity, and cleanness.

11.9% of the respondents also aware of the quarries, marble and stone industries negative impacts on landscape, whereas 27.3% of the respondents assured that the environmental pollution has a negative impact on the landscape elements.

As a conclusion, it seems that the level of awareness on the importance of the landscape, and the threats that the landscape encounters is low among respondents, which leads to more deterioration in landscape components.

Generally speaking, it seems that the level of awareness to landscape changes was the lowest in Aljalzoon Camp (with regard to cleanness, threats, safety, and biodiversity) and highest in Al-Bireh city. This necessitates setting appropriate policies and monitoring mechanisms to trace out the change in the landscape and to prevent activities which could negatively affect it. As a result, It is highly recommended to encourage land reclamation and landscape planning to rehabilitate the partially damage landscape. This will help in the preservation of what is left from the beautiful Palestinian landscape.

Analysis of aerial photos showed that the landscape physical elements in the study area is suffering from large negative changes, which are due to the construction activities that are threatening and negatively affecting the agricultural and green open areas. .