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Cultural Codes and Spatial Patterns: The Ordered Organization of Palestinian Towns in Israel

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This study explores the role played by cultural codes in the development of the built environment of Palestinian towns in Israel. The paper highlights the organizing mechanism behind the evolution of spatial orders since the construction of the state, in accordance to socio-economic, political and technological changes. As the research stresses, spatial development usually occurs without the direct intervention of a formal top-down plan. Based on a morphological analysis of all 77 Palestinian Israeli towns in addition to an in-depth analysis of the towns Sakhnin, Abu-Snan and Meisar, the research defines a three ring structure that includes the core, the second inner ring (the main built fabric) and the third outer ring (the new neighborhoods). The spatial structure corresponds to three periods: before the establishment of the state, until the 1990's and since the early 2000s. This spatial timeline is reflected through different patterns of landownership: mutual clan ownership at the towns' core, a familial ownership at the second ring and a division to privately owned parcels at the third ring. This spatial pattern also shows through the different hierarchy of the street networks, the types of residential patterns and the relation between open and built spaces. The built environment in each ring is developed gradually subject to negotiations between tenants, while this dynamics facilitates the constant adaptation of the towns and the cultural codes to the changing circumstances.

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