Decad
U.S. a
of the
resea
Arab
natio
the m
set o
prog
"syst
elites
and
impli
rang
conf
oil, a
Soc
the
of m
Env
ass
pro
cris

Envisioning the Arab Future

Modernization in U.S.–Arab Relations, 1945–1967

NATHAN J. CITINO
Rice University

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

before separating them on the basis of their distinct interests. Although the contexts differed markedly, cold warriors transposed their agendas onto inherited accounts of regional decline and underdevelopment, much as Ottoman imperial reformers had, and this similarity helps to explain why Americans found Ottoman-Turkish history useful. By the time of the Cold War, regional reform was already an old idea. As Findley wrote in 1989, the "Ottomans' efforts to reform and preserve their state ... mark them as pioneers of the struggle for development that has become a universal Third World theme in this century."[167] The history of modernizing the Middle East therefore does not conform to the boundaries foreign policy scholars have drawn in studying America's encounter with the region. That history also transcends the distinctions between tradition and modernity, East and West that Cold War development debates have handed down to the present.

[167] Carter V. Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 10.

3

City of the Future

"I am especially impressed by the fact that the Arab Development Society began this project on its own initiative, carried it forward with its own resources and demonstrated by action and example the tremendous potentialities of self-help projects, not only in respect of the settlement of refugees but also in pointing the way toward a general improvement of village life in the Near East."
– George C. McGhee to Musa al-'Alami, July 5, 1951.[1]

"Aramco must have a maximum possible knowledge of Arabia and the Arabs in order to operate successfully in the Arab world."
– Arabian American Oil Company, "Local Government Relations Department Program," June 1955.[2]

"Development without self-help is an impossibility."
– William R. Polk, Foreword to Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, xii.

"In brief, 'aided self-help' must aid peasants to build in local, virtually costless materials, using skills which they themselves already have or can easily acquire."
– Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, 118.

This chapter examines model communities as showplaces of development in U.S.–Arab relations. It challenges historians' insistence on drawing clear distinctions between the centralized, rational schemes of planners and the local knowledge by which particular human settlements lived and thrived. Just as American ideas about modernizing the Middle East emerged partly from a dialogue with the region's history, planners appropriated knowledge from

[1] McGhee to Alami, July 5, 1951, folder: Arab Development Society (Project of Musa Bey Alami), box 9, Office of Near Eastern Affairs Subject File Relating to Economic Affairs, 1947–1951, Lot File 55D643, RG 59, NARA.
[2] Barger to Henry, June 30, 1955, with attached paper, folder 19, box 4, WEM.

the local populations for whom they designed communities. The politics of community building make it difficult to always distinguish between schematic and local knowledge in the pursuit of development – between top-down bureaucracy and bottom-up practicality. Planners worked in revolutionary settings that compelled them to identify "indigenous" or "local" sensibilities whose preservation was an indispensable aspect of political legitimacy, even as they implemented their development visions among the poor. Postwar community building was not simply a matter of the state imposing an alien logic on society. The value placed on "self-help" reflected a belief that successful development strategies incorporated local knowledge derived from the poor themselves. As will be seen, the local knowledge planners valued most often was that related to gender and the distinct roles of women and men. This focus on gender raises questions about what constitutes "local" knowledge, however, and whether development strategies based on it could be replicated within one country, across a region, or globally. Planned communities were places where modernizers struggled to accommodate the Cold War pursuit of universal models to anticolonial demands for self-determination. Gender became central to the strategies of both Arab and American planners for reconciling these aims.

In existing accounts, the violence with which authoritarian governments pursued development signified state planners' contempt for local knowledge and conditions. "Designed or planned social order is necessarily schematic," James C. Scott writes in *Seeing Like a State*; "it always ignores essential features of any real, functioning social order."[3] Scott's influential analysis of "authoritarian high modernism" takes the collectivization of Soviet agriculture and other man-made catastrophes as illustrating the disparity between planners' abstract administrative grids and diverse local practices. He describes this relationship both as violent, with states coercing the latter into accord with the former, and as parasitic, because planned cities and model villages survived only through the initiative of locals acting outside of the formal plan. For the Arab Middle East, Timothy Mitchell offers a similar argument in *Rule of Experts*, which examines the violent implications of successive colonial and postcolonial efforts at remaking Egyptian society. These plans were predicated on a distinction between the "real" Egypt and a series of centralizing administrative tools believed to be accurate representations of it, including cadastral maps and, later, the balance sheet of the "national economy," which purported to account for "the totality of monetarized exchanges within a defined space."[4] The dominant paradigm historians use to criticize twentieth-century modernization thus pits the centralizing knowledge of increasingly powerful states against the

[3] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 6.
[4] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University

humanity embodied in natural communities. Historians of American foreign relations base their critiques of U.S. policy toward the third world on this same dichotomy, with some borrowing from Scott's analysis explicitly. Among them is Michael Latham, who describes America's Strategic Hamlet Program as an authoritarian effort to modernize Vietnamese villages while depriving the Vietcong of material support and recruits. By forcibly relocating peasants inside military compounds, Latham argues, this community-building program replicated the historical pattern in which "'progress' and violence went hand in hand."[5]

Many postwar communities, however, were the result of an unequal but nevertheless important exchange between state and society. In addition, communities were constructed by private philanthropies and corporations as well as by states. Not all were the products of a government acting on "a prostrate civil society," in which the preponderance of official power "tends to devalue or banish politics," as Scott writes.[6] In less extreme cases, community development involved an asymmetrical negotiation in which planners sought validation by appearing to take the wishes of locals into account and by demonstrating respect for their ways of life. Because of the narrower power disparities at play in such instances, local knowledge about human and natural environments took on political value. Far from ignoring local knowledge, planners compiled, scrutinized, and brandished it as a defense against charges of paternalism. Incorporating local knowledge into their technical data permitted community designers to claim that they were giving residents what they really needed. At the same time, planners attempted to extrapolate from local practices formulas that they argued could be replicated elsewhere. Historian Daniel Immerwahr observes correctly that "the urge to modernize and the quest for community shared space, existing alongside or even within each other."[7] By attempting to present these two agendas as distinct, however, he ultimately accepts Scott's dichotomy. The contradiction embodied in the phrase "model community" requires more direct analysis than it has previously received. It was an inherent characteristic of Cold War–era projects built in the Arab Middle East and beyond.

Precedents from the Ottoman and colonial eras set the terms in which postwar modernizers sought to legitimize their work, because planned communities in the Middle East had historic associations with authoritarian rulers and European colonialism. Historian Omnia El Shakry dates experimentation with model villages in Egypt to the early nineteenth-century reign

[5] Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 153, 184.
[6] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 5, 94. For another critique of Scott, see Huri İslamoğlu, "Politics of Administering Property: Law and Statistics in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," in *Constituting Modernity: Private Property in the East and West*, ed. Huri İslamoğlu (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 276–319.
[7] Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 71.

of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha. She also notes that during the interwar period, when Egypt was subject to British authority, it was "the second nation (after Belgium) to commission a large-scale survey and study of rural housing."[8] As historian Mark LeVine has shown, Jaffa and the new Zionist town of Tel Aviv served as conjoined, competing enterprises in modern urban planning from the Ottoman era until Zionist forces drove most Arab residents out of Jaffa in 1948.[9] From company towns in the Nile Delta to oil workers' housing in the Persian Gulf, capitalist development likewise brought community-building experiments to the region. According to Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, during World War II Egyptian workers living in housing communities built by textile companies "resented management's around-the-clock supervision and the loss of their personal independence."[10] Postwar planners had to take this legacy into account. They could overcome it only by designing communities that could be portrayed as democratically conceived for the benefit of the people who inhabited them.

The case studies presented in this chapter are villages or towns rather than city neighborhoods. They demonstrate the reach of governments, capital, and urban political movements into the countryside, which became the focus of a myriad of improvement schemes in decolonizing countries.[11] "To develop viable political societies with a sound rural structure built upon or replacing the old arrangements," generalized a State Department report on village development, "requires a major effort at rural political and social reconstruction."[12] The featured communities were also products of their political and economic contexts. These factors included the displacement of refugees, growing oil production, and state policies promoting import substitution and tourism. The mechanization of agriculture also disrupted existing rural communities in many Arab countries. At a time when rural depopulation and rampant urbanization went hand in hand, the distinction

[8] El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*, 104, 123.

[9] Mark LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[10] See Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 271; Ellis Goldberg, "Worker's Voice and Labor Productivity in Egypt," in *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies*, ed. Zachary Lockman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 120; Ian J. Seccombe and Richard I. Lawless, *Work Camps and Company Towns: Settlement Patterns and the Gulf Oil Industry* (Durham, UK: University of Durham, Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 1987); and Nelida Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State in the Persian Gulf: Manama Since 1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[11] On India's experience, see Cullather, *The Hungry World*, 77–94; and Nicole Sackley, "Village Models: Etawah, India, and the Making and Remaking of Development in the Early Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 37 (September 2013): 749–78.

[12] Wriggins to Miniclier, April 17, 1962, folder: Wriggins, H., Chron Jan.–June 1962, box 238, Policy Planning Council Subject Files, 1954–1962, RG 59, NARA.

between "natural" settlements and "planned" communities built to cope with changing circumstances was not always clear.[13]

The four featured cases are Palestinian notable Musa al-'Alami's Arab Development Society near Jericho, supported by the U.S. government as an "Arab Boys' Town"; the Arabian American Oil Company's housing for American and Arab workers in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia; the Egyptian government's villages constructed for its Tahrir Province agricultural settlement; and the model village of New Gourna, designed by Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy and used as a template for subsequent communities in the Middle East and beyond. As these cases demonstrate, states were not the only entities that constructed communities, nor were new towns exclusively agricultural but could also be designed to subsist on wage labor or handicrafts. Although built for different purposes, these communities are nevertheless comparable in two significant ways. First, the community builders defined their visions as successfully reconciling modernity with humanity through careful attention to local conditions and the needs of inhabitants. They could make this claim most effectively by strategically distinguishing their own, locally focused efforts from what they portrayed as the malign influence of distant and impersonal bureaucracies. Long before *Seeing Like a State*, community builders in the postcolonial Middle East drew politically useful contrasts between local knowledge and schematic planning, in which the latter characterized the wrong kind of development.

Second, each sought to legitimize community projects by appearing to demonstrate respect for existing gender roles in local society.[14] These modernizers walked a fine line between *describing* women's roles in particular places, claiming to respect those roles in their schemes, and *prescribing* an idealized domesticity for them within modern built environments. This tension similarly characterized postwar American experiences with domesticity and consumerism. Historian Elaine Tyler May uses the famous "kitchen debate" between U.S. vice president Richard Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev to show how the American suburban home, equipped with shiny appliances to liberate housewives from domestic labor, became a weapon in the Cold War. The "legendary family of the 1950s," May argues, "represented something new" and was not "the last gasp of 'traditional'

[13] See Roger Owen and Şevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 98–99.

[14] Historian Michael Adas notes that "communist and modernization ideologies shared a strong bias toward men as the agents and main beneficiaries of development" and that the "subordination or neglect of women's issues meant that local knowledge systems" were therefore ignored by modernizers. See Michael Adas, *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard, 2006), 260, 266. But it was on the basis of gender that the community builders described in this chapter sought to demonstrate their respect for local knowledge.

family life with roots deep in the past." It paradoxically enshrined "traditional" gender roles within a modern "American way of life" that was "classless, homogenous, and family centered."[15] Historian Lizabeth Cohen describes New Jersey's gendered "landscape of mass consumption" in which shopping centers were "feminized public space."[16] As postwar visions combining material abundance with clearly delineated gender roles, planned communities in the Arab Middle East were not so far removed from the subdivisions of America's affluent society.

The Cold War competition among development models forced modernizers to seek legitimacy for their prescriptions as fulfilling the needs of ordinary people. By the late 1950s, authoritarian bureaucrats had already come to serve as useful villains. As illustrated by the protagonist of William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick's *The Ugly American* (1958), whose "hands were calloused," practical knowledge was the antithesis of abstract plans drawn up by functionaries in air-conditioned offices. "The princes of bureaucracy," write Lederer and Burdick, "were the same all over the world."[17] In her sharp critique of city planning, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Jane Jacobs lamented how

> forceful and able men, admired administrators, having swallowed the initial fallacies and having been provisioned with tools and with public confidence, go on logically to the greatest destructive excesses, which prudence or mercy might previously have forbade.[18]

In an attempt to combine planning with local initiative, official U.S. policy embraced "aided" or "guided" self-help to govern community development programs. According to a USAID training manual, based on guidelines created by an American advisor in Libya, "change can be brought about by the efforts of the people themselves." The villager is "capable of defining his own problems" and "suggesting solutions" while experts must not "dictate, drive, manage, impose," or try to "accelerate growth for the sake of acceleration."[19] Both American and Arab community builders recognized that their visions would succeed only to the degree that they could be portrayed as legitimate expressions of residents' desires, rather than as elite or bureaucratic impositions. Planners were therefore obliged to collect local

[15] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 11, 172.

[16] See Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 278–86.

[17] William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick, *The Ugly American* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1958), 174–75.

[18] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 13.

[19] United States Agency for International Development, *Community Development: An Introduction to CD for Village Workers* (Washington, DC: USAID, 1962), 2, 4.

knowledge about the men and women whom their projects served and to cultivate a development mythology based on the concept of "self-help."

Musa al-'Alami (1897–1984) was born to one of the leading notable families of Ottoman Jerusalem and served as an official in Britain's Palestine mandate. When Arab states met in 1944 to discuss plans for what became the Arab League, al-'Alami solicited Arab governments for funds to help preserve Arab landownership in Palestine. Conceived as a successor to the Ottoman Land Bank, the Arab Development Society (ADS) would enable Arab smallholders to convert their lands into *awqaf*, or religious endowments, to prevent indebted farmers from having to sell land to Zionists. Al-'Alami also planned to teach villagers modern agricultural techniques, provide them with improved sanitation, and encourage small-scale industries. His plans received a disappointing level of financial support from Arab governments, however, and al-'Alami took them over as independent projects when rival Palestinian leader Hajj Amin al-Husayni sought to gain control over the League's welfare activities. Al-'Alami acquired land for two of three planned model villages that would plant modern Arab communities in the Palestinian countryside to counter the Zionists' *kibbutzim*.[20]

The first Arab–Israeli war upended these plans, however, and following the flight of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes, al-'Alami was forced to reinvent the ADS as a refugee relief organization. Thereafter, he mounted a public relations campaign that built on his earlier experience lobbying on behalf of the Arab League. He relentlessly petitioned the United States, Britain, Arab governments, international agencies, and private philanthropies to support the model farm he built near Jericho in the West Bank. To promote his cause, al-'Alami developed a narrative centered on the role practical knowledge had played in establishing the ADS. Al-'Alami contrasted this *savoir faire*, which exploited the know-how ordinary refugees possessed, against the pessimism he had encountered from a host of bureaucratic opponents and useless "experts" whom he managed to prove wrong time and again. Meanwhile, al-'Alami used the ADS to try to reestablish his own paternal authority within a national community torn apart by the disaster of 1948. Rather than simply rely on his elite pedigree, al-'Alami acted as a modernizer helping to fashion new productive roles for male and female Palestinians.

Al-'Alami established the basic elements of his development agenda as early as 1949 in *'Ibrat Filastin* [*The Lesson of Palestine*], a tract published in

[20] See Thomas Mayer, "Arab Unity of Action and the Palestine Question, 1945–48," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22 (July 1986): 335–36; Seale, *The Struggle for Arab Independence*, 291–92, 294–95, 297–98; Sir Geoffrey Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country: The Story of Musa Alami* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 136–38; and Cecil A. Hourani, "Experimental Village in the Jordan Valley," *Middle East Journal* 5 (Autumn 1951): 497–501.

Beirut and then summarized in translation for the *Middle East Journal*. He attributed Palestinians' dispossession to Arab disunity and underdevelopment. Recounting the Arab defeats of the previous year, al-'Alami emphasized Palestinian villages' tenuous hold on the land. "And so the country fell," he wrote, "town after town, village after village, position after position, as a result of its fragmentation and lack of unity." His language portrayed the national crisis in terms of domestic disorder and sexual dishonor:

> Hundreds of thousands of the Arabs of Palestine have left their houses and homes, suffered the trials and terrors of flight, died by the wayside, lived in misery and destitution, naked, unprotected, children separated from their parents, robbed, raped, and reduced to the most miserable straits.

In contrast, "the Jews mobilized not only all their young men, but also all their girls," as part of a "general mobilization and complete military organization." The way forward, al-'Alami insisted, required not merely unity but "complete modernization in every aspect of Arab life and thought." An egalitarian nationalism must be created "for the benefit of the whole people, not of a special class or specific element," and "the woman must be equal to the man, so that she may share in the formation of this new Arab society."[21] The new order would create strength through education, technical expertise, and economic development. Al-'Alami declared that we must "adapt ourselves and our ways of life" in order to meet the new situation.[22]

Al-'Alami proved adept at eliciting sympathy from a succession of American and British officials drawn to his patrician approach to development and refugee assistance. He also won over figures from the Ford Foundation and the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco), the private entities that provided most of his support. In addition to McGhee, he impressed British diplomat Sir Geoffrey Furlonge, who would write al-'Alami's authorized biography, *Palestine Is My Country*. Former American University of Beirut (AUB) president Bayard Dodge and Aramco vice president James Terry Duce, whose company lent the ADS equipment and experts and would purchase much of what the ADS farm produced, met with al-'Alami during his 1951 visit to the United States.[23] Another key American supporter was economist Norman Burns, who held posts in the State Department and with the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) before himself becoming AUB president. In 1950, Burns had visited the 'Ayn Hilweh refugee camp in Lebanon and his description of it incorporated similar images of disrupted domestic life to those al-'Alami used. "All of the

[21] Alami, "The Lesson of Palestine," 380, 387, 394, 399.

[22] Musa al-' Alami, *'Ibrat Filastin* (Beirut: Dar al-Kashshaf lil-nashr wa al-tiba'a wa al-tawzi', 1949), 37.

[23] See Boardman to Burns, June 12, 1951, folder: Arab Development Society (Project of Musa Bey Alami), box 9, Office of Near Eastern Affairs Subject File Relating to Economic Affairs, 1947–1951, Lot 55 D643, RG 59, NARA.

children," Burns wrote, "looked ragged" but "appeared healthy," while "the adults appeared as healthy as the average peasant," although their "clothes were more ragged and their faces looked unhappy." In the valley, "speckled with khaki-colored conical tents for a distance of a half mile square," women and girls were forced to carry "huge earthen pots on their heads" from a distant water source, while other girls were put to work "sewing cotton cloth for baby clothes." Most tents "were practically empty of everything except children and adults sitting about in dejected fashion trying to keep out of the sun." One UNRWA official explained that in the camp "village and family heads try to keep their villagers and family members around them to maintain their importance." Burns nonetheless concluded that "Ain Helwi refugees are literally on the margin of existence."[24] By contrast, al-'Alami's ADS appealed to Burns as a modern and productive community in which vulnerable members of Palestinian society were cared for. Within the State Department, Burns rejected a pessimistic assessment of the ADS written by Herbert Stewart, a British consultant to the UN economic mission to the Middle East led by Gordon Clapp.[25] Burns criticized Stewart for neglecting to mention that "Musa Bey intends" vacant houses at the ADS site "for refugee orphans as soon as their means of subsistence can be arranged." Stewart also "fails to note that the project is giving employment to 100 to 200 additional refugee families from the Jericho refugee camp."[26] Burns reinforced al-'Alami's narrative, which pitted obstructionism on the part of the United Nations and other bureaucracies against the ADS patron's own practical knowledge and intimacy with his refugee wards.

Al-'Alami told State Department officials that "everyone had been against the project at the beginning." Opposed to any refugee resettlement, the "Grand Mufti [Hajj Amin al-Husayni] and the Arab League opposed it for political reasons," he told McGhee, while the "UNRWA and British experts opposed it for technical reasons." Nevertheless, "the scheme had finally become a going concern" in spite of "long opposition from several quarters."[27] The experts "said the land could not be reclaimed," he told U.S. officials, "but we've grown cotton, bananas, grapes and vegetables

[24] Burns to Gardiner, November 6, 1950, folder: Letters Norman Burns, box 8, Office of Near Eastern Affairs Subject File Relating to Economic Affairs, 1947–1951, Lot 55 D643, RG 59, NARA.

[25] See Gardiner to Berry, June 20, 1951, folder: NE – Jordan, box 6, Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Subject Files Related to Economic Affairs, 1947–1951, Lot 55 D643, RG 59, NARA; and memo by Stewart, December 22, 1949, FO 371/82253, BNA.

[26] Burns to Gardiner, July 3, 1951, folder: 1. Agriculture – Jordan 1. Land Reform, box 2, Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Subject Files Related to Economic Affairs, 1947–1951, Lot 55 D643, RG 59, NARA.

[27] Memoranda [2] of conversations by Boardman, May 18, 1951, folder: 1. Agriculture – Jordan 1. Land Reform, box 2, Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Subject Files Related to Economic Affairs, 1947–1951, Lot 55 D643, RG 59, NARA. See also *The Arab Development Society, Jericho, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* (Jerusalem: The Commercial Press, 1953), 12.

successfully, and we've settled refugees near their homeland."[28] Among al-'Alami's opponents initially had been the Jordanian government, which had attempted to seize ADS accounts in Amman to help the kingdom cope with the refugee crisis. But al-'Alami spirited the funds to Beirut in his car and then prevailed on King 'Abdullah to grant the ADS 5,000 acres of barren land in the West Bank near the Allenby Bridge some five miles north of the Dead Sea, where "nothing grew except occasional patches of camel-thorn and a few scraggly bushes."[29] In contrast to the Western powers, which he believed sympathized with Israel, al-'Alami wanted to settle refugees in the Jordan Valley near their former homes. "Thinking over what he had been told by those international experts whose duty it was to deal with the problem of the refugees," Furlonge wrote, al-'Alami "found himself unable to accept" that Palestinians must move "to some unspecified haven in Syria, Iraq, or beyond." What convinced him, despite the naysayers, that it was possible to farm this part of the valley using groundwater was his own local knowledge: "He had spent part of every winter since boyhood in Jericho and had there watched as much rain as falls in England during a year pouring down in three months . . .; surely, he argued, all this rain must be somewhere in the subsoil and ought to be recoverable from it."[30] The story of how Musa al-'Alami found the water to sustain his ADS model farm served to legitimize the role he scripted for himself as the founding father of a post-1948 Palestinian community.

In a chapter that Furlonge titled "The Finding of the Water," al-'Alami described leading a drilling expedition consisting of "the members of my household and garden staff, eleven in all, with only one educated man among them." He found "a young man" from a nearby refugee camp who improvised "a rig made of pipes welded together into a tripod, with a pulley on it carrying a sort of thin cylinder for boring and another object intended to bale out the displaced earth." Since this Palestinian Arab version of the Ugly American "seemed to know what he was doing," al-'Alami took the "entirely illogical decision" to build "nineteen houses even before finding water." The gamble paid off when water was discovered in January 1950. Al-'Alami had been recuperating from an illness in Jerusalem, but returned to the ADS site to rejoin the youth whose ingenuity had made it all possible:

> I said foolishly, "Have you found water?" and he said simply, "Drink." So I drank, and it was sweet; and I put down the pitcher, and I felt as if I were choking, and I looked round at the others and I saw tears running down all their faces, as well as mine.

[28] Boardman to Burns, May 18, 1951, folder: Jordan, box 16, Records of Near East Affairs Bureau, Office Files of Asst. Sec'y George C. McGhee, 1945–1953, Lot 53 D468, RG 59, NARA.

[29] Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 170; see also Simpson to Falle, August 13, 1955, FO 371/115712, BNA.

[30] Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 167, 168.

With similar practicality, al-'Alami and his refugee band planted a variety of crops in the newly reclaimed desert: "We had no idea what to try; but it was early in the year and things would grow, so we tried whatever anybody suggested." Wheat, barley, vegetables, beets, and turnips all flourished. For "three or four years none of the experts who came out could tell us the reason; all they could say was that according to the text-books there should be nothing there."[31] By growing crops in what was considered a barren desert, al-'Alami also defied the Ottoman land classification of the area as "dead [*mawat*]."[32] Al-'Alami related the finding of the water on numerous occasions to potential benefactors.[33] "The Society has so far dug eleven wells and found water where it had always been supposed none existed," he boasted to McGhee; "it has reclaimed and irrigated five hundred acres of land officially registered as dead and waste."[34] As one British diplomat said of al-'Alami, "ninety percent of his success was due to being on the spot day and night, and learning the vagaries of the Jordan Valley."[35] His story portrayed the ADS farm as exemplary for being deeply rooted in the land. It emphasized how exploiting local and practical knowledge could restore Palestinian self-respect while celebrating al-'Alami's personal role as both patriarch and modernizer.

The ADS reflected al-'Alami's vision of a modern Palestinian national community. "Its duty now was to create the very conditions of an ordered and settled life," an official Jordanian pamphlet about the ADS explained, "and to re-organize uprooted and fragmented human groups."[36] For him, "ordered and settled" meant prescribing strict gender roles. The ADS grew into a working commercial farm and included a Vocational Training Centre for refugee orphans but became an almost exclusively male community where masculinity was defined by practical ability and physical rigor. The same source explained that the Society's aim was "not to produce white collared young men seeking office jobs and lazing about in the towns," but "to make of them men with an all-round knowledge who can use their hands and their brains to the best advantage."[37] The boys were subjected to a "course of physical training and drill every day apart from the usual sports," and "taught to swim and have a dip year round in the swimming

[31] Ibid., 171–73, 175–76.

[32] Hourani, "Experimental Village in the Jordan Valley," 497. See also "The Arab Development Society, Jericho, Jordan," n.d., FO 957/220, BNA.

[33] See minute by Duff, June 22, 1954, and Castle to Lloyd, June 24, 1954, FO 371/110950, BNA.

[34] Al-'Alami to McGhee, June 12, 1951, folder: NE – Jordan, box 6, Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Subject Files Related to Economic Affairs, 1947-1951, Lot 55 D643, RG 59, NARA.

[35] Simpson to Falle, August 13, 1955, cited earlier.

[36] *The Arab Development Society*, 12.

[37] Ibid., 25.

pool of the school."[38] Furlonge writes that in selecting orphans al-'Alami decided

> not to take any who were seriously ill or mentally defective, for he had no means of treating them; nor girls, nor boys so young as to need the care of women, for he had no women helpers; nor those who were old enough to be set in their ways.[39]

As illustrated by his account of the dwellings in which he temporarily housed refugee families before taking on the orphans, domesticity was an essential component of al-'Alami's modernizing vision. The ADS "has constructed fifty houses of modern type, with running water, showers, lavatories, and kitchens," he wrote McGhee, "and it has given employment to between one and two hundred heads of families, twenty-five of which are now settled in the houses."[40] Furlonge, describing his first visit to the ADS in 1953, evokes a sort of patriarchal utopia. Arriving at the ADS compound, Furlonge observed how "[s]mall boys in a simple uniform of khaki shirts and shorts, busy and healthy, scurried to and fro." Al-'Alami, who was called "'Uncle'" by boys who would otherwise "still have been destitute and homeless," held court "in a tiny bare whitewashed room," where despite his poor health, "his brain was working overtime" on "ambitious plans for extension or development, on the smallest details of husbandry or of the boys' welfare." It seemed to Furlonge that al-'Alami "was creating something akin to the patriarchal society of his youth, that he was once more presiding over a clan wholly dependent on him."[41] If the refugee crisis forced the ADS to reconfigure its original strategy of rural modernization, then al-'Alami made Palestinian masculinity central to that mission.

Al-'Alami repeatedly stated his intention to build a training center for refugee girls whose role would complement that of Palestinian boys. Girls would receive an elementary education and "be trained in domestic skills, sewing and handicraft, dairy and poultry farming." Because "if we are to train and produce better farmers and artisans," the ADS pamphlet explained, and "build up better families and a solid family life," then this goal "can only be attained if their wives and mothers of their children are educated and trained."[42] According to *New York Times* reporter Kennett Love, al-'Alami believed that a "new generation of farmers ... must have wives of equal caliber if they are to hold to their standards and set the course for others."[43] Al-'Alami told British members of Parliament that he envisioned being able to train 500 orphans at a time, 250 boys and an equal number

[38] Ibid., 36.
[39] Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 179.
[40] al-'Alami to McGhee, June 12, 1951, cited earlier.
[41] Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 182–83.
[42] *The Arab Development Society*, 26.
[43] Kennett Love, "Arab 'Moses' Teaches Orphans to Make Jordan Desert Bloom," *NYT*, May 7, 1955, p. 3.

of girls.[44] But concerns about housing and supervising girls, and the higher priority he accorded to boys, led him to defer doing so indefinitely.[45] As an alternative, he took over a $500,000 Ford Foundation grant for supporting Palestinian villages along the ceasefire frontier, where Furlonge described girls' traditional role carrying water as putting them in danger from the Israelis.[46] The funds permitted al-'Alami to extend his vision beyond the ADS site into villages where "it was possible for girls to be taught while living at home." In addition to an education program supervised by inspectors based in Jerusalem, al-'Alami instituted handicraft training in embroidery, a skill that would complement the weaving taught to boys, "so that the girls could embroider what they wove."[47] In these frontier villages, the ADS could conceivably become more than just a reclamation experiment undertaken in one place using the local knowledge al-'Alami and Palestinian refugees possessed. It could demonstrate the "tremendous potentialities of self-help projects," as McGhee had put it, "in pointing the way toward a general improvement of village life in the Near East."

But al-'Alami's modernizing vision struggled to gain legitimacy given the revolutionary mood of West Bank refugees. He had developed the plan for an orphanage only when the original refugee families brought to the ADS site left, because they feared that resettlement would foreclose the possibility of ever returning to their former homes. The fact that the ADS survived on the basis of Western support also made it a target of mob violence that threatened its very survival. In December 1955, at a time when Jordan was shaken by riots opposing the kingdom's proposed membership in the Anglo-American Baghdad Pact, thousands of refugees from around Jericho descended on the ADS. Al-'Alami was away, and the young boys and staff who were present were unable to prevent "the mob from setting fire to all the buildings, destroying everything in sight, and looting all the livestock."[48] According to news reports, the rioters chanted anti-American slogans and "had wrecking tools and carried cans of gasoline." They concluded their apparently premeditated attack by carrying "all books, accounts, and documents from Mr. el Alami's office out to a waiting taxicab."[49]

The costs of rebuilding the ADS compound after the 1955 attack led to al-'Alami's even greater dependence on private American sources of support and, for the first time, to official U.S. government assistance. In addition to subsidizing al-'Alami's initiatives for girls and other inhabitants

[44] Simpson to Falle, August 13 1955, cited earlier.
[45] Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 206.
[46] Ibid., 194. See also unsigned memo of conversation between al-'Alami and Hart, June 2, 1959, folder: Jordan Economic Development General 1959 6, box 13, Near East Affairs, Subject Files Relating to Iraq and Jordan, 1956–1959, Lot 61 D20 [3 of 3], RG 59, NARA.
[47] Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 197.
[48] Ibid., 179, 190.
[49] Kennett Love, "School in Jordan Rising from Ruin," *NYT*, June 23, 1956, p. 4.

of the Palestinian frontier villages, the Ford Foundation had granted the ADS $149,000 over three years for the boys' Vocational Training Centre. Following the riots, Ford contributed another $30,000 immediately to the costs of reconstruction. Meanwhile, since 1953 Aramco had been purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables grown by the ADS, airlifting the produce directly from Amman to Dhahran on the Persian Gulf.[50] These sales helped to support the Vocational Training Centre, but after the riots, al-'Alami was forced to take out a commercial loan of £100,000 to meet his expenses. His difficulty repaying it prompted what a British diplomatic source called "a gentleman's agreement" in 1958 among the Ford Foundation, Aramco, and the State Department's International Cooperation Administration (ICA).[51] Ford made an additional grant of $200,000 for technical assistance and modern dairy facilities (Brigham Young University donated twenty-six cows), and Aramco indicated that it would continue buying agricultural produce.[52] The ICA agreed to subsidize 100 boys in an expanded Vocational Training Centre at an annual cost of $75,000 for three years, while pledging an additional $92,000 for dormitory and training facilities.[53] Al-'Alami's credo of masculine self-reliance gained him the admiration of Western benefactors, but accepting their assistance further eroded his standing as a Palestinian Arab nationalist.

In other ways, postwar Arab politics marginalized those of al-'Alami's social class. The rise of Egyptian leader Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser and Palestinian militant groups led al-'Alami to reconcile with Jordan's young King Husayn and to consolidate ADS aid requests to Washington with those made by Jordan. A shared paternalism in the cultivation of masculinity characterized the American, Hashemite, and ADS approaches to development. U.S. officials proposed linking the ADS to a program for training young men in Jordan modeled after the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps.[54] Norman Burns, al-'Alami's defender within the State Department, told a Jordanian general that the program would promote "good citizenship values, self-discipline, personal and national pride, and the development of leadership qualities." Husayn reportedly liked the idea.[55]

[50] Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 184, 185.
[51] "The Projects of the Arab Development Society," n.d., FO 957/220, BNA.
[52] See Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 201; and Strong to Talbot, June 8, 1961, folder: 1961 Chron Inter-office Memorandum [1 of 2], box 3, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs/Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Records of the Director, 1960–1963, RG 59, NARA.
[53] See Meyer to Jones, July 29, 1960 and Meyer to Hart, July 19, 1960, folder: 1960 Chron Inter-office Memos [2 of 2], box 1, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs/Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Records of the Director, 1960–1963, RG 59, NARA.
[54] Meyer to Hart, July 19, 1960, cited earlier.
[55] Keeley to State, foreign service dispatch 116, September 29, 1959, with attached memo of conversation, 785.5/9-2159, RG 59, NARA. See also Mills to State, September 5, 1959, *FRUS 1958–1960*, 11: 725.

But the image in which al-'Alami and Burns hoped to mold Palestinian males was rapidly being eclipsed by another, more radical model for manhood emerging from the refugee camps: that of the *fida'i*, or commando who raided Israeli-controlled territory. Scholar Dina Matar describes how the founding of Harakat al-Tahrir al-Filastini (Fatah) by Yasir 'Arafat and others in 1959 created a new role model for Palestinian youth:

> Donning military fatigues and the Palestinian *kuffiyeh* – instead of a suit and a red tarbush – the leaders of Fatah radically changed the way Palestinians were represented, bringing to the fore a new generation and a new image. The new revolutionary leaders were drawn from diverse class, social, religious and regional backgrounds. Significantly, many of them had lower-middle-class, rural or refugee-camp origins.[56]

The *fida'iyin* commitment to armed struggle eclipsed the ADS boys' "lines of neat cottages," their "regular routine" of "the schoolroom, the workshops or fields, the refectory, and the sports field." As Fatah began scripting a new Palestinian masculinity, the ADS's most celebrated graduate, a once-sickly orphan named 'Ali, was adopted by "a rich American visitor" and eventually became a high school gym teacher in California.[57]

And while the ADS's "amateur" and "pioneer" character might have been endearing to al-'Alami's backers, these upstart qualities proved liabilities when it came to securing commercial markets and aid from international agencies. At the end of 1960, Aramco abruptly stopped buying ADS produce, shifting to cheaper sources from Eritrea and Saudi Arabia.[58] Al-'Alami subsequently struggled to find alternative customers, but he had been dependent on Aramco for transport, and the ICA denied a previous request for help purchasing refrigerated trucks and cargo planes. The Development Loan Fund (DLF) would advance monies only against anticipated revenues and insisted on calculating a "cost-benefit ratio" for further proposed reclamation to expand the ADS to some 40,000 acres.[59] Al-'Alami's applications to the World Bank were denied, despite warm personal relations with bank president Eugene Black, while the ADS was forced to rely on the Ford Foundation and King Husayn when the United States withdrew its assistance over a three-year period beginning in 1966. The ADS focused on producing "locally marketable" poultry and dairy products, forsaking the citrus and out-of-season produce al-'Alami had hoped to sell to Middle Eastern and European customers.[60] Even as the ADS limited its marketing to local customers, however, al-'Alami increasingly drew on global development

[56] Dina Matar, *What It Means to Be Palestinian: Stories of Palestinian Peoplehood* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 89.
[57] Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 202–03, 206n.
[58] See ibid., 200, 205; and Strong to Talbot, June 8, 1961, cited earlier.
[59] See unsigned memo of conversation between al-'Alami and Hart, June 2, 1959, cited earlier.
[60] See Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 206, 209–10; and "Arab 'Boys Town' Is Given $100,000," February 10, 1968, *NYT*, p. 3.

expertise to improve its operations. Al-'Alami traveled to the Imperial Valley in California to learn about irrigation and to Hawaii to consult with university experts on tropical agriculture.[61] In 1962, he stopped off in London to hire professional managers for his Vocational Training Centre after he found that two promising German candidates lacked sufficient command of English.[62] Al-'Alami had created the ADS enterprise by exploiting refugees' local knowledge, but could never make it into the basis for modernizing Palestinian communities beyond his model farm near Jericho. He also came to depend on just the sort of international experts whose skepticism he had first defied using his personal familiarity with the Jordan Valley.

When war broke out in 1967, al-'Alami was in Europe purchasing new equipment. Israeli troops occupied the ADS site on June 7 and confined the staff to their bungalows. Furlonge writes that the Israeli advance created a "scene of desolation reminiscent of 1955." Israeli "tanks had driven across the fields ... smashing water-conduits and putting all but two of the wells out of action." Alfalfa had withered, chickens and cows had died, "the transport had been taken and many of the houses looted." With Israel occupying the West Bank, al-'Alami shuttled between Amman and Beirut before eventually being permitted by Israeli authorities to settle in east Jerusalem. He again looked to the Ford Foundation for money with which to rebuild and drew support from charities established by friends in the United States and Britain. Having schooled Palestinian youth in manly self-reliance, al-'Alami found himself dependent on foreign benefactors and Israel. He failed to attain the role he had written for himself in 1949 as the father of a new Palestinian society that was both modern and firmly rooted in the land. In a concluding tribute, Furlonge nonetheless memorializes al-'Alami's vision combining rural modernization with masculinity: "what shall be said of one who, by his own labours and those he inspired in others, has made forty thousand acres of desert into gardens and a thousand waifs into men?"[63]

In contrast to al-'Alami, who dreamed of replicating the ADS farm at Jericho into the model for a gendered Palestinian modernity, Aramco's leadership faced the challenge of applying management techniques used in other global oil enclaves to the distinct setting of eastern Arabia. This was a political challenge in which community building played a central role, because the separate-and-unequal housing the company provided its American and Arab employees elicited protests from the Saudi government and helped to provoke violent strikes on the part of Arab workers. It reinforced impressions of Aramco as a neocolonial enterprise during a

[61] See unsigned memo of conversation between al-'Alami and Hart, June 2, 1959, cited earlier; and Meyer to Jones, July 29, 1960, cited earlier.

[62] See Archer to Johnston, March 31, 1962, FO 957/251, BNA.

[63] Furlonge, *Palestine Is My Country*, 214–16, 220.

time of revolutionary Arab nationalism. It was therefore incumbent upon managers to show how Aramco profits could be reconciled with practical local concerns regarding employment, wages, and housing. This imperative motivated the company to investigate local conditions intensively and to create a bureaucracy, the Arabian Affairs Division, to compile and organize that information.[64]

Scholars were not the first to understand modernization as the destruction of local diversity by an unsentimental rationality. The most influential literary critique of Aramco describes the obliteration of local communities before the onslaught of global capitalism. *Cities of Salt*, the series of novels written during the 1980s in Damascus by Saudi dissident 'Abd al-Rahman Munif (1933–2004), describes one character witnessing the destruction of his village's orchards by an American oil company:

> [The] things that still break his heart in recalling those days are the tractors which attacked the orchards like ravenous wolves, tearing up the trees and throwing them to the earth one after another, and leveled all the orchards between the brook and the fields. After destroying the first grove of trees, the tractors turned to the next with the same bestial voracity and uprooted them. The trees shook violently and groaned before falling, cried for help, wailed, panicked, called out in helpless pain and then fell entreatingly to the ground, as if trying to snuggle into the earth to grow and spring forth alive again.[65]

Munif employs animal predators to evoke the relentless advance of capitalist enterprise, spinning a counter myth to Aramco's and utilizing what Vitalis characterizes as a "destruction of Eden" trope.[66] But even William A. Eddy, whose work for both Aramco and the CIA gave him an opposite perspective to Munif's, resorted to bestial images to capture Aramco's transformation of Saudi Arabia. In a letter to his family describing the company's construction of the Dammam–Riyadh railroad, Eddy wrote:

> We landed at the Hofuf Airport and drove in cars another 30 miles out to the railhead where the railway is a-building like a long snake lengthening itself toward the southwest.... Beyond that Saudis were spiking down the rails and laying rail at the rate of 4,000 feet a day. Ten miles beyond that the dinosaur-like steam shovels were building up the roadbed, dumping and packing down gravel and crushed stone, circling like dragons in the flying sand.[67]

[64] On the role of Aramco in Saudi Arabia's development, see Toby Craig Jones, *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Water Forged Modern Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[65] Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt*, trans. Peter Theroux (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 106.

[66] Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, 2. Journalist Thomas Lippman writes that Munif "dramatizes for effect." See Thomas Lippman, *Inside the Mirage: America's Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 78.

[67] Eddy, "Dear Family," February 26, 1950, folder 4, box 6, WEP.

To contrasting effect, Munif and Eddy both emphasized the impact of global capitalism on eastern Arabian communities. Aramco's managers sought to compile local knowledge as part of their effort to dispel expectations of an inevitable conflict.

Aramco's harvesting of knowledge about Saudi Arabia served a political purpose inasmuch as it appeared to provide evidence of the company's concern for locals. "The oil company made it its business to know as much as possible about how the country functioned," writes journalist Thomas Lippman, "a prodigious task in the absence of statistics, reliable media, and competent government organizations." Arabist George Rentz (1912–1987), who headed the Arabian Affairs Division created after the war, even interviewed Bedouin "relators" who offered oral testimony about tribal relationships and geography.[68] Novelist Nora Johnson's husband worked in government relations studying "the minutiae of certain aspects of life in the Eastern Province," including "local history, place-names, and tribal customs" by interrogating what Johnson called "a phalanx of mangy, grizzled, half-asleep Aramco-hired Bedu."[69] In accumulating "a maximum possible knowledge of Arabia and the Arabs," Aramco management stressed that the information obtained "must be organized in a manner that makes it available to specific problems of the Company." Yet Rentz's staff extended its research broadly into areas of "history, geography, language, politics and culture," and Aramco maintained a "comprehensive research library" of Arabic materials.[70] In 1958, the company conducted a wide-ranging survey of its Arab employees, using IBM data cards to manage the information. It then used the survey as one basis, along with face-to-face interviews, for modifying its Home Ownership Loan Program for Arab employees.[71] "Having such a valid reason for asking questions and meeting people," observed one Aramco researcher, "provides an opportunity for gathering data on other subjects in which we are interested."[72]

Aramco's compiling of local knowledge served a similar political purpose to its denunciations of European colonialism and the contrasts drawn between formal empire and the company's role in Saudi Arabia. Just as the highly favorable 1949 article in *Life* had contrasted Aramco's benevolence against "the odium of old-style colonialism" (see Chapter 2), Rentz and his coauthors wrote in the 1960 *Aramco Handbook* that experts from the company's Arabian Affairs Division "assist in the solution of particular problems" and "contribute toward a better understanding of the people and the

[68] Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, 49. On Rentz, see the biography in folder 57, box 1, WEM.
[69] Nora Johnson, *You Can Go Home Again: An Intimate Journey* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1982), 59.
[70] Barger to Henry, June 30, 1955 with attached paper, cited earlier.
[71] Quint to Mulligan, April 3, 1960, folder 64, box 2, WEM.
[72] Memo by Quint, April 11, 1960, folder 64, box 2, WEM.

country."[73] They presented Aramco as heir to the earlier "introduction of Western modernizing influences" in the Middle East by Britain and France, whose political rule under the mandate system had fomented "disillusionment and resentment among nationalist leaders."[74] European colonialism served as a useful foil against which to portray Aramco's modernizing mission as sensitive to local needs. Nora Johnson assessed Aramco's enterprise in contradictory terms as "a remarkably sensitive imposition of a Western culture on an older, Eastern one … the transaction between us and Saudi Arabia was quite different than that of the British Empire."[75] Aramco engineer Larry Barnes, who was otherwise critical of the company in his self-published memoir, still concluded that "Saudi Arabia and its people would not be as well off if the oil had been exploited by a French or British company."[76] The presumed contrast between Aramco and the "British … big stick" approach became typical even of internal State Department memoranda.[77] Aramco at least partially succeeded in brandishing local knowledge about Saudi Arabia to argue that its operations were the antithesis of a colonial imposition. Britain fulfilled the same legitimizing function in Aramco's modernizing narrative as UNRWA experts did in al-'Alami's.

The company's residential communities became crucial sites for displaying Aramco's commitment to modernization and its local knowledge. They were also places where gender politics functioned as a proxy for broader arguments about whether Aramco was modernizing or colonizing Saudi Arabia. Describing the "Little America," suburban quality of the company's Senior Staff Camp has become a set-piece in numerous accounts of the initially whites-only compound that Aramco built for its American employees at Dhahran on the Persian Gulf. Aramco clerk Michael Sheldon Cheney wrote of "neat blocks of houses set in lush gardens" with "jasmine hedges and clumps of oleander." For Lippman, the Americans' gated community was "*Pleasantville*."[78] Journalist Kai Bird, whose father served as U.S. consul in Dhahran, compared it to "a Dallas suburb," except for the siren that regulated workdays in this company town. Like any suburb, it boasted "an elementary and junior high school, a commissary [or market], swimming pools, a movie theatre, a bowling alley and a baseball field."[79] Mary Elizabeth Hartzell, who came from Seattle to manage Aramco's research library, wrote home to her mother about the consumer abundance available

[73] Roy Lebkicher, George Rentz, Max Steineke et al., *Aramco Handbook* (Dhahran: Arabian American Oil Company, 1960), 208.
[74] Ibid., 80.
[75] Johnson, *You Can Go Home Again*, 57.
[76] Larry Barnes, *Looking Back Over My Shoulder* (n.p., 1979), 31.
[77] See Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, 8–9; and Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC*, 54.
[78] Quoted in Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC*, 57; Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, 55–70.
[79] Kai Bird, *Crossing the Mandelbaum Gate: Coming of Age Between the Arabs and Israelis, 1956–1978* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 90.

to the company's American employees. In the dining hall, she enjoyed "a big buffet with candles and a camel made of ice for a center piece … salads & meat & fish, cheese, delicious cake with real butter icing, peaches & pears, roast turkey & dressing." Some of the fresh produce she bought in the commissary – "celery, lettuce, tomatoes, grapes, bananas, pears, apples, lemons, oranges, potatoes, onions, cabbage, limes, [and] avocadoes" – may well have come from al-'Alami's farm.[80]

Inside the fence surrounding what residents called "American Camp," criticism of the narrow roles permitted to women did not seriously jeopardize faith in Aramco's modernizing mission. One disgruntled male employee referred in his resignation letter to the hyper-masculine environment: "Though I am continually annoyed by the boarding school-army camp atmosphere of Dhahran I am full of admiration for many of the things which the Company has done."[81] As a "bachelorette," Hartzell lived in manufactured housing, "a portable with 4 rooms for 8 girls," rather than in a suburban ranch. Her hostess at a sewing party, Hartzell observed to her mother, "is a 'Mrs.,'" and so had a "lovely six room house." When she learned of a female acquaintance's engagement, Hartzell sighed: "They will have a brand new house."[82] The "Little America" in Dhahran replicated the postwar domesticity of home, even as the company relied on the labor of single women who worked as nurses, secretaries, and teachers. Though not members of the company's senior staff, these employees were still permitted to reside inside the "American Camp." Living in a compound that excluded Arabs, Hartzell nonetheless aligned herself with what she described as Aramco's progressive "foreign investment," contrasting it against British colonialism. The British "are not doing so well in the Arabian peninsula just now," she wrote her parents in 1957; "I think their local representatives must be living in the last century."[83] The wife of one executive juxtaposed women's boredom with men's participation in Aramco's mission. "You certainly had women there who were unhappy," she told Lippman, because "many of the men were in such exciting jobs." The development of Saudi oil "was the biggest thing that was going if you were a geologist or a petroleum engineer … And here was the wife at home."[84] Johnson recalled that at social gatherings where men celebrated their professional achievements, husbands "tried to include their wives, and we all sat around and laughed politely," but "it made me sad that I would never have such adventures." Left at home during the day, wives

[80] Hartzell to mother, August 8, 1952, folder 8; and Hartzell to mother, November 16, 1953, folder 9, box 11, WEM.
[81] Peyton to Pendleton, September 1, 1957, folder 10, box 2, WEM.
[82] Hartzell to mother, August 8, 1952, folder 8; Hartzell to mother, January 28, 1953, folder 9; Hartzell to mother, August 14, 1953, folder 9, box 11, WEM. See also letter by Mulligan, September 19, 1959, folder 22, box 11, WEM.
[83] See Hartzell to "mother & daddy," n.d., [1957], folder 13, box 11, WEM.
[84] Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, 64.

"not only cooked, but strained to outcook each other."[85] Deftly, however, Johnson used her experience with the "'[p]roblem that has no name'" in Aramco's "phony, plastic Levittown" to defend the company's role in Saudi Arabia: "it seems to me that Aramco was the ever patient and humoring wife, smilingly agreeing to everything, to the unreasonable, tyrannical husband that Saudi Arabia was. (Yes, dear. It's your country.)" Her defense of Aramco took the form of consciousness-raising. "Why should they respect us," she asked, "if we didn't respect ourselves?"[86]

Writing at about the same time as Johnson, Munif portrayed the arrival of American women and the invasion of foreign gender norms as the most compelling evidence for colonization. His fictionalized account of a huge American ship reaching shore offers one local perspective on gender politics from outside the fence:

> There were dozens, hundreds of people, and with the men were a great many women. The women were perfumed, shining and laughing, like horses after a long race. Each was strong and clean, as if fresh from a hot bath, and each body was uncovered except for a small piece of colored cloth. Their legs were proud and bare, and stronger than rocks. Their faces, hands, breasts, bellies – everything, yes, everything glistened, danced, flew. Men and women embraced on the deck of the large ship and in the small boats, but no one could believe what was happening on the shore.[87]

In real life, when the future Saudi petroleum minister 'Abdullah al-Tariqi broke the color barrier and insisted on living inside the fence with his white American wife, residents harassed the interracial couple. According to *Time* magazine, "American matrons took his wife aside and reproved her for marrying an Arab." Tariqi's testimony concerning his domestic life reinforces the impression of Aramco as a colonial enterprise: "It was a perfect case of an Arab being a stranger in his own country."[88]

Aramco's housing policies for Arab employees evolved as the company's response to government demands and those made by workers in a series of postwar labor strikes. Following a 1945 strike, Aramco rejected Saudi officials' call for the merging of American and Arab residential communities and instead adopted a policy of loaning Arab employees funds with which to build their own homes in separate communities. Aramco borrowed its Home Ownership Loan Program from its corporate parent, Exxon, whose subsidiary Creole Petroleum utilized it in Venezuela.[89] In Venezuela, too, the oil company had built segregated communities for expatriate workers characterized by an idealized domesticity. "The enclosed camp dramatically constricted women's freedom of movement," writes historian Miguel Tinker

[85] Johnson, *You Can Go Home Again*, 45–46, 48.
[86] Ibid., 61, 62.
[87] Munif, *Cities of Salt*, 214.
[88] Quoted in Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, 136.
[89] See Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, 108.

Salas. "The persistence of racially and economically segregated oil camps throughout Venezuela," Salas further observes, describing the dilemma Aramco also faced, "increasingly clashed with the industries' broader social and cultural discourse."[90] Following a weeklong strike in the Saudi oil fields in 1953 during which demonstrators stoned a U.S. Air Force bus, Aramco made limited concessions in negotiations with Saudi government officials. The U.S. embassy reported, however, that Aramco was pleased that it was "able to oppose successfully" demands that it bear the cost of building workers' homes, rather than loaning them the funds to do so.[91] Aramco turned to a labor management technique utilized by the global oil industry to cope with its housing problem, but sustaining the argument about its modernizing role in Saudi Arabia depended on demonstrating that such a policy could be reconciled with local lifestyles.

It was on issues of gender that the Arabian Affairs Division staked much of the company's claim to respect local society. Following another strike in 1956, and internal deliberations in which Aramco adopted certain reforms but not the integration of housing, the company made a push to expand its Home Ownership Loan Program for Arab employees.[92] In 1960, the company noted a "sharp decline" in applications for loans to construct homes in Rahimah, one of two planned communities built for Arab employees. Rahimah and the newer town site of Madinat Abqaiq served as separate and less well-appointed versions of the American Camp. Researchers were charged with answering the question: "Why has Saudi Arab employee interest in the program declined and how may they be induced to participate in it?" The company was also interested in estimating the eventual size of these communities, which affected demand for "schools, playgrounds, medical facilities, etc.," and therefore in calculating fertility and child mortality rates among employee families. This information would come from "interviews with wives of employees" who, in the initial plan, would be the subject of "450 hours of interviewing." When this proved too ambitious, eighteen employee wives were interviewed in August and home visits made in September to speak with women living in Rahimah.[93]

The interviews were conducted by Phebe A. Marr, a Harvard PhD candidate in Middle East studies who, as a woman, could meet with Arab employee wives prohibited from contact with male nonrelatives. Marr's role in the Arabian Affairs Division and knowledge of Arabic enabled her to interact with Saudi women in a way that eluded other American women

[90] Miguel Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy: Oil, Culture, and Society in Venezuela* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 149, 199.

[91] Jidda (Jones) to State, foreign service dispatch 277, January 23, 1954, 886A.062/1-2354, RG 59, NARA. On the strikers' demands, including housing reforms, see the correspondence in FO 371/104882, BNA.

[92] See Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, 205–08.

[93] Quint to Mulligan, April 3, 1960, folder 64, box 2, WEM.

who lived inside the fence. Lippman describes the practice of having Saudi women visit American women's homes, though he also writes: "Aramco women could avoid Arabs entirely if they chose, and many of them did so."[94] In Dhahran, Johnson watched herself becoming like "those masked Arabian women" whom she regarded as "silent, protected, infantile creatures."[95] Hartzell described Arab women as "shapeless black figures," though, intriguingly, "one catches a glimpse of gay trousers just around the ankles."[96] Marr's contact with Arab women therefore gave her access to the sources of local knowledge that had been least available to Americans, but which the company regarded as most valuable.

Within her small sample, Marr made a point of speaking with both Sunni and Shi'a Muslim women and with those who lived in company town sites as well as in the "natural" communities of the nearby Qatif oasis. She concluded that female isolation was the overwhelming reason that families found the company communities undesirable. In fact, Marr uncovered "several cases of husbands moving out of Company houses in town sites and back to natural communities to please their wives." In a complaint echoed by American women, one twenty-three-year-old Shi'a Arab wife told Marr that "she missed her family and had no one to talk to all day." While the houses that the company constructed for both Americans and Arabs were built for nuclear families, Arab women's most important relationships were with other females from their extended families. "Cut off from family and friends of like religion and background," Marr wrote, "women are left without any means of contact with the world outside their houses." This problem was difficult to remedy within the town sites because it was "too expensive to build Company houses big enough to house the extended family." In Marr's view, amenities provided in the company homes did not suit Arab women either. Few used their kitchen ranges, "preferring to sit on the floor or on small, low, wooden platforms while preparing the food and cooking it" with a primus stove, which "provides a certain amount of mobility." Women "do not like to stand over a stove to cook, which they consider backbreaking work." They "are not ready to use modern facilities such as high sinks, bathtubs, and refrigerators," Marr reported. Overall, she concluded that the company should allow employees to build houses "in their home towns." Families "should not be urged to move into townsites where the traditional pattern of their lives is disturbed to a considerable degree." Such houses "should be modern in appearance, but preserve the best features of the traditional style, such as the open courtyard." This floorplan (which she sketched as part of her report)

[94] Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, 37–38, 56.

[95] Johnson, *You Can Go Home Again*, 79.

[96] Hartzell to mother, November 22, 1953, folder 9, box 11, WEM.

illustrates how Marr believed Aramco should accommodate its housing policy to local sensibilities.[97]

Marr's fellow researcher Malcolm Quint reached similar conclusions in a study titled "Home and Family in Qatif Oasis." Residential communities were organized around "the extended family group embracing three generations, since in Qatif communities, as in most of Saudi Arabia, the household unit is the extended family consisting of a father and mother, married sons and their wives and children, and unmarried daughters." Unlike in the company town sites, the layout of residences was meant to accommodate this larger group. "The building itself," Quint explained, "is more often than not a conglomeration of small rooms built helter-skelter around the inside of a compound wall." This arrangement facilitated extended family relations among women. Quint found that "visiting and gossiping among the women of the extended family takes place in the open courtyard area of the family dwelling, and much of the chatter so vital to the continued happiness of the women goes on while they perform their household tasks." Moreover, kinship networks bound together different extended family households in the residential quarters of the towns. "Just as the household is a family unit," Quint explained, "so also the village or quarter of the town is largely a kinship unit." For women living in such an environment, "the opportunity to meet people outside the family almost never exists." It was therefore "unrealistic to expect significant numbers of employees from the Oasis to obtain houses in the Company townsites," where women would be deprived of extended family contacts.[98]

Other Aramco research focused on domesticity and gender relations as the local knowledge most valuable to the company. The Arabian Affairs Division investigated whether significant numbers of Saudi Arab women could be hired by the company, but concluded that "the only socially sanctioned adult role for a woman ... is that of wife and mother, who is to be kept at home."[99] A report about family relations in the towns of Saihat and al-Mallahah explained that women "live under a rigidly defined system of sexual segregation," indicated by the "Arab word for woman (Hirmah – sing.; Harim – plural)," which "is derived from the root H-R-M" denoting "forbidden, prohibited, and unlawful." Even in the courtyard house meant to accommodate an extended family, "the woman must keep herself fully clothed." The Arabian Affairs Division thus went to great lengths to understand local domestic practices. Its work permitted researchers, so their reports implied, to penetrate beneath surface appearances and grasp

[97] Marr to Mulligan, "Home Ownership Program – Rahimah," December 22, 1960, folder 5, box 3, WEM.

[98] Jones to Weathers, January 25, 1961, with attached report by Quint, "Home and Family in Qatif Oasis," November 1960, folder 5 box 3, WEM.

[99] Vidal to Mulligan, "Employment of Saudi Arab Women," September 16, 1961, folder 9, box 3, WEM.

the reality of gender relations. "Despite the strictness of this ideal system," the report on Saihat and al-Mallahah revealed, "women are not quite as segregated as it would appear." It was virtually "impossible for a woman living in a large household" and "carrying out the ordinary household tasks" to "completely efface herself from the males of the household." Only the wealthiest women who could pay others to do such tasks are "really expected to observe this ideal system."[100]

Aramco adopted the recommendations made by Marr and Quint and permitted Arab employees to use the Home Ownership Loan Program to build houses in their home villages. According to company literature and favorable accounts of Aramco, the housing program was a successful example of the company ascertaining and then accommodating local needs. "Having gained sufficient experience as to Saudi Arab employees' desires," explained the *Aramco Handbook*, "the Company has placed increasing emphasis on the administration of the Home Ownership Program" to ensure quality control in the houses constructed.[101] Lippman writes that "the program proved generally popular and Aramco has always been proud of it." After the Saudi government bought out and nationalized the U.S. companies, Saudi Aramco continued the practice and more than 36,000 homes were eventually built or purchased.[102] But the *Handbook* made its claims about respecting workers' desires before Quint and Marr were charged with studying why most Arab employees declined to participate. The problems facing the program, moreover, were hardly unique to eastern Arabia. Salas writes of oil company communities in Venezuela:

> [T]he design of the new living arrangements undermined traditional practices. By establishing a series of formal rules and regulations, the companies sought to "de-ruralize" their new laborers and recast their relationship with the land, producing modern laborers who depended on the company for their wages. Faced with small accommodation and no possibility of growth, camp life also recast the family and weakened the extended networks that pervaded Venezuelan society. Eroding the basis of the extended family and its multiple levels of authority emphasized the role of the male, and so did limiting women's ability to engage in independent productive activity.... Confronted by these conditions, some families opted to live in nearby villages instead of a camp.[103]

The company intensively studied local conditions, but did so in order to address a problem seen in other global oil enclaves.

[100] Unsigned memo to file, "Preliminary Notes Permitted Degrees of Relationship – Saihat and al-Mallahah," March 14, 1960, folder 64, box 2, WEM.

[101] Lebkicher, Rentz et al., *Aramco Handbook*, 215.

[102] Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, 86; see also Thomas C. Barger, *Out in the Blue: Letters from Arabia, 1937–1940: A Young American Geologist Explores the Deserts of Early Saudi Arabia* (Vista, CA: Selwa Press, 2000), 264.

[103] Salas, *The Enduring Legacy*, 176.

Aramco did not succeed in mitigating housing as a focus of Arab protests. At the outbreak of war in June 1967, Arab mobs attacked American Camp. Despite her faith in Aramco's benevolence toward the Saudis, Johnson had feared just such a scenario during her time in the kingdom a dozen years earlier: "What would happen if there was revolution? War? Mass attack from mad armed Arabs, knives in teeth, eyes glittering?"[104] But demonstrators caused only limited property damage. Bird writes that "a mob invaded my childhood home in the American consulate compound, and one young man broke his leg while trying, successfully, to tear down the Stars and Stripes." Rioters "later moved on to Aramco's American Camp ... stoning cars and nearly ransacking the home of Tom Barger, Aramco's president."[105] Barnes, the Aramco engineer, was working in Abqaiq when the demonstrations broke out. Confronted with what he later called a "native uprising" similar to what the Belgians had faced in the Congo, he telephoned his wife, Marion, and told her to barricade herself in a bedroom closet with their daughter and his gun.[106] As Barnes' comparison suggests, domesticity had become entwined with anticolonialism in Saudi Arabia as elsewhere in the third world. Aramco leaders consequently recognized that gender was crucial to reconciling their enterprise with Arab nationalism. Far from an abstract knowledge that, in Scott's words, "ignores essential features of any real, functioning social order," Aramco's approach fetishized such details, particularly those regarding women and gender, to validate its role in the kingdom. The fact that Aramco maintained a bureaucratic office, the Arabian Affairs Division, to collect and manage local knowledge poses a challenge to the sharp dialectic underlying Scott's critique. Company literature, and an informal mythology accepted by many Americans, also positioned Aramco as the antithesis of British colonialism. That mythology is itself an artifact of postcolonial politics, which forced modernizers to legitimize development as fulfilling local desires.

In many respects, the villages constructed as part of the Egyptian government's Tahrir (Liberation) Province desert reclamation project appear to provide a textbook case of the "authoritarian high modernism" Scott criticized. A massive scheme initiated by the Free Officers' regime that seized power in July 1952, Tahrir Province initially envisioned reclaiming some 600,000 *feddans* of desert west of the Nile Delta on the way to eventually cultivating twice that area and increasing Egypt's total agricultural land by a staggering 5 to 10 percent. The first new village built in Tahrir Province, Umm Saber, consisted of public buildings plus 230 homes capable of

[104] Johnson, *You Can Go Home Again*, 79.
[105] Bird, *Crossing Mandelbaum Gate*, 209, 210.
[106] Barnes, *Looking Back Over My Shoulder*, 169.

housing 1,400 relocated peasants.[107] Eventually, planners hoped, the province would be organized into twelve districts, each containing eleven villages the size of Umm Saber.[108] Villages would be built of hollow mud bricks that could help manage extreme desert temperatures and whose local fabrication would contribute to the province's self-sufficiency. Those peasants carefully selected to live in the villages were subject to military-style training described as "complete human reconditioning" intended to create a new Egyptian citizen.[109] According to historian Jon B. Alterman, Tahrir reflected an "impatience bordering on urgency" among Free Officers eager to change Egypt's unfavorable land-to-population ratio. Alterman writes: "Tahrir was breathtakingly broad in scope ... it would provide the first breath for a model society that would revolutionize the countryside."[110] More than just reclamation, Tahrir appears to fit Scott's definition of "authoritarian high modernism" as an attempt at the "administrative ordering of nature and society" by the state.[111]

But a closer look reveals how Tahrir Province's legitimacy hinged on whether it was perceived as respecting peasants' way of life. Tahrir is therefore important because it highlights the political aspects of modernization Scott's critique neglected. Even as villages were being constructed and land reclaimed in the 1950s, a conflict was already under way over how the experiment would be remembered both within Egypt and abroad. Among the Egyptian elite, Tahrir served as a site for controversies over land reform policy. In addition, the province became entangled in Cold War politics and served as a useful foil for Americans who claimed that a rival, U.S.-sponsored project in Egypt fostered grass-roots democracy, in contrast to the top-down authoritarianism of Tahrir, which began receiving Soviet assistance in the 1960s. In both the domestic Egyptian and Cold War contexts, the value of the Tahrir scheme was debated in terms of its ability to deliver self-determination as well as modernity. In the political conflict over its value as a model, the legitimacy of Tahrir Province depended on its being perceived as an antiauthoritarian project.

No one defended Tahrir Province more tenaciously than its founder and early leader, Major Magdi Hasanayn. A Free Officer who was given wide latitude by Nasser in a bureaucratic fiefdom called the Tahrir Province

[107] Government of Egypt, *The Liberation "Tahreer" Province* (n.d.), 3, 5.
[108] See Doreen Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East: A Study of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 49.
[109] Quoted in El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*, 197.
[110] Jon B. Alterman, *Egypt and American Foreign Assistance, 1952–1956: Hopes Dashed* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 79. See also Roel Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity: Secular Liberal and Left-Wing Political Thought in Egypt, 1945–1958* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 201.
[111] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4.

Organization, Hasanayn managed the project until the National Assembly removed him in 1957 and placed Tahrir under the Ministry of Agrarian Reform.[112] From the earliest stages, Hasanayn combined an emphasis on Tahrir's impressive scale with a focus on its humanizing elements. He sought to deflect criticisms of Tahrir's Pharaonic ambitions by turning attention to the province's villages, which he portrayed as vibrant communities. He explained in contradictory terms to British journalist Harry Hopkins that it would be "the creation of a youthful, co-ordinated and coherent Egyptian society" that also possessed "peculiar individuality, aims, [and] ability, to serve as a model of what the Revolution intends for this noble nation." As one measure of the project's humane character, Hasanayn told Hopkins that peasants would be taught to play musical instruments because "a fellah who can appreciate music is more evolved."[113] He told British agriculturalist Doreen Warriner: "'Humanity is to be the keynote.'"[114] Hasanayn invoked the communitarian values and desert pilgrimage of America's Mormons: "*This is the place!* You know what they achieved. It will be so with us also.'"[115] His promotional materials even referred to Umm Saber as "the first new Egyptian 'neighbourhood.'"[116]

In his memoir, *Al-Sahara': al-Thawra wa al-Tharwa, qissat mudiriya al-Tahrir* [*The Desert: The Revolution and the Resources, the Story of Tahrir Province*] (1975), Hasanayn defended his project as creating autonomous communities where peasants would be free to live out the values of Egypt's revolution. This was a difficult task, because he presented this argument at the same time that he sought to defend the viability of collectivized agriculture in a running debate with opponents. Published following Nasser's death during the presidency of Anwar Sadat, *Al-Sahara'* reprinted historical materials from the time of Hasanayn's leadership and removal from office during 1950s, but also reinterpreted the meaning of Tahrir Province following two recent Arab–Israeli wars and amid Sadat's economic liberalization. Nevertheless, Hasanayn's attempt at reconciling his large development vision with small-scale communities situates him in the same historical moment with the ADS and Aramco's town sites, whose architects also sought to portray their new communities as places where modernization could coexist with humanity.

Hasanayn uses several strategies for infusing a sense of self-determination into an undertaking of such ambitious size. The first was evoking a radical egalitarianism among the technocratic elites who designed Tahrir Province,

[112] See Gabriel S. Saab, *The Egyptian Agrarian Reform, 1952–1962* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 64.
[113] Harry Hopkins, *Egypt, The Crucible: The Unfinished Revolution in the Arab World* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 128, 130.
[114] Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East*, 49.
[115] Hopkins, *Egypt, The Crucible*, 129.
[116] *The Liberation "Tahreer" Province*, 10.

the workers who built it, and the peasants who settled it. Tahrir overcame the colonial legacy that distinguished between ideas and labor, he insisted, and the absence of civilization in the desert imposed upon all people working there "one equal rank." The "democratic method [*al-uslub al-dimuqrati*]" utilized at Tahrir meant that any worker or peasant could make his voice heard at "the highest executive level" of the province.[117] Hasanayn similarly emphasized the camaraderie among engineers and workers, who rode side by side together on plows and bulldozers, lived in the same type of houses, ate in the same cafeteria, played on the same athletic teams, and shared nightly entertainments. He made much of the fact that while many of the 150 experts who worked on Tahrir were trained abroad (including some in the United States), they were all Egyptians, with no foreigners among them.[118]

Another strategy involved displaying empathy toward peasants and describing the brutal realities of life in rural Egypt that Tahrir promised to transform. *Al-Sahara'* presented a historical account of peasant oppression embellished with Hasanayn's borrowings from Marxism-Leninism. Like the slow turning of the water wheel, he explained, centuries of farming the Nile Valley had "changed the hand that held the whip, but the whip did not change." The Ottoman conquest had placed further burdens on peasants, while the rise of the colonial cotton trade partially integrated Egypt into global capitalism without creating any incentives for landowners to improve the primitive means of production based on peasant labor. Hasanayn's account both stereotypes the peasant and anticipates later critiques accusing reformers of appropriating him by trading on the "credit of his oppression [*sum'at zulmihi*]." Paradoxically, Tahrir Province must be ambitious in scale, Hasanayn insists, in order to break the oppressive cycle. Hasanayn's recounting of the bureaucratic and reactionary forces that persecuted him testify to Tahrir's humane approach. Portraying his political opponents as obstructing historical progress, he refers to those who ousted him from the leadership of Tahrir as "Ottoman chieftains." He castigates the functionaries who bungled agricultural reforms and the "knights of the routine" who sabotaged them.[119] Like other community builders, Hasanayn set up anti-democratic and bureaucratic rivals as straw men.

For Hasanayn, ground-level knowledge about Egyptian village life provided the basis for designing Tahrir's communities. Not unlike the study of Saudi towns undertaken by Aramco, Hasanayn's experts investigated the "objective conditions of the Egyptian village." They aimed to preserve "all the fundamental characteristics of the Egyptian peasant" while making "appropriate adjustments" to define a new type of Egyptian settlement.

[117] Hasanayn, *Al-Sahara'*, 86, 133–34.
[118] Ibid., 104; 106–07, 138.
[119] Ibid., 8, 26, 38, 62, 71.

Through this process, they arrived at the ideal size of 230 families and 1,400 people per community. Hasanayn claimed that these plans placed "the human being [*al-insan*]" at the center, and so villages were designed to a human scale in order to integrate family, work, and social life. Clusters of eight to ten houses were grouped around a courtyard of twenty-four square meters opening onto the main road, and each village was provided with a main square, market, school, mosque, and sports field.[120] As Hopkins described them:

> [T]he villages were designed with amenity and a new pattern of life in view, not merely brute necessity. Council House, mosque and primary school were set around lawns and gardens. The houses themselves, each with its small front garden, were constructed in U-shaped blocks, front doors opening on a public square, back doors on a service road to the fields.

Houses came fully furnished for families, down to the pots and pans and standard-issue clothing for women and men. Hasanayn's deputies ushered Hopkins into one of the homes:

> There was a chintz-covered sofa against a wall in the small living room and flowers in a vase on the table, which was covered with patterned oilcloth. One of the remaining two rooms had a double bed; the other, a double-decker iron bunk for the children. There was a bathroom with a flush toilet and shower. Cooking was by kerosene.[121]

The design of the houses and villages presupposed a community of nuclear families, and applicants for relocation to Tahrir Province had to be peasant heads of households who "possess[ed] only one wife, no dependants other than children, and no property; they must have been only once married and must have finished their military service."[122] Indeed, Hasanayn relied on the nuclear family structure of Tahrir's villages and a gendered division of labor as the means for integrating the household and community into his vision of Egypt's national development.

Hasanayn held up the integration of women into training programs and working life as evidence of the project's democratic character. Among the many "firsts" he claimed for the province was peasant women's training in cleanliness, weaving, and home management.[123] Warriner proclaimed women's participation in sports as "a revolution indeed."[124] During the first six months following their arrival, Hasanayn writes, peasants underwent

[120] Ibid., 124, 157, 158; see also 175.
[121] Hopkins, *Egypt, The Crucible*, 133, 134.
[122] Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East*, 51. See also Hasanayn, *Al-Sahara'*, 164–65.
[123] Ibid., 322. On the "The Home Economics [*al-tadbir al-manzili*] of Nationhood" in Egypt, see Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, 132–65.
[124] Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East*, 50.

training at the second village constructed, 'Umar Shahin, before being resettled permanently in their new homes. This training was conducted on the level of each individual [*fardi*] man, woman, and child; on the level of the family [*al-usra*] as the basic unit of the new society; and on the level of the "local community [*lil-mujtama' al-mahalli*]." Women's training included cleanliness, childcare, and "methods of modern management for the new home [*turuq al-isti'mal al-haditha lil-manzil al-jadid*]," as well as "compulsory [*ijbari*]" literacy training. Consistent with a gendered division of labor, female peasants were schooled in poultry science, milking, and rural handicrafts, as opposed to the agricultural and vocational training given to men. Women learned to be consumers as well as producers, and their domestic roles figured prominently in the way Hasanayn related the nuclear household to national development. Women learned what every modern home needed: "a broom [*miqasha*]," "sackcloth [*khiyash*]," "feather-duster [*minfada*]," "bucket [*jardal*]," "phenol [*finik*]," "brush [*fursha*]," "soap [*sabun*]," and so forth. In prioritizing the development of the countryside over urban industries, Hasanayn emphasized the building up of peasants' "purchasing power [*al-qudra al-shira'iya*]" to "broaden the internal market [*tawassu' al-suq al-dakhiliya*]" for Egyptian manufactures.[125] For him, the efficiencies large-scale collective farming provided would create the wealth with which to grow peasant purchasing power and generate internal demand. In this way, each peasant woman played a critical role in Egypt's national development through the modern management of her household.

In the battle over Tahrir Province, Hasanayn's opponents within Egypt included civilian advocates of private landownership, such as Nasser's agrarian reform chief, Sayid Marei, as well as military officers in the reclamation bureaucracy who became invested in state ownership of agricultural land. Following a visit in 1964 by Khrushchev, Nasser accepted Soviet aid to reclaim 10,000 additional *feddans* in northern Tahrir Province.[126] Given that it became a Cold War symbol of Egyptian–Soviet cooperation second only to the Aswan High Dam, Americans also had a stake in shaping perceptions of Tahrir Province. They attempted to do so negatively by contrasting its supposedly authoritarian nature with the grass-roots democracy they associated with the Egyptian-American Rural Improvement Service (EARIS). Modest only when compared to Tahrir, EARIS was a joint project by the two countries to reclaim about 33,000 *feddans* in the marshlands of Buhaira Province and the desert near the Fayyum oasis.[127] Like Tahrir,

[125] Hasanayn, *Al-Sahara'*, 76, 166–68; see also 80, 137.
[126] See Robert Springborg, "Patrimonialism and Policy Making in Egypt: Nasser and Sadat and the Tenure Policy for Reclaimed Lands," *Middle Eastern Studies* 15 (January 1979): 56–58. See also transcripts printed in Hasanayn, *Al-Sahara'*, 181ff.
[127] See Saab, *The Egyptian Agrarian Reform*, 212–18; and Alterman, *Egypt and American Foreign Assistance*, 63–95.

EARIS envisioned resettling peasants in villages that would enhance traditional community ties through the construction of "wide streets, a mosque, piped water supply and community center (school, a meeting room, health clinic, community bath and training facilities)." Lebanese-born sociologist and U.S. Department of Agriculture expert Afif I. Tannous took control of community-planning efforts for EARIS in spring 1953 by calling for a grass-roots approach that included the organization of "women to improve home life and increase their participation in community affairs." According to Tannous, "self-help is the basic method in the operation of the Program."[128] The architects of Tahrir and EARIS each cited their plans to mobilize women as evidence for the democratic approach taken by their respective projects.

Although U.S. officials identified problems with EARIS including the high cost of village amenities, they criticized Tahrir's alleged authoritarianism to portray EARIS as a success.[129] Political scientist Richard Hrair Dekmejian wrote a history of EARIS in 1981 for USAID that relied on government documents and interviews with former U.S. officials. Dekmejian's account of EARIS thus provides a counterpoint to Hasanayn's defense of Tahrir. Each author criticizes the rival project on the grounds of bureaucratic indifference toward its human subjects. Dekmejian writes:

> In developmental terminology, Tahrir vs EARIS represented two distinct and divergent approaches – "modernization from the top" vs. "modernization from below." In the American perception, the Tahrir province represented a clear example of "modernization from the top," where the Egyptian government followed etatist-socialist principles by providing financing, organizational direction and technical cadres, and permitted only limited peasant participation. In sharp contrast, the American approach to EARIS emphasized voluntaristic, grass roots peasant participation in democratic village self-governance.[130]

Tannous himself recalled: "We were going to consult with the people and not just impose things on them." His later visits to EARIS villages confirmed that the project "was flourishing beautifully, in contrast with the Tahrir Province that the Egyptian government developed from top-down, without involving the people."[131] Yet Hasanayn similarly characterized Tahrir as an undertaking concerned with "civilization in its broad sense." The villages of Tahrir were not just places for housing workers or facilitating reclamation, Hasanayn insisted, as occurred in Abis, where EARIS built settlements. By contrast, Tahrir's superior planning respected the "objective, indigenous

[128] Richard Hrair Dekmejian, "An Analytical History and Evaluation of the Egyptian American Rural Improvement Service (EARIS), 1953–1965" (USAID, April 1981), 8, 9.
[129] See Alterman, *Egypt and American Foreign Assistance*, 87–95.
[130] Dekmejian, "An Analytical History and Evaluation of the Egyptian American Rural Improvement Service," 30.
[131] Interview with Afif I. Tannous, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection, Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/item/mfdipbib001160/, accessed September 23, 2015.

characteristics" encompassing the "historical and contemporary circumstances" of both the land and those who worked it.[132]

Although Hasanayn and Tannous emphasized the "self-help" aspects of their projects in retrospect, each also sought to legitimize his project through respect for grass-roots community and peasant culture. Like other community architects, Hasanayn stressed the inclusion of women and an abundant domestic lifestyle as proof of his project's antiauthoritarian nature. His prescription of standardized gender roles sought to reconcile the promise of individual and community freedom with the vision of a mass society. One female Egyptian social scientist employed by Tahrir Province believed that its training programs would give peasants a new understanding of the state, replacing the army's "spirit of domination [*ruh al-saytara*]" with a human face.[133] Yet Warriner observed that in 'Umar Shahin, the "women, primly tending the model house" under the supervision of female trainers, "seem slightly dazed."[134] *Al-Sahara'* combined domestic with martial imagery, projecting Tahrir's two faces onto different gender roles. Hasanayn not only focused on home and community, but also lauded Tahrir's sons for bearing arms during the Suez War. In the wake of June 1967, he emphasized the role of villages in holding Egyptian territory and described Tahrir as the blueprint for the "total regulation [*taqnin shamil*]" of rural life.[135] Hasanayn intended women to symbolize empowerment and to counter impressions of state authority attempting to control the countryside.

Like Hasanayn in *Al-Sahara'* and al-'Alami in *Palestine Is My Country*, Hassan Fathy engages in mythmaking and score-settling in his development memoir *Architecture for the Poor* (1973).[136] He blames "peasant obscurantism and bureaucratic hostility" for the failure of New Gourna, the model village he built during the late 1940s opposite Luxor in the Nile Valley (Figure 3.1).[137] But Fathy's work also exemplifies how local knowledge assumed political significance and shows that community building was more than just the state's act of violence against the countryside. Among architects, debates have centered around whether Fathy's

[132] Hasanayn, *Al-Sahara'*, 135.
[133] Quoted in El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*, 211.
[134] Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East*, 52.
[135] Hasanayn, *Al-Sahara'*, 177. By 1971, Tahrir Province consisted of some 200,000 total reclaimed acres and 40,000 households. See table 1, "Some Major Reclamation Projects in the Arab World," in John Waterbury, "The Cairo Workshop on Land Reclamation and Resettlement in the Arab World," *Fieldstaff Reports*: Africa: Northeast Africa, series 17 (December 1971): 7.
[136] Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*. This chapter also draws on manuscripts from the Hassan Fathy Archives [HFA], Rare Books and Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo, Egypt. Fathy's first published account of New Gourna was *Gourna: A Tale of Two Villages* (Cairo: Egyptian Ministry of Culture, 1969).
[137] Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, 149; see also 150–51.

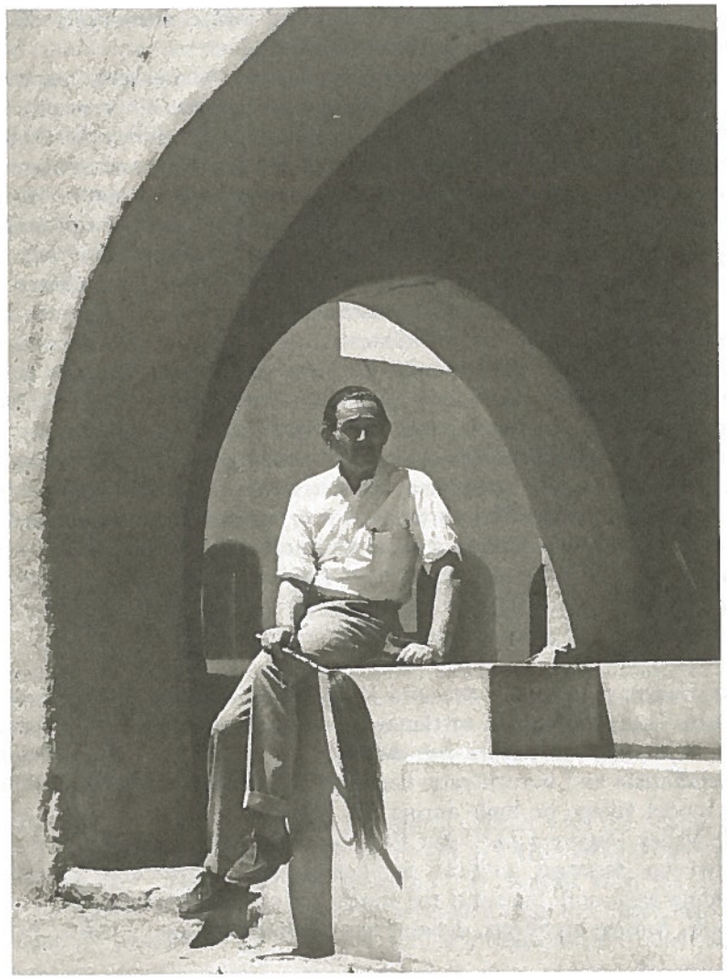

FIGURE 3.1. Hassan Fathy at New Gourna. Copyright and Courtesy of Rare Books and Special Collections Library, the American University in Cairo.

vernacular architecture – mud brick structures with handcrafted, domed roofs – was local or cosmopolitan, modern or a protest against the postwar international style.[138] Mitchell portrays Fathy as caught between the state's

[138] See James Steele, *An Architecture for People: The Complete Works of Hassan Fathy* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1997); and Panayiota I. Pyla, "Ekistics, Architecture and Environmental Politics, 1945–1976: A Prehistory of Sustainable Development" (PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002).

determination to promote tourism in the Valley of the Kings and recalcitrant peasants living in the "Theban Necropolis" whom the Antiquities Department charged Fathy with relocating. For Mitchell, New Gourna built on previous state programs that had also dispossessed peasants. Fathy "insisted on the participation of villagers in the design" of New Gourna, Mitchell writes, but "never succeeded in persuading the Egyptian government that it had anything to learn from the peasant."[139]

New Gourna was more significant, however, for its method of aided self-help than for the architectural style Fathy developed there, a method he sought to replicate beyond Egypt. Nor was Fathy's role limited to that of a reluctant soldier in the Egyptian state's war against its people. As Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait write:

> The importance of urbanistic flows across the Middle East is derived from the extent to which Arab planners, architects, builders and so on have customarily worked in other countries in their region. These intraregional flows, carrying practices across national boundaries, are often not easy to capture and hence may be greatly underestimated.... Yet those who practice across a region represent only a partial enlargement of scale; at a higher scale of complexity is of course the global practitioner.[140]

Fathy became a global practitioner. His method emerged from Egypt but evolved in the course of his experiences working in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, West Africa, and the United States. His interpretation of "aided self-help" grew into a formula for housing the poor that simultaneously offered a strategy for legitimizing community projects through the incorporation of local knowledge.

Architecture for the Poor emphasized the active involvement of Gourna's residents and respect for their way of life in the design of the new model village. Fathy writes that the location for the new village was chosen by a committee consisting of himself, government officials, "the Mayor of Gourna and the sheikhs of the five hamlets" that composed the old village. The success of the project depended, Fathy argued, on understanding social and family relationships among Old Gourna's 7,000 residents:

> All these people, related in a complex web of blood and marriage ties, with their habits and prejudices, their friendships and their feuds – a delicately balanced social organism intimately integrated with the topography, with the very bricks and timber of the village – this whole society had, as it were, to be dismantled and put together again in another setting.[141]

[139] Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 184, 186–87, 189.

[140] Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait, "Introduction: Transporting Planning," in *Urbanism: Imported or Exported?*, ed. Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Academy, 2003), xxvi.

[141] Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, 17.

Fathy aimed "to uncover the everyday life of the Gournis and reveal it, perhaps even more minutely than they themselves knew it," a task that ideally would require researchers to "watch the village life for many months," both to "observe and invite suggestions."[142] Like Hasanayn, Fathy described a manner of community planning that supposedly closed the power gap between experts and residents, in the case of New Gourna by restoring the "unhurried, appreciative discussions" between craftsman and homeowner that used to characterize village construction. If "each family must be designed for separately," then the architect is no longer an imperious professional, let alone a government bureaucrat who "designs one house and adds six zeroes to it."[143]

Similarly, Fathy's use of mud brick and handcrafted domes of the sort he observed in upper Egypt represented the strategic composition of an "indigenous" style that could set New Gourna apart from what he portrayed as attempts to impose foreign or dehumanizing housing models on peasants. Criticisms of Fathy's claim to have found a "pure" Egyptian style or arguments that his was a cosmopolitan amalgam of different "local" practices therefore neglected its political purpose. Fathy proposed to restore peasant individuality in an explicitly Cold War context:

> Inexorably and largely unchallenged, the promoters of sameness have prevailed and have eliminated from modern life the tradition of individuality. Mass communications, mass production, mass education are the marks of our modern societies, which, whether communist or capitalist, are in these respects indistinguishable.[144]

Mud brick, fabricated onsite using precise data about the composition of soils, as well as the courtyard house and wind-catch as architectural features to regulate the extreme local climate, held down construction costs. At the same time, the domes fashioned by craftsmen from upper Egypt freed him from a reliance on purchased building materials and foreign expertise. As al-'Alami did, Fathy made a statement about self-determination by portraying his community as arising from an intimate connection with the land itself. Dwellings, he wrote, "should look as much at home in the fields as the date-palm."[145] Among his complaints about the American EARIS villages was that "they employed materials and techniques applicable to town building but foreign to the countryside," including "industrially fabricated building materials."[146] Likewise, his use of the courtyard house was portrayed as preserving both Arab culture and the extended family networks on which Old Gourna was based. Along with the dome, he wrote, the courtyard house was

[142] Ibid., 50, 53.
[143] Ibid., 29, 31, 51.
[144] Ibid., 27.
[145] Ibid., 44.
[146] Hassan Fathy, "Agrarian Reform and Rural Housing in Iraq," November 3, 1958, binder II #30, HFA.

"part of a microcosm that parallels the order of the universe itself," while the clustering of houses inhabited by the same extended family around a common courtyard "will help to cement together the family group by a constant gentle emphasis on its oneness." The new village would be divided by curved streets into four quarters, each of which would house "one of the main tribal groups of Old Gourna." Fathy contrasted his respect for the Gournis' family relations against the inhumanity of bureaucratic plans symbolized by the grid pattern.[147] "This approach to habitation," he wrote of organizing New Gourna's layout by family, "is the antithesis of the anonymity of modern urban housing development commonly applied to villages."[148] Fathy's plan combined these residential quarters with public buildings meant to foster a rich community life, including a mosque and Coptic church, *khan* (or market) for displaying handicrafts, a public bath, theater, women's center, medical dispensary, and schools for boys and girls.[149]

Fathy claimed to be both preserving and enhancing the Gournis' way of life. It was through his observations about women's place in village life and prescriptions of their roles in New Gourna that Fathy proposed to reconcile these objectives. Fathy resorted to the same etymological strategy as Aramco's researchers for defining a traditional domesticity:

> The Arabic name *sakan*, to denote the house, is related to the word *sakina*, peaceful and holy, while the word *harim*, which means "woman," is related to *haram*, "sacred," which denotes the family living quarters in the Arab house.

Fathy revered the courtyard house as a sacred space containing a "trembling liquid femininity." If the courtyard is not fully enclosed on four sides, then

> this special atmosphere flows out and runs to waste in the desert sands. Such a fragile creation is this peace and holiness, this womanly inwardness, this atmosphere of a house for which "domesticity" is so inadequate a word, that the least little rupture in the frail walls that guard it destroys it.

The courtyard-and-square layout of New Gourna was therefore intended partly to regulate women's entry into the village's common areas and to provide for degrees of public exposure. Fathy's evocation of village women's role placed special emphasis on those occasions when they were permitted out in public. These included women's market day, "the one day in the week when they can leave the confinement of the house and enjoy the freedom of walking, dawdling, and gossiping as they please." In characterizing how female villagers fetch water, Fathy likewise conjures an image of traditional, local practices: "black-robed women, erect as queens, each with her water

[147] Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, 58, 70, 71–72.
[148] Hassan Fathy, "New Gourna: A Housing Experiment, March 26, 1955, binder I, #24, HFA.
[149] Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, 70. Mitchell notes that "there was also to be another kind of building not usually found in villages, a police station." See Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 187.

jar (*ballas*) carried nonchalantly on her head." His plans for New Gourna contained proposals for preserving what Fathy described as women's traditional practices at home and in public but that promised to modernize them according to his own vision of domestic and community life.[150]

In consulting with the Gournis about their new homes, Fathy was unable to speak with the women, who "were kept jealously out of the way," though he later had female intermediaries do so on his behalf, as Phebe Marr would for Aramco. Unlike al-'Alami and Hasanayn, Fathy did not directly assign women an economic role in New Gourna, though presumably they could participate in the production of the handicrafts that he envisioned as sustaining the village. Rather, the architect synthesized his conception of tradition with scientific expertise to legitimize prescribed roles for women in public and private. An example concerned the *hammam*, or public bath, which would offer women the opportunity "to escape from the restriction of the house" on the day set aside for them each week. There, women could gossip and "choose brides for their sons and brothers" from among village females whose charms would be on display. As individual homes were provided with internal faucets, the *hammam* would replace the village well as the site where women contracted marriages. Fathy sought to revive this "traditional" practice in a way that incorporated social and medical science. "When the prescriptive sociologist wishes to manipulate people into the patterns and activities he favors," he explained, "it is by means of institutions like the hammam that he will be most successful." The bath in New Gourna would fulfill a sociological role by giving women and men "a wide, varied, and strong collection of social contacts," as well as a hygienic one, by offering each villager "mental as well as physical refreshment" and "an opportunity to delouse himself." Fathy similarly invoked tradition and science when describing his design for cooking and washing facilities in the Gournis' new homes. "The peasant woman usually cooks over a fire built on the ground," he explains. The kitchen was designed "only after prolonged observation and careful analysis of a woman's movements while cooking," retaining "the squatting position for the cook, as this has been shown to be far more comfortable than a standing position."[151] The laundry pit that would be built into each home also permitted the woman to work while seated before a circular stand designed to hold a basin. "Scientific findings on the thermal metabolism of the body," he wrote, "show the wisdom of adopting such a posture in a warm climate." The "size, height and dimensions of the seat and the disk are designed to suite [*sic*] the bodily movements of the peasant woman while washing in the traditional way."[152] In

[150] Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, 57, 76, 100.
[151] Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, 40, 88, 89, 98.
[152] Hassan Fathy, "New Gourna Village: A Housing Experiment." See also Fathy to Marinos, "Quriyya al-Gourna al-Namudhijiya al-Jadida," n.d., pp. 16–17, binder I, #13, HFA.

Fathy's prescription of domestic roles for women, no distance separated the expert from the peasant, because scientific evidence confirmed the wisdom of traditional practices.

Fathy attempted to turn his project into an authentic expression of peasant self-determination. His memoir echoes Tayeb Salih's Arabic novel set in the upper Nile, *Season of Migration to the North* (1966). Salih's narrator praises the village craftsman who built the "vast and ancient door" to his grandfather's house from a single tree using the same self-taught expertise with which he fashioned water-wheels. Like New Gourna's buildings, the old house was built of mud brick created from the surrounding earth, "so that it is an extension of it."[153] Mud brick communicated an opposite message of local authenticity from the "abbreviated visual image of efficiency" that Scott regards as the high-modernist aesthetic.[154] Fathy's respect for local knowledge and tradition at New Gourna also enabled him to criticize other aided self-help projects. When governments, the United Nations, or "some other benevolent authority" provided equipment and materials for peasants to construct their own homes, wrote Fathy, "the 'self-help' lasts just as long as the 'aid' does." Villagers who acquired new skills to utilize the materials faced "that most frustrating of blind alleys" when the materials ran out and they could no longer practice their trade. This was precisely the problem Fathy sought to avoid by teaching Gournis how to fabricate mud bricks from "common local materials."[155] His approach made New Gourna replicable, "a true model village, whose buildings could be copied safely by any peasant with no technical help anywhere in Egypt."[156] In this way, Fathy set himself apart from people at "clean universities in nice, progressive countries" who were "offended by the existence of poverty and squalor among millions in the unfortunate countries." Aid bureaucracies might have provided assistance out of disdain for the poor ("'Give him sixpence to go away.' 'What a dreadful smell – give them some drains.'"), but Fathy presented himself as attuned to peasant lifeways.[157] Though the Gournis inconveniently revolted against relocation and sabotaged a dike, flooding Fathy's village, the architect had devised at New Gourna a method for legitimizing development programs by leveraging local knowledge.

In 1957, Fathy joined Doxiadis Associates, the Athens firm founded by the visionary architect and planner Constantinos Doxiadis.[158] A development

[153] Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (New York: Michael Kesend Publishing, 1989), 70, 71. On the doors of village houses, see also Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, 35.
[154] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 224.
[155] Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, 117, 118.
[156] Ibid., 96.
[157] Ibid., 117.
[158] See Fathy to Doxiadis March 28, 1957, folder: DOXIADIS Associates, HFA. On Doxiadis' role in the urban planning of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, see Pascal Menoret, *Joyriding in*

oracle and entrepreneur, Doxiadis originated the discipline he called "ekistics," or the science of human settlements. Social geographer Ray Bromley describes ekistics as "a unifying concept enabling scholars and policymakers to link micro-, meso- and macro-scale processes throughout history and far into the future."[159] Doxiadis used his experience working with Marshall Plan funds in his native Greece to land Ford Foundation support for the "City of the Future" (COF), a massive study that attempted to project the trends that would shape human settlements over the ensuing two centuries. For his part, Fathy's emphasis on local knowledge tempered Doxiadis' fixation on the global scale. Fathy contributed "evolving notions of 'tradition,'" scholar Panayiota I. Pyla writes, that complemented the future megacity of "ecumenopolis" prophesied by Doxiadis. During the time he worked on COF, Pyla explains, Fathy "assumed the role of a spokesman for the 'underdeveloped' parts of the world."[160]

While at Doxiadis, Fathy cultivated local knowledge about poor communities as a way of legitimizing his approach to aided self-help. His first major opportunity to do so came with his work on Greater Mussayib, a rural community of several thousand households constructed in Iraq's Babil Province. In "A Report on Housing for Greater Mussayib," Fathy wrote to Doxiadis that he had visited "archaeological sites as well as villages and towns" in the area "with the objective of getting acquainted with the national and local spirit" and "to spot out" the "methods of construction" that had "survived or could be rendered valid anew." Fathy believed that public facilities could logically be provided only "by grouping the people into villages of convenient size." As at New Gourna, however, Greater Mussayib would be planned around family relations. Doing so required

> close investigation in the social field, with regard to the affinity between individuals in the family and tribe groups, their desires of proximity of their houses, of securing seclusion for the family groups and quarters, and the distribution of the family quarters in the village plan etc.

As he had done in the Nile Valley, Fathy sought to reconcile his concept of local tradition with the findings of modern science, particularly in the domestic amenities provided in peasants' homes. Such amenities would have to be "designed with respect of the customary ways of usage" yet also offer hygienic means for "washing of the body, the laundry, dishwashing, the disposal of waste water and the night-soil as well as the recommendation for

Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 67–101.

159 Ray Bromley, "Towards Global Human Settlements: Constantinos Doxiadis as Entrepreneur, Coalition-Builder and Visionary," in *Urbanism: Imported or Exported?*, 316. See also Constantinos A. Doxiadis, *Ekistics: An Introduction to the Science of Human Settlements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

160 Pyla, "Ekistics, Architecture, and Environmental Politics," 93, 106.

cooking, heating, baking and water storage, etc." Fathy juxtaposed arrangements for female domestic labor with his hope that Mussayib's male heads of households would include retired police and military officers, who were given special privileges under Iraq's land law. These men would "form an educated class with a high level of living who will be setting new standards for the peasants."[161] A Doxiadis Associates bulletin published after the July 1958 Iraqi revolution referred to a breakdown in the "patriarchal family system" that led to the influx of the rural poor into *sarifa* shanties on Baghdad's periphery.[162]

For COF, in which researchers were assigned to study human settlements in different regions of the world, Fathy barnstormed cities in West Africa between December 1960 and February 1961 (see Chapter 1).[163] He portrayed his method of aided self-help as an antidote to the racist legacy of colonialism evident in the region's towns. West African towns, Fathy wrote, "are wholly European creations, serving foreign economic and political interests, and the African shanty towns that have grown onto them are as different in culture and life as they are in architecture from the smart modern buildings of the centre." Such cities are characterized by "separate areas for different races," a "ghetto system" that foments "resentment and race-hatred."[164] Colonial cities were artificial, in the sense that they did not emerge naturally from their environment. When "a European town is planted in the bush, the natural hierarchy of settlements is upset" because such a town "does not have a genuine relationship with the countryside." This incongruity is symbolized by the European preference for "impossibly expensive air-conditioning" that few black Africans could afford. Blacks were also excluded from city centers by "municipalities' laws preventing the building of native-type dwellings in specified areas." Fathy argued that "Africans who want houses should be encouraged to build for themselves" wherever possible. To make aided self-help work in the cities, and to make the resulting dwellings suited to their inhabitants, the study of tribal relations and local practices was essential. "There can be no question," Fathy wrote,

> that one of the most vital pieces of research waiting to be done is on how to make use of the existing habits of cooperation found in the tribal system, the village tradition of freely contributed labour for a common purpose, and to direct it into organized urban building projects.[165]

161 Hassan Fathy, "A Report on Housing for Greater Mussayib," October 10, 1957, folder: Iraq Housing Project, box: Architectural Projects 1930s–1960s, HFA.

162 Doxiadis Associates *Bulletin* no. 5 (September 1959), folder: S XI DOX A, box: Dox 11, HFA. On Doxiadis Associates' work on an urban housing program in Iraq, see Steele, *An Architecture for the People*, 111–16.

163 See ibid., 117–23.

164 Hassan Fathy, "Preliminary Sketch of the Report on Africa," March 22, 1961, folder: PP 107 typescripts, COF, etc., box: 11 Dox, HFA.

165 Hassan Fathy, "Future Insertion in the Report," June 14, 1961, folder: PP 107 typescripts, COF, etc., box: 11 Dox, HFA.

Fathy therefore insisted that his method could prove equally useful in urban and rural areas. Following his study of West African towns for COF, Fathy contributed to a UN rural housing project in Dar'iyya, Saudi Arabia, where he sought to mobilize local knowledge to help villagers build themselves dwellings near the Saudi ruling family's ancestral home.[166]

Fathy disparaged the United States as embodying a dehumanizing approach to human communities. For COF, Fathy had read a report on North American cities that criticized suburbanization and automobility, as well as class and racial segregation.[167] Reiterating Jacobs' critique of American city planning, Fathy linked the "problem of delinquency" to the "frame of the town plan" in the United States. "We have in the USA," Fathy wrote in a 1963 conference paper, "a unique chance to study the effects of an anonymous town plan on the individual."[168] In a larger sense, Fathy rejected modernization theorists' portrayal of America's present as the model for developing countries' future:

> There is a tendency to take for granted that the type of civilization seen in the USA today ... represents the future for all societies that have not yet reached the USA level. Even those who look beyond the present scene in the USA tend to believe that it is at least a necessary stage in the evolution of societies, and that the countries that today are called underdeveloped must pass through a stage in which their society and urban scene will resemble that of the USA today. This view is surely far too simplistic.

In U.S. cities, "man has been subordinated to the machine, and the cities designed for cars." With respect to town planning, the United States was "the most backward country on earth."[169] Yet, as aided self-help gained support in official circles, and as Jacobs and others raised objections to city planning and urban renewal, Fathy found American allies. Though at times he had defined his community-building method in opposition to the United States, Fathy would attempt to bring it to Chicago.

Fathy's leading patron was William R. Polk, the Harvard Arabist who served at the State Department (see Chapter 6). Polk later headed the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs (ASIIA) at the University of Chicago. Polk admired Fathy, describing him as the "Third World's Walter Gropius" in a letter to the University of Chicago Press, which published

[166] See documentation in box: HF1 Series III/B Architectural Projects Sohar, Oman/Dar'iyya, KSA, HFA.

[167] G. Gutenschwager, "A Report on American and Canadian Cities," July 14, 1961, R-ERES 16(14), no folder, HFA. See also Gerald A. Gutenschwager, *Planning and Social Science: A Humanistic Approach* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004). Fathy makes similar criticisms in "The Dwelling within the Urban Settlement," August 18, 1961, binder II, #46, HFA.

[168] Hassan Fathy, "Dwelling in Developing Countries" [handwritten draft for 13th International Course in Criminology, June 22, 1963], no folder, box: Dox 11, HFA. See Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 57, 74–88.

[169] "Dwelling in Developing Countries" [handwritten draft].

Architecture for the Poor on Polk's recommendation.[170] "He is certain[ly] the most humane, perceptive and socially sensitive architect in the Middle East," Polk wrote an ASIIA colleague, "and, I think, may be recognized as one of the great architectural thinkers of this period anywhere."[171] Polk brought Fathy to the ASIIA on a $10,000 fellowship in 1971–72. Fathy worked on development plans for Egypt and delivered talks including one titled "Architecture for the Billion Poor" at the Chicago Club.[172] In the summer of 1972, Polk met Fathy in Beirut and proposed that the architect assist Clyde Ross, a Mississippi-born neighborhood activist and later himself an ASIIA fellow, to design and build homes in the mostly African American area of Lawndale on Chicago's west side. Ross had appealed to the ASIIA for funds with which to rebuild the 3300 block of Flournoy Street into a "showcase for the west side," and Polk believed that Fathy should design it.[173] "It would demonstrate Hassan Fathy's technique [of] 'guided self-help', using cinder block construction," Polk wrote, "and would be an electrifying project."[174]

Ross's neighbors approximated the sort of community ties Fathy encouraged, although their determination to resist undesirable living conditions gave them something in common with the residents of Old Gourna. To protest unfair contract sales to African Americans by real estate speculators, Ross and others organized rent strikes and demanded the renegotiation of contracts. Their Contract Buyers' League filed a federal lawsuit, ultimately dismissed, alleging racial discrimination and redlining.[175] In the wake of late-1960s urban violence, Ross mobilized his neighbors to improve their homes through cooperative labor. They "tuckpointed, sandblasted and painted their houses, sodded their lawns and are building fences and installing lights to give additional security," declared an ASIIA press release.[176] Polk hoped to tap into this cooperative spirit to build dwellings using Fathy's method. The project would be designed on the basis of information, supplied by Polk, about the families living in Ross's Flournoy Street neighborhood along with their preferences for their new homes:

> the most important room in the house in their estimation is the dining room. This can merge into a living room and should be made convenient to the kitchen by a bar or partial cutaway of the wall for serving. The kitchen can be fairly small. However,

[170] Polk to University of Chicago Press, November 29, 1971, folder 9, box 15, ASIIA.

[171] Polk to Diamandopoulos, July 30, 1970, folder 9, box 15, ASIIA.

[172] Polk to Fathy, May 3, 1971, folder: Adlai Stevenson Institute, 1970–73, HFA. See also the advertisement of Fathy's November 16, 1971 talk, ibid.

[173] Ross to Diamandopoulos, May 2, 1972, folder 1, box 19, ASIIA. On Ross's fellowship, see Polk to Ross, May 11, 1973, ibid.

[174] Polk to Diamandopoulos, June 22, 1972, folder 7, box 18, ASIIA.

[175] See Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), 233–71.

[176] "Background," August 22, 1972, folder 1, box 19, ASIIA. See also "Victory Party," *Chicago Tribune*, August 31, 1972, sec W 4A, p. 10.

they do seem to want bedrooms larger than 9 ft. by 12 ft. (which seems to be the urban renewal standard).[177]

Fathy hoped to merge local knowledge with his own prescriptive vision. "There are several plans in my mind to ensure security within the quarter," he replied, "by correct implantation of the buildings ... gently forcing people to meet in the streets day and night."[178] ASIIA appeals to potential funders compared African Americans' displacement by urban renewal to the global problem of underdevelopment. "Solutions in Cairo, Calcutta and many other cities," one such letter explained, "may show us experiences applicable to Chicago."[179] The ASIIA had previously hosted a conference called "Making Black Power Work: Strategies and Proposals."[180] Just as Karen Ferguson has shown with respect to the Ford Foundation's support for Black Power activism, the ASIIA sought fresh approaches for "reforging a social consensus on race" and taming the revolutions that threatened liberalism at home and abroad.[181] Fathy claimed that his own technique for building model communities, though developed in the Middle East, could be implemented in West Africa and elsewhere. It appealed not only to experts such as Doxiadis and officials in developing countries, but also to Polk and dovetailed with the ASIIA's emphasis on liberal modernization.

In his foreword to *Architecture for the Poor*, Polk described Fathy's method as potentially helping to reverse the disintegration of the black family. "Mothers and children were often parted from one another" during slavery, Polk explained, while internal migration compounded "the rootlessness" of American blacks and urban renewal amounted to "yet a new uprooting of communities." Polk implied that self-help could restore the patriarchal family. Black families, "even when fatherless and plagued by instability," Polk wrote, "attempted to assert neighborhood." He praised New Gourna as the antithesis of public housing whose design was a "bureaucratic decision" that yielded slums "whether horizontal or vertical." Through guided self-help, the architect could "assist people in accomplishing their objectives by their own efforts better and more cheaply than they could" without him.[182]

The plan to build homes in Lawndale through aided self-help faced obstacles including city building codes and extreme winter weather. "Chicago is laced with building code restrictions," Polk wrote Fathy, "which will enormously complicate the realization of the project."[183] Chicago's bitter cold

[177] Polk to Fathy, June 27, 1972, folder 7, box 15, ASIIA.
[178] Fathy to Polk, August 27, 1972, folder 9, box 15, ASIIA.
[179] Elting to Cooke, October 24, 1972, folder 1, box 19, ASIIA.
[180] See file on William Ellis, folder 3, box 18, ASIIA.
[181] Karen Ferguson, *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 5. See also Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*, 132–63.
[182] See Polk's foreword to Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, x, xi, xiii.

was the opposite temperature extreme from what Fathy had confronted in the Middle East, although Fathy had observed how "municipalities laws" similarly prevented self-help construction in West African cities. Ross did refurbish buildings in Lawndale with ASIIA support, but not on the basis of Fathy's designs.[184] Nevertheless, Polk's belief that the approach pioneered at New Gourna could work in urban Chicago testifies to Fathy's success in gaining legitimacy for his aided self-help method.

The examples from this chapter illustrate the oversimplification involved in trying to distinguish clearly between the knowledge of the state and that of local communities. Not only did planners incorporate local knowledge into their development schemes as a way of validating them, but they also played on the very distinction between bureaucratic and local knowledge that scholars later used to criticize modernization. Community-building expertise flowed within and across national borders, involving more actors than just the state. Fathy's method developed at New Gourna migrated to Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and West Africa before making an appearance in Chicago. Aramco applied a policy borrowed from Venezuela to the problem of housing employees in eastern Arabia. Al-'Alami received praise for using practical knowledge to make the ADS a going concern, but also turned to the international experts he had once repudiated. Fathy parlayed his knowledge of the Gournis into a job with Doxiadis and incorporated his Nile Valley experience into the global COF study. In Chicago, he became a fellow at one of those "clean universities" mentioned in *Architecture for the Poor*. Even Tahrir Province, a massive government project, was the subject of a debate within Egypt and abroad over whether it respected local knowledge.

Focusing on gender in community building bridges the gap between states and societies found in Scott's analysis, as well as the presumed cultural differences over modernity separating Arabs from Americans. Both Arab and American planners seized on gender practices as the ultimate marker of indigenous culture and self-determination. Their strategic references to how the poor "really" lived and alignment with ordinary people against dehumanizing bureaucracies were legitimizing devices. The English and Arabic sources cited for this chapter are replete with such mythmaking as those who designed communities went to great lengths to shape the historical meanings attached to their projects. Judging from the featured cases, they had more success convincing potential sponsors of these arguments than gaining acceptance from the poor themselves. But their claims to respect local knowledge reflected the imperatives of postcolonial politics and cannot be dismissed as mere pretense. Their projects embodied a contradiction between the drive for progress and the desire for liberation. Through their embrace of "self-help," community builders paradoxically argued that planning could deliver freedom.

[184] See Ross to Polk, March 22, 1973, folder 1, box 19, ASIIA.