A Tale of Three Cities – Urban Culture and Social Change in the Palestinian West Bank

Thomas Malsch[1,*], Hilke Rebenstorf [2]

[1]Institut fuer Technik und Gesellschaft, Technische Universitaet Hamburg Harburg, Hamburg, Germany
[2]Institut fuer Sozialwissenschaften, Universitaet Hildesheim, Hildesheim, Germany

*Corresponding author (Email: malsch@tu-harburg.de)

Abstract - Based on survey data of adolescents and parents from three major Palestinian cities, this article is a contribution to an ongoing debate on urban Arab culture and social change in the Middle East. Starting with a critical review of scholarly articles on the three West Bank cities of Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah, we draw on evolutionary concepts of change from below, assuming varieties of urban modernization instead of global convergence of city cultures. In adopting a comparative approach, we argue that social transformation does not follow an overall pattern of global urbanization, but is locally configured by contradictions inherent to historically grown concepts of gender relations, patriarchal control, openness for difference, democratic liberties, secularism and Islamism. Our findings should help to understand how social and cultural change unfolds along varying paths of transition between tradition and modernity and is driven by intergenerational encounters and interurban exchange.

Keywords - Palestine, Modernization, Change from Below, Intergenerational Change, Urban Culture, Democratic Culture

1. Introduction

This paper is a contribution to an ongoing debate on urban life and social change in Palestine which was instigated by sociologists from Birzeit University some years ago. Based on survey data of Palestinian households collected by the Institute of Women's Studies at Birzeit University (IWS) in 1999 and on census data of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Lisa Taraki and Rita Giacaman have published a research essay in which they submit two closely related, yet contradictory assumptions: first, that the West Bank cities of Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah may be conceived of as representing three unique social universes or paradigmatic cases of contemporary Arab urban culture; and, second, that the three cities' urban cultures could be conceptualized as successive evolutionary stages of modern urbanization (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 31). The authors are aware of the contradiction. Nevertheless, throughout their essay, they are wavering between the paradigmatic-universes and evolutionary-stages hypotheses, without resolving the problem of how to conceptualize social change.

On the following pages we will not be able to offer a straightforward solution either. What we can do, however, is to clarify the underlying problem in drawing on evolutionary concepts of social change from below and on empirical findings from a trilateral empirical survey conducted in 2000, which was originally designed at Potsdam University to ex-

plore changing values, political attitudes and democratic aspirations of Palestinian, Israeli and German juveniles, then 18 years old, and, further, to crosscheck juveniles' responses with parents' responses (Rebenstorf, 2004/2009). Returning to the Palestinian data subset of the Potsdam study more than a decade after the survey was conducted is motivated by the fact that these data allow for a recalibration of Taraki's and Giacaman's findings based on IWS and PCBS survey data collected at about the same time. While, at first glance, the Potsdam data seem to confirm the assumption of three distinctive paradigms of urban culture, an analysis from the perspective of social change from below suggests significant modifications of the two authors' tale of three cities.

As is always the case with social research, data as such do not spell out their meaning to the reader. In order to translate alternative readings of empirical findings from different sources into instructive evidence, the argument of this paper will be framed by four methodological distinctions: (1) The distinction of modernity/tradition taken as a relational device to observe how sociality is configured in terms of Ernst Bloch's "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous" (Bloch, 1991/1935); (2) the distinction of change from below, driven by local conflict dynamics of simultaneously coexisting norms and values from different epochs or social formations, and global change from above, such as powerful ideas and ideologies or political-economic transformations, impacting on local urban culture by way of exchange; (3) the distinction between democratic progress and autocratic retrogression

which has been conspicuously absent from the debate but was put on the agenda again by the Arab spring of 2011; (4) and the distinction between age cohorts or generations of adolescents and parents which enables the observation of social change by means of intergenerational transitions (Mannheim, 1952/1923).

However, two notes of caution must be given before we begin: First, none of the surveys addressed on the following pages has been specifically designed to support the research questions of this paper. And second, with few exceptions, all survey data that will be discussed here have been collected just before the outbreak of the second intifada. Thus, they reflect the 1990s, which is the period when the Palestinian Authority was established in the course of the Oslo accords, but not the disruptions from 2000 onwards, not to speak of the period after the separation of the Gaza Strip from the West Bank in 2006. Keeping these notes of caution in mind, Taraki's and Giacaman's approach and findings will be presented in the next section (section 2), followed by a discussion of critical commentaries (section 3), an intergenerational analysis of the Potsdam survey data (section 4), and a conclusion highlighting major findings (section 5).

2. Three Cities Compared

While earlier fieldwork on Palestinian society sought to explain continuity and change in terms of truncated or distorted socioeconomic transformation of traditional Palestinian peasantry into modern wage labor (Rosenfeld, 1964; Cohen, 1965; Tamari, 1981; Rothenberg, 1998) under Israeli rule, more recent work, along with a shift in Middle Eastern social anthropology from "village studies" to "urban studies" (Gilsenan, 1990), has turned to urbanity and urbanization as prime topics of research. Rather than making assumptions about general global trends of capitalist modernization, urban studies in contemporary Arab society have discovered urbanization as sources of variation and diversification of hybrid lifestyles and city cultures emerging between modernity and tradition (Geertz, 1979; Joseph, 1988; Hoodfar, 1997). In line with these studies, Lisa Taraki and Rita Giacaman want to find out how "the loss of Palestine's cosmopolitan urbanity" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 1) during and after the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948 could be regained today, despite enduring occupation and dependency.

In order to cover the entire bandwidth of West Bank urban culture, Taraki and Giacaman have selected three major cities for the purpose of a socio-historical comparison: Hebron in the south, Ramallah in the center, and Nablus in the north. These cities are conceived of as representing three distinctive "urban paradigms" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 40), shaped within specifically different contexts of local culture and regional history. Whereas, on one side, all three paradigms are seen as enriching contemporary Palestinian urbanity equally well, the city of Ramallah, on the other, is more or less tacitly applied as a yardstick to measure the development of the other two urban centers. Ramallah's urbanity is portrayed as an epitome of social heterogeneity and cosmopolitan openness, serving as a powerful attractor of a new Palestinian middle class with flourishing transnational connections. Hebron is depicted as a semi-rural town with a homogenous population, embedded in tribal traditions and kinship networks. And Nablus, as a stronghold of Palestinian nationalism, is attested an intermediary position between Hebron's traditionalism and Ramallah's modernity. Indeed, presenting Hebron and Ramallah as "polar opposites" or "antipodes on the continuum of modernity and development" (Rosenfeld, 2008: 2) and locating Nablus somewhere in the middle, are a highly suggestive assumption.

In comparing historically grown urban-rural relationships and political structures of the three cities, the authors describe how Nablus was governed by families of rural origin from the vicinities of Jebel Nablus, who moved into the city in the course of the 19th century to become urban merchants and notables, but continued to control the region's peasants through ties of patronage and clientelism (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006:10; Doumani, 1995). Along with the emergence of a dominant urban center and a class of well educated, land-owning notables controlling the region of Jebel Nablus, came a "more or less complete separation between agriculture in the villages and trade in the cities…" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 12). While the same historical pattern also holds true for Jerusalem, Hebron's historical relationships with the surrounding area of Jebel al-Khalil took a different turn. Instead of developing into a dominant urban center controlling the region just like Nablus, Hebron continued to be dominated by powerful district-lords and clan chiefs who resided outside the walls of the city in the villages of Jebel al-Khalil. As a consequence, Hebron remained, like many other West Bank towns, a "ruralized township" devoid of any modern urban life of its own (Tamari, 1983).

In contrast to Nablus and Hebron, the two largest cities in the West Bank, Ramallah's history as a Christian town was not shaped by dominant notable families or rural district lords (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 24) nor did Ramallah experience the same demographic and political continuity as the other two cities. Instead, Ramallah was swept with political discontinuities and demographic ruptures that began with a massive influx of refugees in 1948. As a consequence, Ramallah's population today consists of only 39% of non-refugee origin, compared to Nablus with 76% and Hebron of 82% non-refugees respectively (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 42). Above all, Ramallah lost its original Christian majority (today just about one third of the inhabitants are Christians) despite having received a significant proportion of urban middle-class Christian refugees from the coastal plains and towns around Jaffa. Instead of dwelling in refugee camps on the outskirts of Ramallah, most Christian refugees settled inside the town and became part and parcel of the town's original social fabric. Thus, Ramallah was able to sustain "its unique Christian cast and consequently more 'open' way of life…" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 23).

Propelled by the foundation of the first Palestinian university in 1976 in Birzeit near Ramallah, the city's "reputation for openness and tolerance became a factor for further heterogeneity" which attracted more people who wished to evade from the narrowness and social oppression (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 23) of village life and township gossip and wanted to take advantage of new job opportunities and leisure activities offered to qualified in-migrants and professionals. Last but not least, the city's open and liberal identity was decisively strengthened with the advent of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994, which was accompanied by the establishment of diplomatic representations, non-government organizations, international institutions, and a substantial number of return migrants, followed by foreign capital and investment. Accordingly, Ramallah has seen an ever growing amount of in-migration that far exceeded the amount of in-migration attracted by the other two cities (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 44) and contributed to the emergence of a unique urban ethos which is, as the authors see it, most clearly expressed "in lifestyle indicators related to consumption but also to education, employment and women's visibility in the public sphere" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 28).

Whereas public life in Nablus and even more so in Hebron has been traditionally more sex-segregated and constricted by patriarchal moral codes, Ramallah's "relatively lax and free social atmosphere" allows for "the mixing of men and women…" and has produced "a restaurant and café culture where men and women can feel comfortable in public and where alcohol can be served" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 24). Survey data indicate that Ramallah's population holds more liberal views regarding moral decency, sex segregation and gender roles compared to the other two cities: "In Hebron, 39% of respondents thought that their daughters should not work outside the home, compared to 30% for Nablus and 18% for Ramallah" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 49) (cf. Table 1). Such differences conspicuously correspond to rates of female students inscribed in post-secondary education and of women enrolled in the labor market which are far higher in Ramallah than in the other two cities (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 36). In line with these findings, women's marriage age is higher in Ramallah with only 26% of women getting married under eighteen compared to Nablus with 37% and Hebron with 51% (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 30). Accordingly, rates of single women over fifteen years in Ramallah are higher too (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 29).

Table 1. Indicators of Sex Segregation in the cities of Hebron, Nablus and Ramallah
(compiled according to Taraki and Giacaman 2006)

	Hebron	Nablus	Ramallah
Daughters should not work outside home	39%	30%	18%
Women obtaining post-secondary education	14%	15%	24%
Women enrollment in labor market	7%	13%	21%
Rate of female marriages < 18 years	51%	37%	26%
Rate of single women > 15 years	24%	29%	39%

Another reason given for Ramallah's openness compared to Nablus and Hebron is transnationalization. About half of all Palestinian households in the West Bank and Gaza are reported to have close relatives living abroad, mostly in Arab countries, but also in America and Europe (Hilal, 2006: 201). Over decades, these migrants have contributed to a massive reflux of commodities, transmittances, investments and foreign ideas. "In view of the return visits of migrants to the home country on a periodic basis for holidays, marriage, and other purposes", Taraki and Giacaman purport that "the influence of migrants on the cities themselves … may well partially explain differences in lifestyles and life pursuits" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 47). Indeed, regional distributions of out-migration (including labor migrants, student migrants, and political refugees) display strong disparities: While 78% of Hebron migrants live in Jordan, compared to 59% for Nablus and 35% for Ramallah, 50% of Ramallah migrants live in the USA and Canada, compared to only 9% for Nablus and 3% for Hebron (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 47). Therefore, it is not implausible to assume that Ramallah's transformation into a dynamic center of development, modernization, and liberalization has also been

driven by American-Palestinian emigrants and returnees (cf. Tamimi, 2008; Hammer, 2005) investing in buildings, institutions, commerce and other activities, coming back home with fresh ideas, cultural openness, and practical experience with democratic procedures and institutions. Migration has thus considerably contributed to "the development of a new middle-class ethos, increasing the 'openness' of Ramallah to the outside world, in this case the diasporas in the Americas" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 22), while Hebron and Nablus, in contrast, were far more exposed to patriarchal traditions and tribal customs that were reinforced by Palestinian labor migrants coming home from Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states.

However, the two authors' message is slightly different. In their opinion the point of reference for Ramallah's new middle class is not so much the Americas and the West but the radiance and appeal of modern Arab urban centers such as Beirut, Cairo, and Amman, whose urban middle-class lifestyle is powerfully transmitted via trans-Arab satellite television straight into Palestinian living rooms (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 48). Matching ideally with a home-grown Ramallawi spirit of liberal openness, a "hybrid" Arab urban

culture has "captured the imagination" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 25, 50) of Ramallah's middle-income strata and of intellectuals and professionals, whose "sensibilities, dispositions, life projects, and practices" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 27) are reflected in a curiously "localized cosmopolitanism" which is connected to the world outside, albeit cut off from the rest of Palestine, not least because of mobility restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 32).

3. In Search for Explanations: Political Economy, Transnational Migration, Patriarchal Authority

As noted by Maya Rosenfeld in a review article, "one cannot escape the feeling that this essay was written as a song of praise for the Ramallah-based Palestinian middle class…" (Rosenfeld, 2008: 3). Taraki and Giacaman themselves seem to have been captured by the "Ramallawi spirit" which, released from the bottle of middle class imagination, could indeed be a reason for concern with bias and prejudice. Aware of the problem of bias, the two authors refrain from ascribing the role of a trendsetter for the West Bank's future urban development to Ramallah. Rather than viewing Ramallah as a more advanced case of modern urbanization and as a model for less advanced cases like Hebron and Nablus, they prefer to speak of "three different paradigms of contemporary urban formations" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 31, 40) or distinctive "social universes" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 33) which "are not necessarily best understood in an evolutionary framework or in terms of traditionalism and modernity" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 31). But when it comes to the point of comparing survey data, the authors obviously cannot resist the temptation of viewing their cases "as representing three stages in the process of modern urbanization" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 31). Thus, they keep on wavering between two lines of interpretation without making a point of theorizing uniqueness in terms of social change.[i]

In her commentary, Rosenfeld does not explicitly address the problem of how to understand paradigmatic oppositions in terms of evolutionary social change. Instead, she is concerned with what she conceives of as the most problematic presumptions of this essay: first, that localized urban universes "allegedly breed distinct value systems" (Rosenfeld, 2008: 3) and second, that Hebron and Ramallah are to be viewed as "antipodes" of traditionalism and modernity, with Nablus somewhere in the middle. Instead of explaining urban culture in terms of unique paradigms or closed universes of local history, she suggests to view Palestinian variations in urban culture as the products of a foundational political-economic process yielding "both the exception (i.e. Ramallah) and the rule (i.e. all other urban … communities in the West Bank)" (Rosenfeld, 2008: 3): namely, the Israeli occupation as "the single most significant factor"[ii] for

Palestinian society's contemporary stagnation and arrested urbanization, which is, as Rosenfeld notes, "conspicuously absent" from the two authors' analysis (Rosenfeld, 2008: 2). However, saying that the occupation yields "both the exception and the rule" is not very helpful in answering the crucial question: How exactly is difference and variation produced? Saying that Ramallah's urban culture is just another, yet somewhat exotic instance of truncated urbanization produced by an underlying general pattern of (post)colonial political economy sounds like a powerful argument, but is not as powerful as it appears, unless we find a convincing way to demonstrate how exactly difference, variation, and exception are generated at the level of urban history within a global context.

To develop a better understanding for change from below we need to analyze the evolutionary interplay of variation, selection, and stabilization (Luhmann, 1997) by way of communication and exchange between city cultures. Hence, empirical investigations should start with the production of difference at the local level. Of course, Rosenfeld does not bluntly deny that Ramallah is different in depicting higher rates of students, qualified professionals, management employees, and educated return migrants than the other two cities (Rosenfeld, 2008: 3). And, of course, we cannot simply explain away the fact that Ramallah's openness and modernity still bear the imprints of past practices of authoritarian patriarchal traditions that are simultaneously reinforced and undermined by a regime of occupation and colonization (Rosenfeld, 2008: 2, 4). However, to gain deeper insights into social change and continuity in Palestinian urban society it is not enough to argue that largely similar socioeconomic living conditions tend to generate convergent cultural values and social norms. Instead, we suggest shifting the focus of discussion on (1) patriarchal gender relations and (2) openness for cultural difference, in drawing on Bloch's (1935/91) concept of the simultaneousness of non-simultaneous norms and values of "pre-modern" and "modern" provenience.

(1) As far as sex segregation and changing gender roles are concerned, Rosenfeld questions the two authors' argumentative strategy of maximizing differences. Her point is that the three cities and their respective hinterlands display far more similarities than differences: increasing proportions of girls enrolled in secondary school education; low proportions of women engaged in wage labor outside the home; a very low marriage age of women and a correspondingly high population growth rate; and "a very high rate of kin marriages" (Rosenfeld, 2008: 2). These socio-demographic similarities indicate how social life in general and women's life in particular are shaped by patriarchal norms, economic restrictions, education opportunities, military oppression etc. The evaluative problem is, however, that we have no clear cut criteria to confidentially say, as Rosenfeld does, why and when obvious interurban differences, for instance in women's employment and girls enrollment in post-secondary education (cf. Table 1), are "low" or "high". Of course, to demystify the

exceptional modern role attested to Ramallah by Taraki and Giacaman, we could argue, in line with Rosenfeld, that there are still 2 out of 10 parents even in Ramallah who would not want their daughters to go out for work, and that early marriage is predominant also in Ramallah with 4 out of 10 women being married away below eighteen. However, it is also true that a strong majority of Ramallah daughters, in contrast, is allowed to work outside home and get married at a more mature age, while in Hebron twice as many daughters than in Ramallah are given away in early marriage (5 out of 10) and twice as many are not allowed to work outside (4 out of 10). But how can we tell a difference that makes a difference from one that makes no difference?

While Rosenfeld's attempt to downplay significant differences is obvious, she addresses one crucial issue which, in turn, is wholly ignored by Taraki and Giacaman: cousin marriage. Given that cousin marriage is a salient indicator of patriarchal dominance and customary kinship structures, the empirical distribution of marriage patterns should confirm to the following expectation: that "traditional" Hebron displays the highest and "modern" Ramallah the lowest rate of cousin marriages, with Nablus, once again, ranging somewhere in the middle. However, this is not quite the case. While, curiously enough, the two authors do not discuss this issue, Penny Johnson's empirical analysis, published in the same book, shows that in 1995 first-cousin marriage by district is reported highest for Hebron with 30% of all marriages across all age cohorts of ever married women, followed by Nablus and Ramallah with 24% each (Johnson, 2006: 73). Interestingly, first-cousin marriage rates do neither vary by type of residence (village, town, refugee camp) nor by educational level and are impressively high even among women with post-secondary education with 21%, compared to an average rate of 28% for the Palestinian territories (Johnson, 2006: 70; cf. 30% in 2004, Assaf and Khawaja, 2009). In other words: A substantial proportion of highly qualified female professionals, epitome of Ramallah's modern middle classes, are enrolled in traditional kinship marriages and more or less bound by related patriarchal values and restrictions. In our reading, these data strikingly illustrate Bloch's simultaneity of non-simultaneous traditions and modern life styles, and the question is: Do these contradictions peacefully coexist?

Indeed, rates of first-cousin marriages together with another substantial proportion of marriages between more distant relatives from the same clan are impressive, adding up to overall rates of 57% of endogamous marriages for Nablus, 66% for Ramallah, and 87% for Hebron (Johnson, 2006: 73). These figures do certainly support Rosenfeld's view that the two authors' praise for Ramallah's exceptional modernity is misconceived, if not grossly exaggerated. This is confirmed by cross-check investigations of exogamy rates or rates of out-marriages which can be read as an indicator for weak kinship relations or decreasing patriarchal family values or, consequently, as an indicator for cultural openness. In this respect, Nablus with a much higher rate of exogamous "stranger" out-marriages appears to be culturally more open

than Ramallah with a lower rate of out-marriages, while Hebron, as expected, depicts the lowest rate (Johnson, 2006: 73). Again, these data support the general view that urban culture across different sites and locations in Palestinian society is (1) still strongly shaped by kinship marriage and related patriarchal traditions and (2) that Ramallah, including district villages and refugee camps, is not exceptionally modern or progressive, but just a normal West Bank city, (3) while Nablus, when exogamy is considered as an empirical indicator for cultural openness, appears to be the most modern or progressive case. We will have to reexamine this point in the next section.

(2) The question whether Ramallah's open cosmopolitan culture can be viewed as a model for Palestine's future urban development has also been raised by Sari Hanafi, albeit with a different theoretical stance, which is equally cutting across theoretical concepts of urban localism and globalized dependency assumptions (Hanafi, 2009). While Rosenfeld deplores what in her eyes is but an uncritical appraisal of "(post?) Modernist ethics" and a departure from "the radical orientation that characterized Palestinian social science just two decades ago" (Rosenfeld, 2008: 3), Hanafi finds that "Ramallah's culture of individualism and cosmopolitanism" is overstated (Hanafi, 2009: 98). In order to question the assumption that urban culture is produced and reproduced in a sort of closed-loop of local universes cut off from the outside world, Hanafi suggests to draw on transnationalism as a theoretical approach to understand how emergent transnational communities and migrant networks instigate social change across geographical and political borders while transcending the confines of nation-states and localized cultures. Accordingly, flows of migration should be conceived of as circular itineraries, going to and fro between locations and countries, often including more than one move, as in the Palestinian case, and therefore cannot be mechanically reduced to a putative opposition of Ramallah's occidental liaisons with the Americas and Hebron's oriental liaisons with the Arab countries.

Moreover, we should add that diversity of lifestyles and living conditions in urban neighborhoods are not necessarily conducive for the development of cosmopolitan openness for difference. Instead, when "difference" or "otherness" is not valued as an invitation but, in terms of non-simultaneous conflicts, as discomforting or threatening, the diversity of urban environments could be translated into retrogressive self-insulated local communities with rigid rules of social demarcation.[iii] Following Seidman's analysis of the Hamra quarter in Beirut, "cosmopolitanism requires selves whose boundaries are porous enough to 'let in' difference, and whose sensibilities are enriched by the challenges to the life-world that otherness presents" (Hanafi, 2009: 98, quoting from Seidman, 2009: 3). However, defining cosmopolitanism in a transnational context as "openness for difference" (Glick Schiller et al., 2011) or "cosmopolitanism from below" (Beck and Znaider, 2006) brings us back to a crucial point of patriarchal control and gender relations: openness for cross-cultural

transnational marriages (Beck-Gernsheim and Beck, 2011) beyond the confines of kin marriage and parental marriage arrangements. And again, we cannot preclude, without collecting more and different empirical data, the existence of encapsulated communities and insulated "closed" subcultures inside an "open" environment such as Ramallah city, nor can we preclude finding, at a closer look, empirical indications of openness for difference also under conditions of an allegedly "closed" environment such as in Hebron's urban culture.

To end this section, we must also touch on an issue that should be conceived of as a conceptual extension of concepts of openness and cosmopolitanism: tolerance and democracy. Given "the fact that … the student movement at Birzeit University, perhaps 'the' symbol of the 'Ramallawi spirit,' has been dominated … by factions affiliated with Islamist political parties" (Rosenfeld, 2008: 3), there are good reasons to cast doubt on the presumption that Ramallah's professionals and intellectuals, many of whom former students of Birzeit University themselves, unambiguously should stand for an open democratic culture. [iv] Instead, Ramallah's openness might turn out, at second sight, also as a culture of intolerance or entrenched conflicts between secular forces (Fatah) and Islamism (Hamas) about democratic principles such as human rights, gender equality, freedom of speech, separation of powers, the right to vote, the right of opposition, protection of minorities etc. Given that popular support for Hamas in the parliamentary elections of 2006 did not stop short at the city gates of Ramallah, but was just as strong there as in the other two cities (Rosenfeld, 2008: 2; cf. Baumgarten, 2006), Ramallah's exceptional role compared to Hebron and Nablus needs to be questioned.

4.   Findings from the Potsdam Study

In this section we draw on the Palestinian data subset from the Potsdam study (Rebenstorf, 2009) to give the comparison of gender relations, openness for difference, and political orientations a different twist. And to be right up front with political voting preferences: our Ramallah respondents' voting preferences in 2000 were not specifically susceptible to Islamist parties, nor were they basically different from preferences observed for Hebron. According to our data, more than half of our Ramallah students and parents prefer political parties with secular agendas (Fatah, Shabia, Fida, PFLP, Democracy), but only a minority prefer Islamist parties (Hamas, Jihad) (Table 2). In Hebron, support for "secular" parties is weaker, but slightly stronger for Islamist parties. And Nablus respondents are neither committed to secular nor to Islamist parties but completely detached from party politics, as it seems: abstention rates are surprisingly high in Nablus compared to Hebron and Ramallah. Hence, instead of focusing on the opposition between Hebron and Ramallah, as we did in following Taraki and Giacaman, the problem to tackle is how to understand Nablus as an "exceptional" case.

Table 2. Voting preferences of students and parents

	Ramallah		Hebron		Nablus	
	Students	Parents	Students	Parents	Students	Parents
Secular Parties	52%	52%	42%	45%	9%	5%
Islamist Parties	14%	14%	19%	21%	3%	4%
No vote at all	28%	25%	32%	27%	81%	86%

Differences between students and parents are statistically non-significant in any of the three cities. Differences between parents from Nablus compared to Hebron, from Nablus compared to Ramallah are statistically significant (p=.000) as are the difference between the students in these cities. Statistically non-significant are the differences between students as well as parents from Hebron and Ramallah.

Before going into details, we must give a short introduction into the intent and scope of the Potsdam study. Originally, the Potsdam questionnaire was designed to understand the formation of democratic political identities of young people in East Germany (Brandenburg), Israel and the West Bank. The questionnaire was designed to address cross-cultural issues of political socialization: How do young people learn to adopt political attitudes, how do they become committed to political agendas, what kind of ideas do they develop about democracy? Data for the Palestinian subsample were collected in the summer 2000 by pre-trained interviewers from Bethlehem University, who visited secondary-school students from selected schools in the West Bank at home and asked them and also one of their parents to complete one questionnaire each. Based on two samples of 573 students and 562 parents, the survey was supposed to adequately represent relevant structural characteristics of the West Bank population. However, as it turned out, the sample is not strictly representative, since female and Christian students as well as fathers are over-represented, whereas mothers as well as students from rural and peripheral regions are under-represented (PCBS 2004: 210). The study, therefore, does not allow for descriptive, representative generalizations, albeit analytical conclusions about relationships between respondents' cities of residence and respondents' opinions and orientations can be drawn.

The following comparison of the three cities is based on sub-totals of 281 students and 272 parents: 131 students (127 parents) from Hebron, 90 (87) from Nablus, 60 (58) from Ramallah. [v] In focusing on young people of about 18 years of age just before completion of their secondary school education (tawjihi) and on their parents, the Potsdam survey data allow to address change and continuity of urban Palestinian culture in a promising new way: Who else would stand for society's transition from patriarchal traditions to democratic institutions, if not young, educated, and

urban-based juveniles representing their country's future? How else could we identify indications for social change, retrogressive or progressive, if not by comparing two subsequent generations who cover a time span of twenty to thirty years? In other words: In focusing on an age cohort of juveniles who are presumably less traditional and more committed to modern lifestyles than the average population, we operate with an "in-built bias" that may tell us more about Palestinian society's future prospects than a strictly representative study covering all segments of the population equally well would do. Thus, what we would like to know from the Potsdam survey data is how they reflect similarities and differences in urban culture. In particular, we want to discuss how urban society and local culture are reflected in our respondents' views on (1) gender roles and gender equality and (2) openness for difference and otherness. In going beyond Taraki and Giacaman, we will take a closer look also at (3) democracy, nationalism, and religiosity and on issues of (4) family cohesion and intergenerational conflicts.

(1) As mentioned before, the Potsdam study was not designed to provide exactly that sort of information which would be needed to carry out a systematic comparison of urban culture in Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah. To begin with methodological restrictions, the Potsdam questionnaire does not address issues like marriage patterns and spouse selection, women's dress codes or female decency, sex segregation in urban public life, or female-male interaction on streets and places, in cafés and cinemas. Nonetheless, the Potsdam study can supply the debate on the development of Palestinian urban culture with information concerning students' and parents' views about the role of women in public political offices and on the labor market. These are highly contested fields in Arab and Middle Eastern society, and so they are in Palestinian society. Note, however, that agendas of "secular" and "religious" parties are not that different on issues of sex segregation and gender equality as they used to be in the early 1980s. Along with the revival of political Islam and the decline of secular nationalism in the past three decades, Fatah has given up much of its progressive social agenda, while Hamas, in turn, has begun to support women's political rights and rights to higher education and employment, as long as gender inequality prescribed by Sharia law and traditional decency is warranted.[vi]

This ambiguity – women's inclusion into education, employment, and politics, but their exclusion from male dominated and sex integrated domains (Rosenfeld, 2004) – is also reflected in the Palestinian data subset of the Potsdam study. Women's nomination for government posts is rejected by 4 out of 10 students and parents in Nablus and Hebron[vii] (Fig. 1). But when we come to Ramallah, the picture is almost turned upside down. In contrast to the cities of Hebron and Nablus, only 2 out of 10 respondents from Ramallah agree with the exclusion of women from government posts, but a clear majority of 6 out of 10 disagree. It is clear that these findings perfectly match with Taraki's and Giacaman's original presumption of Ramallah's exceptional modernity. What

does not exactly match, however, is the observation that Hebron is located in the middle instead of Nablus in regard to disagreement with female exclusion from government.

Ramallah's relative modernity, compared to the other two cities, is also confirmed by the statement that the father should be the family's breadwinner (Fig. 2). Ramallah respondents' support is markedly low compared to Hebron's and Nablus' support which is twice as high, similar to the previous statement on the exclusion of women from government. Interestingly, in the case of Hebron we can observe an almost perfect match between the two generations (with students slightly more liberal), while Nablus data depict a strong discrepancy between students' and parents' views on gender roles.
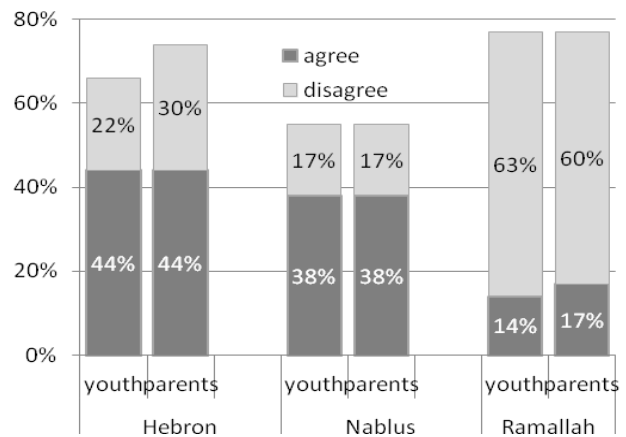
Differences between youths and parents within cities are non-significant. Differences between parents from Hebron and Ramallah are significant, as are the differences between youth from Hebron and Ramallah (p=.000).
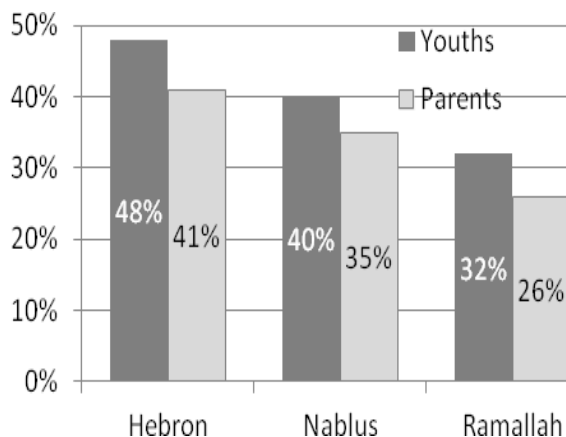
Figure 1. "Women do not belong in government"
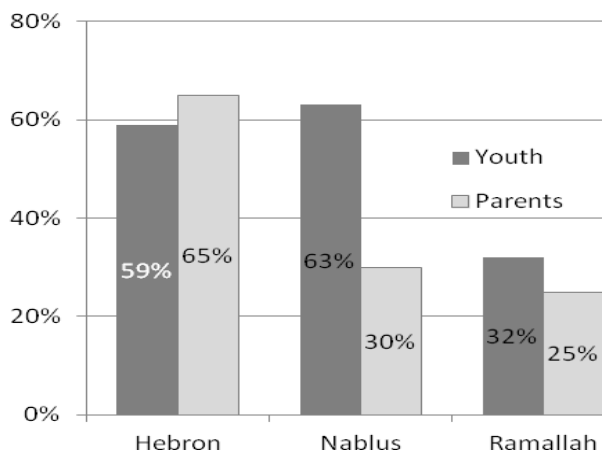
Difference are significant (p=.000) between parents and youths in Nablus, between youths from Ramallah and Nablus and Ramallah and Hebron, between parents from Hebron and Nablus and Hebron and Ramallah.

Figure 2. With children, the husband should go to work while the wife stays home and takes care of children (agreement)

But what accounts for the discrepancy? Is there an outright contradiction on moral principles of sex segregation and female decency lurking beneath these data? Or is women's

employment viewed as a matter of convenience and opportunity rather than a matter of principle? Are parents just more pragmatic than juveniles and, hence, more ready to adapt to labor market exigencies, regardless of gender restrictions? In any case, at least in Ramallah we can observe a strong support for women's employment, widely shared by both students and parents, and this observation clearly corresponds to the fact that, in our sample, mothers' work outside the home is reported to be much higher than in the other two cities: 5 out of 10 of our Ramallah mothers are reported to have an employment outside home compared to 2 out of 10 in Hebron and just 1 out of 10 in Nablus. What makes our Ramallah mothers also special is that almost two thirds of them are highly educated (tawjihi or post-secondary) compared to one third in Hebron and just one fifth in Nablus.

(2) As we have seen in the previous section, Nablus' urban culture is apparently more open in regard to exogamous marriages than the other two cities. But we have also seen that openness is a more complex issue. To explore the hypothesis of "open" Ramallah versus "closed" Hebron, in assuming a bipolar opposition between cultural modes of "openness and diversity" versus "insularity and sameness" (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 34), the Potsdam survey offers empirical data which resonate with cultural or cosmopolitan openness, as discussed in the previous section: tolerance for and acceptance of foreigners and foreign culture. In this respect, our findings support the opposition of Ramallah's openness versus Hebron's traditional culture of seclusion from strangers as well as the in-betweenness of Nablus: 5 out of 10 students in Hebron report to "feel uneasy in the company of strangers", compared to 4 out of 10 in Nablus and just 3 out of 10 in Ramallah (Fig. 3a). Similarly, parents' responses basically display the same tendency, but on a lower level than students, with Hebron scoring high, Ramallah low, and Nablus in the middle. Here, the difference between students and parents could be explained by the latter's life experience rather than indicating an intergenerational drift in attitudes or a general xenophobic trend of Palestinian society.
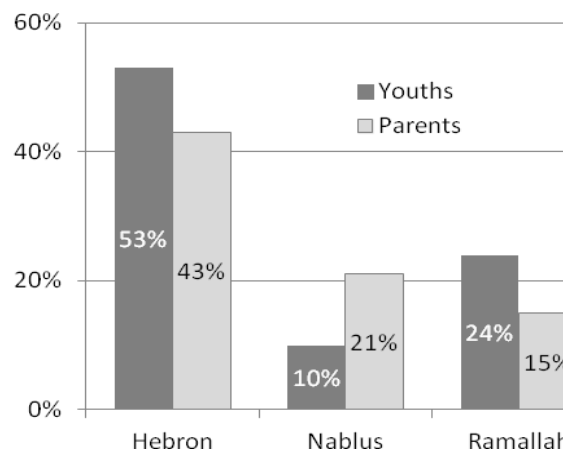

Differences between Hebron and Ramallah are significant (p=.05).

Figure 3a. I feel uneasy in the company of strangers – (values 4+5 on a 5-point scale of agreement)
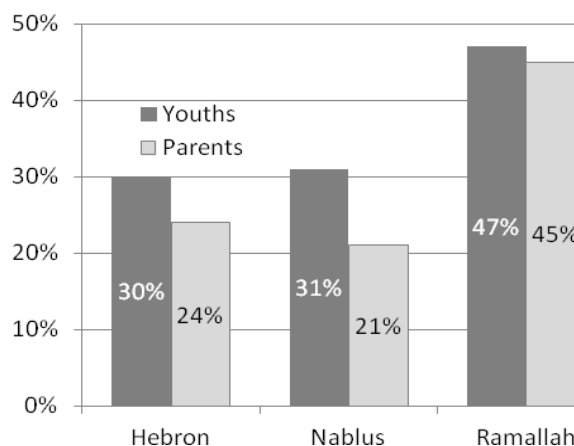
Significant difference between youths from Ramallah and Nablus; Ramallah and Hebron (p=.05) and between parents from the same cities. (p=.01)

Figure 3b. "The presence of foreigners enriches our culture"– (values 4+5 on a 5-point scale of agreement)

Significant differences between parents and youth in Nablus and Hebron (p=.05); between youths of all three cities (p=-000); between Parents from Hebron and Nablus and Hebron and Ramallah (p=.01).

Figure 3c. Foreigners who work here should eventually go home – (values 4+5 on a 5-point scale of agreement)

Ramallah's outstanding liberality is also confirmed by responses to the next two statements which cannot be explained away that easily with "age", i.e. life experience as an intervening variable that loses its impact quasi automatically when students grow older. The statement that "the presence of foreigners enriches our culture" is quite strongly supported by Ramallah respondents of both generations: almost half of them agree (or strongly agree), compared to rates of only one fifth to one third from Hebron and Nablus (Fig. 3b). However, responses to the xenophobic statement that "foreigners who work here should eventually return home" do not follow exactly the same pattern. Here, we find a particularly strong contrast between Hebron and the other two cities. Hebron displays stronger "xenophobia" with 5 out of 10 respondents supporting the statement (students 53%, parents 43%), compared to just about 2 out of 10 respondents from Nablus and

Ramallah (Fig. 3c). These findings show that Ramallah's culture is consistently more open, Hebron's culture, as expressed by our respondents' replies, is consistently less open, and Nablus appears to be "inconsistently" wavering between seclusion and openness: A neat confirmation of Taraki's and Giacaman's original hypothesis?

However, the case of Nablus is complicated and needs careful consideration. As we can see, students in Ramallah seem to be just as open to foreign culture as parents, in Hebron they appear to be more open than parents, and in Nablus the intergenerational difference is strongest. Intergenerational differences in Nablus can also be observed in regard to the statement that "foreigners should go home": Nablus students, contrary to their Hebron peers, are definitely less "xenophobic" than parents, and even less so than Ramallah students. Nablus students are, in other words, consistently more open than parents, and the question is: Do these findings indicate that urban culture in Nablus is about to experience an intergenerational transition towards more openness and diversity of lifestyles? Given that openness/xenophobia cannot be satisfactorily covered by two or three items, and that other significant indicators for openness such as exogamous marriage preferences were not investigated, we cannot give a plain answer, but shall return to the question below.

Table 3. Democratic Principles – Agreement Rates of Youths and Parents compared
(Values 5+6 on a 6-point-scale of agreement)

"Everyone should have the right to stand up for his/her own opinion, even when the majority is of different opinion."			
	Nablus	Hebron	Ramallah
Youths	12%	79%	93%
Parents	3%	75%	74%
Statistically significant are differences between youths and parents within cities, between parents and between youth across the cities, except the difference between parents from Hebron and Ramallah			
"Even if someone is right in a dispute, he/she should look for a compromise."			
	Nablus	Hebron	Ramallah
Youths	4%	61%	59%
Parents	6%	50%	48%
Statistically significant are differences between parents and youths in Hebron (p=.05), between youths from Nablus and Hebron and Nablus and Ramallah as are for the parents from these cities (p=-000).			
"In principle, every democratic party should have the chance to run the government"			
	Nablus	Hebron	Ramallah
Youths	9%	28%	45%
Parents	6%	36%	40%
Statistically significant are differences between youths of all three cities (p=.000/.01), and between parents from Nablus and Hebron and Nablus and Ramallah (p=-000). Differences between youths and parents are not.			
"A living democracy is inconceivable without a political opposition."			
Youths	6%	22%	34%
Parents	8%	28%	36%
Statistically significant are differences between youths from Nablus and Hebron and Nablus and Ramallah as are for the parents from these cities (p=-000). Differences between youths and parents are not statistically significant as are differences between Hebron and Ramallah.			

(3) After having discussed gender roles and openness for difference, we now turn to political orientations and democratic values. As noted above, political parties in our context are of interest only as representatives of alternative images for modeling Palestinian society's future: a society with human rights and democratic institutions limited by religious prescriptions and patriarchal control, or one with religion and patriarchy limited by individual rights and democratic institutions? The question, then, is how images of society held by respondents are underpinned by and related to political orientations, democratic values, and religious convictions. Can we expect that Ramallah's students and parents, who are living in a somehow more open environment, will also tend to prefer, and more so than their peers in Hebron and Nablus, democratic and secular principles of social and political organization? Do we find support for the view that

Ramallah's "free and relaxed atmosphere", beyond fostering liberal views on gender equality and openness for difference in the social realm, is also more conducive for democratic orientations in the political realm? Or is Rosenfeld's "null-hypothesis" correct that cultural and political consciousness in Ramallah is not much different from the other two cities?

To answer these questions, let us first discuss responses concerning some democratic principles (Table 3). The "right to one's own opinion" is broadly supported by 3 out of 4 respondents from Hebron (values 5+6 on a 6-point scale) and Ramallah, but receives amazingly little support in Nablus where we have a massive evasion into neutral categories of abstention instead (students 79%, parents 90% value 3+4 on a 6-point scale). While students and parents in Hebron display almost identical scores, students in Ramallah appear to be more liberal than parents. Looking at the "need for compromise" we can observe largely similar findings. Again we find majorities agreeing with the need for compromise in Hebron and Ramallah, with students scoring higher than parents in both cities. And once again, support from Nablus is very poor indeed, going together with high neutrality rates (81%, 82%).

Looking beyond the three cities in question for a moment, the "need for compromise" is most strongly supported in the rural region of South Hebron (students 78%, parents 56%), far stronger than in Hebron city or Ramallah, although social life south of Hebron is far more traditionally embedded and less experienced with democratic standards. Hence, we are faced with the paradox that the West Bank's "deep south" appears to be, at least in this respect, more democratic than Ramallah's modern urban culture. To resolve this paradox, note that Jebel al-Khalil has always been strongly pervaded not so much by modern party politics but by tribal customary law and clan politics whose function is to sustain a balanced coexistence between rivaling tribal confederations and kinship factions by way of primordial procedures of sulh peacemaking (Qubaja, 2012), while Ramallah is perhaps more influenced by concepts of basic individual human rights or of legal democratic struggle for power tamed by checks-and-balances between executive, legislative, and judicative institutions. The difference should not be exaggerated but must be kept in mind when we now come to two more principles of modern democracy touching on the regular interplay of government and opposition.[viii]

While the "right of one's own opinion" and the "need for compromise", as shown above, are widely shared across generations and cities (with the exception of Nablus), support for the statements that "all parties should have an equal chance" and that "democracy is unthinkable without political opposition" is much weaker. The view that "every party must have a chance" is shared by 4 out of 10 respondents in Ramallah, 3 out of 10 in Hebron, but less than 1 out of 10 in Nablus (9%, 6%). And the "need for political opposition", another crucial benchmark for a living democracy, is still supported by more than one third in Ramallah, one quarter in Hebron, but less than one tenths in Nablus. These findings show that (1)

democratic orientations are relatively strong in Ramallah, less so in Hebron, and least in Nablus; (2) more students than parents in Ramallah and Nablus agree with equal chances for parties, but more parents than students in both cities agree with the need for opposition; (3) Hebron students consistently stronger than parents agree with both principles, indicating a possible shift, not to speak of a potential intergenerational rift; (4) and Nablus respondents, once again, massively abstain from making a point of either supporting or rejecting the demands implied in these statements and evade into neutral or detached answer categories instead (chances: 79%, 88%; opposition: 75%, 84%).

Nablus respondents, who consistently convey an image of non-commitment or detachment from party politics and democracy, subscribe to amazingly stark commitments when it comes to nationalism and religiosity. An overwhelming majority of Nablus respondents, in living up to their city's expectations as an historical stronghold of Arab and Palestinian nationalism, supports the idea of Arab nationalism, whereas nationalism in Ramallah and Hebron is by far less prominent or hegemonic (Fig. 4).
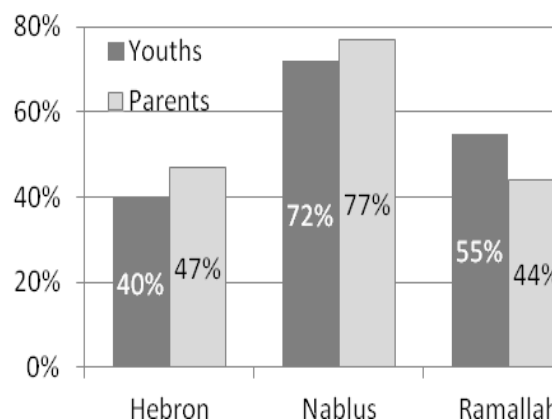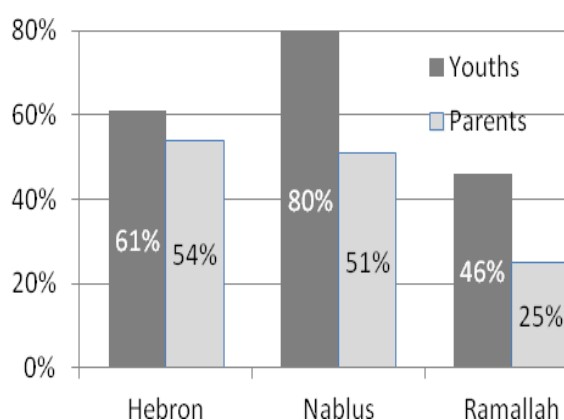

Differences between youths and parents are non-significant. Differences between youths from all three cities are significant (p=.000 to p=.05) as are the differences between parents from Nablus and Hebron and Nablus and Ramallah (p=.000)

Figure 4. "How much are you in favor of Arab Nationalism?" (values 4+5 on a 5-point scale)

While these data do not display a statistically significant intergenerational change, despite seemingly having declined in Hebron and increased in Ramallah, it is clear that nationalism has largely sustained its historically vested hegemonic dominance in Nablus, comparing parents and youths. Hence, the crucial question is: What happened to "old" secular Arab nationalism, the formative ideology of parents born around 1960, with the rise of "new" political Islamism, the formative ideology of Palestinian adolescents born in 1982?

Interestingly, our findings suggest that religiosity and nationalism are altogether not that contradictory as one might assume, when reviewing current ideological debates. In a perspective of social change we can see that parents' religiosity is equally strong in Hebron and Nablus, but much

lower in Ramallah, just as expected (Fig. 5). Similarly, students' religiosity is lowest in Ramallah, medium in Hebron, and highest in Nablus. As far as intergenerational change is concerned, we can observe an intergenerational increase of religiosity, quite in line with Rosenfeld's earlier suggestion, in all three cities. To summarize, two findings are particularly remarkable: (1) Ramallah students, on one hand, have produced "non-simultaneous" tensions in being more religious but also, although insignificantly, more nationalist than parents, while, on the other hand, they are more liberal and democratic; (2) and Nablus, more so than the other two cities, seems to be characterized by a specific intergenerational divide between parents' old secular nationalism, fettered with moderate religiosity, and students' new religious nationalism powered with political Islam.[ix]
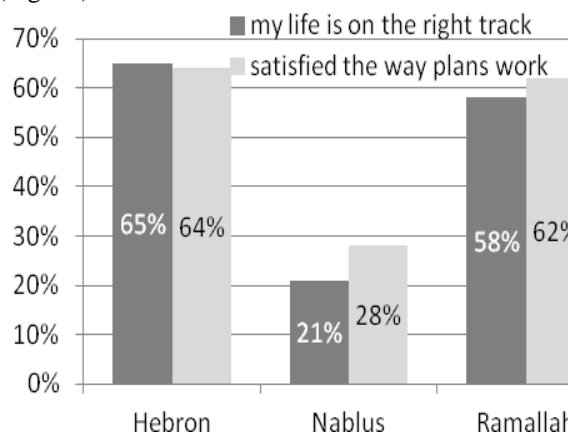

All differences are statistically significant, except the difference between parents from Hebron and Nablus. (p=.000 for parents Ramallah – Hebron, Ramallah – Nablus, youths Nablus – Ramallah, parents and youths in Nablus, p =.01 for youths Nablus – Hebron, p=.05 other differences)

Figure 5. "How do you see yourself in religion?" (youths: values 3+4 on 4-point scale, parents: value 3 on 4-point scale)

(4) Gradually we can see a city profile of Nablus emerging from the Potsdam survey data, which is singular not so much in regard to values of gender equality and cultural openness, but because of an exceptionally low commitment to principles and procedures of political democracy combined with an exceptionally stark commitment to nationalist and religious convictions. To understand and explain the contradictions of Nablus' singularity, we want to draw on certain symptoms of anomie (Durkheim) at the family level found in our Nablus data subset. These data apparently support what could be called the hypothesis of Nablusian anomie (Rebenstorf, 2010). In regard to life satisfaction and future expectations, Nablus students appear to be far more pessimistic than their peers from Hebron and Ramallah. While only about one quarter of students from Nablus agrees that "my life is on the right track" and that "I am satisfied with the way my plans work out" (Fig. 6a), more than half from our Hebron and Ramallah subsamples support these statements. In line with such pessimism, an overwhelming majority of students from both Hebron and Ramallah, but just a tiny

minority from Nablus subscribe to modern values of individualism in emphasizing the importance to "achieve something in one's life" or to "develop one's own abilities" (Fig. 6b).

Statistically significant are the differences between students from Nablus and Hebron (p=.000) and from Nablus and Ramallah (p=.000).

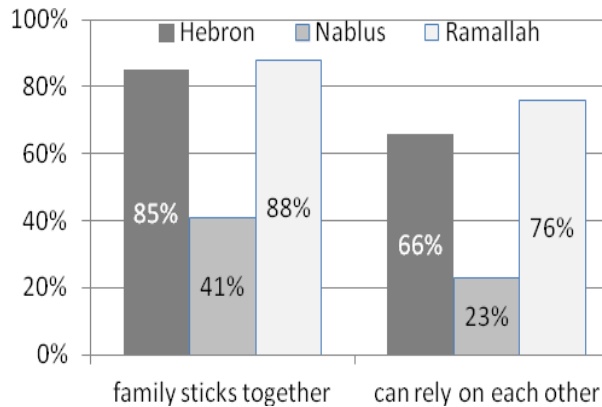**Figure 6a.** Students' Life Satisfaction (values 4+5 on a 5-point scale of agreement)
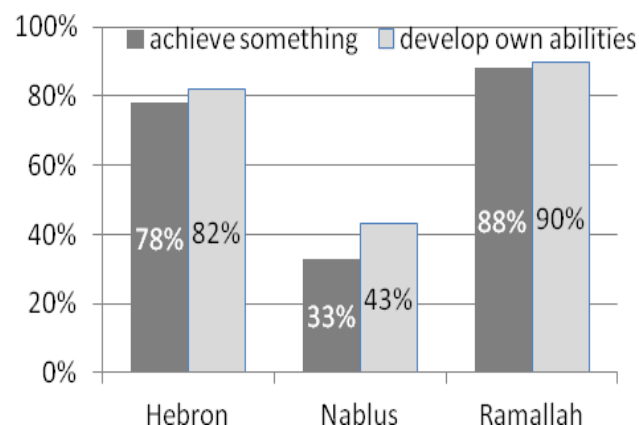
Statistically significant are the differences between students from Nablus and Hebron (p=.000) and from Nablus and Ramallah (p=.000).

Figure 6b. Students' individual aims in life (values 4+5 on a 5-point scale of importance)

Remains the question: Why looks life so much brighter for students in Hebron and Ramallah and why so gloomy in Nablus? One of the reasons for the "Nablus blues" could be that family cohesion is definitely perceived to be weaker by Nablus students than by their peers from the other two cities. The Potsdam data reveal that twice as many secondary-school students from Hebron and Ramallah than from Nablus believe that "Whatever happens, my family sticks together" (Fig. 7a). Similarly, 3 or 4 times as many students from Hebron and Ramallah, compared to Nablus, agree with the statement "In our family one can rely on each other". That Nablus students do not feel as safely embedded within supportive family networks as Hebron and Ramallah students, is mirrored also by the comparatively lower rates of Nablus parents having an

eye on their children in responding that "my child can count on my help when she/he has a problem" and that "I know my child's friends" (Fig. 7b).

Statistically significant are the differences between students from Nablus and Hebron and Nablus and Ramallah (p=.000)

Figure 7a. Family Cohesion – Students' Perceptions (values 4+5 on a 5-point scale of agreement)
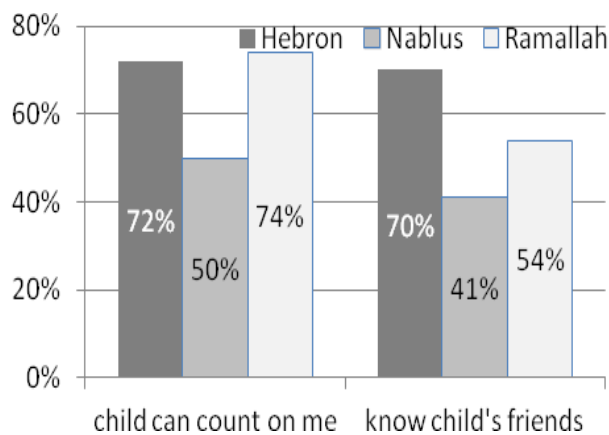
Statistically significant are the differences between parents from Nablus and Hebron with respect to both statements (p=.01), between parents from Nablus and Ramallah regarding "child can count on me" (p=.01) and between parents from Hebron and Ramallah regarding "know child's friends (p=.05)

**Figure 7b.** Family Cohesion – Parents' Statements (values 4+5 on a 5-point scale of agreement)

Reviewing issues of intergenerational conflict depicts quite similar results. What makes Nablus students conspicuously different from their peers in Hebron and Ramallah is that the latter two cities' students present themselves as the obedient children of their parents who voluntarily comply with their elders' prerogatives, whereas the former report to have frequent arguments with their parents about various issues concerning the expression of personal independence and individuality: more than half of our Nablus students report to have conflicts with parents about style of clothes, friends, and private plans compared to just a quarter from Ramallah and less than one fifths from Hebron (Fig. 8a).
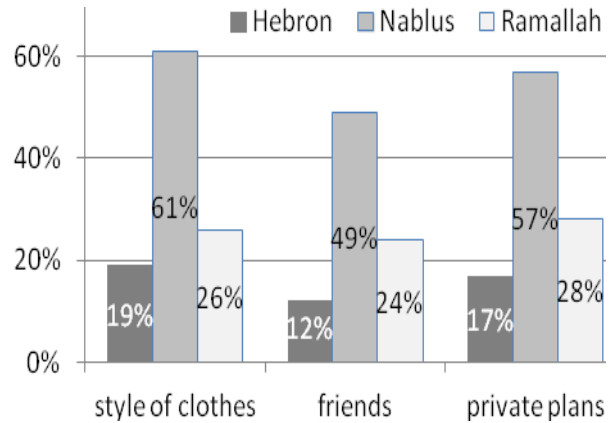
Statistically significant are all differences between Nablus and the other two cities (p=.01) and between Hebron and Ramallah with respect to "friends" and "private plans" (p=.05)

Figure 8a. Conflicts at home - Students' Perceptions (value 4+5 on a 5-point scale of frequency)

The contrast of these findings to what Nablus parents have to say about their style of education (Fig. 8b), which they self-characterize as relatively permissive, is more than drastic. Nablus parents present themselves just as liberal as Ramallah parents with respect to granting their children freedom and even more liberal than Ramallah parents in accepting that "my child behaves differently from what I would expect". However, these data also reveal that other side of alleged Nablusian permissiveness is parental neglect: almost twice as many Nablus parents, compared to the other two cities, do not "consider my child's opinion" on important decisions.
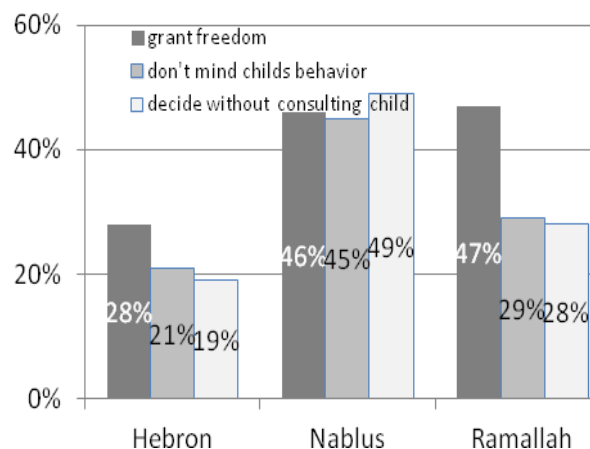
Significant are differences between Hebron and Nablus (p=.01), Hebron and Ramallah in regard to "grant freedom" (p=.01), Nablus and Ramallah with respect to "don't mind child's behavior" and "decide without …" (p=.05)

Figure 8b. Parenting Style – Parents' Statements (values 4+5 on a 5-point scale of agreement)

In summarizing these findings, we can identify three distinctive patterns of urban intergenerational relations: (1) intergenerational relations of Hebron combine high protection with high control[x] and low conflict intensity; (2) Ramallah,

similar to Hebron, depicts high levels of parental protectiveness, but in combination with less control and slightly more conflicts; (3) Nablus' intergenerational relations depict low protection of children combined with low levels of control and high conflict intensity: Is this the stuff Nablusian anomie is made of? As it seems, the price of anomie Nablus secondary-school students, specifically adolescent young women[xi], have to pay for this kind of disembedded freedom, is high: a disturbing loss of family cohesion, an irritating dissonance between parents' alleged permissiveness and students' experience of control conflicts, and a bewildering exclusion from parental protection and loving care.

5.   Conclusion

To conclude this paper, let us return to the initial question: Is it correct to conceive of Hebron's and Ramallah's urban cultures as antipodes of traditionalism and modernism with Nablus somewhere in the middle? According to our findings the answer is "no". What we can observe, instead, are four distinctive pairs of opposition: (1) Nablus' religious authoritarianism (non-liberal, non-democratic, non-secular) versus Ramallah's moderate secular liberalism (strong democratic values, modern individualism, achievement); (2) Hebron's stranger-excluding tribal localism paired with relatively weak nationalism versus Nablus' strong nationalism, paradoxically fused with (cosmopolitan?) openness for difference; (3) Hebron's tribal kinship structures, based on unquestioned norms of patriarchal control and protection, versus high exogamy rates in Nablus with distorted families and disturbing intergenerational conflicts; (4) and, last but not least, Hebron's and Nablus' strong segregation of sexes and patriarchal gender roles versus Ramallah's more liberal gender relations with working mothers as an accepted matter of course.

The next question is: Do these oppositions stand for different dimensions of traditional versus modern traits of society, and, if so, do they support the view that the three cities display significant differences in terms of evolutionary stages of modern urbanization? The analysis of the Potsdam survey data has shown that Ramallah's city profile of secular liberalism, democratic values, modern individualism, and gender equality is definitely more modern or progressive than Hebron's traditional profile of patriarchal authority, strong sex segregation, and stranger-excluding localism, if not tribalism. However, gender equality and secular liberalism, even in Ramallah, cannot be taken at occidental face value since they do not have the same, uncontested meaning in Palestinian society as, for instance, in protestant European societies. Moreover, Ramallah's traditional family values of patriarchal control and protection are probably not that different from Hebron's, while Hebron's tribal traditionalism, on the other hand, is charged with a significant load of modern individualism (achievement, personal abilities, right to own opinion). And Nablus' authoritarian Islamism, nourished with

neo-traditional religiosity, is rife with paradox and does not easily fit into the modern/traditional divide: ("cosmopolitan") openness for difference versus strong nationalism, shattered family values producing sharp intergenerational conflicts and a deep longing to restore the very patriarchal values that have been lost beforehand.

The fact that Nablus, instead of being located somewhere in the middle, depicts a singular city profile of its own particular brand of modern religious authoritarianism, is obvious. But singularity does not preclude, in our opinion, an evolutionary interpretation of the empirical differences. To pursue an evolutionary interpretation of urban culture, let us consider varieties of modernization (by loose analogy to "varieties of capitalism", Hall & Siskice, 2001) rather than a general global trajectory, and let us further assume that each of our three city cultures is driven by specific local configurations of "non-simultaneous" contradictions generating distinctive paths of social transition. Hence, the question is: What are these contradictions like and how are they translated into and mediated by social change from below? The city of Nablus is an obvious case to analyze and reconstruct social change in evolutionary terms (variation, selection, stabilization) at the local level. Indeed, from Nablus we can learn how traditional family values are practically deconstructed, how anomic freedom and risky new lifestyles are released from shattered traditions (variation), how distorted families with rising divorce rates[xii], suffering from disillusionment and disorientation, turn against personal freedom and democratic values (selection), in an attempt to restore past practices of patriarchal authority by way of submitting to a modern Islamic moral order (stabilization) in a retrogressive effort to invoke a glorious past.

Hebron and Ramallah are less obvious cases, though. In contrast to Nablus, Hebron's contradictions between traditionalism and modernization have so far remained largely latent. As it seems, individualism and the quest for education (variation: achievement, individual rights) certainly have developed but are nonetheless strictly confined to hitherto unquestioned patriarchal family values (selection). Similarly, modern ideas of nationalism and Islamism, in spite of having swept all over the country during the past decades, were successfully absorbed by and incorporated into strong clan structures of the West Bank's "deep south", without evoking any substantial social and cultural change, as it seems. And Ramallah's urban lifestyle of modern middle-class liberalism seems to have found, for the time being, a somehow well balanced peaceful coexistence of modern values of individualism, liberalism, gender equality, and openness with traditional family values and conventional marriage arrangements under parental control and protection. Thus, while Nablus appears to be susceptible to unpredictably explosive dynamics of conflict and crisis, Hebron's tacit tensions are prone to a more unspectacular kind of gradual change within a solid framework of uncontested tribal traditions. And Ramallah's prospects will depend on the city's cultural capacity to resolve intergenerational conflicts be-

tween proudly presented urban liberties and young people striving even more for independence and individual self-determination as already granted to them.

The presumption that Ramallah's urban culture is specifically favorable for democratization is further supported by comparative intergenerational data from the Potsdam survey. Given that parents are about 25 years older than their children, comparing students' with parents' attitudes might be indicative, with all due methodological reservation, of social change over a period of two or three decades. So the question is: Are Ramallah's students more modern or progressive than parents? And if so: What is the impact of intergenerational differences on speed and direction of social change? As we can see from our data, Ramallah's students, at the turn of the century, definitely take a more liberal and democratic stance than their parents' generation. Hence, potential support for liberalization and democratization, underpinned with shared intergenerational values of modern individualism and gender equality, may have been increasingly hatched by Ramallah's urban culture from the 1970s onwards, probably both despite and because of occupation and Islamization, and even more so, when the adolescent generation of 2000 in the decade following the Al-Aqsa war grew up and began to occupy influential positions after the end of their studies. However, democratization and liberalization is just one possible option. As Ramallah students are also more nationalist and religious than Ramallah parents (on a far lower level than Nablus students, though), there are other options, whose realization will also depend on the impact of change from above.

While Ramallah students are simultaneously more democratic, more nationalist, and more religious than parents, Hebron students, exactly reverse, are simultaneously less democratic, less nationalist, and just about as religious as parents: firmly covered by patriarchal kinship customs and equally far away from progressive democratic and retrogressive Islamist modernization, they do not seem to stand for any substantial change. In contrast, Nablus students do stand for intergenerational change, even more so than Ramallah students, but in the opposite, retrogressive direction. Committed to starkest religiosity and strong anti-democratic, strong nationalist sentiments, Nablus students, in the summer of the year 2000, appear to be wide open for Islamism, supporting a social agenda of patriarchal gender inequality and sex segregation. And thus, to conclude our own version of the tale of three cities, we can see the city of Nablus emerging as the Palestinian West Bank's dynamic center of a cultural conflict, challenging both Ramallah's secular liberalism and Hebron's tribal traditionalism with the seductive radiance of a retrogressive yet powerful promise for a better future.

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[i] Of course, there are other research approaches to urbanization apart from focusing on social change. But according to Ward, the state of the art in urban research is far from the idea of analyzing cities as closed entities: "The challenge for any future scholarship on comparative urbanism is to move away from understanding cities as discrete, self-enclosed, and analytically separate objects. The next wave of comparative studies has to understand cities rather differently. Cities have to be theorized as open, embedded, and relational." (Ward, 2008: 407)

[ii] Palestinian political economy is not solely configured by occupation and colonization, but thoroughly shot through with financial support and donors from Western and Middle Eastern countries, UNWRA refugee support etc. and has produced a unique blend of donor-seeking clientelism (Hanafi and Tabar, 2004; Beck 2005).

[iii] While encounters of difference with Western culture (not least: Israeli/Palestinian encounters, cf. Adwan et al. 2011; Rosenthal, 2012; Sa'ar, 2006) or with other ethnicities from the same country (*Shami, 1988: Circassians/Palestinians in Jordan*) could be avoided by encapsulation, encounters of difference in transnational families cannot be externalized that easily without jeopardizing the foundations of kinship unity.

[iv] Palestinian society's predominance of patriarchal traditions seems to offer little room for democratic participation, according to many observers. Recurring allegations of corruption against political organizations and state institutions along with the influence of *hamulas* (family clans) in certain regions attest to the fact that patronage-based structures are still widespread. In the course of the Israeli occupation of 1967, and particularly during the Intifada in 1987, a parallel civil society emerged that challenged traditional powers and social structures (Badawi, 2003; Jamal, 1995; Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003; Rebenstorf, 2009; Robinson, 1997; Tamari, 1990, 1999).

[v] All student respondents from Hebron and Nablus are Moslems, while the Ramallah sample is composed of 35 Moslems (58%) and 25 Christians (42%); the gender relation is 84 female (66%) to 43 male (34%) respondents for Hebron, 39 female (43%) to 51 male (57%) for Nablus, and 36 female (60%) to 24 male (40%) for Ramallah. Distributions of parents' education and employment show that 49% of the Hebron fathers have completed secondary school (tawjihi) or additional post-secondary education, compared to 68% for Nablus and 74% for Ramallah. Similarly, in 2000 just 47% of the Hebron fathers were enrolled in full-time jobs, compared to Nablus with 59% and Ramallah with 68%. According to our findings, and in line with PCBS- and IWS-data, mothers' employment in Ramallah is about 30% (half-time), but almost completely insignificant in the other two cities.

[vi] "The political shift from a Fatah- to a Hamas dominated government has shifted understandings of whether the state should be secular or Islamist. Paradoxical developments, by which Hamas has, on the one hand, fostered women's education and job training opportunities, but, on the other, insisted on women's subordinate legal status, are reflected within the Islamist women's movement." (Allabadi, 2008: 181)

[vii] A similar tendency is reported concerning the perception of gender roles and the social status of women: strong support for women's political activity and public responsibility (Hammami, 2004: 132), strong approval of women's higher education and of female work outside home (Johnson, 2006: 88).

[viii] According to Ze'evi, "understanding clans is … a crucial part of the study of local Palestinian politics", not only because of the resurgence of the clans, often under the guise of political factions, in the course of the Palestinian Authority's apparent inability to uphold municipal services and Arafat's loss of government control, but moreover because, ultimately, persistent tribal structures are "detrimental to the emergence of a viable democratic culture." (Ze'evi, 2008: 2)

[ix] Rebenstorf's calculations, based on PCBS survey data (PCBS 2004: 210; PCBS 2002; 57), demonstrate that the proportion of "Al-Aqsa martyrs" is remarkably higher in Nablus (14% of the occupied territories' population : 23% of "Al-Aqsa martyrs") than Ramallah (12% : 10%) and in Hebron (22% : 15%), where it is lowest (Rebenstorf, 2010: 275).

[x] The empirically established fact that Hebron parents tend to give their children more latitude in marriage partner choice than parents in other urban environments, should be therefore interpreted with caution: "Aside from gaps between ideals and actual practice, choice obviously takes on different meanings in varying contexts" (Johnson 2006: 82), for instance, in line with Islamic law, that children may reject a suitor proposed by parents. Accordingly, "parents in the southern West Bank, at first glance, seem to support individual rather than family decision making in marriage, in seeming

contradiction to the conservatism … usually attributed to the region and in particular to its major center of population, Hebron" (82).

[xi] In analyzing cases of "failed familial fidelity", Sa'ar describes what could be called gender-specific anomic conditions of family life: "The official ideology of the Palestinian family envisions the relationships … as those of cohesion, solidarity, and mutual commitment, and ignores the possibility of loneliness within it… Yet for women, this familial grip often yields an outcome quite the opposite of support and assurance" (Sa'ar 2001: 723). However, these observations, according to the author, cannot be explained as "a simple reaction to economic destitution or the anomie that presumably follow urbanization or similar changes." (724)

[xii] Divorce rates in Nablus between 1997 and 2011 have increased from 12% to 20% (divorces to marriages), while remaining stable in Hebron (9% to 11%) and Ramallah (24% to 25%) (own calculations based on PCBS 2011).