

THE MUNICIPAL COMPOUND IN LATE OTTOMAN GAZA: LOCAL APPROPRIATIONS OF A TANZIMAT INSTITUTION AND THEIR VISUAL AND MATERIAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract | The introduction of formalized municipalities was a central component of Ottoman political reform during the late 19th century. As of the 1860s, Ottoman legislation and the combined efforts of state officials and local notables initiated an Empire-wide streamlining of the existing plurality of traditions of urban governance. The main institution behind these reforms in the urban sphere was the modern municipality, as defined by the Municipal Law of 1877. Along with this institutional standardization, the architectural profile of the modern municipality was redesigned to meet Empire-wide standards. This chapter ventures into the still largely unwritten history of the Municipality of Gaza and examines how the “standard package” of Ottoman municipal reform was appropriated by local actors. In so doing, it concentrates on the visual sources that provide information on the physical seat of the municipality, the “municipal compound,” and the ways in which its architecture was planned and executed to communicate the political visions and divisions in the city. In particular, this chapter looks at how two pairs of collective actors shaped the municipal compound and its surroundings. The first is the Sultan and his government in their dealings with the municipal council, and the second is the two factional camps that dominated Gaza’s political scene, with a description of their emergence and physical establishment. Overall, the chapter conceptualizes the municipal compound as a unit of analysis in the urban history of Greater Syria and demonstrates the power of a combined analysis of visual and textual sources in revealing hitherto unnoticed dynamics in urban society.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of formalized municipalities was a central component of Ottoman political reform during the late 19th century. Its aim was to give the Ottoman state a firm hand in urban affairs, far beyond the level of control it had exerted in the past. The provisions of the Provincial Code (*Vilayet Kanunnamesi*) of 1864, further specified by the Municipal Law (*Belediye Kanunu*) of 1877, furnished the legal and institutional backbone for an Empire-wide effort to streamline the plurality of traditions of urban governance. In fact, the Tanzimat innovations in municipal governance only took off on a

large scale under the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, who was extremely interested in urban development and used the municipalities to strengthen the Ottoman state presence in the Empire’s provinces.¹

1 For studies on municipalities in the late Ottoman Bilad al-Sham, see: on Jerusalem, Yasemin Avcı and Vincent Lemire, “De la modernité administrative à la modernisation urbaine: Une réévaluation de la municipalité ottomane de Jérusalem (1867–1917),” in Nora Lafi (ed.), *Municipalités méditerranéennes: Les réformes urbaines ottomanes au miroir d’une histoire comparée (Moyen-Orient, Maghreb, Europe méridionale)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2005), pp. 73–138; Jens Hanssen, “Municipal Jerusalem in the Age of Urban Democracy: On the Difference between what happened and what is said to have hap-



In parallel to this institutional standardization, the architectural profile of the modern municipality was redesigned in line with Empire-wide standards. This led to the emergence of an architectural ensemble that may be called a municipal compound, similar to what Yasemin Avcı calls the “government compound” or “government quarter” to refer to the buildings housing central government institutions.² Extending the literature on late Ottoman Gaza and the comparative example of Jerusalem, this chapter argues that, at least in some cities, the municipal compound acquired a representational form of its own. The municipality’s material and visual representation was distinct from that of the central state in the city and thus communicated the increasingly participative nature of the municipality. A range of social actors, both “from above” and “from below,” claimed and appropriated its symbolism for their own ends.

The “government compound” as it developed from the 1860s onwards, combined the

pened,” in Angelos Dalachanis and Vincent Lemire (eds.), *Ordinary Jerusalem, 1840–1940: Opening New Archives, Revisiting a Global City* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 262–280; on Beirut, Malek Sharif, *Imperial Norms and Local Realities: The Ottoman Municipal Laws and the Municipality of Beirut 1860–1908* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2014); Jens Hanssen, “The Origin of the Municipal Council in Beirut 1860–1908,” in Lafi (ed.), *Municipalités méditerranéennes*, pp. 139–175; with a comparative perspective, Mahmoud Yazbak, “Comparing Ottoman Municipalities in Palestine: The Cases of Nablus, Haifa, and Nazareth 1864–1914,” in Dalachanis and Lemire (eds.), *Ordinary Jerusalem*, pp. 240–261; Johann Buessow, “Ottoman Reform and Urban Government in the District of Jerusalem, 1867–1917,” in Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi (eds.), *Urban Governance under the Ottomans: Between Cosmopolitanism and Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 97–141. For interpretations of the architectural features of government and municipality buildings, see for example, Zeynep Çelik, *Empire, Architecture, and the City: French-Ottoman Encounters, 1830–1914* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Stefan Weber, *Damascus: Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation, 1808–1918*, 2 vols. (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2009).

2 Yasemin Avcı, *Osmanlı hükümet konakları: Tanzimat döneminde kent mekanında devletin erki ve temsili* [Ottoman Government Houses: State Power and its Representation in the City Space during the Tanzimat Period] (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2017) [in Turkish]. On architectural aspects of post-Tanzimat Ottoman government houses and the state’s representation in the city space during the Tanzimat period, see Nurcan Yazıcı Metin, *Devlet kapısı: Tanzimattan cumhuriyete hükümet konaklarının inşâ süreci ve mimarisi* [The Government Office: Construction and Architecture of Government Houses from the Tanzimat to the Republican Period] (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2019) [in Turkish].

governor’s seat with other government agencies and service institutions, such as the local army barracks, the court of law, and the post and telegraph office. As Avcı notes, the Tanzimat’s government compound functionally replaced the citadel as the seat of state agencies in the city, while, on the level of symbolic communication, its representative architecture replaced the mosque for ambitious governors. These buildings became powerful material symbols of the modern state in the making.³ There was no abstract designation for these architectural ensembles, but they were usually referred to by the name of their eponymous buildings, i.e., *hükümet konağı*, “government house,” or *belediye konağı*, “city hall.” In some cities, the term “government plaza” or “municipal plaza” (*hükümet / belediye meydanı*) came to designate this area. These terms are still commonly used in the Republic of Turkey.

The municipal compound typically included a city hall, a municipal park, and/or square and a street of the same name. Sultan Abdülhamid II typically symbolized his backing for certain municipalities by ordering the construction of city halls, public fountains, and clock towers. The municipal compound formed part of the standard Tanzimat repertoire of municipal reforms and its symbolic language, and, like most other components of the Tanzimat reforms, this institution continued under the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Local elites and ordinary people in the cities of the Ottoman Empire appropriated and translated this “package” into their own local contexts. In many cases, they made the *belediye* a forum for innovative forms of political participation and modernization. At the same time, the imperial government appropriated these sites as a new channel for symbolic communication with urban populations. Both trends made the municipal compound a unique element in urban development throughout Bilad al-Sham.

So far, these issues have mainly been discussed in relation to the region’s major cities, for which we have relatively many textual sources such as newspapers, diaries, and memoirs. This chapter discusses the process of appropriating the institution of the *belediye* from “above” and “below” in the particular

3 Avcı, *Osmanlı hükümet konakları*.

context of Ottoman Gaza, a city that has been widely neglected by historical research. In the face of a dearth of textual sources and the destruction of most of the material evidence on the ground during the upheavals of the 20th century, it draws on the theoretical directions developed to analyze other cities to interpret visual source material such as maps and photographs.

THE LEGACY OF PREVIOUS PERIODS: THE CITADEL, THE AL-RIDWAN RESIDENCES AND THE OTTOMAN SARAY

The slightly elevated plateau on which the municipality was eventually located had a long history as site of state power, which manifested itself in several prominent architectural structures (see Figures 1 and 2).⁴ Here, we shall restrict the discussion to the periods from the Mamluk era onwards.⁵ During the period of Crusader rule in Gaza, the city's fortifications were dismantled as part of an agreement between Salah al-Din and Richard the Lionheart, who stayed in Gaza from 1191 to 1192. When Muslim military leaders retook the city for good in 642/1244, the plateau was the site of a citadel and the remains of the western city gate known as Hebron Gate (Bab al-Khalil). It is important to note that this was Gaza's busiest gate as it was the point where the caravan route entered the old city center (known as the Daraj and Zaytun neighborhoods during the late Ottoman period) and where merchants and other visitors entered the city's main market (al-Suq al-Kabir).

Although the city walls were not rebuilt during the Mamluk period, the citadel con-



Figure 1: Map of Gaza's Government Compound in an Aerial Photo from 1918. The map is oriented to the north. Source: Bavarian State Archive (BayHStA) BS-Palästina 463, Munich, Germany. The photograph shows Gaza's government compound with its vast plaza center to the right, where the Gaza citadel had been, and the two Ridwan residences to the west and north.

tinued to be used.⁶ Opposite the gate there emerged Gaza's most populous suburb, known as the Shaja'iyya or Turkuman neighborhood. When the Ottomans took over the city in 1517, they made the citadel the seat of the district governor. The famous Ridwan governors of the 17th century transformed the citadel area into a veritable palace quarter.

Husayn Paşa, the most illustrious representative of this dynasty, even employed a French gardener, who took care of what the French traveler Laurent d'Arvieux described as large and lavish palace gardens.⁷ In the late 19th century, the "Pasha's Mansion" (Dar al-Basha) to the north and the "Ridwan Mansion" (Dar Ridwan) to the west of the citadel were impressive reminders of this period (see Figures 1 and 2).⁸ From the 1860s onwards, the structures left from the Ridwan period were transformed into government quarters, which were more austere but also more imposing.

4 Moshe Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae (CIAP)*, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2009) (on the Citadel, p. 25; the Saray, p. 29; the Ridwan mansion pp. 196–198); 'Uthman al-Tabba', *Ithaf al-a'izza fi tarikh Ghazza* [Presenting the Notables in the History of Gaza], edited by 'Abd al-Latif Abu Hashim (Gaza: Maktabat al-Yaziji, 1999), vol. 2, pp. 333–334 [in Arabic]; Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century: The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996) (on the Ridwan residence pp. 25, 39–41, on citadels in general, p. 13); 'Aref al-'Aref, *Tarikh Ghazza* [The History of Gaza] (Jerusalem: Matba'at Dar al-Aytam al-Islamiyya, 1943), pp. 176–178 [in Arabic].

5 For a brief discussion of Gaza's history, see Johann Buessow, "Gaza," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam THREE*.

6 Mahmud 'Ali Khalil 'Ata' Allah, *Niyabat Ghazza fi l-ahd al-Mamluki* [The Regency of Gaza in the Mamluk Period] (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1986), pp. 164–165 [in Arabic].

7 Laurent d'Arvieux, *Des Herrn von Arvieux hinterlassene merkwürdige Nachrichten*, vol. 1 (Kopenhagen and Leipzig: Ackermann, 1753) [German translation of *Mémoires du Chevalier d'Arvieux*, Paris 1735], pp. 39–40.

8 Today, only the *Dar al-Basha* remains.



Figure 2: An Aerial View of the Government Compound Area from the South, c. 1917.
Source: CZA, PHG/1065479. Aerial photograph of Gaza, c. 1917.

APPROPRIATING THE TANZIMAT REPERTOIRE IN GAZA: LOCAL BEGINNINGS, A SULTANIC PROJECT AND A LOCAL POLITICAL TURNOVER

Most of the information on Gaza's government compound derives from visual sources. Georg Gatt's map and chapter of 1888 and aerial photographs from the period of World War I show where the buildings were located. Photographs of specific buildings that were collected by the former governor of Jerusalem, Kamil Paşa⁹ (probably dating from the 1890s) and an aerial view shot from an angle (see Figure 2) give us an impression of the buildings' size and design. The following institutions can be identified in Gaza's Government Quarter: the government house (*saray*), the barracks (*kişle*), an armory (*bayt al-barud*), the Sharia court of law (*mah-kama*), the Post and Telegraph office (opened 1864 and known as *al-busta* or *Dar al-Telegraf*), and a grain depot (*al-'anbar*). This array of ad-

ministrative institutions was completed by a simple mosque, which was known as the citadel mosque. The whole area beyond the former city gate was bounded by a large swath of open land, including two cemeteries (*Maqbarat 'Ali ibn Marwan* and *Maqbarat Bani Nas*). Beyond the cemeteries lay the wide green belt of irrigated gardens that surrounded the remains of the ancient city wall. Adding to the representative character of the Bab al-Khalil area was a small monument known in European languages as the "Tomb of Samson" and in Arabic as (*Shamshun*) *Abu l-'Azm*. It reminded passers-by of two important mythic figures whose story was linked to Gaza. *Abu l-'Azm* could be understood as referring to both the Biblical hero Samson and to a saintly figure who was venerated by the Maghrebi (*Maghariba*) community, who settled in Gaza during the 3rd/9th century.¹⁰

The photographs of the area show an assemblage of new and old. The lower parts of most of the above-mentioned buildings betray their medieval origins, while the upper stories

⁹ Kıbrıslı Kamil Paşa, who served twice as governor of Jerusalem (1855–1857 and 1869–1870) and later became famous as Grand Vizier.

¹⁰ Sharon, *CIAP*, vol. 4, p. 69c.

are designed according to the standard model of Tanzimat-era official buildings, with spacious and regularly arranged windows, and whitewashed facades. Many of them have tiled roofs.

This array of institutions and their architectural representation in Gaza's government compound fall into a pattern that we dub the "Tanzimat standard package" of administrative institutions and their symbolic language. Avcı's and Nurcan Yazıcı Metin's studies on the government compounds of Anatolia provide many examples of this standard pattern.¹¹ It is found in especially pure form in the desert town of Beersheba, which was built after 1900 as an entirely new development.¹²

This ensemble, as elsewhere, can be interpreted as a material representation of the separation of powers that characterized late Ottoman government. The *saray* was the seat of the civilian government, the barracks and armory were the seat of the military, and the court was the seat of the judiciary and religious administration. The newest institutional player in this complex political field was the municipality. It represented the interests of the city's population and was in charge of questions related to infrastructure and urban planning, medical services and public hygiene, and the cultivation of the city's public image through embellishments and the organization of public events and ceremonies.¹³ In spatial terms, this new element was located west of the government area.

11 Avcı, *Osmanlı hükümet konakları*; Metin, *Tanzimattan cumhuriyete*.

12 Nimrod Luz, "The Re-making of Beersheba: Winds of Modernization in Late Ottoman Sultanate," in Itzhak Weissman and Fruma Zachs (eds.), *Ottoman Reforms and Muslim Regeneration: Studies in Honor of Prof. Butrus Abu Manneh* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 187–209; Yasemin Avcı, "The Application of the 'Tanzimat' in the Desert: The Bedouins and the Creation of a New Town in Southern Palestine (1860–1914)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45/6 (2009), pp. 969–983.

13 A major source is Georg Gatt, "Legende zum Plane von Gaza," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 11 (1888), pp. 156–157; Ekrem Işin (ed.), *Üç kitaplı kentler: 19. yüzyıl fotoğraflarında Kudüs ve kutsal topraklar* [Cities of the Three Books: Jerusalem and the Holy Land in 19th Century Photographs] (Istanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2008), pp. 43, 71 [in Turkish] (taken from the album of Grand Vizier Kıbrıslı Kamil Paşa, c. 1900); Bavarian State Archive (BayHStA) BS-Palästina 463, Munich, Germany (an aerial photo taken by the Bavarian Squadron, dated 28 May 1918, 12.10 pm); NLI, 2369509_01, Palestine. Department of Lands and Surveys, Map "Gaza," 1:1,000, Plan 4, Gaza Town Surveys. Jaffa: Survey of Palestine, 1928.

It was much more than a peripheral addition to the center of power, as it came to occupy a strategic and very visible position, occupying Gaza's gateway on the main overland road into the city.

As in several other cases in the region, the foundation date of Gaza's municipality is subject to debate. In most studies, 1893 is given as the foundation date of a modern municipality, and the official chronicle of Gaza's municipality starts in that year.¹⁴ However, an article by the local priest Georg Gatt makes it clear that Gaza underwent a process of municipalization at least from the 1880s onwards, not long after the passing of the Ottoman Municipality Law in 1877. The main physical structures of the new municipal compound had been built when Gatt drew his map in 1887 (it was published in 1888). They included the city hall (*da'irat-i belediye / belediye da'iresi*), a public fountain, and a municipal park, commonly known as *belediye parkı* in Ottoman Turkish.

Gaza's municipal compound appears to have originated in an authoritarian measure. Evidence about a well leads us to this conclusion. In 1285/1868/69, *kaymakam* Rifat Bey al-Çerkesi built the Rifa'iyya Fountain (Saqiyat al-Rifa'iyya and Sabil al-Rifa'iyya), a complex consisting of an aqueduct, pool, public fountain (*sebil*), and garden, funded by compulsory contributions by the inhabitants of Gaza.¹⁵ This laid the groundwork for what was later to become Gaza's Municipal Park. Our earliest documentation for the park's design is Gatt's map of 1888 (see Figure 3). Later sources, in particular the World War I aerial photographs and a British map of 1928,¹⁶ confirm the basic features represented there.

14 History of Gaza Municipality. Source: Gaza Municipality Website. <https://www.gaza-city.org/index.php?page=VmpGa05HRXISWGxUV0d4VFIRZDRWbGxYZE-V0alJsSIZVzVhVGxWVU1Eaz0=> (accessed 2 January 2020).

15 Al-'Aref, *Tarikh Ghazza*, pp. 281–282 (including a photograph of the well). Al-'Aref writes that the *kaymakam* was responsible for the "digging" of the well, but it is likely to have been a renovation of a well that had been in existence since the days of the Ridwan governors in the late 16th century. This is at least what an inscription recorded by al-'Aref suggests, which ascribes the building to Bahram Bey, a son of the famous governor of Gaza Mustafa Paşa, the founder of the Ridwan dynasty (Sharon, *CIAP*, vol. 4, pp. 194–197).

16 NLI, 2369509_01. Palestine. Department of Lands and Surveys, Map "Gaza," 1:1,000, Plan 4, Gaza Town Surveys. Jaffa: Survey of Palestine, 1928.

The Municipal Park was located on both sides of the main road connecting the overland road from Syria to Egypt (al-Darb al-Sultani, the old Via Maris) with the Government Compound. It was conveniently located in low ground outside the ancient city walls, in the green belt of gardens generally known by the Arabic term *hakura* (pl. *hawakir*), which were irrigated by a network of wells, basins, and channels. The *hakuras* are part of the basic modules of Gaza's urban tissue. Gatt's map shows many such garden plots south of Bab al-Khalil, including Hakurat al-Ridwan and Hakurat al-Surani (see

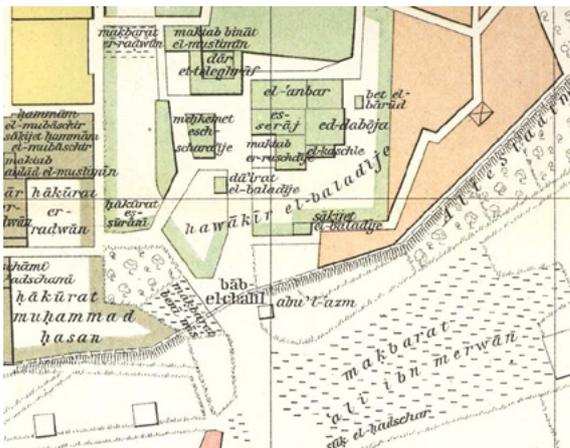


Figure 3: Gaza's Municipal Park, Detail of Gatt's Map. Source: Gatt 1888. Note the old city wall (labeled in German "Alte Stadtmauer") and the adjacent gardens (*hawakir*).

Figure 3).

The structure of Gaza's municipal compound blended in with this local "modular" concept. Thus, the Municipal Park with its two halves was called "the Municipal Gardens" (*Hawakir al-Baladiyya*). We cannot say with certainty whether it was just by coincidence that the City Hall came to be located in Gaza's green belt or whether the location was even the main reason for building it there. However, it speaks for the latter interpretation that the Municipal Park was obviously considered an important component of the municipality's mission, and large investments were made there from the start. Our sources indicate it had a geometric garden design and a large *saqiya* complex called *Saqiyat al-Baladiyya*. In all probability, the latter fed the Rifa'iyya Fountain. The symbolic value of this public fountain emerges clearly from the fact that it underwent a second renovation around 1318/1900, and this time the

sponsor was no less a figure than Sultan Abdülhamid II (see Figure 4). Given that the *sebil* was located directly across from City Hall and that it had been in existence since at least the 17th century, we may surmise that it may have dictated the precise location of the City Hall building.

The centrality of water in the planning of Gaza's municipal compound resonates with what we know about the Ottoman Municipality of Jerusalem, where the Municipal Garden became a popular multifunctional public venue.¹⁷ An even more striking parallel can be found in the planning of Birüsseb' (Beersheba) as an Ottoman model town in 1900. There, a large geometric garden was among the first structures to be built and became a physical manifestation of the Ottoman ambition "to make the desert bloom."¹⁸ The Beersheba park, as depicted in photographs from the World War I period, was laid out geometrically (see Figure 5).

Despite certain difficulties due to the historically irregular layout of the municipality's grounds, Gaza's Municipal Park was designed with a similar pattern in mind, including several fountains and flowerbeds in various shapes (see Figure 6). These features seem to echo geometric gardens in the French tradition. The symbolism of the well-ordered garden, however, was firmly rooted in older Middle Eastern and Islamic traditions. Palace gardens symbolized the ruler's power and care and the "Circle of Justice" (*da'ire-i 'adliye*), a popular tradition in Ottoman political thought. The garden was a metaphor for justice, good governance, and general harmony and well-being.¹⁹ Gardens and irrigated groves were also popular spots for picnics and leisure.²⁰

Both the Middle Eastern and European traditions were adopted by the municipality. In Jerusalem, a cistern deliberately built under Jerusalem's City Hall and the custom of sprinkling the streets around it with water, together with

17 See the chapter by Abigail Jacobson in this volume.

18 For the contemporary context, see the US Bureau of Reclamation established by Theodore Roosevelt in the Federal Reclamation Act of 1902, as well as Zionist rhetoric of the time.

19 Linda T. Darling, "Circle of Justice," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam THREE*.

20 For an example from Gaza, see an anonymous dialogue on local politics (c. 1895) that is set in a garden where men of different ages meet during their leisure time. BOA, BEO., 651/48815/38, Anonymous Dialogue (in Arabic), c. 1895.



Figure 4: The Abdülhamid (Rifa'iyya) Fountain in Gaza. Detail from an aerial photo of c. 1917, showing the fountain from behind, opposite the municipality building. Photograph of 2017, showing the fountain's façade after recent renovation works.

Sources: CZA, PHG/1065479. Aerial photograph of Gaza, c. 1917. Visit Palestine Center, <http://visitpalestine.ps/where-to-go/listing/gaza/sites-attractions-gaza/archeological-sites-gaza/sultan-abdul-hamid-spring/#images> (accessed 3 January 2020).

the maintenance of a well-kept park, symbolized the municipality's role as caretaker of the urban community at large.²¹ Vincent Lemire describes how the process of municipalization in Jerusalem was linked to Ottomanization and how Sultan Abdülhamid II enrolled the municipality as a partner when establishing a symbolic presence

in the city. In 1901, for example, around the time he renovated Gaza's Rifa'iyya Fountain, the Sultan diverted *waqf* funds to the Jerusalem municipality to alleviate the acute water shortage in that city. Solemn ceremonies celebrating the sultanic donation at public wells throughout the city staged the Sultan as the supreme protector

21 Buessow, "Ottoman Reform," p. 109.

of the urban community.²² It is worth inquiring whether in the age of Ottoman Constitutionalism (1876–1878 and 1908–1918), the adoption of the royal garden and water symbolism was reinterpreted as a statement of popular sovereignty.



Figure 5: An Aerial Photograph of the Public Garden of Beersheba dated 1918. Source: BayHaSta, Bildsammlung Palästina 480. Luftbild von Gaza, 28 May 1918.

In Gaza, the local Municipal Park provided both a symbolic entrance to the city and a public space of generous proportions. The *sebil* of Sultan Abdülhamid II endowed the ensemble with the sovereign's stamp of approval. Gaza's City Hall faced the *sebil* across the street. The building fits into the "assemblage" pattern noted above, with old stone structures combined with newer parts, with their whitewashed facades and red-tiled roofs (see Figure 7). It seems tempting to interpret the juxtaposition of the City Hall and the sultanic monument as an attempt to harmonize the ideals of popular and monarchical sovereignty as inherent to the concept of a constitutional monarchy. On a less speculative note, evidence makes it clear that both the municipality and the Sultan were embroiled in local power politics. Thus, as discussed below, the sultanic renovation project of 1900 appears to have been intimately linked to the power dynamics within the municipal council and the city as a whole.

THE "HAMIDIAN PROJECT" AND THE SEARCH FOR LOCAL ALLIES

The contextualization of these findings from the textual sources reveals that the institutional, spatial and architectural development of

²² Vincent Lemire, *La soif de Jérusalem: Essai d'hydro-histoire (1840–1948)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010), pp. 339–353.

Gaza's municipal compound was closely intertwined with local and imperial politics, and in particular local factionalism and an initiative by Sultan Abdülhamid in the early 1890s to cultivate closer relations with local allies in Gaza. This took place within the context of the growing strategic importance of the city as a result of the British occupation of Egypt, the general need to increase control over the Bedouin population in southern Palestine, and the recent agricultural boom triggered by soaring profits from the export of barley. As Dotan Halevy has shown, this new source of income boosted the power and self-confidence of several successful merchants from Gaza's elite families as well as that of the Municipal Council. In 1893, the municipality was officially recognized. During the same year, the Municipal Council presented an ambitious development scheme that included the construction of a municipal hospital, paving of the streets, and the construction of a sewer system, all to be built within the next twenty-five years. Funding for these projects would come from taxation of Gaza's burgeoning grain exports.²³

The new possibilities fueled the ongoing competition between the leading Gazan elite households and their rivals. After a period of heated factional strife, which culminated in an intervention of Ottoman gendarmerie troops in 1898, a faction led by members of the Shawwa family, helped by the influential Muslim scholar-cum-Sufi *shaykh* Ahmad Busaysu (c. 1825–1911), emerged as the dominant players in municipal politics. Their influence was to be lasting: Sa'id al-Shawwa (1868–1930) served as mayor from 1906 to the end of Ottoman rule in 1918. He and three younger family members were to hold the mayoralty for almost half of the 20th century.²⁴ The Busaysu family was less

²³ See Halevy's chapter in this volume.

²⁴ On factional strife in late Ottoman Gaza and its reflection in the city's morphology, see Yuval Ben-Bassat and Johann Buessow, "Urban Factionalism in Late Ottoman Gaza, c. 1875–1914: Local Politics and Spatial Divisions," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61/4 (2018), pp. 606–649. The social basis of Gaza's factional politics is explored in eidem, "Applying Digital Methods to the Urban History of the Modern Middle East: GIS Analysis of the Social Basis of Political Partisanship in Late Ottoman Gaza," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 63/4 (2020), pp. 505–554. The Gaza Municipality's website mentions the following mayors from the Shawwa family: Sa'id al-Shawwa (1906–1918), his sons Rushdi al-Shawwa



Figure 6: An Aerial Photograph of Gaza's Municipal Garden, c. 1915.
Source: CZA, PHG/1065479. Aerial photograph of Gaza, c. 1915.



Figure 7: Gaza's City Hall, c. 1890.

Source: Collection of Grand Vizier Kıbrıslı Kamil Paşa. Kıraç Vakfı. ed. 2008. *Üç Kitaplı Kentler*, p. 71.

prominent in municipal politics, but at least one of their members, the merchant Khalil

(1939–1951) and Rashad al-Shawwa (1971–1982), and a younger relative, 'Awn al-Shawwa (1994–2001).

Efendi Busaysu (c. 1870–1940), served as municipal councilor and mayor.²⁵

²⁵ Al-Tabba', *Ithaf*, vol. 3, pp. 52–54.

This background helps reconstruct what at first glance may look like the mere application of the “standard package” of Ottoman municipal reform. Rather, the architectural symbolism of order, progress, and harmony was deliberately designed to reflect well on both the Sultan and his local allies.

THE POLITICAL REVERSAL OF 1898 AND THE BEGINNINGS OF SHAWWA HEGEMONY

The dominant faction in Gaza between the mid-1870s and the late 1890s was led by a member of the Husayni family, who also held the mufti-ship in the city during this period, apart from a few short intervals. Various opposition factions, mostly led by the scholar-cum-businessman Muhammad Saqallah (1812–1896), tried to dislodge the Husaynis from their dominant position. Since the Husaynis repeatedly clashed with the Ottoman government, the latter tended to support the anti-Husayni opposition, but without lasting success. An invigorated opposition led by several members of the Shawwa family and the above-mentioned scholar Ahmad Busaysu eventually managed to bring about the decisive change of 1898. Interestingly, the Shawwas and the Busaysus were supporters of the Husaynis up to a certain point in the mid-1890s, when they turned against their former patrons for reasons that remain to be elucidated.

The Husaynis, the most prominent Gazan elite family, had their assets concentrated in the upscale Daraj neighborhood, where they owned several large mansions. A street called Mufti’s Lane (Sibat al-Mufti) connected this area to the Grand Mosque and the government compound next to it.²⁶ An annual celebration highlighted the Husaynis’ role as pa-

26 The name Sibat al-Mufti probably refers to the large mansion belonging to the Husayni (al-Mufti) family nearby. See for example, Salim ‘Arafat Mubayyid, *al-Binayat al-athariyya al-islamiyya fi Ghazza wa-qita’iha* [The Historical Islamic Buildings in Gaza and Its Region] (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Misriyya al-‘amma li-l-Kitab, 1987), pp. 327–328 [in Arabic]. This thoroughfare between the Sayyid Hashim Mosque and the city’s Ottoman administrative center is called Al-Wehda Street (*Shari’ al-Wahda*) today. The British map of 1928 has several names for various segments of the street (from north to south): Harat al-Sayyid Hashim, Shari’ al-Shaykh Faraj, Shari’ Abu Ramadan, and Shari’ al-Dabbuja.

trons of the Hashim Mosque in Daraj, named after the Prophet’s grandfather. These annual celebrations took place in the week preceding the Prophet’s birthday (*al-mawlid al-nabawi*) and commemorated the issuing of a decree by the Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839–1861), which instated Ahmad Muhyi al-Din al-Husayni as *imam* and *khatib*, prayer leader and preacher, of the mosque. The building was renovated with the help of Sultan Abdülmecid around 1860,²⁷ which gave the Husayns sultanic approval for their status and prestige in Gaza.

During the late 19th century, the up-and-coming Shawwa family and their allies, the Busaysus, built their own stronghold in Shaja’iyya, a suburb at a distance from the other elite households, which were mainly located in the central Daraj neighborhood.²⁸ During the 1890s, they managed to monopolize the newly created institution of the municipality and build a successful counter-faction to that of the Husaynis. The Shawwas’ move to Shaja’iyya marked the beginning of the spatial polarization of local politics in Gaza; political and spatial polarization went hand in hand. According to the sources, the Busaysus and the Shawwas were the only elite families with residences in Shaja’iyya. The street connecting the neighborhood to the City Hall was called Shawwa Street, indicating the family’s strong position in the neighborhood. The Shawwas’ home base and assets were initially in Tuffah next to the slaughterhouse the family owned. During the mid-19th century, Khalil al-Shawwa, the family’s leading figure, established his stronghold in Shaja’iyya, where he had a grand mansion built, and renovated the Qazdamri Mosque²⁹ (later also

27 Sharon, *CIAP*, vol. 4, pp. 33–34. Sharon’s information is based on Max van Berchem, who mentions 1862 as the date of the mosque’s reconstruction and 1892 as the date of a renovation.

28 In this regard, it is interesting to consider Philip Khoury’s comments on factionalism in late Ottoman Damascus: “The conflicts associated with factionalism may also have been representative of the very process of class consolidation in which up-and-coming families challenged already established families for a place alongside them at the summit of power and influence in Damascus. Conditions were more fluid ... in this period of social and political readjustment.” See Philip S. Khoury, “The Urban Notables Paradigm Revisited,” *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 55–56 (1990), p. 222.

29 Tabba’, *Ithaf*, vol. 3, p. 251.

known as Shawwa Mosque)³⁰ and the irrigation well attached to it (Saqiyat Jami' al-Shawwa).³¹ Their allies, the Busaysus, already had a strong presence in this neighborhood, where the celebrated scholar and Sufi *shaykh* Ahmad Busaysu worked as a preacher in the Ibn 'Uthman Mosque and where a street nearby was known as Busaysu Lane (Zuqaq Abu Busaysu).³²

As a consequence, the government compound, where the interests of the competing parties were located, ended up being situated between the Husaynis' stronghold in Daraj and the opposition in Shaja'iyya. The two main streets leading there from these two neighborhoods were called Mufti's Lane (Sibat al-Mufti)³³ and Shawwa Street (Shari' al-Shawwa), respectively.³⁴ Thus, political factionalism was inscribed in the city's morphology and streets, together with buildings in their vicinity, formed axes representing the leading families who clustered in specific regions of the city.

On the eve of the World War I, the municipal compound had evolved into a new Ottoman reform-style entrance to Gaza's city center. It was complemented by three schools, which turned the area into a veritable educational campus composed of two primary schools (*ibtida'iye*), one for boys and one for girls, and one secondary school for boys (*rüşdiyye*).³⁵ As we know from other cities in Bilad al-Sham, schools constituted important public spaces, as they regularly served as venues for public events such as award ceremonies, sports events, plays, and exhibitions, involving major figures from the civilian and religious administrations.³⁶ The development of the school complex continued after the end of Ottoman rule and was bolstered

by members of the Busaysu and Shawwa families in the educational sector.³⁷

THE HERITAGE OF THE OTTOMAN MUNICIPALITY COMPOUND

The effects of the World War I on Gaza were more calamitous than on any other city in the Arab provinces. As the front approached, all the inhabitants were evacuated and many of them did not return. Many of the buildings were severely damaged by the fighting. Urban life only picked up slowly during the 1920s and municipal politics seems to have by and large followed the pre-war patterns. The British deposed the pre-war mayor, Sa'id al-Shawwa, for his loyalty to the Ottomans and the municipality was led for the next decade by British-appointed members of lesser families, Muhammad Abu-Khadra (1918–1924) and 'Umar al-Surani (1924–1928).³⁸ At the same time, as a British map of 1928 shows, the importance of the Shawwa and Busaysu families was manifested in the street names Shawwa Street and Busayu Lane, which were officially endorsed by the Mandate authorities, whereas the street between the Saray and Samson's Tomb was registered as Municipality Street (Shari' al-Baladiyya).³⁹

In 1928, the British authorities authorized free mayoral elections, which were won by Fahmi al-Husayni (1828–1939), a lawyer and the first mayor from the Husayni family since the 1890s.⁴⁰ During Husayni's tenure, Gaza was extended to the coast, the local hospital and a

30 Gatt's map makes indirect reference to this by labeling an adjacent building "Saqiyat Jami' al-Shawwa," that is "Shawwa Mosque Well."

31 Gatt's Map of 1888.

32 British Map of 1928.

33 Mubayyid, *al-Binayat al-athariyya*, pp. 327–328.

34 British Map of 1928.

35 Gatt, "Legende zum Plane von Gaza," p. 156; al-'Aref, *Tarikh Ghazza*, pp. 200, 259. We do not know when these schools were founded.

36 See, for example, the coverage of these events in Jaffa by the local Arabic newspaper *Filastin*, summarized in Johann Buessow, "Children of the Revolution: Youth in Palestinian Public Life, 1908–14," in Yuval Ben-Bassat and Eyal Ginio (eds.), *Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turk Rule* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp. 55–80.

37 For example, the Ottoman census records of 1905 may provide indirect evidence for the educational careers of three sons of the scholar 'Abd al-Mutallib al-Shawwa: Muhammad Efendi, (b. 1293/1876/77) was a student at the Teachers' College (*dar al-mu'allimin talebesinden*), another Muhammad Efendi (b. 1295/1878) was a scribe (*katib*), and the third (b. 1299/1882) was a student (*talib-i 'ulum*). ISA, *Nüfus*, Reg. 265, p. 161. The above-mentioned Ahmad Busaysu served as head of Gaza's Education Department (*ma'arif re'isi*). Tabba', *Ithaf*, vol. 4, pp. 296–309. On the Shawwa family and its gravitation to higher education, see the chapter by Sarah Buessow in this volume.

38 Gaza Municipality, official website, "Mayors of Gaza," <https://www.gaza-city.org/index.php?page=Vm0xNFYyS-XhUWGXUYTJoV1lteEtjRiV3V25kamjGbDNWbGhvYVdKS-FVrWIZNV2h2WVVaSmVGZHNiRIZOVjjoNldWY3hVMD-VyTVVWaGVqQTk=> (accessed 2 January 2020).

39 NLI, 2369509_01, Palestine. Department of Lands and Surveys, Map "Gaza," 1:1,000, Plan 4, Gaza Town Surveys. Jaffa: Survey of Palestine, 1928.

40 Gaza Municipality, "Mayors of Gaza."

new market were completed, streets were widened, and the city was placed on the electricity grid in 1938 in cooperation with the Palestinian Electricity Company. Soon after, the municipality moved to its new frontier of urban development; i.e., the new neighborhood of Rimal. A new City Hall (see Figure 8) and a new Municipal Park (see Figure 9) were built at the northern end of Cemal Paşa Boulevard, which Husayni renamed 'Umar al-Mukhtar Street, to commemorate the Libyan anti-colonial resistance fighter 'Umar al-Mukhtar (1862–1931).⁴¹



Figure 8: Gaza's New City Hall.
Source: *Huna l-Quds*, 21 December 1940, p. 6.



Figure 9: Gaza's New Municipal Park.
Source: *Huna l-Quds*, 21 December 1940, p. 4.

41 See Fahmi al-Husayni, "Shari' 'Umar al-Mukhtar fi madinat Ghazza wa-*i*'tirad qunsul janaral Italya 'ala tasmiyyatihi [Gaza's 'Umar al-Mukhtar Street and the Italian Consul's Objection against its Naming]," in *Huna l-Quds*

Thus, Husayni moved the municipal compound not only closer to his main project, the new district of Rimal, but also away from the Shawwas' traditional stronghold in Shaja'iyya and closer to the Husayni's power base in northern Daraj.

In 1930, a number of Gaza notables, mostly members of the city's Municipal Council, filed a complaint against Husayni to the High Commissioner of Palestine, much in the tradition of the late Ottoman politics of petitioning. The petitioners contested the decision to allow Husayni to maintain his legal practice while serving as Gaza's mayor, alleging that he was engaged in his own private business "to an extent as to neglect the interests of the town, which is more in need of organization than any in this country."⁴² Eight years later, in 1938, the anti-Husayni opposition gained the upper hand when, in the context of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, the British Mandate authorities arrested Husayni on charges of being part of the anti-British leadership in Palestine. Along with Musa al-Surani (a relative of the previous mayor), he was imprisoned in Sarafand Prison and in 1939, was formally stripped of his post as mayor by the British and replaced by Rushdi al-Shawwa (c. 1889–1965), who remained in this position until 1952.⁴³ The events of 1938 bear striking parallels to those of 1898, when the Ottoman government exiled three leading members of the Husayni family by force, thereby paving the way for the longstanding dominance of the Shawwas and their allies in municipal affairs.⁴⁴

[*"Here is Jerusalem,"* magazine of the Palestinian Mandate Arabic radio station] 1/25 (22 December 1940), pp. 3–4 [in Arabic].

42 Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917–1967* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 50. Fahmi al-Husayni was elected as mayor on 5 May 1928. By that time, factionalism had begun to interact with modern party politics. Husayni had joined the Palestinian Liberal Party (*al-Hizb al-Hurr al-Filastini*) in 1927, which had been founded during the same year by journalist 'Isa al-'Isa and soon came to be dominated by the Nashashibi family of Jerusalem. See Asaf Likhovski, *Law and Identity in Mandate Palestine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006), p. 177.

43 See the biographies of Fahmi al-Husayni on "Mayors of Gaza" (Gaza Municipality, official website). For a personal statement by Shawwa regarding his mayoral agenda, see Rushdi al-Shawwa, "Madinat Ghazza [The City of Gaza]," *Huna l-Quds* 1/25 (22 December 1940), pp. 3–4 [in Arabic].

44 Ben-Bassat and Buessow, "Urban Factionalism."

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

This chapter has shown how, from the 1870s onwards, the “standard package” of Ottoman municipal reform was appropriated by local actors in the city of Gaza. In so doing, this study has concentrated on visual sources that provide information on the physical seat of the municipality, the “municipal compound,” and the way this architectural ensemble was designed to communicate political visions and divisions in the city. As an extension of the case study of Gaza, this chapter has argued that the municipal compound deserves to be treated as a unit of analysis in the urban history of the Syrian lands, and that the combined analysis of visual and textual sources can expose hitherto unnoticed dynamics in urban society.

Visual sources were instrumental in establishing a chronology of the Gaza municipality’s beginnings. The first initiative in the area of the municipality compound that we can document was made by the Sultan’s government; i.e., the construction of the Rifa’iyya Fountain by the sub-district governor Rifat Bey al-Çerkesi in 1875. This seems to have laid the foundation for the Municipal Garden, which came to define the entrance to Gaza’s city center from the overland road. While in this case the impulse came “from above,” from an Ottoman governor, the next stage of development we know of was initiated “from below.” Georg Gatt’s map of Gaza and his accompanying notes (published in 1888) indicate that a well-established municipality was operating in Gaza during the 1880s and a municipal compound had been built as a western extension of the government compound. The City Hall came to be located opposite the *sebil* and the Municipal Park. The central government’s official endorsement of the municipality came only in 1893. During the same year, the Municipal Council proposed an ambitious infrastructure program to be funded from local tax revenues. The renovation of the *sebil* opposite the City Hall by Sultan Abdülhamid II around 1900 gave his architectural stamp of approval and patronage to what was already a functioning institution and was to become the stronghold of his local allies.

Thus, the Sultan’s government and the Municipal Council constituted a pair of actors that complemented each other. Another dimension

in the dynamics of municipal development were the two factional camps that dominated Gaza’s political scene: one led by members of the Husayni family and an opposition faction that became the Shawwa faction during the mid-1890s. These two groups came to be identified with specific neighborhoods, buildings, and streets at opposing ends of the city: the Husayni camp at the northern end of Daraj and the Shawwa camp in the southern suburb of Shaja’iyya. In 1898, the Shawwa camp was victorious and dominated municipal politics until 1918. During the first decade of British rule, the municipality continued to operate as before the War. A radical change took place in 1928, when the mayoralty reverted for the last time to a member of the Husayni family, Fahmi al-Husayni, who set the municipality on a new path in many ways. His most important and consequential measure was to open up a new zone of urban development by initiating the construction of the new Rimal neighborhood between Daraj and the port. The municipal council under Husayni also made use of the spatial symbolism that had developed during the Ottoman period by moving the municipality and the park north, close to both the new “frontier region” of Rimal and the Husayni family’s traditional stronghold in the Hashim Mosque area.

Today, despite the upheavals since the demise of the Ottoman Empire, Gaza’s late Ottoman municipality is still remembered, as can be seen from the history section of the Gaza Municipality website.⁴⁵ The tradition of the Municipal Park has been preserved in the municipality’s new location. The garden’s design dates back to mayor Fahmi al-Husayni’s time in office. It is still geometric, but has a modernist, less meandering layout than its Ottoman-era predecessor, thus fitting the wide expanses and the gridiron pattern of the Rimal neighborhood. Following in the footsteps of previous rulers, from the Ridwan governors to Sultan Abdülhamid II, Fahmi al-Husayni also made use of the symbolism of the well by initiating the digging of the Park Well (Bi’r al-Muntaza), in 1933, which incorporated a diesel engine that

45 Gaza Municipality, “Mulakhkhas ‘an nash’at al-baladiyya [A Short History of the Municipality’s Development],” <https://www.gaza-city.org/index.php?page=VmpGa05HRXIS-WGxUV0d4VF1rZDRWbGxYZEV0a1JsSIZVVzVhVGxWVU1E-az0=> (accessed 2 January 2020).

powered a large fountain⁴⁶ (see Figure 9). In the early 21st century, the Municipality of Gaza invested considerable care into this Municipal Garden, even in very difficult financial circumstances, which testifies to the continuing popularity of this concept. The schools remained in the old locations. They and several street names are perhaps the strongest sign of continuity in the former area of Gaza's Ottoman municipal compound. The name Baladiyya Street has faded from use, but al-Shawwa Street and Rushdi

al-Shawwa Street still commemorate the family of the former mayors. To this day, the *sebil* of Sultan Abdülhamid remains a major landmark. Freshly renovated with support from Turkey around 2017, it was promoted by the Palestinian Tourism Authority as a cultural monument.⁴⁷ Its link to the municipality seemed as much forgotten as the fact that it was the Hamidian government that enabled the boom in municipal activity during the last decades of Ottoman rule in Bilad al-Sham.

46 Al-'Aref, *Tarikh Ghazza*, p. 282.

47 Palestine, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, <http://www.travelpalestine.ps/en/category/32/1/Gaza-City> (accessed 2 January 2020); Visit Palestine Center, <http://visitpalestine.ps/where-to-go/listing/gaza/sites-attractions-gaza/archeological-sites-gaza/sultan-abdul-hamid-spring/#images> (accessed 3 January 2020).

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MUNICIPAL HISTORY WEBPAGES: DIGITAL CHRONICLES AND SITES OF IMAGE CULTIVATION

Municipalities in Greater Syria are an intriguing case constituting one of the most participatory political institutions in the region, in particular for an authoritarian system. The municipalities also have an unusual degree of continuity from the late Ottoman period to this day.

Writing the history of the municipality of Gaza at the turn of the 21st century involves challenges to the growing number of scholars interested in the urban history of today's conflict-ridden Middle East. Because it is impossible to visit the material remains and archives of urban life for security and political reasons, historians increasingly resort to digital resources. This includes tapping the rapidly growing number of digitized documents and publications (see Text Box 10) and the reconstruction of spatial relations available through the Geographical Information System (GIS).

In terms of the still largely unwritten history of urban politics in the region, one major source of information is often 'grey literature,' i.e., materials and research produced by organizations outside of established commercial or academic publishing channels. One example is "Here is Jerusalem" (*Huna l-Quds*), the Arabic magazine of the Palestinian Mandate Arabic radio station, which published a collection of illustrated articles on Gaza in 1940.

Since the inception of the internet in the 1990s, municipalities across the historical Greater Syria region have established their own websites, which typically also contain a subsection on their history. These municipal history webpages can be read both as

mines of information and as digital chronicles that present historical narratives meant to cultivate the self-image of the city and its municipality. When carefully cross-checked against other available sources and subjected to source criticism, they can provide unique information on a variety of topics such as former mayors and council members, key events that are commemorated as milestones in urban development and more generally the local discourse on municipal history.

The content and style of presentation of these websites vary considerably. In 2021, for example, one of the prominent features in the history-related pages of the Arabic municipality of Bethlehem website was a gallery of former mayors. The site defined the late Ottoman era as the time when the institution was founded with the municipality logo, which was present on most pages with the line "established in 1872" in Arabic and English.¹ The Hebrew and English pages of the Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa focused on examples of historical architecture as tourist attractions. The references to history cover vast swathes of time from the Biblical period to the many architectural structures of the Ottoman period in Jaffa, but completely omitting the institutional history of the municipality.²

The municipal history webpages of Gaza City are similar to those of Bethlehem in that they emphasize the late Ottoman roots

1 Website of the Bethlehem Municipality. <https://www.bethlehem-city.org/ar> (accessed 3 March 2021).

2 Website of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality. <https://www.tel-aviv.gov.il> (last accessed 3 March 2021).

of the institution and the former mayors, who are presented in a gallery of images with short biographies.³ Until 2019, a second webpage listed the municipal council members from 1906 to the present accompanied by a short but informative narrative of the council's main projects and achievements during the council's respective terms.⁴

The Gaza's municipality's website mirrors the unstable political situation prevailing today in the Gaza Strip. The well-organized history pages in 2019 have given way in 2021 to a new layout with rather messy webpages,

with less text and images. Fortunately copies of the old website were preserved in the Internet Archive digital library.⁵ Therefore, perhaps the most important methodological lesson to learn when working with municipal websites in the case of grey online literature is to consider that websites in general are protean entities. Their changes over time may be interpreted as reflecting the dynamics of the public discourse on the municipal heritage. One possible avenue of research would be to compare several sites to assess how this heritage has been commemorated in different contexts.

3 Website of the Gaza Municipality. <https://www.gaza-city.org/mog-history> (accessed 3 March 2021).

4 Website of the Gaza Municipality, subsection "Tarikh baladiyyat Ghazza" (History of the Gaza Municipality). <https://www.gaza-city.org/index.php?page=VmpGa05HRXISWGxUV0d4VF1rZDRWbGxYZE-V0aljsSIZVVzVhVGxWVU1Eaz0=> (accessed 20 February 2019).

5 Internet Archive, Wayback Machine, copy of the Gaza Municipality website dated 30 December 2018. <https://web.archive.org/web/20181230133351/https://www.gaza-city.org/index.php> (accessed 3 March 2021).