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## Space for gender: cultural roles of the forbidden and the permitted

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**Abstract.** In this paper I analyze gender as cultural construction and reconstruction of space amongst Bedouin society in the Negev Desert in Southern Israel. I focus, in particular, on changing meanings and boundaries between 'forbidden' and 'permitted' spaces. These meanings and perceptions are critically analyzed in the light of the 'modernity planning project' which has gradually moved Bedouin from spontaneous settlements to government-built towns. My main aim is to analyze cultural construction of space as it relates to women, and to explore how lack of consideration of these perceptions serves to increase control over Bedouin women in modernized towns through the reformulation of boundaries of 'forbidden' and 'permitted' spaces.

### Introduction

My main aim in the paper is to explore cultural and gendered constructions of space and how the different voices among Bedouin women, attempting to incorporate the dual values of tradition and the desire for change into their lives, necessitate a more sensitive planning approach. In contrast to the basic assumption of spaces being neutral and 'absolute'—characteristic of procedural planning in general, and of Israel in particular in the case of Bedouin women, space is defined as either 'forbidden' or 'permitted'. This paper identifies the existing tension between on the one hand the modern procedural planning approach, which ignores cultural meanings of space, thereby indirectly serving as a reforming model that can, theoretically, liberate women from cultural restrictions and as such be supported by Western feminism; and on the other hand an approach sensitive to cultural differences, even when such an approach appears to be at the expense of the interests of women, owing to a belief that this is the only way to create gradual change. These tensions are highlighted by exploring how Western town-planning assumptions serve to increase control over Bedouin women through boundary reformulations between cultural meanings of spaces. I conclude that from the outset planners should consider the cultural constructions of space when planning for cultural minorities.

### The Bedouin in the Negev

Half of the 100 000 Bedouin in the Negev live in seven government-built towns: Rahat, Tel Sheva, Kessifa, Aruar, Shegev Shalom, Hura, and Lakia (see figure 1, over). According to the authorities, these towns were established so that modern infrastructure and social services could be provided for the Bedouin population in those high density areas. The remaining 50 000 Bedouin live in some 108 spontaneous settlements scattered over the Negev area, and are considered illegal by the Authorities (Ministry of Housing, 1995).

Spontaneous settlements have been proven to be far more successful than professionally designed town-housing projects in their response to the cultural needs and socioeconomic priorities of their inhabitants (Turner, 1976), and indeed the relocation of the Bedouin to modern towns resulted in extensive social and cultural change. Tents or

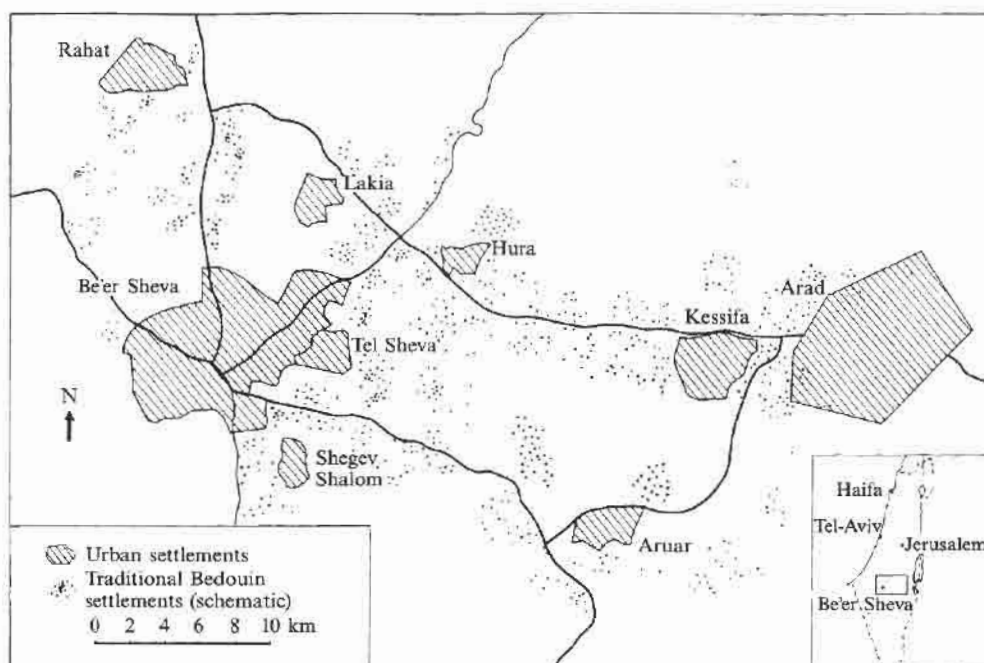


Figure 1. Location map.

other temporary dwellings were replaced by stone and concrete houses in neighborhoods organized on a tribal basis, in which residential density became much greater than was the case in the previous spontaneous settlements. These changes have had a tremendous impact on Bedouin society at large, and in particular on Bedouin women. Another effect of relocation has been changes in the Bedouin economic lifestyle. Most Bedouin have ceased to work in traditional agriculture and sheep herding (7%) and have turned to modern forms of employment such as construction (33%), public services (15%), and industry (15%). Only 5% of Bedouin women are wage earners, employed mostly in the textile and service industries (Ministry of Housing, 1995). Approximately 70% of men employed work outside the town they inhabit (Ministry of Housing, 1995).

Spaces in Israel, in general, are strongly classified. A strict concern with separation and order (Sibley, 1992) means that control is sometimes an important priority in the planning of space. This is most noticeable in development policies and planning projects for non-Jewish ethnic groups, such as Palestinian Arabs and Bedouin. It is clearly expressed in the lengthy disputes over ownership of the land inhabited by the Bedouin. Both the State of Israel and the Bedouin stake their claims to this land, each party invoking relevant traditions of laws and amendments to prove ownership. In the meantime, the Bedouin have been evacuated from the land they live on to seven government-built towns. These towns were built during the period 1969–84, with the official intention of providing Bedouin with an infrastructure and services which, so the authorities claimed, could not otherwise be provided in their scattered traditional settlements. It remains to be seen, however, whether in fact the towns become fully developed as intended. In reality, infrastructure and services are being developed at a much slower pace than in Jewish settlements, or in some cases are not developed at all, a situation which can only cause the degeneration of the Bedouin's lives and aggravate the already harsh period of transition (Ministry of Housing, 1995). Urban life was probably more problematic for the Bedouin owing to the fact that the new towns

were planned without their consultation. Although planners attempted to incorporate Bedouin cultural codes into the planning process, they were still not directly involved. Another indicator of their tragic situation is that the Bedouin population, both in towns and in their traditional settlements, are considered to be the poorest community in Israel (Ministry of Welfare, 1995).

The fact that the Bedouin are not allowed to choose between traditional settlements and relocation of towns is another means of state control. They are faced with the option of either relocating to government-built towns or risking living in what are defined as 'illegal' spontaneous settlements. This lack of choice has proved to be one of the fundamental flaws of modern planning. The effects of the relocation on the Bedouin lifestyle have been discussed elsewhere (see, for example, Ben David, 1993; 1995; Fenster, 1993; 1997a; Meir, 1986a; 1986b). In this paper, however, the focus is on how the move to towns negatively affects the gendered reconstruction of space and the reformulation of boundaries between forbidden and permitted spaces for women.

### **Culture, gender, and space in planning**

Before analyzing the cultural construction of space for women, it is important to acknowledge the complexities inherent in defining culture—both an abstract and global concept. This duality creates a variety of definitions in the relevant literature, differing according to the field of research and theoretical approaches. For example, culture is defined by Cosgrove and Jackson (1987) as "the medium through which people transform the mundane phenomenon of the material world into a world of significant symbols to which they give meaning and attach values". It is also defined by Jackson (1989, page 2) as "the level at which social groups distinct patterns of life". Cultures, according to Jackson, are 'maps of meaning' through which the world is made intelligible. Overall, Mitchell (1995) presents some *twenty* definitions of culture, stating that in most cases "culture is symbolic, active, constantly subject to change, and riven through with relations of power. Culture is represented in terms of spheres, maps, levels, or domains. It becomes a medium of meaning and action. Culture is everything!" (1995, page 105).

It is no surprise, therefore, that these complex and contested definitions render the incorporation of cultural constructions of space difficult, especially regarding those relevant to gender relations. In this paper I attempt to explore how cultural norms are projected onto spaces so that for women these spaces become forbidden or permitted. These projected meanings of space are naturally connected to, and derived from, power relations within communities. Identifying spaces as forbidden or permitted is actually a spatial emphasis of the patriarchal power of men over women, and the resultant limitations imposed on the mobility of women. These cultural meanings attributed to space include codes of 'honor', 'modesty', 'shame', 'disgrace', 'manhood', 'women as property', and 'men as women's owners'. These codes create and determine the spatial boundaries of the individual. They limit the spatial mobility of women more than men, as the value of women as a symbol of Bedouin culture determines collective cultural boundaries of 'us' and 'them' (Yuval-Davis, 1995). In some cases, space may be considered inappropriate for women for reasons of modesty, despite being still accessible to men. Alternatively, in some societies (for example, among Ethiopian Jews) 'impure' spaces are created specifically to house women during their period of menstruation, and such spaces are forbidden to other members of the group. In such cases the symbol of a woman's honor is the boundary which determines forbidden or permitted mobility (Fenster, 1998).

The conceptualizations of forbidden and permitted can be associated to a large extent with the Western conceptualizations of 'private' and 'public' dichotomies. In discussions with Bedouin women (as elaborated later), they refer to their home and

neighborhood as 'their private place' in which they are free to move as opposed to other areas of their town (park, town center) which are in fact inaccessible to them. I try to concentrate here on the non-Western definitions of forbidden and permitted spaces rather than discuss the contestation of private/public dichotomies (for elaboration see, for example, Arderner, 1993; McDowell and Sharp, 1997; Pratt, 1994; WGS, 1997). To this end it is important to outline briefly how the Bedouin construct forbidden and permitted spaces. The Bedouin perceive permitted spaces as the tent or home. However, when a stranger enters this 'private' area, it immediately becomes 'public', and thus forbidden for women who actually live in the house. This means that even inside her own home a Bedouin woman must 'escape' to a 'modest' space, so that she will not be visible. It is indeed Bedouin cultural norms that dictate these rules. It is argued that these norms, as they are not acknowledged in town planning, in turn pose an obstacle to Bedouin women relocated to towns.

In this paper I criticize the fact that the procedural, modernized planning process does not consider cultural constructions of space. Bedouin towns built in this way created a situation of increased control over Bedouin women. Moreover, the state 'modernity project' for the resettlement of the Bedouin exemplifies the use of planning schemes as a means of control over an ethnic group. To this end, planning is acting as a regressive agent of change (Yiftachel, 1995). This typically occurs in segregated societies with non-assimilated ethnic groups, where one of the fundamental issues of planning is the use of land. It has undoubtedly occurred in Western pluralistic democratic societies although usually it takes place in relatively subtle ways, mainly influenced by market mechanisms (Harvey, 1973) or male dominance (Fincher, 1990; Sandercock and Forsythe, 1996). The modernity project in the Negev has threatened Bedouin culture by producing high residential density, increasing the likelihood of undesirable encounters for Bedouin women, and thereby supplanting deeply engrained cultural codes concerning women's modesty. By way of compensation, the boundaries of forbidden and permitted spaces have become stricter in the new towns; larger areas are now designated as forbidden to Bedouin women, though they may be adjacent to permitted areas. To emphasize the lack of sensitivity inherent in the modernized planning system, and its resultant negative effects on Bedouin women, the two approaches of procedural modernist and progressive postmodernist planning are briefly presented below.

Procedural planning theory based its methodology on modernized perceptions. It represents a modernist outlook on society, emphasizing a rational comprehensive approach to planning, a formal top-down process which ignores the 'others'—the marginalized—and therefore pays less attention to social relations and their expressions in space. The theory views society as one homogeneous entity, rather than penetrating more deeply into its social and cultural structures. The planning procedure is an end in itself; in other words, the 'product'—the plan is what counts and this product is dictated by the planner's perceptions and ideas. This type of Western modernist theory views the process and direction of change as predetermined, and notions of empowerment and forms of social and environmental relations are ignored. Modernist planning thus involves an autonomous process of change, rather than being a product of the integration of premodernized cultural codes, norms, values, social relations, and environmental attitudes. This type of planning is insensitive to the complexities of social change and to metaphorical, sometimes hidden, meanings attributed to space. Procedural planning assumes spaces as absolute and perceives their physical aspects rather than their social and cultural constructions.

The above planning approach of control and cultural blindness was employed in the forced relocation of the Bedouin to concentrated, densely populated towns rather than allowing them to choose small rural villages similar to spontaneous settlements

for their new homes. The modernist approach was expressed in the basic assumption that Bedouin cultural norms, such as housing density, neighborhood proximity, distance between tribes, and women's modesty, would change and therefore did not need to be taken into consideration. This ignorance of cultural norms within the planning framework only created greater control over Bedouin women. They became more restricted by Bedouin men, whose own ambivalence towards the transition resulted in their forming 'guards of honor' to shield their women further from the new realities of the modernized towns.

Progressive planning, in contrast, approaches the planning process not merely as a formal top-down exercise, but rather as an ongoing dialogue between institutions and target groups. This process serves as a means to achieving the social and political goals of people involved in the planning process, to building beneficiary capacity and empowerment, and to allowing equal access to resources. The approach includes planning traditions such as advocacy planning, negotiated planning, critical planning, and radical planning (Alterman, 1994). It derives from a postmodernist view of society, which challenges the 'grand theory' of modernism by emphasizing the particular and the local (Ley, 1989) while being aware of social and cultural constructions of space and including them in planning procedures. Unfortunately, these planning procedures are not used by state apparatus because they involve a process of redistribution of power.

Planning theory, which perceives modernization as a goal in itself, is criticized by feminists who see such theory as a male bastion (Sandercock and Forsyth, 1996). Modernistic components such as residential zoning, which emphasize the division of home from work or the distinction between downtown and neighborhood, are seen as reiterating and reinforcing the familiar distinctions between the male and female spheres (Fainstein, 1996). Still, there are diverse opinions as to where the analysis of gender is relevant, especially regarding the economic status of women, their location and movement through space, the connection between capitalist production and patriarchal relationships, the connection between 'public' and 'private' life, how women know about the world and how much they learn to define their needs, and lastly what forms of communication women feel most comfortable with (Sandercock and Forsyth, 1996).

What is the significance of feminist contributions to planning theory? These contributions serve to highlight the control over women in planning policy, and the resultant negative effects on them. For this reason Friedman (1996) suggests radical planning as an appropriate planning approach, with the aim of achieving equality and emancipation. Another point of interaction between gender and progressive planning is the necessity to highlight the relevance of 'difference' in planning theories and how differences among people should be taken into account in practice (Moore-Milroy, 1996). This means taking the plural nature of a society into consideration in planning. Sandercock and Forsyth (1996, page 473) call it "planning for multiple publics", at the center of which is the "acknowledgement and celebration of difference". They consider this new planning theory as the most significant theme in the rethinking of planning in the 1990s and for the future. In this paper I criticize some of the Western feminist assumptions of urban planning in its modernized procedural form, as liberating women from culturally encoded spatial restrictions. I highlight both the importance of identifying metaphorical spaces as a precondition of urban planning and the necessity of adopting a sensitive approach to cultural difference even when it appears to operate against the interests of women. The subsequent culturally sensitive planning approach emerging from these points is suggested at the end of this paper as the planning-in-stages approach, which is an attempt to incorporate the goal of improving women's lives while respecting tradition even where it does not coincide with women's interests.



### Gendered cultural construction of space in Muslim and Bedouin societies

Muslim sexuality is actually territorial (Mernissi, 1975) and its territoriality is symbolically expressed both in women's clothing and in the articulation of forbidden and permitted spaces. In many Muslim societies, the cultural constraints applied to women are stricter and more articulated than those for men. In Iran, for example, many public areas are now segregated by sex, including schools and universities (Tohidi, 1991). These restrictions are intensifying in Islamic fundamentalist countries (Beller-Hann, 1995) because political ideals in Muslim countries use religion to restrict women's lives (Afshar, 1996) rather than because the roots of the religion entail women's oppression, as commonly thought in the West.

The practice of the veil is one of the most explicit symbols of a woman's honor being intrinsic to her body. A woman's clothes serve as a means to defining boundaries between forbidden and permitted spaces or territories, particularly among Islamic fundamentalists. The advent of the imposition of the veil is disputed (Mernissi, 1991). In several countries, such as contemporary Iran, all women, including non-Muslims and foreigners, are obliged by law to wear the veil and observe traditional Islamic *hejab* (complete covering of women). However, in countries where this practice is not compulsory, such as Egypt or Turkey, women dress traditionally for various reasons, and the specific meaning attached to this practice varies according to its cultural and ideological context (Mohanty, 1991). It is not possible, therefore, to assume, as do some Western feminists, that the mere practice of veiling women in Muslim countries indicates the universal oppression of women. In Iran, women veiled themselves during the 1979 revolution as an act of opposition to the Shah and Western culture colonization (Tohidi, 1991), although today Islamic law dictates that all Iranian women wear the veil (Afshar, 1996). For many Muslim women, the veil is a symbol of 'Islamification' and its revivalist ideals. In this case, the veil is a liberating, rather than oppressive, force (Afshar, 1996). In other cases, the practice of veiling solves the problem of women's desire to move freely in 'public', while acknowledging cultural and religious restrictions.

In Cairo, Macleod (1990) observed that young, educated, middle-class women choose to dress traditionally when they leave the house to go to work, despite the fact that this code is not always demanded by the 'guards of honor' in their society (husbands, fathers-in-law, parents). The paradoxical situation that Macleod identifies is that these women, on the edge of modernity, use the symbol of their inferiority (as approached by Western feminism) in order to broaden the space of their activities outside of the home. The function of the veil expands the boundaries of forbidden space for Muslim women living under severe restrictions. As such, Muslim women have succeeded in adapting to fundamentalist laws by creating laws of their own regarding permitted within forbidden and by wearing the veil and the *hejab*. Veiled women feel less exposed to verbal or physical male abuse when using public transport or when moving anywhere in a public space (Abu Odeh, 1993). Both Afshar (1996) and Abu Odeh (1993) view the veil in the context of Third World Feminism—as a mechanism that permits both spatial mobility for women and a sense of social and psychological safety. The veil enables women to become the observers and not the observed (Afshar, 1996), while providing a short-term and immediate practical solution which, though not replacing the long-term feminist struggle for equality and liberation, is not merely a sign of oppression but allows for women's modesty while enabling them to navigate the public arena. A culturally sensitive approach helps in the comprehension of these norms which, although viewed by Western feminists as abusive or subordinate, sometimes serve as a mechanism for women to work through their practical and daily problems. This approach should also be employed in regard to planning.

The Bedouin way of life in the Middle East is expressed through issues of territory and space. Some researchers presume that the nomadic lifestyle of Bedouin reflects an aterritorial approach to land (Rappoport, 1978). Others claim that the mechanism of spatial mobility resolves social conflicts by reducing the chances of undesirable encounters between rival tribes. The transition from a nomadic to a settled lifestyle has redesigned the relationship to territoriality by increasing interaction. In turn this has created many difficulties, as different tribes have been forced into proximity, and the Bedouin have in many cases been unable to deal appropriately with resulting conflicts (Bar, 1989). Forced settlement has often proved destructive, even causing psychotic disturbances (Rappoport, 1978). It has resulted in a need for immediate solutions on the part of the Bedouin in order to deal with the traumatic transition, and is often expressed by becoming more religious or creating additional stricter social rules. These changes, and particularly the increase in housing density, have made authority constraints stricter and the whole process of forced settlement, therefore, more destructive for women. This crisis will be further examined in the following section.

Studies dealing with gender in nomadic societies in the Middle East have distinguished between private space—the tent, which is women's space—and public space—*ma'ahal* (a collection of tents), which is considered men's space—and have determined that as women have no role in the public space they are in an inferior position to men. However, other studies have challenged this distinction and suggested that women have political power and influence despite their spatial limitations. All agree, however, that women have a passive role in the determination of their lives (Lewando-Hundt, 1984).

The role of the veil for many Bedouin women living in planned settlements in the Middle East is similar to that for women in many Muslim countries. Bedouin women must cover their heads in order to leave their home. However, although the head-covering is part of a basic traditional cultural code, unlike in other Muslim societies it does not facilitate spatial mobility partly because cultural codes are stricter.

A comparable reduction in women's freedom of movement has occurred among Bedouin in the new settlements built in Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran (Rappoport, 1978). The closer the proximity of other neighborhoods, the greater becomes the severity of cultural constraints applied to women. Abu Lughod's study (1986) of a group of Bedouin in Egypt demonstrates this trend. The planned Bedouin settlements in Egypt are not as isolated as in the past, and they receive more visitors as a result of trade and commerce among men. Because of cultural codes forbidding women any contact, even eye contact, with men, more Bedouin women in planned settlements in Egypt wear the veil than was the case when they lived in traditional settlements, and thus their mobility is limited to the domestic arena. In other words, permitted space has been reduced with the transition to permanent settlements, such that Bedouin women have undergone a most difficult transition. Restriction in movement means that these women feel unable to use even social and welfare services, located outside their neighborhoods, to overcome these difficulties. *The transition to permanent settlements has led to deterioration of these women's status and self-image as traditional roles are no longer achieved, leading to a sense of worthlessness* (Abu Lughod, 1986; 1993).

The mobility of Bedouin men in Egypt is far less limited within the planned settlements and their periphery than is the mobility of women. Codes of morality and modesty are also less strict for Bedouin men. Nevertheless, there are other cultural constraints limiting Bedouin men's mobility. In the Negev, the Bedouin live in neighborhoods within towns, according to tribal affiliation, and men avoid moving in other neighborhoods because of accepted traditional rules of territoriality and respect for women's modesty. Accordingly, one does not move within the territory of another tribe uninvited. However, men's limitations do not affect their ability to perform their double role

(productive and community; see Moser, 1993), whereas the limitation on women's mobility does affect their ability to fulfill their triple role (reproductive, productive, and community management; see Moser, 1993) owing to lack of access to basic services. This situation renders their town life less tolerable.

### **Gendered cultural construction of space among Bedouin in the Negev—results of the field work**

Perceptions of the shortcomings of modernized planning in the new Bedouin towns has led to an increasing realization of the benefits of progressive planning, which would take into account the need to include Bedouin participation in the planning process in order to address their ethnic and gender needs with greater sensitivity. The following analysis of the reconstruction of forbidden and permitted spaces among Bedouin in the Negev is based on fieldwork carried out among Bedouin in the towns during 1995. This fieldwork was part of a study undertaken to prepare a *Development Plan for the Bedouin Settlements in the Negev* for the Ministry of Housing (1995). As the fieldwork progressed, it became increasingly obvious that participation would need to include not only ethnic issues, but gender issues also. The approach adopted for the plan was a market-oriented one; that is, the Bedouin town was perceived as a product which should meet the needs of its consumers—the town residents. This approach is in line with those of progressive planning.

The research method made use of questionnaires, completed by a statistical sample of the town's male residents. Access to women was limited, because they could not be interviewed alone by people outside their own tribe. Therefore the study among Bedouin women was achieved by using focus groups in which the researcher met some 10–15 women together, from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, where they discussed various issues in an open-ended fashion. Four such focus group meetings were carried out with Bedouin women in the towns. Generally women from the same extended family or tribe took part in each meeting. They were mostly young (not older than 35) and some were married. None of the women were wage earners and all came from financially stable families. Approximately half the women (mainly from Rahat) were educated (most had completed high school). Most of these educated women were married to educated men. The issues raised in the meetings concerned the adequacy of the modernity planning project in relation to the lives and needs of these women. Most issues and problems were raised by the women themselves.<sup>(1)</sup>

The following analysis is a summary of the main issues raised in the focus groups regarding the construction of forbidden and permitted spaces and the adequacy of the modernity project in meeting Bedouin women's needs. The material is analyzed initially at four levels that concern all Bedouin women: home, neighborhood, town, and region. It is followed by an analysis of the comparative spatial mobility of different Bedouin women.

(1) As an Ashkenazi (European) Jewish woman, carrying out research among Bedouin for the government of Israel raises many questions regarding my positionality and ability to represent the community. To what extent would my position and power allow for open dialogue? I take Kobayashi's position (1994) that the question is not whether our position of power and authority denies us the right to conduct research but, rather, how we use our privilege to social ends. For me, the fight to include the voice of Bedouin women in this work has not been easy in a country where official planning systems, using a modernized planning approach, ignore issues of 'otherness' and representation, especially when a non-Jewish ethnic minority is involved. I chose to address this particular dilemma by focusing not on difference but communality (Kobayashi, 1994), taking the view that as women in a male-dominated Israeli society we all face various types of oppression, either social, cultural, religious, or spatial. The four focus groups in fact expressed great relief to be working with, and more freedom to speak to, a woman outsider.



## Gender mobility between the forbidden and the permitted at different spatial hierarchies

### The domestic level

The domestic area (usually the tent) was traditionally considered private space, the security of which was guarded carefully by the Bedouin (Bar, 1989). The area of the tent or home provided protection, and if a male passed over the boundary into this domestic area, he would receive the protection of the head of the household and be considered a guest, who would then be sheltered by the owner. This meant that the permitted area would become forbidden to women when a guest entered the tent or home (see figure 2). The definitions of Waltzer and Sibley are helpful in the comprehension of this ambivalence. Waltzer's definition (1986, in Valentine, 1989) expresses clearly the Bedouin definition of forbidden space as "the space we share with strangers, people who aren't our relatives, friends or work associates", and, therefore, codes of modesty and honor become threatened and these spaces in turn become forbidden. Sibley (1995) suggests that boundary-making depends on how the outsider is perceived in relation to the host's conception of privacy in a particular culture. These subtle ambiguities, present in questions of gender and space, serve as examples of how important it is for planners to familiarize themselves with cultural mores in order to accommodate the needs of ethnic groups. For example, within the domestic space, the boundary of the private can be defined as ten steps from the tent or at the point at which the voice of a man requesting shelter can be heard, or it can be measured at a fifteen meter radius from the tent (Havakook, 1986).

The house became the permitted space with the relocation to towns. The only space where inner design is planned and controlled by Bedouin women is also the domain where women are most influential. As Fatma said during one of the focus group sessions:

"Women are those who decide how to plan their home—because they stay at home all day—whereas men are those who go out, always go in and out" (9 February 1995). Another example of the dialectic between values of tradition and the desire for change is the combination of the two sets of values within Bedouin homes and kitchens. To avoid a situation where permitted space is converted into forbidden space within the home, a typical house in town is usually large and its inner plan is constructed with the entrance to the guest room separated from the rest of the house, so that when a guest enters the house women can still stay within. Most houses are also planned with two guest rooms, again to create sufficient flexibility regarding cultural norms, one guest room furnished with modern, western style furniture and the other traditionally furnished with carpets and cushions on the floor. There are also usually two kitchens, one modern, within the house, and one traditional, usually in the yard, with the traditional *tabbun* (oven). This structure does indeed meet women's needs but also reflects the somewhat ambivalent situation which women (as well as men) face between modern and traditional lifestyles. This ambivalence is also expressed by their feelings towards the homes that they themselves planned. One woman said "The house is big, I prefer the tent because of the high expenses on the house", and another woman commented

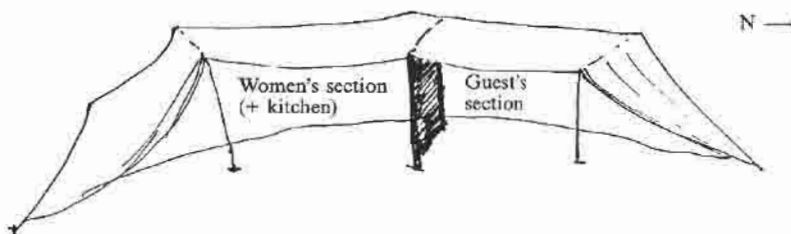


Figure 2. Bedouin tent and its divisions.

"There is more work today; in the tent there was no need to clean the floor everyday and now there is too much cleaning, therefore there is less time today than in the past ... It was better in the past!"

This somewhat nostalgic longing is perceived by some researchers as a result of modernization (Casey, 1993), and indeed for these women modernity increased to a large extent their household burden and made them ambivalent toward its consequences. This dialectic is expressed by the erection of tents in backyards, a behavior pattern often seen in the towns. It is a reaction very similar to that of the settled travelers in Europe who erected tents or caravans in their backyards as a means of adapting nomadic ways to settled life (Sibley, 1992).

In the new towns most housing plots are in close proximity and are larger than one dunam in size (0.1 hectare) (see figure 3). Although extended families could live comfortably in close physical proximity in spontaneous settlements, high densities of housing makes it more difficult to tolerate in towns. Not only do families live close to one another, but extended families very often live in the same house (on different floors), whereas in spontaneous settlements each nuclear family would have a separate domestic unit. Increasing residential density in towns, relative to the dispersed way of life in traditional settlements, drastically changed the boundaries between permitted and forbidden, both because of the greater fear that codes of honor would be violated and because of neighborhood conflicts, which were no longer reduced by distance between extended families. The effects of increased density are frequently alluded to by the Bedouin men. More than 80% of the respondents to the questionnaire claimed that both plot size and distance between plots were too small.

The fact that residential density reaches two to three housing units per dunam means that Bedouin women usually live with parents-in-law or other members of their husband's family, and such living arrangements increase feelings of confinement. Lewando-Hundt (1984) points out that the move to towns increases the possibility for conflict between wives and mothers-in-law in relation to the organization of the extended family life, because of the fact that they live in such close proximity. The control of the mother-in-law was very explicit in one of the focus groups. We were able to discuss and talk about various issues for a couple of hours before the mother-in-law entered the room. The discussion then immediately shifted both in terms of topics and more particularly in atmosphere.

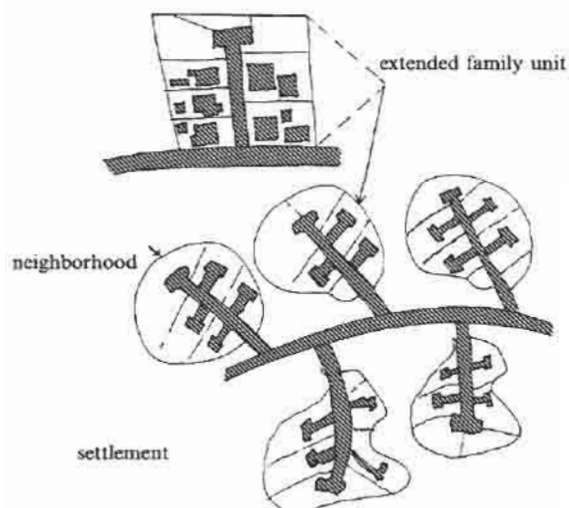


Figure 3. Bedouin neighborhood and settlement.

Housing density also influences the degree of mobility in the forbidden space, as women are not able to move freely where men outside of their immediate family congregate. The women in the focus groups stated that they found this density to be suffocating, and that there were a number of young families in Rahat planning to move to a smaller plot, in another area of the neighborhood, in order to be further removed from family supervision and control. As Halima said:

"Being here is too crowded, there are not enough plots and therefore all the [extended] family have to live in one plot. That's why we wish to move to another neighborhood, no matter who our neighbors are" (15 February 1995).

This last sentence echoes an expression of resistance. This woman feels so suffocated that she prefers to break traditional laws of tribal affiliation in order to gain privacy. It should be emphasized that the choice of moving, albeit not always realistic, exists only in the modernized town and would never have been an option in traditional settlements. However, the fact that this opinion was expressed at all, and even then by only one participant at the end of our discussion, demonstrates that this is still a dream rather than a real choice.

### **The neighborhood**

Neighborhoods are divided according to tribal affiliation, with extended families receiving a block of plots from the authorities. A typical Bedouin neighborhood, as depicted in figure 3, demonstrates how neighborhoods are planned around cul-de-sacs in order to avoid undesirable interaction. These confined neighborhoods may be the only permitted space open to Bedouin women outside of their home in the towns. Most women in the focus groups agreed that they could move freely within their neighborhood. They do most of their daily shopping in the neighborhood, whereas clothing and shoes are purchased in the nearby cities. The move to the new towns has changed the division of labor between couples. In spontaneous settlements men shopped for all goods, as service centers were far away with few means of transport. By way of contrast in the towns, women are responsible for shopping, as services in the neighborhoods are closer and public transport from towns to nearby centers is more frequent (Lewando-Hundt, 1984). Women spend most hours of the day within the confines of the neighborhood, whereas men and children, for reasons of employment or schooling, spend much of the day outside the neighborhood. The sense of suffocation is therefore more acute for women than for men and children. These feelings are expressed in the following quotations:

"I am sick and tired of being alone all day. My husband comes home very late and my two kids go to school and I feel that I have nothing to do during the day. I wish I could work in a textile factory in town. I think that if there was a textile factory in the town, my husband would have allowed me to work" (Fatma, 15 February 1995).

"I am bored, everyday is the same. I want to study, I want to go out, to travel, to work. It is hard to change because of public opinion" (Mariam, 9 February 1995).

*These expressions show how frustrated and confined women feel as a result of their ambivalent situations in the towns; they have many domestic duties in their new homes but at the same time they feel that there is nothing much to do during the day that is meaningful, and therefore they feel a lack of self-fulfillment. The above statements express a search for meaning, freedom, and for more options to allow them to move outside of their neighborhoods.*

The density in these neighborhoods and the increased cultural constraints have limited women's ability to enjoy the use of newly introduced services. Women do not feel comfortable in the public areas. To use Davis and Anderson's terminology (1983), the high-density network created in the new towns is strong and has created a situation where gossip alone can seriously affect a family's standing in the community. Thus parents may

not send their daughters to coeducational high schools, for fear of unwanted encounters with males from other tribes and the rapid spread of rumors resulting from such encounters. Women in the focus groups requested that girls-only high schools be built as a solution.

#### **The town level**

The high residential density in towns and the fact that the Bedouin live in close proximity to groups of other origins increase the risk that codes of modesty will become violated through encounters with these groups. Such cultural constraints have reconstructed the boundaries of permitted space. The town as a whole is a forbidden space for most women. The majority of women in the focus groups were not acquainted with other neighborhoods aside from their own. Bedouin women did not know or use services in other neighborhoods and, aside from several groups in Rahat—the largest of the new towns—had no social relationships in those neighborhoods.

An indication of the ineptitude of the modernizing planners in creating appropriate public spaces for the resettled Bedouin is clearly seen in the fact that a large modern park-like area was built in Rahat, away from the residential areas, which nobody visits. Assize's story below illustrates how the complexity of culturally constructed space in Bedouin society creates forbidden spaces for women. She is 32, with four children, is university educated, and works in a white-collar profession:

"One afternoon, my kids were bored and being naughty, as there is no playground in the neighborhood; so I thought why not take them to the park that we have at the entrance to the town. You know, it is so beautiful, full of grass and flowers ... very pleasant. After all, why do we need this if we can't use it? So I went for the first time with my kids and after maybe ten or fifteen minutes later my husband came hurrying to take me back to the neighborhood. He was angry, and told me 'Don't you know it is forbidden?' Apparently, his brother drove along the road and saw me, and went straight to my husband to tell him" (21 April 1995).

One way of analyzing this event is by critically emphasizing how gender and culturally blinded assumptions made by the planners about the use of this park ended up in the park becoming a 'white elephant', mainly because its location near the main entrance to the town increases the risk of unwanted encounters. This is why a progressive planning approach, which does take these constraints into consideration and adopts a more participatory planning process, seems more appropriate for planning Bedouin towns. The story proves that women's permitted spaces have shrunk and their spatial mobility now ends in their own neighborhood, with the next step in the spatial hierarchy being only in other cities in the region—Be'er Sheva, Hebron, and Dhahiriya—which they visit occasionally.

Another way of analyzing this event is by exploring and highlighting the women's resistance to their spatial restrictions. By taking her children to the park, a well-known forbidden place, Assize protested against two issues: the lack of appropriate services in her neighborhood (such as playgrounds) and also against 'forbidden' spaces in general. Indeed, explicit and/or implicit resistance does exist among Bedouin women. The forcefulness of its expression changes in accordance to their status and origin. Those who resist more explicitly are the Israeli Palestinian women married to Bedouin men (see later section).

Bedouin women's confinement to their neighborhoods in which infrastructure and social services are poor makes these women nostalgic towards their past. Although they acknowledge the benefits of living in modernized towns, they also complain of the negative social effects, as expressed in the following opinions that were voiced in an informal discussion by the group of women from Rahat (2 May 1995):



"The town is a dirty place, too much herd, no clubs for children and us."

"Life today is easier: less work, no herd to take care of, washing machine, electric oven and no need to bring wood. It is easier physically but mentally and socially it is more difficult. People today are stressed and impatient; in the past, life was calmer."

"I would have preferred water and electricity but not in a city... In our traditional life there was friendship and today even my brother doesn't come to visit. The city alienates."

It is probably the combination of poor physical living conditions and increased social and cultural restrictions which creates this nostalgia and these expressions of dissatisfaction towards their present lifestyle.

#### **The regional level**

Almost all the women in the focus groups travel to Be'er Sheva, Hebron, and Dhahiriya at least once a month to shop, always with other women or with their husbands. Women of Rahat travel more often than do women of other towns. The explanation is that although the proximity to other groups in the towns increases the fear of violation of traditional codes, the anonymity in other cities is greater. Whereas the use of public spaces within towns is more restricted, traveling to public areas of cities nearby does not demand the same rules of modesty. It creates a fascinating spatial mobility pattern in which Bedouin women's mobility is very limited within the town, but other cities, which are large and anonymous, are considered less public in terms of codes of modesty than neighborhoods in the town itself. As mentioned earlier, the wearing of a head covering among Bedouin women is a prerequisite and, unlike women in other Muslim countries, is not a means of expanding their public space. This means that wearing a head covering does not allow them to enter areas which are considered forbidden, such as other neighborhoods.

The curious 'gap' in the hierarchy of spatial mobility demonstrates that for Bedouin women there is no direct relationship between distance and boundary formulations of forbidden and permitted spaces. A more distant place may be considered permitted, and therefore allow women more mobility than a place in close proximity.

#### **Cultural heterogeneity among Bedouin women and its effects on spatial mobility**

The women in the focus groups, although coming from a similar background, expressed different views. Indeed Bedouin women cannot be viewed as one homogeneous group. There are many differences to be examined such as age, tribal origin, socioeconomic status, and the length of time lived in an urban environment. Gender construction of space may differ according to age, education, and the marital status of women. Also different tribes have different customs and laws. Women who have lived in the new towns for a longer period tend to adapt quickly to more open lifestyles. The responses of some of the women in the focus groups are presented below.

##### *Middle-aged traditional Bedouin women*

A small number of women participating in the focus groups were older women, who had married relatively early (usually when they began to menstruate) and who now have, on average, between 10–12 children. These women never received any formal education, most rarely left their domestic area, and some still live in houses without electricity or running water. Their day generally begins in the early hours of the morning, when they heat water for their husband and children and bake bread. Some of them are the first wives of men who have subsequently married a second and sometimes a third time, and they accept this situation without question. These women live according to very strict cultural roles, and for them permitted space beyond their neighborhood simply does not exist. Most of them rarely visit nearby towns or any large cities in Israel.

*Urbanized Bedouin women—women living in Rahat*

Women living in Rahat, the largest and second oldest Bedouin new town, have a better level of services and are therefore afforded greater mobility than women in smaller towns. Having also lived in a town environment for a longer period, their movement in urbanized space has become less restricted than that of women in smaller and newer towns. The women from Rahat interviewed in the study were not older than 35, most were married mothers, and almost all had elementary and high school education. None of these women worked outside of the home. Most mentioned that they go to the shops and the bank in the town center. The size of Rahat (27 000 inhabitants in 1996) somewhat reduces the chance of undesirable encounters as compared with that in smaller towns; there are even some women who visit friends in nearby neighborhoods. This group is not representative of all the Bedouin women in the selected towns. In discussions with other women (not as part of focus groups) it was clear that there are differing cultural constraints among tribes, with varying levels of spatial mobility.

All the women interviewed from Rahat were characterized by a strong desire to go out to work (this issue will be discussed in the section dealing with employment), and by their ambitions to have more permitted public places; access to playgrounds for children, parks, and more education facilities. A commercial center is being developed on ex-territorial land (state land which does not belong to any tribe), which allows women access as it is not considered the territory of one of the tribes but common land. Some of the Bedouin women from Rahat visit the bank in the town center and the few shops that have recently opened there. This means that boundaries of permitted areas for the women of Rahat are broader than for Bedouin women in other smaller towns without ex-territorial commercial centers. It is interesting to note that women in Rahat consider their situation to be better than women in other Bedouin towns because, as they say, they are permitted greater mobility. This is despite the fact that both the park and the commercial center in the town are empty most of the time.

*Israeli Palestinian women married to Bedouin men*

The situation of Israeli Palestinian women married to Bedouin men represents the dilemmas of this society regarding transition to modernity. A substantial number of women living in Bedouin settlements today are Israeli Palestinian women (from Arab towns and villages in Israel) who married Bedouin men. Prior to marriage, these women lived in large towns such as Lod and Nazareth, or large villages such as Abu Ghosh, near Jerusalem. Of all categories, these women possibly suffer the most from restricted spatial mobility, as the majority possessed freedom of movement in their parent's home, where they formerly lived a modern way of life (in terms of dress, level of education, and daily behavior). The transition to a Bedouin town, with all the resultant limitations, produces culture shock for these women. They used words such as 'suffocating' and 'prison' to describe their situation. Fatma is 30 years old with seven children, she was born in Lod and now lives with her Bedouin husband and his family in Kessifa. She describes her situation thus:

"In the town, everybody knows everybody and sees everything. My parents bought me a baby carriage to help me to take the kids to the health clinic, but my brother-in-law doesn't allow me to use it. My husband is a good man but my brother-in-law is bad. He is frustrated, and that is why he behaves like that. He is afraid that his wife will demand a baby carriage too, and in this way he will lose control over her. So I cannot use the pram, and have to carry my kids in my arms for long distances" (9 February 1995).

Another interesting example which highlights this situation is the role of the head covering and traditional dress. Most Arab women are not accustomed to dressing

traditionally and therefore approach it as a burdensome obligation. On leaving the boundaries of the private area some of them stop their car and change into Western-style clothes, in a space that is culturally neutral for both themselves and their husbands. As mentioned earlier, their life histories put them at the forefront of resistance to these traditions, which in turn creates tensions between themselves and Bedouin women and men. Hamda complained:

"There is a higher control on us Arab women, because men know that we are coming from a different cultural background and they are scared and feel threatened" (9 February 1995).

This is most probably the reason that every single change these women attempt to introduce into their lives, such as using a baby carriage, is perceived as a threat, and indeed these women's resistance to tradition is the most explicit. They were the only ones who expressed opinions in the group discussions, using the services of a legal adviser to ensure that their rights are not offended, and they were also the only ones to use contraceptives despite the fact that many other Bedouin women wished to use them but do not dare, owing to their husbands' and families' objections.

#### **'Forbidden' and 'permitted' spaces in employment among Bedouin women**

One of the most explicit expressions of the desire to expand spatial mobility and increase well-being is expressed in the desire to become salaried employees. Most women are not so much interested in financial rewards, but rather in what they call 'changing the atmosphere', which actually means increased freedom to move outside their home.

As mentioned earlier, only 5% of Bedouin women are salaried employees (Ministry of Housing, 1995), a very low rate compared to 44% of Israeli Jewish women, and 15% of Israeli Palestinian women. The reason for this low rate of employment is primarily cultural. Although there are no exact data regarding the distribution of employed women before and after marriage, field observations and discussions with women suggest that most employed women are single. When a woman marries and has her first child she stops being a wage earner because of social and cultural constructions of gender roles. This is a difficult situation, especially for educated women, and it leads to a very unique image of the ideal husband. Aisha, 21, single, and Rahat's first kindergarten teacher says:

"If you ask me what type of a husband I want, I tell you: he doesn't have to be handsome or rich. My only wish is that he lets me carry on working after marriage" (2 May 1995).

Some women make certain that they can be employed after marriage. Zohara (27 with 3 children) studied in high school, and says that she started working just after finishing high school. She loves her work, and before marrying she made an informal agreement with her husband and his family that she could carry on working after marriage, and even after having children. Indeed she still works but, as she herself points out, she is an exception both in her family and her whole tribe. This is clearly emphasized in the statistics on employment presented earlier. Those who work tend to be married to men who have at least twelve years of education themselves. The mobility of these women is far greater and many of them have traveled to other towns in Israel. However, the great majority of Bedouin women feel trapped by being unable to seek waged employment, particularly those who are educated and have passed matriculation. On the one hand, they have acquired modern ideas and skills that make them different to their mothers. On the other hand, cultural codes preserve their inferior status, so that they continue to live like their mothers, although feeling far more stifled. As a result, they are unfulfilled and have an increased lack of satisfaction with their 'inferior' status.

Halima is 26 years old with three children. She lives in Rahat. She finished high school and successfully matriculated. Her story expresses the frustration of Bedouin women: "When I studied in high school I was so unique, not many girls studied at high school in my times. I dreamt that I would go to university to study mathematics, but my husband's parents did not allow me. Even to work at the high school laboratory they don't allow me. I was once unique and educated and now I am exactly like other uneducated women" (2 May 1995).

This frustration highlights the gap between the modern education provided by the State to the Bedouin, and the lack of openness among the society's members themselves to accept modernization among their own women. This situation is becoming more and more extreme, as statistics show that the level of education among Bedouin women is increasing. In 1982 girls accounted for 35% of Bedouin students, and in 1994 this number had risen to 44%. [These statistics relate to students in elementary school, middle school, and high school (Ministry of Education, 1995).] The number of employed Bedouin women, however, is growing at a much slower rate, and the number of girls in high school classes remains relatively low owing to a high drop-out rate. Bedouin women recognize the complexities of going out to work: on the one hand, they can make a financial contribution to growing family expenses; while on the other, they face the constraints and social circumstances that make employment so complicated for them (Tal, 1993). To overcome cultural limitations, most women in the focus groups requested that employment opportunities be developed in the towns themselves, preferably in their own neighborhoods. They believe that places of work within their 'domestic sphere' will make it easier for them to work. Bedouin men's views of their women working have in fact become more flexible with the move to towns, as is shown by the findings of the field survey. Most Bedouin men in towns (75%) support the idea of developing employment opportunities for women in the settlement, compared with only 30% of men in spontaneous settlements supporting such a proposal.

#### **'Space for women'—women's clubs**

To overcome constraints of mobility, and to enrich the private space, Bedouin women have requested the establishment of a range of services that would make their lives easier in the towns. They talked about clubs for women, where they could learn how to function better with modern electrical equipment for cooking and cleaning, and they also wanted sports and exercise facilities as well as make-up training programs.

In 1996, women's clubs, organized by Israeli women's organizations, existed in only three of the towns. These clubs are 'spaces for women': they serve as a woman's equivalent of the *sheig*, a hospitality tent where gatherings take place to serve men. They are places where women can meet, share problems, and enjoy themselves. The atmosphere is one of intimacy and sisterhood, and constitutes an emotional support system for women. It is something that is particularly necessary for women in Bedouin towns, especially in view of the dramatic changes taking place in their lives, and the fact that the move to the towns releases them from many of their traditional roles, leaving them with much free time. Women from neighborhoods without such women's clubs complained that their men spent all day sitting in the *sheig*, talking with one another, whereas women had no such place to talk freely.

The process of establishing such social groups in the towns was long and hard, because Bedouin men felt ambivalent towards them, fearing that traditional codes would be broken and that rules of modesty would be violated. It is also possible that they were afraid of losing control over their wives. With time, the men were persuaded that it would not threaten their dominant status, and that their wives were learning how to be housewives in modern Western kitchens. The same cultural roles of 'forbidden' spaces



apply to these clubs: they serve only women living in the neighborhood who belong to the same tribe.

### **Gendered planning and the modernity project—practical implications**

#### **Cultural and social implications**

In this paper I have begun to examine changes in the cultural construction of permitted and forbidden spaces for Bedouin men and women experiencing the modernity project. The analysis has shown that, unlike for women in other Muslim societies, traditional dress does not enlarge the permitted. Traditional dress is compulsory but does not increase freedom of movement. The situation in the Bedouin towns in the Negev is similar to the situation of the Egyptian Bedouin as described by Abu Lughod (1986). It is apparent that women experience the most difficulties during transition. Their living space shrinks and they do not find replacements for traditional activities as men do. Permitted spaces are limited because of the extreme housing density in the towns relative to the large space for mobility that existed in spontaneous settlements. These findings strengthen the claim that planning frameworks should provide solutions to delicate situations such as these. They expose the failures of modernized planning, which is oblivious to cultural codes and the implications of changes in boundaries, and the fact that such changes have had different ramifications for men and women.

#### *Planning implications*

The tension has been identified between the reforming model of Western feminism—in which women can be liberated from culturally encoded spatial restriction via procedural planning—and a sensitivity to cultural differences—expressed in progressive planning, even when it appears to operate against the interests of women. The idea of 'planning in stages', which is presented below, is the suggested way to deal with this tension. Planning in stages must be based on the participation of men and women. A participatory planning approach would ensure an understanding of the nuances of Bedouin mores, crucial to the future planning of towns, which then will be more suited to their Bedouin inhabitants. It is also important to identify the appropriate stages in planning: this is particularly true for Bedouin women, whose participation in the planning process is crucial precisely because of their delicate situation in the process of change. The concept of planning in stages focuses on creating fewer restricted spaces for women and also on how to increase accessibility to services. This follows the requests of the women themselves. Planning in stages emphasizes the idea that change takes place in stages, with a pace of its own determined by tribal origin, educational level, age, and the gender of its residents. This rate of change requires the use of various planning techniques which will ensure flexibility in planning in order to produce 'plans for multiple publics', with particular emphasis on gender differences. Different planning scales must be adopted in accordance with the needs of the different groups in the population, and the needs of different women. Planning analyses and the participation of Bedouin must begin to relate to the following components, some of which have already been raised in focus groups:

*Housing density.* The strong sense of density, felt particularly by Bedouin women, forces young couples to move to smaller separate housing plots to ease the effect of cultural constraints imposed on them by their families, thus allowing for more independence for new generations.

*Planning of mobile services.* The construction of forbidden/permitted spaces necessitates a flexible planning approach for certain services. The suggested framework respects gender codes as they currently exist, while working towards reforming gender relations: the planning of services must suit the cultural constraints of the society. Perhaps during the

first stages of settlement the services should be built on a neighborhood basis or in the form of mobile services, particularly in the case of medical services. Today there is one clinic in each Bedouin settlement (except for Rahat which has two), and Bedouin women, who are responsible for health matters in the family, have to walk long distances with their children to get to a clinic. (As we have seen, the use of baby carriages is still rare among the Bedouin.) Banking and commercial services could be mobile, as could informal education services such as libraries. It is also possible to make the services provided by women's organizations mobile too. As mentioned earlier, women's clubs serve only neighborhood residents, and if the courses provided by them were set up on a more mobile basis, they could become available to more women. An example of this kind of activity exists in the youth center for culture and sport in Tel Sheva, where some activities take place in women's homes. Any plan should take advantage of the infrastructure and services that urban life offers to become more sensitive to women's needs. Limitations today make it very difficult for women to fulfill their roles and responsibilities as mothers and homemakers, especially in terms of health and educational services.

*Employment opportunities.* In order to respect cultural constraints, a planning-in-stages approach to employment opportunities for Bedouin women should be considered. This would challenge the current approach of zoning land use, which separates industrial and commercial areas from residential areas, and has produced a crisis of modernism. A planning-in-stages approach toward the Bedouin would combine land uses, and encourage the establishment of small modern businesses—as well as nonpolluting industries such as sewing, weaving, and craft workshops—within the neighborhoods in the primary stages of settlement planning. This recommendation does not negate the need for the development of specific industrial areas in all Bedouin settlements, and the hope is that, with time, public space available to women will expand, allowing them to work in more distant locations.

### **Different voices—different opinions towards the 'modernity project'**

It is largely accepted today that the category 'women' is not uniform: factors such as class, race, ethnicity, and sexual preferences dictate different perceptions of space, and different socioeconomic and political needs. As suggested by Sandercock and Forsyth (1996) difference should not be lost in planning procedures, and 'planning for multiple publics' should always be taken into consideration.

In this light, I wish to emphasize the different voices that are expressed among Bedouin and Arab women with regard to suggested frameworks of flexible planning. The framework used in our field work followed the needs expressed by the women in the focus groups. As such, it has come in for criticism from some feminists who suggest that such a flexible planning approach perpetuates the subordination of Bedouin women and legitimizes the restricted movement of women in certain spaces. There is no clear-cut answer to this dispute. It illustrates the discourse between Western 'white' feminism and Third World feminism which may need to address more subtle cultural issues. It introduces the notion of cultural relativism in planning, which needs further discussion (see Fenster, 1997b). It is important to acknowledge the range of opinions involved when implementing such planning practices.

### **Summary and conclusion**

In this paper I have analyzed how the modernity project for Bedouin has brought to light the need for awareness of cultural construction and reconstruction of space. By studying the patterns of mobility of the Bedouin in the Negev, I have highlighted the shortcomings of planning-as-control in a modernity project. Perceptions of space as

modest or permitted, or immodest and forbidden, are presented in terms of the cultural constraints that limit and reduce women's movement. This kind of analysis has particular meaning in discussing gender in the cultural construction of space among Muslim societies in general, and among the Bedouin in particular. According to the findings of the focus groups, Bedouin women in towns have very limited mobility, depending on the size of the settlement, its age, and factors relating to the status, age, and origin of its residents. Their confinement to the domestic space and the neighborhood is relaxed only with a spatial leap to anonymity at the regional level. This restricted mobility has important implications for the development and planning of services and industry in the settlements, in terms of both their scope and their location. Clearly, progressive flexible planning is required to meet the needs of distinct ethnic populations undergoing change.

Although Palestinian Israeli women's groups in general have begun to define their needs in recent years, Bedouin women's aspirations have not yet been addressed on the international stage. It is hoped that we can learn to be sensitive to women's issues in a multiethnic context, both in order to encourage new freedoms and in order to preserve the cultures of fragile minorities as they evolve.

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