Article

Negotiating Space: The Construction of a New Spatial Identity for Palestinian Muslim Women in Israel

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Abstract: This article examines the impact of space on Muslim Palestinian women living in ethnically divided and deindustrialized cities and the roles ethnic marginalization and patriarchy play in shaping their spatial experiences. It examines how women negotiate their roles within space and establish themselves as actors therein. This study also explores the connection between mobility and space in the case of Palestinian Muslim women in Israel. It considers whether and how space and mobility are connected for this minority group. Muslim women in Israel, who were once rarely involved in spaces outside their homes, fields, and villages, have broken existing boundaries to enter new economic, social, and educational environments. However, the gendering of space for these women has been profoundly changed and challenged by a variety of factors, namely state interference, modernization, and Islamism.

Keywords: women; space; place; Palestinian Muslim; identity; mobility; Israel

1. Introduction

Little or no existing research addresses this area of discussion, reflecting the dearth of scholarship on Israeli Palestinian women in general (Daoud 2009). This paper thus aims to fill an existing void while hopefully inspiring further research on the topic. The article is based on an analysis of in-depth interviews with six Muslim women living in religiously and ethnically mixed Muslim-majority cities in Israel.[1] It analyzes women's stories related to their perception of place/space and identity. Examining women's voices enhances current research models and methodologies (Belenky et al. 1986) and highlights women's narratives, activities, concerns, and ideas, thereby enabling us to gain an understanding of what shapes their spatial identities.

The research sample includes the following women: Esheh, Amal, Zuhriyyeh, Raghda, Maha and Susan. All these women are highly educated.[2]

These women come from different localities and regions in Israel and represent different religious ideologies: three are secular, one is a member of the outlawed Islamic Movement,[3] and two view themselves as ideologically similar to the Islamic Movement but are not members. Geographically, one comes from Umm El-Fahm,[4] a predominantly Muslim city and the stronghold of the outlawed

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[1] Interviews with women in this paper were conducted by the author between January and April 2017.
[2] Esheh is a Ph.D. student and a mother of one child, in her 30s; Amal is a Kindergarten teacher and mother of five, in her late 40s; Zuhriyyeh is a project manager in her town, single, in her 50s; Raghda, is a student, single, in her 20s; Maha is an instructor, a mother of two, in her 50s; and Susan, is a lawyer and mother of two, in her 40s.
[3] In 1996, the Islamic movement in Israel split. The more pragmatic Southern Faction (IMSF) recognized the Oslo Accords and members ran for national elections as part of a coalition of other Arab parties. The Northern Faction (IMNF) on the other hand, opposed the Oslo Accords and active participation in national elections. The latest faction was outlawed by the state in 17 November 2015. On this topic see (Daoud 2016a).
[4] It is the second majority Palestinian city after Nazareth with over 52, 000 resident citizens of Israel.

Islamic MovementNorthern Faction. A second woman is from Kuf-Qare', another predominantly Muslim city in the Triangle area. One is from Nazareth, the largest Arab Palestinian city in Israel, which is a Christian-Muslim mixed city in the North,[5] and one is from Haifa,[6] a mixed city of Jewish and Arab residents (Christian, Muslim and Druze). One woman is from Tamra, an entirely Muslim city in the North, and one is from Raineh, a mixed village of Muslims and Christians in the North.

The interviews were based on open-ended questions such as: Tell me about your city; do you feel it is accommodating for women and their needs? What does your city mean to you, and would you consider moving? What does "home" mean to you? What obstacles do you face in private and public spaces? How does politics affect both spaces? Do you believe place affects attire and freedom for women? What are the physical conditions in your locality? Do you think your case represents other cases? As a minority, how does your nationality affect your space and identity?

My experience of conducting research with Palestinian women in Israel on a variety of topics over a period of more than two decades allowed me to carefully select appropriate female participants for this project. I chose women with whom I had previously worked who can speak on the topic and are familiar with terms such as "identity," "public spaces," and "private spaces." Two interviewees, Amal and Raghda, were recommended by prominent activists. The interviewees were excited about this research; however, the topic of space/place was a little new to them and complicated even to educated participants. In total, I contacted ten women, but only six were willing to participate. I would suspect that uneducated or inactive women would have some difficulty speaking on this topic. Interviews were conducted in Arabic via phone, and I translated them to English. In most cases, I had to follow up with participants for clarification and to ensure my translation was accurate. The follow-up communication occurred via email and WhatsApp (WhatsApp Inc. Mountain View, CA, USA). Having known these women for many years. I believe I was able to accurately convey the exact meaning of their sentiments.

One consideration presents itself in this analysis: can the study of a few Muslim women capture the significance of place in women's lives and the identity of the entire female Muslim population in Israel? Five out of the six women interviewed said their cases represent the cases of most women they know. As an initial study on the topic, this project offers insight into women's shifting spaces and identities. It explores how individuals' ethnic and gender identities as Palestinians and as women (religious or secular and city or village dwellers) are formed and affected by their life experiences and relationships.

Understanding Palestinian Muslim women living in a Jewish state and their relationship to space requires contextualizing their experiences within the general Israeli Palestinian population and their relationship to public space in Israel, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

2. Public Space and Palestinian Identity: The Historical-Political Context

Following the 1948 War, Palestinians[7] remaining in the newly established state of Israel became a minority dominated by the Jewish majority and alienated from public space, which was seized by the state's aggressive policies designed to control them. The Jewish state automatically excluded non-Jewish citizens with respect to nation-building, identity definition, political power, and national priorities and goals (Rabinowitz 2001, p. 66). Urban cities and centers shank or disappeared as a result of rapid expansion of Jewish settlements aimed to absorb the new immigrants. The old Palestinian metropolis was erased. Public spaces and poor infrastructure in Palestinian localities became a clear indicator of the group's marginal status, exclusion, and alienation (Rabinowitz 2001, pp. 66–67).

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[5]   A city of about 80,000 Christians and Muslim Palestinians.
[6]   Haifa is the third-largest city in Israel located on the Mediterranean, with a population of over 270,000 in 2015. About 82% of its population is Jewish, almost 14% are Palestinian Christians, and some 4% are Muslims.
[7]   Palestinians constitute about 21% of the 8.615 million citizens of Israel in 2016; among them, 84.4% are Muslim. See (CBS 2016).

Over the years, institutionalized discrimination became one of the major factors blocking the development of Arab localities in Israel. Since the establishment of the state, not even a single new Arab community has been established.[8] According to *Adalah*—The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, the severe housing crisis facing Arab citizens of Israel is a direct result of long and systematic discrimination in state zoning regulations and land distribution policy (Adala 2017). A letter sent by *Adalah* to various state authorities, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, illustrates this problem:

This discrimination has been expressed via massive state land expropriations from Arab citizens, the shrinking of jurisdictional boundaries of Arab municipalities, lack of distribution of state land for the purposes of development, budgeting earmarked for Judaization of the landscape, as well as discrimination in the state budgeting of Arab municipal authorities (Adala 2017).

With no expansion of the existing communities' jurisdictional areas, the population density in Arab localities has increased 11 times over and has significantly contributed to the housing shortage. While local authorities play an important role in the planning and development of their towns, only five Arab local authorities (out of 110) are granted the right to control local planning. Regional committees, mostly Jewish, do most of the planning for Arab towns. This system prevents Arab communities from having development plans designed to address the unique needs of their residents (Adala 2015).

Danny Rabinowitz argues that the spatial discontinuity of Palestinian citizens in Israel damaged their ability to develop a coherent identity (Rabinowitz 2001). However, Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy go one step further, arguing that the discussion of Muslim women in Israel should be put into a context of a minority that resides in separate Arab geographic and cultural spaces, a fact that allows women of this minority to maintain their unique culture (Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy 2008). Complexity of identity of Palestinians in Israel has been largely discussed in the literature about this minority. Some suggest their identity stems from four elements: citizenship (Israeli), ethnic (Arab), national (Palestinian) and religion (Muslim, Christian or Druze)[9]. Other scholars view this minority's ongoing identity dilemma as deteriorating into a crisis.

3. Beyond Location: Space as Identity

In his landmark 1979 essay "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective," the eminent geographer Yi-Fu Tuan proposed a more humanistic perspective of geography than that to which we are accustomed. Notions of both place and space are core factors in the discipline of geography. While geographic literature historically gave different definitions to any given place, scholars mostly associated it with location. However, argued Tuan, place should be explained within the broader frame of space, and it should not strictly signify location, for it conveys a very real sense of "history and meaning." In his words, then, the study of space is the examination of "a people's spatial feelings and ideas in the stream of experience" (Tuan 1979, p. 388). This experience is how we come to know the world through "feeling, perception and conception." (Tuan 1979) Others have argued that the importance of space should be examined based on human interaction and according to group experiential and social position. Further, the space we construct varies from one individual to another and cultural group to another. Moreover, spaces are "gendered" (Low 1996; Spain 1993; Nakhal 2015, p. 17). Jana Nakhal, who examined gendered space in the case of Beirut, argues that "the capitalist patriarchal system[10] we live under dictates our roles and relations to the place." Nakhal further argues that women are subjugated within "economic and social structures at home, in the street, and in

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8   This is aside from forced communities of Bedouins in the Negev area, south of Israel. More on this topic, see (Ismael 2005).
9   For further discussion on this topic, see for example (Ghanem 2001; Rouhana 1998).
10   This phrase largely refers to the assumption that the capitalist system feeds on a pre-existing system of oppression, patriarchy, and enforces women's oppression in economy and beyond. See (Comanne 2010).

cafes" and suggests that both women and men living in developing countries need places that fulfill their needs.[11]

Other areas of study, such as environmental psychology, propose that identities form in relation to environments. Place and identity are inextricably bound to one another as people identify with where they live, shape it, and are shaped by it. Examining the relationships among people and places contributes to the understanding of identity formation and the role of place in social and psychological development (Giesek et al. 2014a). Place identity is a sub-structure of a person's self-identity and consists of knowledge and feelings developed through everyday experiences of physical spaces. A sense of place identity derives from the multiple ways in which place functions to provide a sense of belonging, construct meaning, foster attachments, and mediate change.

The public or private character of space is contested politically, economically, socially, psychologically, and spatially. Since the emergence of the notion of "public" in ancient Greece, access and use of public space has always been limited and disputed. Space is always layered in the way it is perceived and regulated, as well as in the way it is physically constructed (Giesek et al. 2014b). According to architectural historian Dolores Hayden, place makes memories cohere in complex ways. People's experiences, she says, focusing on urban landscape, intertwine the sense of place and the politics of space (Hayden 2014). According to her, some identities are hidden from certain narratives of place. Geographer Don Mitchell makes a compelling argument that access to public space is a right, and this right can be examined according to people's right to inhabit that space. He suggests that our ability to occupy public space is a fundamental human right, rather than a right to property (Hayden 2014).

As for the discussion of home, theoretical approaches reveal that the meaning of "home" is rather complicated. A complex distinction has been made between the physical nature of the household and the concept of home, which encompasses interaction between place and social relationships. However, even home is not one-dimensional and is far from being ideal. Idealizing home does not reflect the diverse experiences of people and provides a false description of the meaning of home (Mallet 2004).

The following sections analyze the interviews and discuss the factors that shape Muslim women's relation to space, both public and private.

4. Shifting Space-Shifting Experiences

College education, especially in mixed cities, has increased Palestinian women's experiences, their national identities, and in some cases their feminist awareness. In some cases, these experiences pose challenges when these women go back to their closed spaces and localities; they have to abide by social norms and lose some of the freedoms they enjoyed in the big cities during their college years. Examining the case of Esheh, a young Palestinian woman living in the city of Umm el-Fahm, which is the stronghold of the outlawed radical wing of the Islamic Movement in Israel,[12] we see traces of that assertion.

In particular, the importance of space is reflected in Esheh's undergoing of the traditional move to the home of her new husband's family after marriage, whereupon her social outlook is profoundly changed although she never actually leaves Umm el-Fahm. Esheh said:

> Just recently, I started to feel the importance of place in my life. This especially happened after I got married and moved away from the center of the city, Umm el-Fahm, to live in another neighborhood far from the center. My parents' house is located in the center, and all services are available including a school, a bus, and a store. My new home has no internet connection, no paved street, and no adequate electricity. I realized that I cannot adapt to these changes. Prior to that, I had lived in Haifa for five years as a student. The people I used to deal with were students and academic professionals. The people I have to deal with

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[11]　See (Nakhal 2015, pp. 24–28).
[12]　More on the Topic see, (Daoud 2017; Rubin 2015).

> now are my mother-in-law and my husband's family and their friends. I even have to go to the hair stylist that they go to. This started to bother and affect me much. Before, I used to wonder why women in our society disappear after marriage and used to criticize this phenomenon. I am starting to understand the reason now.

Esheh's example also reinforces the idea that patriarchal values can be held just as easily by women as they are by men, giving shape to their common perception of gender roles See ([Daoud 2009](#), p. 112). Amal, from Tamra, a predominantly Muslim city in the north of Israel, expressed a very similar experience to that of Esheh:

> Women live close to the husband's family and relatives; there is no freedom, and the woman is obligated to fulfill all social duties with them. There are a lot of problems because of that. The woman does not have much freedom and choice. Many women are deprived of education and still subject to family violence. There are social centers for women, but women do not go there because of social norms and pressures.[13]

However, the meaning of place for Zahriyyeh, a Palestinian woman from Kufr Qare', a predominantly Muslim city only a few kilometers from Umm el-Fahm, involves much more than location; it carries spirit, personality, and even a "holiness."[14] In fact, it is often the case that physical, historical, national, and personal experiences come together in an emotionally charged combination in such a space. Zuhriyyeh's experiences were determined, among other factors, by her lifelong physical disability. She recalled the following:

> Unlike other kids of my age, I was not born in a hospital but at home. This is probably why I am still connected to this place and the umbilical cord hasn't fallen until this moment. When I became seven months old, I was given the wrong immunization, like all kids my age in my city. They either died or had some kind of disability. My case was the worst. The state just recently (I am now in my late 40s) acknowledged its responsibility and compensated us. However, my connection to this place is also connected to history, to my late father's story of our dislocation as Palestinians following the 1948 war. Then, all women left, and my father and other men stayed to protect the village (it was not a city yet that time). Every "Independence Day," my father used to tell us this story. It accompanied me all my life. They (the Israelis) got their independence, but at the same time, they took our homeland.

The connection to the land was another type of connection to Zuhriyyeh had with her place. She continues:

> My father was a peasant, and he loved his land and cultivated it and cherished it and his olive trees. He taught us that the land has a higher value. I lived and studied in Haifa for six years, but while I was there, I used to see my town in everything.

5. Physical Buildings and the Politics of Space

Nahkal has argued that architectural standards also matter. They "recreate gender, racial and class hierarchies, just as local cultural productions reinforce specific notions of women-as-space" ([Nakhal 2015](#), p. 18). As a result, Nakhal says, "we are left with an unchallenged reproduction of gender binaries and a reinforcement of what women are 'supposed' to be and do."[15] However, while the physical design features were the focus of many studies, there are few studies focusing on gendered space within the home ([Towsend 2000](#), p. 40). Modern architectures, for example, position

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13   Interview by Author, 30 March 2017.
14   See for example discussion of Tu Fu on the emotional meaning of space, pp. 409–11.
15   ([Nakhal 2015](#), p. 22).

the kitchen, which is defined as a woman's space, at the rear of the house, which reflects the division of front/back of the house or public/private. However, in more expensive houses, larger kitchens are located in the front of the house.[16] The design of the home thus does not give space to women, although her home is supposed to be her private space. This is illustrated in the case of Esheh, who criticized the culture of buildings and housing in her city that do not take into consideration women's needs, arguing that her case represents so many other cases in her city:

> The culture of buildings and architects are very different in the Arab communities than in Jewish or mixed towns. We build huge houses: villas. My house is 250 meters, and it is not considered above standard. In Haifa, I am ready to live in a 60-meter house. It takes half of my daily energy, about six hours, cleaning. The moment I enter my home, I see the kitchen, and I hate that. It is a reminder that this is the primary space for woman. The absurdity is that the kitchen is open to the living room, so it has to always be clean and tidy, something that is almost impossible. The social environment does not accept those who are different, and the community does not give support. Women have no control over the place. When a woman gets married, her house is already built and prepared by her husband and his family. It is not acceptable by the society that a woman says what she wants from her house or controls the way it is built. No woman I know had a say on her house.

However, Maha from Haifa, a mixed city in the North of Israel, had a different experience and has told a different story. Unlike Esheh, she had a say in choosing her married home and where to live. She also says that other women she knows moved from the village to Haifa, and they also had a say in that decision:

> I don't think you can always assume that the houses in the village are bigger, because that is not always the case. It is true that usually there are more family members there. In my case, our apartment is adequate for two people, and we have a spare room for guests and an office.

Maha admitted, though, that Arab families in Haifa with school-age children have to negotiate their location and space and make compromises. Segregation based on ethnicity is another issue she mentioned:

> Families with children do make sacrifices. Indeed the apartments are smaller, and parking is an issue. This is especially the case when the woman is a professional and the household owns two cars. We live in a mixed neighborhood, but it is one of the few mixed neighborhoods in Haifa. It used to be more mixed, but more Jews have moved out over the years and it has become mostly an Arab neighborhood. There are a lot of segregated Jewish areas in Haifa because Arabs cannot afford to buy or rent homes there and because they are far away from the Arab schools where Arabs prefer to live close to.

The discussion of space and gender brings into examination the spatial dichotomy of private/public spheres, a central consideration in gender theories. Public spaces are considered to be areas occupied by large numbers of people where business and other interactions take place. Private spaces, on the other hand, are areas that involve privacy, intimacy, comfort, a sense of freedom, and liberation. Public spaces, such as the workplace, are viewed as masculine spaces, while private spaces, such as home, are viewed as the female's domain/the domestic sphere. However, strong critiques challenged the "idealized" view of home as a refuge (Mallet 2004, p. 71). This dichotomy was also challenged by feminist theory, which argues that the personal is political. However, some feminists (Davis-Yuval 2003) have fallen into that categorization of personal vs political, associating the

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[16] (Towsend 2000, p. 44).

personal/private with the home and family, where most women are located, and the public as political.[17] In addition to the personal space that does not meet women's needs, public spaces also do not take into account women's and gender needs (Nakhal 2015, p. 17). This shortage is apparent in the case of Zuhriyyeh:

> Our "Arab" localities still lag in their basic infrastructures. For example, here there are no sidewalks. A disabled woman, like me, or a mother who wants to go for a walk with her baby in a stroller, isn't able to do so. Moreover, buildings are very close to each other, and neighborhoods are crowded. There is unbelievable daily traffic, especially in the only entrance to the city, due to state policies and lack of land allocations to public spaces. Our infrastructure suffers in all areas. No one wants to give up any meter of his private land, not out of selfishness but because we are politically trapped. Something has to change about state policies.

Moreover, this research shows that private/personal is not always a free space for women because husbands and different members of the family and extended family have varied positions, interests, and powers. Many of the challenges women face in their public spaces are a result of state policies rather than bad internal local planning.

It is the family and relations between kin rather than the tangible structure of the house that matters most.[18] In examining several cases of Palestinian Muslim women and their relationship to space, it becomes clear that the physical building can create meaning in shaping women's spaces. As Tuan has suggested, piles of bricks and stones become places because they possess life and create meaning. Others have referred to the relation between home and identity and suggested that home is an expression of the self, reflected in interior design, decorations, etc. (Mallet 2004, p. 82) This was the case for Zuhriyya, who was so bound to her house:

> My home is my space; it means so much to me. I built it the way I wanted from my own money. I am strongly attached to my family, to my aging mother, to my brothers and their kids. We are becoming more and more of an individual and consuming society; the fertility rate is decreasing, everyone gets an education and gets a job, and people live on welfare and have overstated amenities. I built a wall around me and do not let anyone interfere with my life. Recently, my brother tried to interfere and dictate something on me. I was shocked at this masculine patriarchal attempt but stood firmly against it.

Raghda, from the city of Nazareth, the largest Arab Palestinian city in Israel, expressed suffocation resulting from the crowded neighborhoods and crowded streets that affect relationships, increase tensions between family members and neighbors, and cause private/public boundaries to disappear:

> Streets are very crowded, and car jams and traffic became so suffocating. I now prefer to walk than to use a car. This traffic is not normal. It causes people stress and nervousness and sometimes leads to trouble. I live in the biggest neighborhood in Nazareth. Houses are very close to each other. It is like they are piling on top of one another. People cannot breathe. The atmosphere is uncomfortable, which causes problems with relatives who live right next door. It is suffocating, noisy, and has negative implications on all areas of our lives, especially the psychological ones.[19]

Spaces have an immense impact on women and their daily lives. Amal from Tamra, a predominantly Muslim city in the North, recalled,

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[17] (Towsend 2000, p. 40).
[18] See also (Towsend 2000, pp. 2, 40).
[19] Follow-up interview with Raghda, 25 March 2017.

My neighbor's house is so close to my balcony that I can literally enter their house. Housing and building land areas are very scarce, and there is very little freedom on where to build. Thus, men live usually above their parent's houses. My house is built above my in-laws' house, and this limits my freedom to a big extent. I have to share everything with them, even their emotions, regardless of my own mood or emotions. Moreover, because there are few houses to rent or for sale, a divorced woman may be forced to live with her kids in her divorced husband's parents' house. My friend lives above her husband and his new wife. She and her kids have no other option. Rental prices are very expensive, and at the same time, it is not accepted socially that divorced women live far from their parents or their ex-husbands' parents.

Even a large central city such as Um el-Fahm suffers as a result of state policies. While Umm el-Fahm is considered the social, cultural and economic center for residents of the Wadi Ara and Triangle regions, an area in Israel with a concentration of Arab Palestinian towns and villages with a predominantly Muslim population, it is just a periphery town. Indeed, Arab localities and their living structure in Israel have changed dramatically in recent years from small traditional villages to a unique hybrid rural-urban type called "urbanized villages." As Esheh described it in Um el-Fahm,[20]

Umm el-Fahm is a periphery; it is not what people expect to see. The neighborhoods have very poor infrastructures, and the local council suffers from a poor budget. The current mayor was a former member of the Islamic Movement who ran as an independent after the Islamic Movement decided it wouldn't run again. The state is responsible, but the local council is also responsible because it works without any planning or efficiency. Additionally, the council establishes projects in a sloppy manner. Residents are also responsible because they build driveways for their houses and use the street while doing so, causing trouble for anyone driving or even walking through the area.

One of the key questions that emerges here is: how do women challenge their spatial relationships? How do they deal with their frustration? Blunt Alison and Jillian Rose, who have also discussed public versus private space, suggested that different individuals interact and experience different spaces depending on their gender and other identities (Blunt and Rose 1994).

Gender, no doubt, plays a role here, but education, character, relationship with the male and male characters, and many other factors should be taken into account when analyzing how women behave when living in suffocating space experiences. The trap that many studies fall into when introducing gender as an aspect of research is that they treat "gender" as only concerning women. McDowell has argued that often women are "slotted-in" in order to satisfy a claim for a gendered approach. What is really required is a consideration of the relationships between and among men and women, boys and girls, in order to gain an understanding of how the home may be experienced differently according to gender (Towsend 2000, p. 40).

Esheh, for example, would not hesitate to move with her hijab and deep Islamist roots to another city like Tel-Aviv, a predominantly Jewish city. This is just to illustrate the amount of frustration and alienation Esheh experiences in her own space, location and society. Still, highly educated women like Esheh wait for the right moment to pursue their dreams. She tries to balance her husband's and society's expectations with her own plans and aspirations:

When I was single, I had a lot of freedom in my parents' house, as they valued individualism and supported me. I got married to a family with old values. Before marriage, my soon-to-be husband supported the idea of my studying for my PhD in Jerusalem, but after we got married, his mother opposed that, and I did not pursue my PhD. She was very sick, and I

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[20] For more on the urbanization of Arab communities in Israel, see (Shmueli and R 2015).

had to take care of her and take shifts with other family members every day. The husband's family in my society expects things from the woman, but they do not give her anything in return. The woman is considered their daughter in duties but not in rights. Shortly before my mother-in-law passed away, I applied for my PhD. But it is very hard, especially because I have a little kid; it takes me five hours to get to the Hebrew university in Jerusalem and come back home. It is very hard to pursue education after marriage without support. Although this is my city and these are my people, I started to feel alienated. When I sit with my female friends, we all talk about this and all have similar problems and feelings.

Similar to Esheh, Raghda also expressed her desire to move outside of Nazareth and even to a place outside the state:

Nazareth is beautiful, but it also has a lot of ugly things. Its streets are not comfortable, violence and crime has increased, there is less security, and people do not care for each other like before. There is unseen racism, and sometimes it gets out in a very ugly way (between Muslims and Christians and between different classes). It is also very hard to find a job, and if we do, salaries are very little. Under a Jewish manager in the mall, for example, a girl younger than me could get paid better. There is more appreciation. Here, girls work long hours and accept a salary below the minimum wage. If I get an opportunity to live outside, I am not going to hesitate.

Davis-Yuval identified two important points. First, in welfare states, no society can be free from state intervention, direct or indirect; second, cities or urban spaces offer more freedom and fluidity than villages or towns (Davis-Yuval 2003). Maha, no doubt, has found more freedom in Haifa:

I live in Haifa, and I consider myself a city person. I've never lived in a village. The city to me is the place that I can be relatively more anonymous and where I feel freer to be who I am. Haifa provides me with a fair amount of diversity and a fair amount of access to culture (theater, film, lectures, etc.) It is a place I feel at home because of the climate and the presence of a certain percentage of Palestinian/Arab citizens.

Despite finding more freedom and opportunities living in mixed cities, Palestinians in Israel face several challenges. Indeed, the images of the ethnic divided and deindustrialized city have been very influential in studies of conflict and critiques (Low 1996). As an ethnic minority in Israel, people in Arab cities suffer from neglect and different types of discrimination.[21] Even in mixed cities, Arabs suffer from unemployment, crowded neighborhoods, failed health systems and unequal allocation of resources in the education system (Shmueli, Deborah F. and Khamaisi R, ibid) Maha said:

I can say that my personal experience and the experiences of other women friends in Haifa point to a severe shortage in jobs for Arab women, and living in the city does not really open up doors that are closed to Arab women in Israel in general.

Maha asserted that Haifa is "still not a place that I feel that I own." She was talking about a different type of alienation:

Over time, Haifa has become physically more crowded and has attracted intolerance. In July 2014, during Israel's war against Gaza and in the midst of joint Arab-Jewish peaceful protests against the war, the protesters were violently attacked by right-wing, pro-war outsiders of the city who came loaded in buses. These attacks took place just a few minutes away from my neighborhood. However, no violators were caught or prosecuted. This event was very telling about the illusion of Haifa as a place where tolerance and diversity thrive, and that affected my sense of security.

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[21]   There are Arab 17 cities in Israel, among them 6 mixed of Arabs and Jews.

Maha expressed her impatience as the place keeps impacting her life in many ways:

> I have changed as well, as I find myself being more and more impatient as the city gets to be more crowded and the general political environment in the country becomes more aggressive toward Arabs. Only recently, in November 2016, and during the fires in Haifa,[22] the prime minister announced that this was Arab terrorism, when in fact the police continue to announce that they still do not have any evidence of that. The general atmosphere is poisoned.

Maha accused the Israeli government of causing this alienation: "The government is ultimately responsible for the intolerance and the fact that Arab citizens feel that belonging is lacking."

A space had changed over time, and nostalgia is something people talk about not only in literature, but in their daily lives:

> Everyone speaks about nostalgia, about a city that many leaders and graduates came from. My mother says the only thing in common between our city today and forty years ago is ignorance. People still value a strong person and do not dare to challenge him. She is a remarkable woman.

Mobility and the Search for New Opportunities

Mobility has been defined as "freedom for movement across physical space" (Rosen 2011). It is the process of striking out for new prospects; it indicates liberation, self-reliance, exploration, and reinvention (Rosen 2011). Mobility enhances capabilities, increases opportunities and is an important component of women's freedom (See (Hanson 2010)). Lack of reliable public transportation, limited ownership of private vehicles by women, and poor road conditions limit or deprive women of access to certain public spaces, mainly work places and other opportunities. In some cases, these conditions also increase harassment against women and make women's journeys unsafe (Mahadevia et al. 2016).

One question to be asked in this study is whether Muslim women in Israel drive their own cars and how safe it is for them to move around.

Cultural and social restraints have been given to explain the lack of Palestinian women's access to work places in Israel and the limited mobility of these women using private cars. However, cultural explanations alone ignore the impact of state policies on the economic status of large segments of Palestinians in Israel who suffer from economic difficulties and cannot afford to buy cars or who lack proper public transportation in their Arab localities. A study conducted by Kayan, a feminist organization based in Haifa, has shown that while an increasing number of Palestinian women have driver's licenses, between 37 and 44 percent cannot afford to buy a car, and 23 percent do not have their own cars because of social reasons (In (Daoud 2012)).

All the women in this research have driver's licenses and private cars except for Raghda. She commented:

> I've had my driver's license for nine years, but I do not have a car yet. I use my father's car or walk. Someone has to bear in mind the many expenses of having a car before they buy a car, yet lately, I have started thinking of buying one.

This connection is confirmed by all the women in this study. Amal commented that having a private car increases women's independence and the opportunity to participate in the workplace, and Maha, who has been driving a car for 38 years, said that "no doubt it increases women's freedom and creates opportunities." According to Esheh,

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[22] A wave of fires in Israel during November 2016 that affected various regions, mainly Haifa.

> Having a car is one of the most useful things I've ever experienced. Before I got a car, I had to use public transportation or walk to my workplace, which consumed a large portion of my time. This also made it harder to stay out in the evenings because it is not safe. No doubt having private cars increases women's freedom and mobility, especially for women who cannot do their basic errands such as going to the store or to the doctor without asking the help of others. That is especially true in our city as well as most Arab localities, where public transportation is not adequate.

While Zuhriyyeh echoes Esheh's assessment, she stresses the connection among mobility, personal freedom and time: "These three components are connected to each other." She also adds that in recent years, there has been improvement in public transportation inside her city and between her city and the Jewish main centers, which facilitates mobility for all.

Raghda said that transportation in Nazareth is not an issue, yet she elaborated on the transportation difficulty in other Arab localities, especially those that are not recognized by the state of Israel, such as Ein Houdh,[23] where buses provide service every few hours. There are no schools either, so students have to walk a long way to other localities to seek education.

Interestingly none of the women experienced sexual harassment while using public transportation. Some, however, experienced a different kind of harassment when they became drivers. "Women do not know how to drive" is a general assumption by males in her society, says Esheh:

> I was not harassed in the past when I took public transportation. Now, as a driver, I face harassment from male drivers who shout at me to move although they are the ones who are not following the rules. Lately, I have started to shout back at them and use the same phrase they use against my driving: 'Who gave you a driver's license?'

Zuhriyyeh speaks about a different type of harassment:

> Racist treatment against us [Palestinians in Israel] is becoming a phenomenon in the Israeli society today, especially after the right wing government took over. It has become more frequent that Palestinians with religious appearances are the subject of racist harassment.

Safety is another issue that was raised in the women's discussion about mobility. Women from several cities including Nazareth, Umm el-Fahm and Kufr-Qare' said their mobility is very limited at night because of the growing violence, frequent shootings and murder cases in their cities. "Our localities are not safe anymore. In the evening, it is not safe even for my kid to stand in our front yard," says Esheh.

The situation in other localities seems better. For example, Amal says that in Tamra, a predominantly Muslim city in the north part of the country, public transportation is acceptable and safety prevails in the city:

> Tamra is a small city, and recently the local authority introduced a new transportation system that eased mobility. Some roads are still not safe and lack proper lighting or sidewalks. But generally speaking, I am not afraid to walk at night. It is a safe place, and the people of my city are peaceful.

Maha commented that Haifa, too, is a city with multiple means of transportation and that there are no problems with mobility in this area. She also said that Haifa feels particularly safe although she does not usually walk late at night in the downtown area.

In sum, Palestinian women's mobility opens new spaces for women and increases women's freedom, confidence, independence, mobilization and involvement in the public space; it also provides

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23   In 2012, Israeli authorities shut the only school in this un-recognized Arab Muslim small village in Israel. Israel does not recognize more than 40 Arab localities that existed prior to the foundation of Israel and does not provide them with any basic services including electricity, water, paved roads and education. More on this topic, see (Ismael 2005).

some safety by allowing them to avoid walking at night. However, this mobility is also affected by women's status as part of a marginalized ethnic group in Israel.

6. Publicizing the Personal: Space and Islamism

To what extent is the space of Palestinian women shaped by the rise and the existence of the Islamic Movement (IM) and its dominance or lack of dominance in their cities? To what extent does the IM or nationalism affect women's dress and their private-public spheres?

Surprisingly to many, the IM in Israel, which organized legally in early 1980, heavily mobilized Muslim women, unlike the long-argued fundamentalist approaches that suggest women's limitation and confinement to their homes and roles as mothers and wives. Before the IM, there were few attempts to establish associations to absorb religious Muslim women and to incorporate them in the public life. With this involvement, the public-private dichotomy was cracked open; women in the IM became immersed in charitable, educational, religious, social, and national activities. The movement strongly advocated women's education (although it supported separation in some places) and involvement in politics (although not in high- ranking positions). Online activism in social media, mainly Facebook, and blogs opened a new space for these women to publish their ideas and feelings and to promote their agendas, opinions, and activism (Daoud 2016b, p. 21).

Nabila, an activist from the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE),[24] a fierce opponent party to the Islamic Movement, commented on the new phenomenon of Muslim women becoming active in the public sphere in Nazareth:

> Suddenly these women began to have a life outside their homes. You see them participating in all kinds of activities and meetings in the town. The hijab is not very widespread–maybe because the Islamic Movement itself is not strong here or maybe because of our closeness to the Jewish centers. Although some might think that the last factor might push people more toward religion or conservatism as a reaction to the Jewish influence, this did not happen.

Women's roles were further emphasized by the Islamic Movement's factions, in both the North and the South, especially around election times, when competition for the Arab vote is very intense. Even women in the radical faction of the movement that split in 1996 were largely mobilized.

Mobilization of women in the IM came amid accusations that the IM aims to take women backward and that it imposes the hijab on them. For women interviewed for this research, place definitely affects attire and experiences; however, traditions can play a stronger role than Islamism, as Esheh suggested:

> In Umm el-Fahm, a city where tradition is stronger than religion, the city does not encourage face covering but the hijab with light makeup. The place definitely affects attire. Most women my age wear the hijab with jeans. They prefer the Turkish style.

Zuhriyyeh made an important comparison of her town and Umm el-Fahm, both in the same geographic area and both predominantly Muslim. Her comments confirm that Muslim communities and locations are diverse and that the politics of place differ from one community to another. She said:

> Umm el-Fahm is geographically close to us, but it is oppressive toward women. Unlike women there, women in my city are a model for change and leadership. Many political and active women brought change and are deeply involved. Here, the Islamic Movement has negative and positive impacts on women and people. One example is IM's support for the poor. Women of the Islamic Movement here also participate in remarkable activism. Unlike other women's groups from other parties, they work quietly and effectively.

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[24] DFPE is an umbrella organization including several Palestinian groups with a dominant Israeli Communist party leadership.

> Still, there is a social pressure of the place that expects women, especially the married with older kids and the elderly, to veil. But I believe that the hijab and religion are not related. I do not wear a hijab but view myself as religious.

While an increased number of Muslim women wear the hijab in Israel, earlier research has suggested that this increase is not always connected to the rise of the Islamic Movement in Israel. It was a choice mainly connected to two factors: religion and nationalism (Daoud 2016b). None of the women interviewed by the author has worn the hijab by force. The case of Amal from Tamra, who admitted that she was forced to wear the hijab, portrays women's personal space as shaped and constructed by the political. Amal recalled,

> I did not want to wear the hijab. My husband forced me. He joined the Islamic Movement and it was not acceptable that a wife of an IM member goes unveiled. All my sisters are unveiled. Now, with the IM outlawed by the government, I suspect the younger female generation won't be under such pressure. My friend was pressured in a different way. She was beaten by her husband because she refused to vote for his political nominee.

However, it seems again that in mixed cities, including Jewish/Arab such as Haifa or a Christian/Muslim city such as Nazareth, women enjoy more personal space and freedom of dress. Raghda asserts that in Nazareth, a lot of freedom is given to women in the area of dress and movement:

> We go to cinemas and cafes at night, and more and more women in the past years have enjoyed entertainments in the city. We also have a lot of freedom in our dress. We do not face any issues in these matters.

Maha also spoke about the politicizing of women's personal space, not necessarily by the Islamic Movement, which is weaker in Haifa, but by the internal Palestinian political forces in the city. She points out that some Arab parties contribute to the increasing alienation and separation of women in an ethnically divided city:

> I do not see the influence of the Islamic Movement in Haifa. The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE)/Communist party is definitely weaker and has lost its influence on the city. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has a presence here, and due to NDA's influence, there is a general tone of competition regarding who is more loyal to the Palestinian heritage and who is more patriotic. NDA also feeds a sense of us (Palestinians) vs. them (Israeli Jews) and contributes to a sense of separation between Arabs and Jews in Haifa. The election of Ayman Odeh (DFPE and a resident of Haifa) to the Knesset and his lucid and inclusive rhetoric have helped ease tensions and raised a feeling of pride among the Arabs in Haifa.

While the spread of the hijab is clear, there is no evidence it affected women negatively in their communities; it did not hinder Islamist women from public activism. In fact, the opposite happened.[25] Moreover, supported by the IM male-dominated leadership, many Muslim women view fundamentalist movements as vehicles for socioeconomic advances. A member of the outlawed radical faction stated: "Similiar to other societies, our society undermines women. I am criticized for my education and work that requires me to travel. It is true there is a general support for women's work, but there are still restrictions. To me, the only framework that encourges my activities, including the political ones, is the Islamic Movement". (Daoud 2016b)

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[25] (Daoud 2016b, pp.39–41)). A similar conclusion was reached by Arar and Shapira, who noted that the hijab can enable Muslim women to break into the public sphere and to become part of society's influential circles. See, (Arar and Shapira 2016).

Not surprisingly, Muslim women are alienated from the public space outside of their communities because they wear head covers and speak Hebrew with an accent. They also suffer discrimination when seeking employment in Jewish centers.[26]

7. Conclusions

Examining several cases of Palestinian Muslim women and their relationship to their place and space, it is clear that space, gender and ethnic identity are entangled. The private/public dichotomy proves to be artificial. Personal space is shaped and constructed by multiple factors: the physical, the family/friend relationships, the political/religious/local, and the state. Political interference in the private/personal realm has jeopardized its security and privacy. Public and private are intertwined, and boundaries between them are difficult to distinguish. Further, interviews have shown that physical space and familial relationships are important factors in shaping gender spaces.

Even in what is supposed to be their private space (the home), Arab Muslim women face significant intervention from different family members. Their personal space often does not offer them refuge and comfort. The space is not in favor of these women's aspirations for more freedom to pursue their dreams of higher education, a better job, or a peaceful life. In the public arena, they are not part of the space planning, the architecture of the city, or the streets that do not meet their needs as women and mothers and disabled community members. The community offers little space for women to speak out their frustrations, their suffocation, and their preferences for the space. In larger mixed cities, encompassing different communities, cultures and ethnicities, Muslim women have a greater margin, and their space is shaped by similar and yet different problems: divided cities, marginalization as an ethnic group, and sometimes a feeling of lack of belonging (Rendell 2003).

This research has also shown that Palestinian women's mobility is connected to several issues. Owning private cars opens new spaces for women and increases women's freedom, confidence, independence, mobilization and involvement in the public space; it also provides some safety by allowing them to avoid walking at night. However, this mobility is also affected by women's status as part of a marginalized ethnic group in Israel. In Muslim majority cities, state authorities do not work to address safety problems or interfere by imposing the law against the growing violence and acquisition of arms by the citizens. This environment significantly affects women's mobility, as it causes them to be fearful of going out after the sun sets.

Daphne Spain has argued that spatial perspective points out the reciprocity between status and space (Spain 1993). This is true to some degree, but not completely. Women in this research were mostly educated; however, their impact over space was limited due to a variety of factors. Changes in economic and educational factors have not always empowered Muslim Palestinian women in Israel or led them to challenge their spatial boundaries. Living in majority Muslim cities and in mixed cities, Palestinian Muslim women face a variety of factors that limit their freedom and alienate them because of their gender, their ethnicity, or both. "Humanist findings," argued Tuan, promote self-knowledge that is essential to examine our lives. Examining the meaning of place in the case of Palestinian Muslim women and the challenges they face in their personal and public spaces are the first steps to overcome their spatial alienation and to find meaning in their lives.

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26 For obstacles facing Palestinian women in Israel face in workplaces, see (Daoud 2012).

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