

## **Abstract**

Jerusalem has always been a center of contested incidents and events throughout history. Today it endures a unique model of urban planning and design characterized by apartheid. Open spaces and green areas issue in East Jerusalem has been obvious since the Ottoman era, British Mandate, and finally under Israeli occupation.

This research is concerned with open spaces in Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem that is considered as an important site for world religions; also, defined as part of “Historical basin” in Jerusalem 2000 Master Plan. Due to its geo-political importance, this area is going under dramatic changes.

This research aims to investigate the change of how Palestinian inhabitants of Mt. of Olives have experienced and perceived open spaces, in addition to the impact of landscape change on daily life experience of inhabitants and users of the area and attachment to place.

Depending on perception theories; perception of place is relationship between physical components, activities that occur in the place, and individual meanings and understandings. The study developed a three dimensional analytical framework which consist of Experience of place that affect the perception of space in order to produce sense of attachment and belonging to place. Phenomenological approach was adopted to investigate change of experience and perception of open spaces in Mount of Olives; based on semi- structured interviews with residents, observations and the study of available documents and data about the area.

Main findings of the study indicate that experience of residents has changed; unlike past years open spaces are rarely used by residents today. The experience of open space has changed the perception too; most of interviewees perceived the change to be worse than the past. Most residents indicate awareness toward change of open space that changed the sense of belonging and attachment to open spaces in Mt. of Olives. The results were affected by many factors as socio- cultural and economic change in the community, as well as political situation and Israeli planning in East Jerusalem, in addition to life- style change of residents due to modernity and urbanization. Another factor that was major in interviews was the absence of safety in open spaces. As a result, the open space perception has changed from 'Urban Space' to be 'Geo-political Space'.

Therefore, there is an essential need to provide safety in open spaces and urgent solution by social mobilization in order to activate open spaces with Palestinian existence and safety measures.

**Keywords:** Open space, change, Mount of Olives, Perception, experience, sense of belonging, phenomenological approach.