

Housing and change: Women and progress in Givat Faradis¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the ramifications of “progress” as a generator of change in a traditional society. We investigated Givat Faradis, the new neighborhood adjacent to Faradis, a traditional Israeli-Palestinian town. We present interviews and discussions with two Israeli-Palestinian women as a basis for examining ambiguities and nuances in interpreting concepts of development, tradition and change. In the literature on Middle Eastern and Muslim societies, tradition is frequently represented as oppressive, severely curtailing women’s freedom, while change deriving from development and modernization is perceived as positive and constructive. Our findings seem to indicate that rigid adherence to tradition may sometimes, inadvertently, allow the rebellion inherent to development and progress; that change can be seen in and achieved through tradition in many different forms; and that it is perhaps becoming more possible to mitigate the deeply rooted schism between traditional and modern mores.

Introduction

This paper examines a new housing development—Givat Faradis, an extension to the Israeli-Palestinian² town of Faradis—through the lens of two women residents of the neighborhood. Amal,³ a young lawyer, married with two small children, and a native of Faradis who recently moved to Givat Faradis from the nearby Jewish town of Zichron Yaacov, says that living in Givat Faradis has allowed her to return to her hometown while preserving some degree of separation from her extended family. Living in her own house enables her to be in control of her life and prevents relatives from interfering with rearing her children. Samira is older than Amal, married, the mother of five daughters and a son. She describes Givat Faradis as a different world, remote from Faradis. Moving out of her husband’s parents’ house in Faradis, in which she lived for 23 years, at last enabled her to get a job. She works as a domestic helper in Zichron Yaacov, despite her husband’s objections, and says it makes her feel more independent. For both women, regardless of age differences, careers, life trajectories and future goals, Givat Faradis offers an opportunity to get away from dense and crowded life in Faradis. Moving to the new neighborhood has opened a new way of life that challenges, at least to some extent, the patrilocal⁴ that prevails in Palestinian society, enshrining emotions, as well as cultural and

familial institutions, but also reflecting political and economic constraints (Abou-Tabickh, 2008; Sa'ar, 2001).

The official purpose of building Givat Faradis was to mitigate severe lack of housing in Faradis, by providing homes for young local families, and to cope with the housing shortage of Israeli-Palestinians, the result of years of neglect by the State of Israel. The scheme was intended to improve quality of life by employing Western ideals of suburban living like those of similar Jewish residential developments. Amal's and Samira's stories show that, despite class and generational differences, the two women experience the move to the new neighborhood as a positive act that has changed their life dramatically, each in a different way. Their stories highlight some of the ambiguities found in the literature on tradition and modernity in Middle Eastern and Muslim societies, allowing an understanding of how they experience change in their new homes and how traditional patriarchal boundaries are weakening as a result of development.

Gender relations in the Middle East, Muslim societies and the non-West

In the last two decades, literature on gender relations in the Middle East has focused on the interplay between tradition and change. Much has been written about relationships in the context of modernization, the establishment of nation-states and their role in women's everyday lives (Abu-Lughod, 1998; Moghadam, 2003; Shukri, 1999). In particular, the writings address issues of power, focusing on struggle and resistance against tradition, religion and patriarchal control. Scholars have tried to refute the traditional acceptance of gender roles and the assumption that tradition is the primary determinant of women's status, the key obstacle to social and personal change (Bernal, 1994; Göçek and Balaghi, 1994; Joseph and Slyomovics, 2001; Moghadam, 2007; Sullivan, 1998). These approaches insist that tradition is not synonymous with backwardness and primitivism, but rather can be a source of strength and opportunities for women. Thus, Western concepts are not always vehicles for progress and improvement, especially in regard to women's well-being. Joseph and Slyomovics (2001:8–9), for example, argue that the modern nation-state that relies on the Western construct of the citizen as an individual, and has been adopted by traditional societies in the process of decolonization, disregards the basic autonomy of the individual within the community. Intensified by state support of patriarchal order, this model often encourages the marginalization of women and their activities.

The intersection of gender, development and tradition has been the focus of feminist literature in regard to the non-West. Tradition is often portrayed as immutable in order to justify its own hegemony (Göçek and Balaghi, 1994:5). Yet the concept of tradition does not mean lack of change, nor does it imply backwardness or stagnation (Roy, 2001). In the northern Sudanese village of Wad al Abbas, for example, new understanding of what it means to be a Muslim is associated with economic development (Bernal, 1994). Here, traditions have been adapted or modified to emphasize the differences between men and women and enhance notions of male superiority (Bernal, 1994:59). Bernal shows that messages communicated by Islamic dress and other cultural practices are statements about

change, declarations of tradition that challenge modernity and secularity. Recognizing diversity and dynamism in Islamic societies reveals Islamic culture as generating change in its own right, rather than simply in reaction to Western influence. Others insist that the Islamic revival is an indication of change rather than a resurgence of tradition (Kandiyoti, 1998; Sullivan, 1998).

Critical feminist writings have focused on gendered development policies in terms of their formulation, implementation and outcomes. Such concerns have often led to explorations of local experiences and the way in which policies, whether national or global, are mediated, transformed by and transformative of gender divisions of labor and women's access to localized resources (Nagel, 2005:7). Rural women in post-Taliban Afghanistan, for instance, have been hurt by the severe limitations and unintended consequences of Western-engineered policies (Davis, 2005). These programs, dealing with livestock management in nomadic communities, have disempowered Muslim women because they assume that the latter are not significantly involved in raising livestock, thereby eroding the women's means of subsistence.

Similarly, Goebel (2005) shows how Zimbabwe women are disadvantaged by "fast track" practices. The "fast track" land-reform process was initiated by the government in 2000 in order to formalize redistribution of land in Zimbabwe. Despite protests by a women's organization that has lobbied the government to include women's interests in land-reform policies, and has brought about significant improvements in women's land rights (formalized in policy documents), preference is still given to men as recipients of land resettlement. The patriarchal order of traditional authorities and families at state and local levels has caused the marginalization of women in this respect (Goebel, 2005:164). For example, the resettlement policy maintains the local custom that prevents married women from gaining access to land in their own right. Resettlement permits are assigned in the husband's name only, making divorce impracticable for women. This is particularly problematic in a society where marriages are extremely unstable (Goebel, 2005:153).

These problems in Afghanistan and Zimbabwe indicate that progress-driven development does not always improve the woman's lot when designed to accommodate traditional values. This reinforces the argument that modernization and westernization often abandon former traditions only to create new ones invented by the state (AlSayyad, 2004; Roy, 2002). The plight of the Bedouin women due to the urbanization process implemented by the Israeli government in the Negev is another example of misreading and misusing tradition. Fenster (1998, 1999) describes the limitations and social restrictions inflicted on women in the new Bedouin towns as a result of spatial development that ignores their societal and personal needs. The planning of the new towns, which took place during the 1970s and 1980s in a "top-down" process led by government-appointed Jewish planners, allowed only minor participation of the Bedouin communities and very few Bedouin women in the process. The choice of urban rather than rural settlement patterns, for example, expresses an approach that prioritizes Western measures of efficiency at the expense of the cultural needs and desires of the population (Fenster, 1998:43). Fenster's account of everyday life in the new towns shows that, regardless of better housing and improved amenities, Bedouin women have less freedom of movement.

Living in Western-type urban settlements has made them more confined to their homes, with fewer opportunities for social interaction.

Middle Eastern women's studies on the development of the modern nation-state offer varying definitions of and perspectives on modernization. But, as Hatem (1999) notes, the narratives rely on the same key concepts of modernity, development, tradition and Islam, in which the family is the primary focus. Most scholars agree that the rationalization of gender relations and roles results from a general modernization based on the state's designation of the family as the legal bearer of Islamic traditions. However, rather than offering a cogent critique, this has emphasized the desirable progressiveness of modernity, drawing on the standard linear-temporal concepts of modernity and tradition (Sa'ar, 2007).

Postcolonial and postmodernist discourse has suggested the need to view modernity not "as a panacea for past and present forms of gender inequality" (Hatem, 1999:82) and has stressed the necessity of overcoming the dichotomy between tradition and modernity, especially in terms of gender relations (Abu-Lughod, 1998). Linking women's life experiences to broader political issues enables understanding of the gendered female as embedded in inequality (Shaheed, 1999). Sa'ar (2007) emphasizes the position of Palestinian women in Israel, based on friction and contradictions between and within the different power regimes. As Sa'ar notes:

While the shared patriarchal nature of these regimes (the family, the state, and the national/ethnic communities) produces powerful experiences of omnipresent and naturalized oppression, competition among them allows women some very important latitude (Sa'ar, 2007:45).

Palestinian women in Israel are disadvantaged by their gender and by the ethnicity emphasized by the sociopolitical situation (Al-Haj, 2001b; Herzog, 2004). Their marginalization is intensified by mechanisms of control inflicted upon all Palestinians (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2001:9) and increased by the Israeli government's preservation of the traditional Palestinian societal structure for its own political purposes (Lustick, 1980; Rosenfeld, 1969). Maintained and reinforced traditional values support community elders against social transformations that undermine their authority, in ways that have severely affected women (Hasan, 2002). But studies also stress the state-enabled potential for mobilizing women, as in the case of Druze women who are now obtaining higher education (Weiner-Levy, 2006). Bedouin women are also assisted by legal restrictions on polygamous marriages, and this has diminished the husbands' authority by reducing their patriarchal control (Al-Krenawi and Graham, 1999).⁵

Our analysis of Givat Faradis explores the interplay between tradition and change as represented by two women living in a new housing development for Israeli-Palestinian citizens. Modernism has identified the residential environment as a major arena for progress and development (Balibar, 1991), in which housing—a product of public policies, economic programming, planning and design—is distinguished from the home (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Kallus, 2007; Mallett, 2004). Although the gendered concept of the home has predominated (Friedman, 2007; Gurney, 1997; Spain, 1992; Wigley, 1992), housing is also a recognized

source of gender identity (Phua and Yeoh, 1998). Focusing on the narratives of two women residents in a recent housing development intended to introduce progress into traditional society, we explore how these women experience—each in her own way—change and tradition within their families and social settings.

Givat Faradis is presented by means of planning documents and interviews with planning officials. Analysis of the architecture and the built environment enables us to trace spatial characteristics that provide an important backdrop to the focus of this paper. We present in-depth interviews with Amal and Samira, who discuss their perceptions of the neighborhood in relation to both the old town of Faradis and to Givat Eden, a similar development, built as an extension to the neighboring Jewish town of Zichron Yaacov.

We are Jewish women, professionally trained architects and planners. Initially, our interest in Givat Faradis was professional; this experiment seemed to offer a useful planning precedent. As our investigation progressed, so did our interest in the effect of the new place on the residents' lives. We do not live in Faradis or speak Arabic, but all official Israeli planning documents are in Hebrew. Palestinians living in Israel are, for the most part, bilingual, so we had no problems of communication with the residents. A local council official set up our first contacts with our interviewees. We then used a "snowball" sampling method.⁶ It is important to remember that the women spoke Hebrew, which is not their mother tongue, and the interviews were informal and often intimate. In the quotes that follow, we have translated (inaccuracies of) phrasing or grammar with little alteration, believing that it is imperative to present the ideas and discourse as they were expressed. We are aware of our position as strangers belonging to the dominant culture, and initially we could feel the distancing that other researchers have also noted (Mullings, 1999; Rose, 1997). Nevertheless, and despite class, religious and ethnic differences, our sense is that, as women, we bridged the ethno-cultural gap.

Faradis

Faradis is located on Highway 4 half-way between Tel Aviv and Haifa (Figures 1 and 2). It was established in 1889 by Bedouins of the Al-Awana tribe, on the remains of a Roman-Byzantine and a medieval settlement. Faradis was the only Palestinian settlement remaining in the area after the 1948 war, when hundreds of refugees from demolished villages in the region joined its 900 inhabitants. It officially became a local council in 1952, following the establishment of the State of Israel. However, it was only linked to Israel's electricity network in 1961 (Al-Saad, 2000; Bitan, 2004).

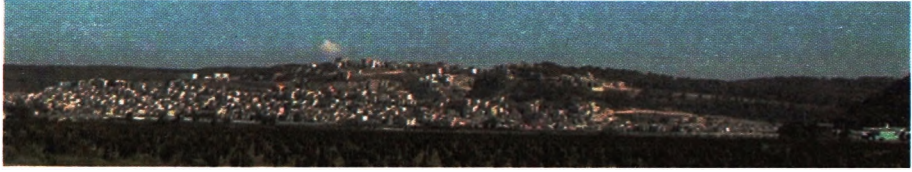


Figure 1: View of Faradis and Givat Faradis from the west (photograph: Rachel Kallus, 2008)

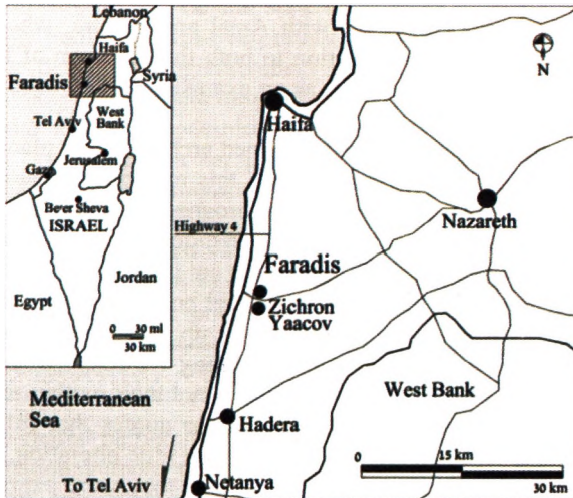


Figure 2: Location map (drawing: Iris Levin)

In the annual classification of municipal councils conducted by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, Faradis is ranked in Cluster 3 (out of 10), indicative of its low socioeconomic status. The entire population is Muslim, of which half is under the age of 18. Among its 10,300 residents, 5,200 are men and 5,100 are women. Most of the inhabitants are employed in agriculture or industry in nearby Jewish settlements. Women work mostly as domestic helpers in Jewish households or in agriculture. Sixty-six percent of the women and 44% of the men are unemployed, and the women who work earn less than half the wage of the men (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003a, 2006). According to a recent survey, women in Faradis are in a better position than other Israeli-Palestinian women, of whom only 10% are employed in a full-time position and another 8% are only partly employed. Of all Israeli-Palestinian women, 82% are unemployed, mostly due to lack of jobs around their place of residence (Bior, 2009).

The total area of Faradis is 2.732 square kilometers. The built area is only 0.778 square kilometers, less than 30% of the total. Most of the land is public, owned by the state and managed by the Israel Land Administration; only 40% is privately owned, mainly by three of the original clans. More than 70% of the residents arrived as refugees in 1948 and own no land at all. There is a severe housing shortage throughout Faradis: seven residential neighborhoods and living conditions are poor.⁷

Average household size is 5.2 (compared to 3.1 in the Jewish sector), and the very high residential density amounts to 10 units net per dunam⁸ (Al-Saad, 2000; Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003b). Commercial facilities, public services and municipal institutions are located mainly in the old center of Faradis, near the main entrance (Figure 3). Built largely before 1948, this is a closely packed agglomeration of narrow winding paths densely lined with three- or four-story structures (Figure 4).



Figure 3: Entrance to Faradis (photograph: Iris Levin, 2004)



Figure 4: View of Faradis, looking west (photograph: Rachel Kallus, 2008)

Bounded by Mount Carmel to the east and Highway 4 to the west, Faradis was unable to expand. Using the only available land on the hill at the northeastern end

necessitated a new master plan (S/BM/558). It took 17 years until the plan was approved in 1994, ironically with the assistance of special regulations authorized in the early 1990s in order to speed up planning processes and accommodate the massive immigration wave from the former Soviet Union. Years of inertia have caused frustration and despair among Faradis' residents, increasing negative attitudes towards the state and the planning authorities (Khamaisi, 1990). Official policies of land separation, including the establishment of purely Jewish settlements, restrictions on land administered by Arab municipalities, discrimination in housing subsidies and financial assistance, and lack of planning of public housing have all limited freedom of choice of housing for Israeli-Palestinians (Khamaisi, 1990; Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003; Low-Yone and Kallus, 1994; Lustick, 1980; Rabinowitz and Abu Baker, 2002). For the most part, Israeli-Palestinians have been left to solve their own housing problems, under the assumption that their private land has not been used efficiently due to their alleged preference for low density and rural building patterns. The housing shortage is also considered to be connected to lack of private transactions, deriving from social mores and political attitudes regarding land (Yiftachel, 2000). Givat Faradis links the state's current agenda for improving conditions of Israeli-Palestinians with the latter's aspirations to bettering their own living standards.

The first Palestinian Intifada (uprising) in 1988 and the Oslo Accord in 1993 revived the sense of national identity among Israeli-Palestinians (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003). The second Palestinian Intifada and the subsequent incidents in October 2000⁹ exposed ongoing discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel (Rouhana and Ghanem, 1998; Yiftachel, 1999). Many young Israeli-Palestinians could no longer tolerate such discrimination. Rabinowitz and Abu Baker (2002) distinguish this "Stand-Tall Generation" from its parents, the "Weary Generation," and its grandparents, the "Surviving Generation." This third generation of the "Arabs of 1948" did not witness the Palestinian Nakba¹⁰ first hand. They are better educated (Al-Haj, 2001a), more politically aware (Rouhana, 1989; Smooha, 1990) and prepared to fight for their rights (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003; Rabinowitz and Abu Baker, 2002; Smooha, 1992). According to Majid Al-Haj (2001b), the events of October 2000 were not a turning point in Jewish-Palestinian relations, but rather the expression of a crisis that had been building up since the peace process—which defined the Palestinians in Israel as marginal to both Israeli society and the Palestinian national movement—was initiated.

The Givat Faradis plan was created by state agencies to deal with this situation. It was affected by the optimism in the wake of the 1993 Oslo Accords and the feeling among Israeli-Palestinians that the authorities were finally prepared to address their needs. Since half of the land on which Givat Faradis is built is privately owned and the other half is owned by the state, the local council had to negotiate the plan with the landowners. A basic premise of the plan was that people in need of housing, with no private land, would receive priority in the Land Administration's raffle. The regional planning committee (<http://www.vaada-shomron.org.il>) set the whole process in motion, and the final plan, integrated into the Faradis master plan (S/391) in 1994, was officially authorized one year later.

Development and gender in Givat Faradis

Givat Faradis is built on the hill above the old town (Figure 5). It is accessed by two roads, one via the old center and the other a bypass.¹¹ At 0.541 square kilometers, it is almost the same size as the built-up area of Faradis itself (approx. 0.778 square kilometers). However, in order to maintain low density, the population of Givat Faradis is planned at less than half that of Faradis, which should help to maintain physical separation from the old town. Its public facilities and open spaces are also intended, when completed, to provide social amenities for the old town, where there are virtually no recreation areas or public facilities.



Figure 5: Givat Faradis, under construction above Faradis

(photograph: Iris Levin, 2004)

Givat Faradis was constructed on the basis of the popular semi-urban development scheme known as Build Your Own Home (BYOH). It is one of the first such schemes in an Israeli-Palestinian town. BYOH was first launched in the Jewish sector as a semi-privatized housing program in the late 1970s, as a counterpart to two decades of public multi-family apartment buildings. It supports an emerging middle-class sector and encourages suburbanization by allowing construction of privately built houses on state-owned land. The scheme has been implemented widely, largely in the Galilee and the occupied territories, thereby combining the government's agenda of social mobilization with geopolitical territorialism. Givat Eden, an extension of Zichron Yaacov on the hillside that overlooks Faradis, is a typical Jewish BYOH neighborhood. Its white houses and red roofs set in green and carefully tended streets serve as a paradigm for planners of Givat Faradis and for residents alike.

The planning of Givat Faradis demonstrates a serious attempt to adapt the BYOH scheme to the Palestinian culture. The planners were appointed by the government, like those of the Bedouin towns in the Negev (Dinero, 2000; Fenster, 1999), some of whom were Israeli-Palestinian professionals. Planning was initiated with strategic discussions between the planners and representatives of the local council, but there was no real public consultation. The plan comprises privately developed houses divided into separate units. This differs both from the self-help housing developments of the Arab sector (Meyer-Brodnitz, 1994) and from the Jewish BYOH pattern. The intention was to retain the custom of patrilocality, in which young married couples live near the husband's relations in a home provided by his family. Land is sold in Givat Faradis per unit (4–6 units per lot) instead of per lot—the standard practice in Jewish BYOH projects, where heavy land-use and density restrictions prevail. Division into units makes building costs divisible and allows owners to proceed according to needs and economic situation. Thus, a plot with four units, in one or in two buildings, are owned by family members who either share building costs or divide the costs and build individually, often employing the same architect or engineer.¹²

The layout of Givat Faradis follows the local topography (Figure 6). Streets are curvilinear, unlike the haphazard layout of the old town. Building lots are usually long and narrow, intended for two buildings per lot. Two housing types are permitted: (1) high buildings of four stories on the hilltop; and (2) terraced buildings with no more than two floors per section on the lower slope. This allows for as many homes as possible to enjoy the view. However, although the illusion is of a spread-out neighborhood, and regardless of the layout, actual density is quite high, i.e., a net built-up density of 7.5 units per dunam¹³ (Figure 6). The density and size of buildings in Givat Faradis (Figure 7) are quite different from the spread-out, detached homes of the typical Jewish suburban BYOH scheme.

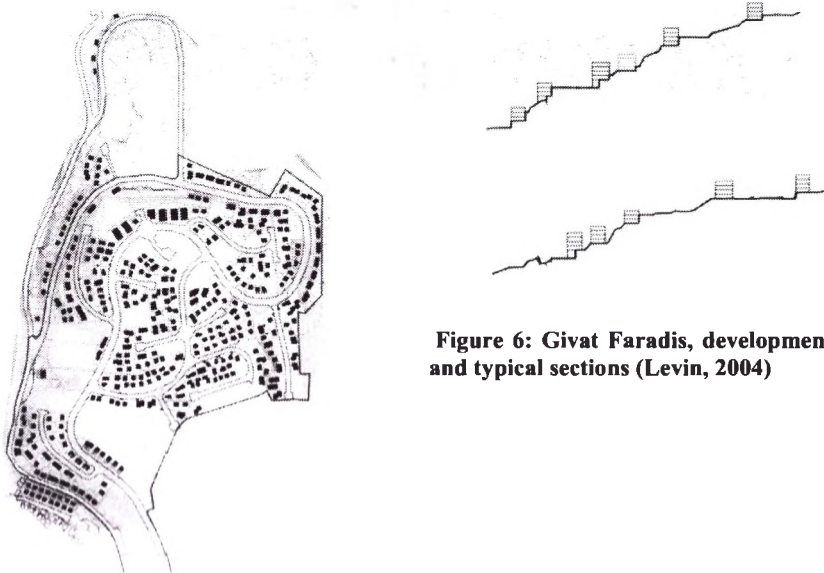


Figure 6: Givat Faradis, development plan and typical sections (Levin, 2004)



Figure 7: Typical streetscape of Givat Faradis (photograph: Iris Levin, 2007)

Despite design codes specifying building size and density, built-up volume and shape, number of stories, set-backs, roof geometry, finishing materials and even types of fences, gates, planting and outdoor fixtures, most of the buildings in Givat Faradis do not adhere closely to these guidelines. The buildings vary in shape and volume. Typically, they have a vertical element indicating a staircase and many protruding or recessed balconies. The arch is common to doors, windows, niches, balconies and fences, and many buildings have illustrations of the Dome of the Rock and/or verses from the Quran on the facades (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Building facade with Islamic motifs (photograph: Iris Levin, 2007)

Narratives of two women in Givat Faradis

Talking to women who recently moved to Givat Faradis allowed better understanding of life in the new neighborhood.¹⁴ It also allowed us to examine some of the contradictions and ambiguities concerning modernity, tradition and suburban domesticity, often seen as entrapment for women. The women were asked about their daily routines and experiences. We asked about their houses—how the lot was purchased, who designed the house, how construction was handled, as well as their opinions of the process, the results and life in the new home and neighborhood. We were often given a guided tour of the house and an explanation of its various features. We discussed what they liked and/or disliked about the house and the neighborhood, how their new environment affected their identities, and how they perceived themselves as Israeli-Palestinian women. The discussions usually took place outdoors on a balcony overlooking the view. In both cases, family members or friends were also present, so that the conversation tended to be more personal only when touring the house, when the women were alone with us. Conversations were largely unstructured, apart from a set of prepared questions.

Amal

Amal is a lawyer, practicing in her own law firm in Faradis. She is married and has a one-year-old and a four-year-old daughter. Her house, one of the first to be built in the neighborhood, is adjacent to that of her brother-in-law, in an 800-square-meter lot that has been divided in half for two houses that are similar but not identical. Amal's and her brother-in-law's houses are built on private land belonging to her husband's family. But even though the land is privately owned, construction could only commence after approval of the neighborhood plan. The houses, in an internal row, face the Mediterranean Sea (see section in Figure 6). Amal's house is a detached three-story building. The main entrance is on the second level, reached by steps from the street. The house is plastered and finished in a beige tone. It includes a kitchen and adjacent dining area, a large formal living room and a smaller family room on the entrance level; three bedrooms and an open space on the second floor; and utility rooms in the basement. According to Amal, most of the activities occur in the kitchen and the adjacent family room. She is not completely happy with the layout, and says she would have preferred the kitchen to face the view and be connected to the balcony, and the living room to face the interior and her brother-in-law's house. She says that the formal living room is used only twice a year, during the holiday season. Casual visitors either sit in the dining area, where they can talk to her while she is in the kitchen, or on the balcony.

As is customary among Palestinians, men build houses as a sign that they are ready to marry. Amal's house had thus been designed before she met her husband, so that she could only make a few alterations. She insisted, for example, on adding a guest bathroom at the entrance level, made a couple of changes in the kitchen and changed the location of the washing machine. She says that neither her husband nor the (male) architect were keen on these changes. In retrospect she feels that she should have been more involved in the design and more insistent in her demands for

changes. She believes she knows better than the architect and her husband about the day-to-day functioning of the house. Asked if she would have changed the design, she answers:

I wouldn't have used the whole lot for the building and wouldn't build such a big house. I feel that two rooms are superfluous. I learned in England that you buy a chair only when you want to sit on it and not for wiping the dust from it. I don't like unessential things.... I would have also exchanged the location of the kitchen and the family room with the formal living room, having them near the balcony facing the view. We don't sit in the formal living room, and it's a pity.

Amal is glad to be living away from her husband's parents, even though this is very unusual in Faradis.¹⁵ She sees herself as an agent of change, explaining that the distance from her in-laws protects her from being watched too closely and criticized. However, the close proximity of her house to that of her brother-in-law on a shared lot is particularly inconvenient for her. Her brother-in-law is very religious, and she finds this inhibiting. She explains: "He doesn't approach me and I don't approach him." However, she adds, "I don't have a problem [with that]; this is how it is in our society." She seems to accept the situation and is not offended, but her dissatisfaction is evident in how she describes the alterations she would have made in the design of the house to increase her privacy. For a start, she would not have placed the houses so near to each other, and she would have eliminated a window in the family room facing her brother-in-law's house. Switching the location of the often-used family room with the barely-used formal living room, she argues, would have eliminated the problem.

Amal's desire to distance herself from the older generation was already evident when she was much younger. She left her parents' home when she was in twelfth grade and moved to Haifa to live with her older sister. When she finished high school, she studied law at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and later lived for three years in the UK. When first married, she and her husband rented an apartment in Zichron Yaacov before moving to Givat Faradis, even though they paid a much higher rent than they would have paid had they lived with her husband's family in Faradis. Separation from the family gave the young couple greater control over family visits and more independence. Amal says that living in Zichron Yaacov allowed her to avoid criticism about her functioning as a mother and housewife. She says:

I'm used to living outside the village. It was very nice and comfortable [in Zichron Yaacov] with a lawn outside the house. But when our daughter was born we felt we needed more space. It wasn't the thought of being close to the parents. I prefer to be away, far away. In contrast to my sisters-in-law who are always at my parents-in-law's place, we're not there all the time. I don't like criticism and being told what to do. In our society an aunt can tell you what to do, how to raise your child. I don't like that.

Living in Zichron Yaacov thus enabled Amal to separate her nuclear family from the extended one, and to develop her own career while taking care of her children and the house. She could construct her own identity without family ties and social pressures.

Although Amal and her husband considered staying in Zichron Yaacov, buying property in a Jewish town was difficult for an Israeli-Palestinian couple. Amal mentions that being under pressure to find a bigger place after their first daughter was born, they even considered building another floor above her parents' house. But when the plan of the new neighborhood was approved and they received the permit to build their house, that was obviously preferable. "[Givat Faradis] gave people a lot of space to come back and live in Faradis," says Amal. People who previously had no other options moved to nearby Israeli-Palestinian villages or to the cities, especially to Haifa.¹⁶ This confirms the findings of other studies, i.e., that young Israeli-Palestinian women from all over the country migrate to Jerusalem, Haifa and other "mixed cities,"¹⁷ in which a larger choice is available to them (Herzog, 2005:243; Masry-Herzalla, 2008). For Amal, moving to Givat Faradis has allowed the young couple to obtain quality housing and get on with their life even though, as Amal admits, family pressures and involvement are greater now. Living in a spacious house is certainly nicer than being cramped in a small rented apartment, but Amal still misses the time in Zichron Yaacov. The new neighborhood has allowed partial separation from the *hamula* (extended family), and for that Amal is grateful. However, the plan also encourages families and relatives to share lots, pushing extended families to own and build together without leaving much space for real privacy. Thus, although *hamula* living is less conspicuous than before, the patrilocal status quo is still maintained.

The considerable independence of the women of Faradis, according to Amal, derives from the town's relative isolation from other Israeli-Palestinian towns and the fact that it is surrounded by Jewish settlements. She disapproves of the traditional Palestinian custom and approves of the influence of the Jewish settlements on the town. She explains:

Faradis [women] go out more, they interact less with people from other villages...they go to malls, to Haifa, and this interaction changes their mentality. ...Here women are more independent. They take a bus to Hadera [the closest Jewish city] on their own. In Arabe and Ar'ara [nearby Israeli-Palestinian towns] you would never find women going alone, they would always be with a son or grandson. The location [of Faradis] and the relationship with kibbutzim and moshavim [rural Jewish settlements] give them independence. Many women work in houses in Zichron [Yaacov], and their homes look European and are organized in Western style.

However, Amal also reports a growing conservatism among the women of Faradis: "I am in the minority; most women become more religious. Half of my family is religious. On a trip with my daughter's kindergarten, I was surprised that only I and three other women were not religious." Despite this conservative climate, Amal fights for her right to work in a male-dominated profession and to have a career together with being a mother and a housewife:

I don't meet many women at work because men usually take care of legal issues and many people prefer to go to a male lawyer. What makes it even harder is that many people think that taking care of my children is my sole responsibility, not my husband's... [for example] my husband's family. And that's why I preferred living in Zichron [Yaacov].

Amal's choices have always indicated a high level of autonomy. Givat Faradis allows her to live her own life in her own way and to maintain that autonomy in both the private, familial realm and the public, professional realm. Her statement that secular women like herself are in the minority now in Faradis suggests a Muslim revival. Contrary to Amal's view, this revival has been interpreted by others as a sign of change, in that strengthening their Muslim identity has given women more opportunities (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2001).

Samira

Samira is older than Amal, married, the mother of five daughters and a son. Her eldest daughter is married and lives in Faradis, and her second daughter is about to wed. Since she moved to Givat Faradis, she has worked as a domestic helper in Zichron Yaacov. Her house on the northern slope faces the hills. It is one of two houses on a 700-square-meter lot intended for four nuclear families. Every house has two units, each on a separate story with its own entrance. Samira's house has only one story at present, but there will be another level with a unit for her son, for which the external staircase is already built. The other house is owned by a nephew and a niece, and is connected to hers by a shared covered parking area. Samira's house has a large balcony in the front, approached by steps from the street. The steps are grandiose, but the house itself is modest—110 square meters on a single level. From the entrance hall one enters a kitchen to the right and a living room to the left, with a den and three bedrooms at the rear. Samira is happy with the layout, especially with the balcony, because there was no outdoor space in her previous home. When the planning process began, she notes, she asked the engineer to plan a balcony. She did not mind the house being small as long as there was a balcony.

For 23 years after her wedding, Samira lived with her husband's parents in Faradis. Her husband, the youngest son, lived with his parents as the inheritor of the family house. She, as his wife, was expected to move in with his parents, as was customary. She had no property of her own. Abou-Tabickh (2008) maintains that differential inheritance makes men the sole inheritors of land and private property. This, she argues, not only forces women to live with their husband's family, but also deprives them of their legal rights. However, as Rosenfeld (1964:29–30) explains, by leaving the inheritance in her brother's hands, a woman maintains her connection with her father's household, and this can be useful if her marriage fails. If she does take the inheritance, it becomes her husband's property—a disadvantage if she wants to get out of the marriage.

His mother's death enabled Samira's husband to sell the family house to another relative and move to Givat Faradis. Samira considers the move a major

improvement, especially when she recalls the overcrowding and tensions in the old house, where five families lived together under one roof. She notes:

The hardest thing down there [in Faradis], from which I suffered the most, was the pressure. We were all one family and interfered with one another. They wanted to help, but made things worse. It's better not to be so near. Now I go down [to Faradis] as if I come from heaven. Everybody hugs me and laughs, as if I come from the US, from a different world.

Like Amal, Samira feels she has enhanced the quality of her life by separating from her extended family. The change has improved family relations by reducing the tensions that she attributes to the crowded life and the constant interference of family members in Faradis:

There was a lot of pressure [in Faradis] and we fought a lot, especially my husband and my children, as he was under pressure. He would come home, eat, sleep and go to the café until midnight. Now he doesn't go anywhere, he doesn't feel he needs to. Friends come over. We are comfortable here, the kids are also not under pressure and don't fight.

Samira feels that the real benefit and her most important achievement since the move to Givat Faradis is that, after many years of being a housewife, she now has a job. Lately she has taken on domestic work in Zichron Yaacov. Her husband objects and sees it as a disgrace, but the job allows Samira a degree of economic independence she did not experience before. She even bought a car that not only enables her to get to work, but also to drive her children to school. Most importantly, as a working woman, she feels she can provide better economically for her children and gain their respect. She says:

I have my own money now, and I buy whatever I need and what the children want without asking my husband for money. It relieves the pressure in the house and makes them see me differently. The children help. My daughter, for example, prepares the food so that when I get back from work I can rest.

Unlike Amal, Samira does not consider herself part of the liberated "young generation." She feels she belongs to an older generation where women's rights are not taken for granted. She has to stand up to her husband and defend her rights and autonomy, especially in regard to her job. She considers her new autonomy as directly related to the move to the new neighborhood. Givat Faradis has given her new opportunities that did not exist in the old town. Thus, even though housing arrangements still maintain patrilocal residence with extended families, Givat Faradis makes room for change, enabling Samira to insist on control over her life and gain autonomy. She also notes that she has made many new friends since the move and that "the neighbors are very nice." This indeed indicates that the impact of her extended family has decreased. Sadly, Samira admits that her daughters' future will probably be similar to hers. They are getting married with no professional

education, although she has tried to convince them otherwise. Their choice indicates that, although they live in a “new world” and their mother has transformed her own life, the neighborhood does not encourage change in the traditional perception of a woman’s role. Indeed, both Samira and Amal think that, in order to create a “modern,” “Western” neighborhood like Givat Eden, greater societal and cultural changes are necessary; merely changing physical conditions is not enough. When asked if Givat Faradis would be similar to the Jewish Givat Eden, Samira responds: “No, no, there [in Givat Eden] it’s nicer. The Jews are more organized, they like lawns and greenery. Down here [in Givat Faradis], it will not be like that. Arabs don’t do that.” Amal expresses similar views when she discusses the differences between Faradis and Givat Faradis: “My husband says things will improve up here, but I say no, it’s the same mentality. Unless you educate them, nothing will change.”

Nonetheless, for both women Givat Faradis is a different world, and the change is not merely in living conditions. What Samira enjoys is what she sees as Western modernity—“like the US,” she asserts. She wants a “clean, tidy” neighborhood and, like Amal, she sees Givat Faradis as offering a higher standard of living. Separation from the old town is thus seen as an opportunity for change.

Each of them experiences change differently. Amal, a young, educated and liberated woman, seeks to preserve her achievements in her career outside Faradis, to combine family and professional life, and to advance herself and her family. For her, the move to Givat Faradis is a continuation of her attempts to separate herself from tradition, so it has not changed her life dramatically. By returning to Faradis and setting up her own practice in the town, she has used Givat Faradis as a catalyst of change that helps her mediate between her two worlds and resolves her personal identity vis-a-vis the outside world.

Samira, older and uneducated, demands financial autonomy and control over her mobility, despite her husband’s disapproval. For her, the new neighborhood goes hand in hand with change. With the move to Givat Faradis, away from her in-laws, she feels strong enough to stand up to her husband, fight for her rights and gain her freedom. The move has thus transformed her life more radically. For Samira, Givat Faradis was not only a catalyst, but a prime instigator of a new path in life that leads to successful change. Whereas Amal might have led a similar way of life elsewhere, Samira was trapped in old Faradis and could never have experienced change without moving to Givat Faradis. Thus, although change is essentially a personal journey, circumstances do count. As the stories of Amal and Samira demonstrate, an environment that promotes and supports change is experienced differently by different women, but each, in her own way, learns to take advantage of it.

Tradition and change in Givat Faradis

The wide streets and large houses of Givat Faradis offer an alternative to traditional Faradis, providing for the first time a proper infrastructure and public amenities for Israeli-Palestinian citizens. It is a modern urban development that maintains the Palestinian cultural esthetic, its hybrid architecture countermending standardization and embodying the residents’ identity and ethno-national affiliations. Although this might be interpreted as a quiet resistance to state hegemony, the women we talked to

insist that Givat Faradis helps them integrate into Israeli culture, both of them using the new planned neighborhood for their own advantage. For them, adopting the formal planning provided by the state is a form of passive resistance to their own world. Faradis symbolizes the old patriarchal Palestinian hierarchy. Givat Faradis represents progress and liberation.

Givat Faradis, however, is not a replica of a Jewish BYOH neighborhood. It is an adaptation of the BYOH scheme to the Arab sector. Although perceived by the women as “bringing Faradis closer to Zichron Yaacov” and thus “making it more ‘Jewish’,” neither of them believes that Givat Faradis will ever become another Givat Eden, but both agree that Givat Faradis has extended and opened up new opportunities for them. Both women live away from their extended families, a separation which allows them greater autonomy. Samira suffered for many years from living with her husband’s extended family according to patrilocal custom. Amal longed, even as a child, to detach herself from family ties and achieve a career, and now refuses to permit family interference. Thus, Givat Faradis has contributed significantly to the women’s independence and given them a sense of liberation.

Givat Faradis has adapted the BYOH to Palestinian sociocultural needs (or perceived needs) in accordance with traditional values. Its planners have made great efforts to modify the scheme, changing from the one-family-per-lot concept to four-families-per-lot, in order to allow extended families to live together as is customary in Palestinian society. This has preserved traditional patriarchal values, often perceived as the result of government control (Hasan, 2002; Lustick, 1980; Rosenfeld, 1969). Just as in the new Bedouin towns in the Negev (Dinero, 2000), the planning process has not involved real public input, especially from silent groups such as women or the younger generation. Nonetheless, this unique planning initiative that takes into account traditional needs can also be seen as a positive step that encourages other modes of change within Israeli-Palestinian society. Perhaps the main difference between the Bedouin towns and Givat Faradis is that the new neighborhood is connected to the old town, which helps maintain continuity between tradition and change. Also, as pointed out by Amal, Faradis has been opened to influences of nearby Jewish settlements, and its inhabitants, especially the women, have been exposed to outside influences. Thus, where the new Bedouin towns in the Negev restrict women’s movements, Givat Faradis encourages improved commuting and communication. Regardless of the criticism and frequently painful comparisons between their situation and that of the Jewish sector, Amal, Samira and all the other people we talked to have no doubts whatever about their national identity. As other researchers have noted (e.g., Rabinowitz, 2001; Sa’ar, 2007; Shafir and Peled, 2002), the residents of Givat Faradis see themselves both as Palestinians related to the Palestinians in the occupied territories¹⁸ and Israeli citizens of the State of Israel. As citizens, they feel entitled to and deserving of equal rights in all spheres of life. Although proud of their Palestinian heritage, Amal and Samira see their personal identity as divorced from the national conflict. However, living in a patriarchal society increases their dual marginalization—within the state and within their own society—and restricts their independent rights to land and housing. On the other hand, gendered and racial realities make Givat Faradis, like other places, a potential site of subversion and resistance (Herzog, 2004:53).

Givat Faradis thus reveals the tensions that are inevitable when traditional values coincide with contemporary life and with aspirations for modernity and progress. Especially for Israeli-Palestinians, this involves dilemmas about formal planning. The pros of a planned infrastructure and long-desired comfort, and the cons such as concessions of private land and zoning enforcement, exacerbate the conflict between the state and its Palestinian citizens. Givat Faradis has adopted Israeli codes of planning, but the adoption of these Jewish suburban patterns promotes the sanctity of privacy, of large, (semi-)detached homes, which is often dubious in terms of gender benefits (see England, 1991). Focusing development on the private home may push women deeper into their traditional domestic roles and reinforce separate spheres for men and women.

However, as Amal and Samira demonstrate, the new homes are arenas of nuanced, more subtle changes in gender relationships, confirming Dowling's (1998) accounts of suburban gender experiences. For these women, change is not expressed merely in their new homes and improved quality of life. It also derives from the new opportunities the neighborhood gives them. Their stories suggest that, for Palestinian women in Israel, gradual change is more effective for achieving broad societal change, while large, dramatic changes may arouse opposition and rejection. Small steps like the new neighborhood seem to be more acceptable to the surrounding community and could create a basis for further change. As in the Sudanese village of Wad al Abbas (Bernal, 1994), change can take many forms. In Givat Faradis, notwithstanding the maintenance of traditional patriarchal values, the change in women's lives offers new opportunities and extends their choices and autonomy (Abu-Lughod, 1998; Joseph and Slyomovics, 2001; Roy, 2001).

NOTES

¹ We would like to thank Amal, Samira and the people of Faradis we have spoken to, who let us into their homes and shared their thoughts and experiences with us. We would also like to thank the three anonymous referees for useful suggestions that helped us improve our paper.

² "Israeli-Palestinians" is the term used to define the Arab population (including Muslims, Christians, Druze and Bedouins) living in Israel who stayed within the borders of the state after its establishment in 1948. In Israeli discourse they are often dubbed "Arab-Israelis," but according to Rabinowitz (1993), they prefer to be called "Palestinians." We concur with Sa'ar's (2007:48–49) analysis and terminology.

³ Interviewees have been given pseudonyms.

⁴ A descent based on the male line, in which adult sons continue to live with their parents, while daughters marry out (Barakat, 1985, cited in Olmsted, 2005:55).

⁵ For a broader survey of existing literature on Palestinian women, see Sa'ar (2007:46–47).

⁶ This is part of a larger project that includes in-depth interviews with six households, involving men and women.

⁷ Based on an interview with Ahmad Al-Ghani, Welfare Department Head, Faradis Local Council, October 2002.

⁸ One dunam, an Ottoman measurement, equals 1,000 square meters.

⁹ The second Palestinian Intifada broke out in September 2000, while Givat Faradis was under construction. Residents of Faradis joined demonstrations all over the country in October 2000 and blocked Highway 4, along with other main roads and highways near Israeli-Palestinian towns.

¹⁰ Nakba, in Arabic, means “disaster” or “catastrophe,” and is used in the context of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

¹¹ The bypass, not yet open, prevents completion of construction, originally intended for 2008.

¹² The services of an architect are not mandatory for obtaining building permits for small residential structures, and many builders tend to employ an engineer to deal with structural issues. However, employing an architect has now become a status symbol.

¹³ Net built-up density in Givat Eden is 2.3 units per dunam (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003b).

¹⁴ Interviews were conducted in August 2003.

¹⁵ Amal’s wish to distance herself from her family is not unique among Israeli-Palestinian women. A study of Arab women students found that, after marriage, 54% wanted to live away from their parents, and 74% preferred to live away from their in-laws (Fogiel-Bijaoui and Bachar, 2003).

¹⁶ This is indicative of the severe housing shortage in Faradis, because negative migration is very unusual in Israeli-Palestinian society (Khamaisi, 1990).

¹⁷ Israeli cities populated by both Palestinian and Jewish residents. For further discussion of and differentiation between mixed-city types, see Rabinowitz and Monterescu (2007).

¹⁸ Sa’ar notes that, despite active connections with Palestinians living under occupation, Israeli-Palestinians do not suffer from their collective injustices. Formally belonging to the Palestinian people creates pride and a sense of otherness vis-à-vis the state, but the practical aspects of their daily lives set them apart (Sa’ar, 2007:48–49).

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