

Figure 3 – Beginning of construction



Social Exclusion, Housing Environment and 'Tolerant Planning' : The Case of the *Jahelin* Bedouin Tribe

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In memory of Sarah Kaminker, a friend and colleague

ABSTRACT: *The aim of this paper is to critically analyze the inherent nexus between power relations, spatial exclusion and the role of the planner in planning processes of housing environments. The discourse of tolerance in relation to spatial planning highlights its socio-political dimensions and questions a whole set of power relations, since we must ask ourselves who should tolerate whom and why. This argument is theoretically based on a vast body of literature suggesting that the appropriation and use of space are political acts, and the kinds of spaces we have, do not have, or are denied access to, can empower us or render us powerless.*

Thus, the article challenges the theoretical debate vis a vis reality, by presenting a particular housing environment planning project for the Jahelin Bedouin community. The Jahelin Bedouin people were expelled from their land, which the Israeli authorities decided to use for a new neighborhood annexed to the Jewish settlement of Ma'aleh-Adumim. Following a long and complex legal struggle, 35 Jahelin families were compensated, creating a precedent whereby the Israeli State was forced to lease alternative state land to Palestinians. A professional team including a planner, a community organizer and an architect was hired by a human rights N.G.O. to work on a project of planning and building 35 housing units for the Jahelin families.

This project, in an ongoing process as will be presented in this article, challenged the traditional role of the planning professionals, as well as the notion of "tolerance." As external professionals, the team had to examine its role critically, and to identify and support community interests through the development of a participatory and mutual process of planning.

Introduction: Who Should Tolerate Whom and Why?

The aim of this paper is to analyze the inherent nexus between power relations, spatial exclusion and the role of the planner in the planning processes of housing environments. By doing so, I intend to explore their relevance to the notion of tolerance and, hence, highlight its implication on planning discourse and practice. Such contextualization, I would propose, questions a whole array of power relations embodied within the act of planning since we must ask ourselves *who should tolerate whom and why*. Based on a broad range of literature (see, for example: Sibley, 1996; Sandercock, 1998), I would argue that this question designates how the appropriation and use of space are political acts, and how the kinds of spaces we have, do not have, or are denied access to, empower us or render us powerless.

In more detail, this article aims to challenge the theoretical debate, *vis a vis* reality, by presenting a particular housing environment planning project for the *Jahelin* Bedouin community. In 1997, the *Jahelin* Bedouin community was expelled from its informal settlement, which the Israeli authorities decided to use for a new neighborhood annexed to the Jewish colony of Ma'aleh-Adumim.¹ Following a long and complex legal struggle, thirty-five *Jahelin* extended families were compensated, creating a precedent whereby the Israeli State was forced to lease alternative state land to Palestinians.² A professional team, including a planner, a community organizer and an architect, was hired by a human rights N.G.O. to work on a project of planning and building thirty-five housing units for the *Jahelin* families.³ This project, in an ongoing process – as I will present in this article – challenged the traditional role of the planning professionals; team had to examine its role critically, and identify and support community interests through the development of a participatory and mutual process of planning (Forester, 1989). In other words, the very act of planning that will be presented in this article, accentuates the need to step 'beyond *tolerance*' in its twofold significance. The first demands re-framing the notion of tolerance in relation to the external power relations between an excluded community and the state. The latter, which is often ignored in a participatory planning approach, calls

¹ Ma'aleh-Adumim is a settlement built on occupied Palestinian territories east of Jerusalem.

² The Civil Administration Authority, which is a military administrative arm, is the representative of the Israeli State in the occupied territories (Judea and Samaria).

³ "Shomrey-Mishpat" is an Israeli human rights N.G.O. dealing mainly with the protection of human rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories. The members of the professional team were the planner Sarah Kaminker, the community organizer Alif Sahag and the architect Haim Yacobi.

for exposing the dilemmas stemming from the power relations within the community which embody patterns of intolerance stemming from its cultural norms.

In order to discuss the above arguments, this paper is structured around three interrelated themes that were recognized as crucial while debating social exclusion, spatial planning and tolerance. The first issue relates to *the tension between any community and the state* over the control of space through planning. This issue, however, is intensified in the case of semi-nomadic, ethnic minority groups. The second theme deals with *the debate around spatial dynamics that occur within a community undergoing a process of cultural, economic and social transformation* in which the tension between 'tradition' and 'modernity' challenges gender, age and class power relations. Thirdly, I will present *the dispute around participation in the planning process as a tool for diminishing the epistemological gap between local knowledge and professional knowledge*. Finally, in the light of the above discussion, the housing planning process of the *Jahelin* Bedouin tribe will be presented, linking it to the tolerance discourse.

The Bedouins and the State

The national scale is the primary sphere in which socio-spatial exclusion exists, and Israel – as a specific example of a settler society – clearly represents this position. My argument here is that spatial exclusion towards minority groups does not occur in a vacuum; rather it is a tangible expression of a wider political and cultural discourse. Jewish hegemony within the national territory is spatially expressed in the production of "purified spaces" (Falah, 1996), using the settlement projects of the dominant Jewish population as an efficient means to achieve it.

In Israel one can recognize the social and spatial patterns that characterize the settler society model (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995; Yiftachel and Kedar, 2000). Three social groups can be schematically marked. The first is the founding charter group, which acquired the dominant political, cultural and economic status during the initial period of establishment. The second group includes the migrants who followed the charter group; they often differ ethnically and are fixed in their inferior social status.⁴ The indigenous people, who form the third group, were excluded from the process of constructing the new state, and members of this group are generally framed into their inferior ethno-class status. In the Israeli context, this third group includes the Arab citizens, including the Bedouin community, who are discriminated in various spheres of public life, such

⁴ This group, in reference to Israel, is made up of the Oriental Jews (Mizrachim).

as economic mobilization/stagnation, cultural visibility/invisibility and participation/exclusion in decision-making (Sikkuy report, 2000). Indeed, the case of the Arab-Bedouins in Israel, as I will present in the following section, illustrates the existing tension between the motivations of the Jewish settler society and the powerless position of the indigenous minority group.

The Arab-Bedouins are Muslims by religion and speak a dialect of Arabic. They live in Israel in two separate areas: the Negev desert (around 120,000 people) and the Galilee (about 60,000 people). These two groups are from different origins, and there are differences in their ways of life. Socially, the Bedouins are divided into three main groups: the 'original' Bedouins who are descendants of nomadic ancestors from Saudi Arabia who moved through the Sinai Peninsula into the Negev; the '*Fallachim*' are peasants who joined the 'original' Bedouins in the mid 19th century as agricultural workers; and the '*Abid*' group, who were black slaves. The 'original' Bedouins are considered superior to the '*Fallachim*' and '*Abid*' (Stern and Gradus, 1979; Fenster, 1996; Meir, 1997, 1999).

After 1948, with the establishment of the state of Israel, only 11,000 (15 percent) Bedouins remained in the Negev area. Most of their land that did not adhere to the State's legal regulations was expropriated by the government and turned into state land through legislation (Falah, 1983; Kedar, 1998); this land was then redistributed, mainly to the Jewish settlements. It is important to note that following the 1948 war, most of the Bedouin population was expelled or fled to Jordan, Egypt and the Gaza Strip.⁵ One of these groups includes the *Jahelin* Bedouins who were expelled and then resettled as a semi-nomadic community in the Jordanian Judea desert. However, let us focus in the next paragraph on the policy implemented by the Israeli authorities in relation to the Bedouin population that remained within the borders of the Israeli state. Reviewing such policies at this point is important, since it will frame the *Jahelin* case within the social, cultural and economic transformation that occurred within the community. Yet, it will also explain the *Jahelin* case as a part of the structural power relations on the macro scale.

The remaining Bedouin population reacted to the massive land expropriation and to their new living conditions in a rapid construction of informal settlements, which were defined by the authorities as illegal. These informal settlements received no supply of basic infrastructure and services. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities view the expansion of informal Bedouin settlements as a threat to state control over state land, and therefore regularly

⁵ According to Dr. G. Kressel, the numbers differ and are interpreted differently according to different interests (Personal communication: July, 1996).

demolish these illegal shelters (Fenster, 1991; Meir, 2003). In the mid 1960s, the Israeli government initiated a plan for re-settling the Bedouins in modern towns in the Negev region. The government planned these settlements and housing, an infrastructure, education and health services were partially supplied. The Bedouin families that moved into these new towns had to withdraw any claims on their unregistered land or informal houses to become eligible for subsidized plots of state land in the new Bedouin towns.⁶

Indeed, the process of sedentarization of the Bedouins had a profound effect on their economic structure. The traditional economic activities of the Bedouins were agriculture and raising livestock which entail a location near water sources and arable land. When nomadism was at its height, most settlements were located on slopes during the winter, for protection from wind and rain, and on the hilltops during the summer in order to benefit from the breeze. Settlements were located near water wells and not far from arable land. Recently, traditional economic needs have changed and most Bedouins do not rely economically on agriculture as their sole means of income. As a result of these new circumstances, there are significant changes in work patterns among the Bedouin in general, and the Israeli Bedouins obtain 80 percent of their income from working in cities (Falah, 1983; Ben-David, 1995). However, there is a dual economy within the Bedouin community: modern economy constitutes the main source of income, while traditional economy, in addition to its symbolic importance, provides economic security (Marx, 1980).

These processes characterized the Bedouin society that remained in Israel, while the *Jahelin* Bedouins maintained a more traditional way of life under Jordanian rule between 1948 and 1967. Yet, it is important to note that there was also an existing tension between the Bedouin tribes and the Jordanian authorities, mainly around issues of land ownership (Razzaz, 1998). It was the war of 1967 – when Israel occupied the Judea and Samaria regions – that caused the second round of interaction between the *Jahelin* Bedouins and the Israeli authorities, this time in the form of a military regime. This regime enabled the intensive colonization of the occupied territories and the establishment of Jewish settlements on this contested land; such a process endangered not only the land of the Palestinian villagers and urban dwellers, but the Bedouin's clusters as well.

Preserving a Sense of Place in Cultural Transition

The home reflects a wide range of environmental and cultural influences,

⁶ For an extensive and detailed analysis of the changes and dynamics in the planning approach towards the Bedouin community in Israel see: Meir, 2003.

and thus it is argued that housing contains both cultural identity and social symbolic meanings (Rapoport, 1969, 1978, 1981; Duncan, 1981; Altman and Chemers, 1984). However, I have concluded elsewhere (Yacobi, 1996) that it is important to acknowledge the limitations of such an argument, since the link between housing and culture is part of a social process, which does not take place in a social void, but rather in a context of different interests. These multi-layered interests are attached to power relations between minority and majority as well as to the relations within a given society between men and women and between different generations.

In this context I would like to highlight several key characteristics concerning the meaning and use of space.⁷ The importance of the family hierarchy within the Bedouin community, in particular at the level of the nuclear and extended family, is expressed in spite of the transformation that this society witnesses. The habit of living with the extended family remains evident in the informal settlements as well as in the planned towns, and investment in housing is central to all family members. The house is considered to be a functional solution, but its meaning as a representation of social status is a relatively new phenomenon for the Bedouin. A significant investment in dual spaces, i.e. the construction of an 'illegal' tent or open-fire kitchen beside the modern house in the planned towns, expresses the ambiguity of the modernization process, its impact on culture and the way it is reflected spatially. The illegal activities in constructing a housing environment are an expression of the Bedouins' cultural-specific needs.

Another aspect relates to the gender division of space. Respect for the Bedouin women is reflected in the domestic sphere, and one must refer to the internal structure of the tent as a reflection of traditional needs and cultural codes. The tent is divided into two parts. The first is the living area, which during the day is occupied by women. This is the space where domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning are done, and where the family members sleep at night. The other part is the "Shik El Makaad," a large and comfortable space for receiving guests, carefully separated in order to preserve the women's privacy. Women can enter this part only when family members are sitting alone.

Privacy is a basic and important mechanism in housing and human settlements. Regarding these issues, it is important to note that the guests' section is always located on the northern side of the tent and the living part on the

⁷ This section is based on three months' fieldwork done in the summer of 1996 in the planned Bedouin city of Rahat and the surrounding informal enclaves in the Negev Region. This research was supported by the David Thomas Grant, the Development Planning Unit, University College, London.

southern side. Guests are supposed to directly enter the guest area and only from the east to avoid unexpected meetings. Such an organization of space also appears in the informal settlements, despite the fact that building materials are different and the structure is permanent (Yacobi, 1996). Indeed, while the traditional mechanism of organizing space was according to taboos, rules, manners, avoidance and social hierarchies, another mechanism, in the case of informal settlements, is achieved through spatial separation using physical devices such as walls, doors and locks.

Finally, the above discussion raises two interrelated aspects previously mentioned in the introduction. The first focuses on the negotiation around the use and meaning of space among community members, both men and women. The process of cultural and social transformation raises several questions: a) To what extent do the (often) forced modernization processes break traditional norms and thus practice intolerance? b) What is the impact of such processes on power relations within the community itself, especially in the changing patterns of gendered tolerance among the community members? and c) Related to this dilemma is the question concerning the effects of intervention through planning that takes place simultaneously with such social transformation.

Such dilemmas, indeed, lay in the core of planning. Yet, the question discussed in the next section is whether a participatory approach is the appropriate, simple step for solving these dilemmas or whether further steps must be taken, that go *beyond tolerance*?

Participation in Planning: Towards Tolerant Professionalism?

The critical body of literature doubts the myth that planning is a rational 'objective' professional activity that generates social equity. Rather, this literature points out the oppressive power of planning which is often used as a tool for social control (Yiftachel, 1998). Indeed, the widening gap between the planner and the end users became an intensive locus for research, writing and developing alternative methodologies of planning such as those developed by Davidoff (1965), Forester (1989) and Sandercock (1998). In relation to this article, I would claim that such alternative approaches have paved the path towards tolerant professionalism in the field of planning, while acknowledging the two as interrelated (Sandercock, 1998).

Accordingly, my intention is to mold the meaning of tolerant professionalism into useful models of action, focusing on the end users as a resource of knowledge concerning their housing needs and demands. By doing so, I would suggest, a significant step is taken towards fulfilling people's planning rights in relation to their ethnic and citizen needs, as well as towards

their empowerment. However, one must acknowledge that involving people in housing programs is neither a simple nor an 'automatic' process that leads to achieving use value of housing. In relation to this argument, I will center the debate around social participation in housing programs and its relevance to the acknowledgement of people's knowledge concerning their daily life.

The literature accentuates the ambiguities and contradictions embodied in the concept of community participation. Moser (1983) argues that no clear consensus exists in the definition of participation and that the diversity of definitions reflects the ideological range of interpretations of development and the different approaches to planning. Fiori (1983) claims that the definition of participation varies according to the interests of the person or the group defining it. According to Fiori, for some the emphasis is on cooperation and coordination between the community and the central power, and for others it is on conflict and social struggle. The distinction between those who identify participation as a means, and those who identify participation as an end, is central for understanding the duality of participation. Hence, I make no attempt to establish a definition of what participation is, but rather to accentuate its controversial nature.

According to Moser (1983), when participation is defined as a means, "it generally becomes a form of mobilization to get things done ... top-down mobilization to achieve specific development objectives, or bottom-up voluntary community-based mobilization to obtain a larger immediate share of resources." On the other hand, when participation is defined as an end, "the objective is not a fixed quantifiable development goal but a process whose outcome is an increasingly meaningful participation in the development process" (Ibid: 3). Gilbert (1992) suggests another distinction between political right and left wings, which correlates with the above definitions. He claims that a great part of the political right supports community action not only to solve the problem of resource deficiencies, but to reduce dependence on the state as well. For those on the political left, community action serves to improve physical standards, but it is more necessary for raising political and social consciousness. Definitely, here lies an essential difference between the two; the left introduces the issue of participation as a vehicle towards empowerment, by making communities aware of their class position and the need for political action.

In reference to Moser's categories of women's participation in housing programs (1983), my attempt is to establish classifications for evaluating the meaning and the contribution of social participation in relation to social power relations. Following Fenster (1996), some similarities exist between gender and minority-majority relations. Hence, despite the fact that Moser's categories relate to gender analysis, their contribution towards understanding social participation

in order to meet ethnic and citizen needs in planning (Fenster, 1996) seems relevant to me. In the following paragraph I will point out each category's validity for the arguments of this paper.

- i. Any given community is the user of its housing environment, its members know their needs and priorities and thus they have the right and duty to make decisions concerning their housing environment.
- ii. Participation in housing activities has the potential to stimulate participation in other spheres of life.
- iii. Participation in housing planning can be viewed as an important vehicle to make excluded communities visible in the social and political context of which they are a part.

To sum up, the above discussion on community participation is articulated within the debate on tolerance. In the context of this article, it is focused on two (interrelated) patterns: external professional tolerance between the planners and the community in question and the internal, i.e., the limits of tolerance within the community itself. These two aspects will be analyzed in the following section.

Forced to Change: the Case of the *Jahelin* Families

The *Jahelin* people were forced to leave their home twice. The first time, as I mentioned previously, was following the 1948 war when they were expelled from the Negev and moved to the Judean desert. In 1997, they were expelled from their tent enclaves, since the land they had been settled on for three decades was annexed to the Jewish settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. The project of re-settling the *Jahelin* was a forced act initiated by the Israeli government. Some of the families were moved to a new site – lacking any infrastructure – where ship containers awaited them as their new houses. The master plan for the new *Jahelin* settlement – as designed by planners working for the Civil Administration – was a given fact for the community, as well as for the professional team, hired by the Israeli human rights N.G.O.

The first few meetings with the *Jahelin* members included informal conversations that aimed to establish confidence between the community and the professional team – the architect, the planner and the community organizer. During the first three months, there were community meetings once a week. These meetings were scheduled for the late evening to enable the men to participate after their return from work. The discussions were held in Arabic, with the support of the community organizer. The main issues that were discussed in

this stage included the legal status of the new plots that were given to them, as well as the meaning of the plan designed by the Civil Administration planners. Towards the end of this stage, I had already gathered some information concerning the gap between the proposed plan and the planning needs of the *Jahelin* people which matched the findings mentioned in the previous sections.

The next stage included more structured meetings that translated the critique of the *Jahelin* people into specific demands. The collected information was then used as a basis for the first negotiations with the Civil Administration planners and officers. Some proposals for changes in the plan were brought forth: the first change we proposed in the master plan was to divide the site according to different clans; this would minimize tension over territory among the families. The second proposed change was related to the road system and the location of public spaces in the neighborhood as planned by the authority.

Although many planners consider these technical issues, as the architect of this project, I viewed these issues as part of the social and cultural debate. Following my previous study (Yacobi, 1996) the location of public spaces is crucial since accessibility of Bedouin women to public services depends on the division between 'forbidden' and 'permitted' spaces (Fenster, 1991, 1996). The third, most important point that we actually succeeded in changing was the 'key' to land distribution. Based on detailed data collected by the community organizer, we suggested distributing the land in correlation with the number of male members in each nuclear family. This demand emanated from Bedouin culture which values the potential of the land as a productive resource for urban agriculture in the first stages of sedentarization, as well as its future reproductive potential, when each plot will be divided between all married sons of the family.

Indeed, the first stage of the project demonstrates the tension between the community and the state. Beyond the fact that the sedentarization of the community was a forced act, the general master plan of the settlement, as well as the key to land distribution, showed no understanding of the cultural and social context and, hence, ignored the community's ethnic needs. At this stage our role as the professional team was to mediate, advocate and claim, on a professional basis, the community's needs as part of their planning rights. Tolerance was understood, at this stage, as accepting the community's physical and symbolic perception of space as a foundation for more democratic and egalitarian planning.

Power relations within the community surfaced when the judicial stage ended and our key for land distribution was accepted. Some of the *Jahelin* families are in a better economic situation than others and some even own a house in the urban fringes of Jerusalem and Ramallah. These families rely economically on the labor market, while other families still earn their bread from grazing; the latter's economic situation is worse. The social hierarchy reflects

economic status, and influences the dynamics of decision-making concerning matters such as the location of the plot that each family received. Conflicts were created within the community and these took a long time to solve.

The professional team viewed these conflicts in a western perspective of 'random justice,' and suggested holding a lottery among the families; this proposal was rejected by the *Jahelin* people on the spot. Finally, after one month of discussions and intensive negotiations among the *Jahelin* themselves and with the professional team, I was given a map drawn up by the people, marking each family plot. Indeed, at this stage of the project the issue of tolerance was shaped by cultural differences between 'tolerators' and 'tolerated,' while the question to what extent we could impose 'more justice' and influence the existing social dynamics remained open.

As already emphasized, planning, in its modernistic sense, focuses on the legislative division of space, the defined control over territory and the documented separation between public and private domains. Such rigid definitions contradict the case of the *Jahelin* community. As a semi-nomadic society undergoing a process of social, cultural, and economic transformation, the *Jahelin* people are re-defining their perception of space. Based on previous research and the vast body of knowledge that accentuates the importance of the use value of housing (Turner, 1976; Rapoport, 1981, Burgess, 1991), we decided to start with a process of participatory dialogue and mutual learning. Through this approach that expresses a professionalism of tolerance, we aimed to translate the planning needs and the spatial knowledge of the *Jahelin* people into professional language.

The first few sessions included only the *Jahelin* men. The level of participation was high, and after several group discussions we managed to gain their confidence. The most important meeting we had dealt with the location of the house on the plot. The use of a three-dimensional model encouraged the people to express their ideas, doubts and critique (figure 1, p. 84), and by doing so we intended to bridge the gap between professional terminology and local knowledge.

Generally speaking, I would claim that the men emphasized the importance of the project in general and the house in particular as a productive source. Hence, their demand to construct the first housing unit on each plot along the main road and by doing so enabling, on one hand, the potential for commercial activity along the street and on the other, using the back of the plot for household agriculture. These planning principles expressed by the *Jahelin* contradicted the building regulations designed by the authorities. However, we succeeded in part in convincing the Civil Administration planners to change some of the regulations, and to enable the use of the back of the plot for urban

agriculture. During all of these meetings the men did not refer to either the housing unit itself or to collective needs such as a school, open public spaces or kindergartens.

At this stage we asked to meet the women as well and the men's response was: "What for?" We explained that in order to make the best plan for the entire community we needed feedback from the women as well. Indeed, this example accentuates the inherent tension that exists between the planner and the community's social norms. It presents the dilemma of tolerance in planning; while we viewed the involvement of women in the project as crucial, the men viewed it as a "non-issue," moreover an arrogant request. Finally the men agreed, though they were quite doubtful.

A small group of ten women of all ages participated in the meeting. An elderly woman brought up the need for a "normal" school for the children and the need for infrastructure: "I wouldn't mind living without a roof above me, it is more important to have a place for our children," she said. Her words presented priorities which differed from those of the men whose were mainly in regard to the size of the family plot and its legal status. The second issue raised by the women was the housing unit itself. The women were asked to draw their 'ideal' house. Such a request was challenging for them and for us it was a very useful tool in advancing the project.

From their cognitive maps (figure 2, p.84) one can see the significance of the gender division of space, the clear hierarchy between private, semi-private, and public spaces as a basic element in the design of the *Jahelin* house. Indeed, the spatial pattern expressed by the *Jahelin* women was similar to that I learned in a previous study I carried out in the Bedouin settlements in the Negev (Yacobi, 1996). This shows how the gender spatial division of the traditional tent dominates the construction of the spontaneous settlements, as well as the design of the 'modern-western' style houses in the new Bedouin towns initiated by the state. Following our meeting with the women, we had a better overall picture, and we could conclude that the space and place of men and women is shaped through their gender roles within the community.

The next challenge was to try and implement the people's knowledge as documented by the professional team. Our intention was to combine the use value of housing as raised by the women and the exchange value accentuated by the men. The main concept was to create a 'soft' and 'flexible' design that would take into account the differences in gender, age, and economic status. This model related to housing as a continuous process, minimizing the importance of the house as a final object.

Based on the discussions with the *Jahelin* people, their critique and comments, we developed the following concepts: The typical housing unit would

be flexible in order to enable its extension according to the size of each nuclear family and its economic situation. The plan of the typical unit would reflect the gender division as raised by the people themselves. However, the structure of the house would take into account the possibility of individual wishes for other options of division. Each housing unit on the extended family plot would be part of a future semi-urban enclave, while at present the land would be used for agriculture. The 'technical' translation for this demand was to request a building permit that would define the maximum building rights on each extended family plot. In the first stage, each family would construct whatever they considered necessary, while in the future they would be allowed to use the rest of their building rights without the need to apply for another building permit.

This approach contradicted the entire concept of building regulations as defined by the authorities and, indeed, at this stage, our loyalty to the 'client' was stronger than our 'commitment' to the planning regulations; we had to negotiate the planning procedure with the authorities. These negotiations demanded that we professionally explain the logic behind such ideas, which ended in the authorities agreeing.

Discussion: Does Tolerance Matter?

The planning process with the *Jahelin* families implies some general conclusions, the first being the need to recognize people's ability to manage their communities in contrast to the inability of inadequate public responses. This accentuates the potential of community participation in identifying people's planning needs, priorities and demands. It is highly important to move away from a technical approach to participation, towards a socio-political perspective for understanding social relations. This point is central in understanding the link between cultural needs and housing, since discrimination and social subordination are not related to housing deficit, but rather to the social power relations within any given society. Culture is a property of a group; it is the core of its values and its dynamics in an ongoing process of changes, transformation and redefinition. Moreover, it is an arena of social struggle, since it expresses social power relations concerning its definition and its implication on housing demands and priorities. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the ambiguity of social participation in housing programs. It is not a 'blue print' for achieving the satisfactory use value of a 'product,' but rather a complex social process.

It is insufficient, however, to evaluate the results of such a project at this stage. At present, all 35 families have started to construct their new houses, partly because of the legislative pressure put on them by the authorities (figure 3, p. 68). From my observations, the *Jahelin* people are investing a lot of time and

money in their houses. These houses have become social symbols of status, reflected in the size of the unit each family has decided to build, as well as in the cost of materials and decoration they have chosen. In addition, all of the units kept the interior division of space according to the plans designed and according to the people's priorities.

Nonetheless, I would like to emphasize that the evaluation of such a project merely through the professional's satisfaction from the physical achievements is neglected. The ethical dilemma that such a project raises goes far beyond the basic professional discourse and many questions remain open. Does the professional team, despite its decision to develop a mutual process of planning with the *Jahelin* families, encourage the oppression of a powerless minority group that was forced to transform its way of life? The questions and conflicts of power relations, the spatial control over space, and the oppression of a minority group through the act of planning indeed demand an approach that goes beyond tolerance. *Tolerant professionalism* is rooted in acknowledging and unmasking the external and internal power relations that shape society and space as inherent components of the planning process. By doing so it challenges these constructed obstacles that are presented in official policies, legal systems or cultural norms.

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