# Land, Towns and Planning: The Negev Bedouin and the State of Israel

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*The Negev Bedouin and the Israeli state are involved in a long-term struggle over land. Conflicts between pastoralists and states over land tenure are quite common. However, unlike many other cases, in Israel the conflict also has an ethnic dimension, as the state considers the Bedouin as a separate and relatively powerless segment of the repressed Moslem Arab population. The state views itself as representing Western modern culture, and the Bedouin as the most backward sector of Middle Eastern Arab culture. Thus the Bedouin are treated as a "minority" twice over. In this paper we show how the state's desire to seize the Bedouin's land, and the Bedouin's efforts to hold on to it, have been major factors in shaping their society and space. After sketching out the general background, we first portray the state's expropriation of Bedouin land. Then we analyze the state's partially successful attempts to set up towns for Bedouin, as a major lever to evacuate them from their land. Finally, at a rather detailed level, we discuss the most recent phase of the conflict, the process of insurgent planning by the Bedouin as their own strategy to protect the remaining land outside the towns from further encroachment by the state.*

*Keywords: Urbanization policy, land ownership, land conflict, Bedouin towns, unrecognized settlements, state planning, insurgent planning.*

## BACKGROUND

The states of the Middle East have always tended to treat the Bedouin as second class citizens. Even today many government spokesmen and experts argue that the Bedouin contribute little to the region's national economies, that they live apart from the settled population and raise animals only for their own subsistence (League of Arab Nations, 1965; Abou Zeid, 1996).[1] Their nomadic way of life was viewed

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*Geography Research Forum • Vol. 25 • 2005: 43-61.*

as little more than an attempt to opt out of civil obligations, such as military service and payment of taxes. By settling the Bedouin, governments hoped to make them more productive and more governable. As they were thought to practice a subsistence economy (see, for instance, Cole, 1975), the loss of land and production caused by settlement was often ignored. On the contrary, the officials believed that as settled peasants the Bedouin would at last enter the market economy. This policy was often informed by the fact that Bedouin own large tracts of land, parts of which the state from time to time requires for various purposes. As the Bedouin move with their herds for part of the year, they are generally widely dispersed and incapable of concentrating large forces. Therefore they are incapable of effectively controlling their lands and are easily subdued by the greater power of the state. It is precisely because state authorities view Bedouin as candidates for land expropriation that they deny the very real contribution of their herds to the national economy (Gardner and Marx, 2000).

The preconceptions of the government officials as to the nature of nomadism affected their settlement policies: they tended to concentrate on housing the pastoralists in permanent villages and on converting them to agriculture. From the mid-19th century onward governments made numerous attempts to force or persuade them to settle (Lewis, 1987). In the Negev these projects began in the 1870s (see Gazit, 2000), slightly later than in other regions of the Ottoman Empire.

However, in complex modern economies the population gravitates to urban centers. As the regions around the cities become more densely settled, land becomes a scarce commodity. This is the case in Israel's Negev. As the Bedouin use large areas of land near the cities for extensive herding and dry farming, they own a commodity of enormous value. Therefore the Israel Lands Authority (ILA), the government agency controlling 93 per cent of Israel's land, is constantly being pressured (or tempted) to allocate the land to more powerful groups, such as the army, Jewish settlers and commercial interests. The state then expropriates large blocks of land in the name of security considerations, progress and economic development, but does not necessarily use the land more intensively or profitably than the Bedouin. Some 80 per cent of the land in the Negev has been allotted to the army, and is mostly reserved for bombing ranges, training terrains and camps. In some outlying regions land was awarded to the Nature Reserves Authority, another agency of the State. Thus the ILA unceremoniously expropriated the 'Abde ('Ovdat) canyon from the Kishkhar Bedouin for a nature reservation for ibex and gazelles. In recent years it leased large parcels of former Bedouin land to Jewish settlers in 'individual farms' in order to prevent what the officials describe as the 'encroachment of Bedouin on State land'.

In reality, the state and its agencies have gradually appropriated most of the Bedouin land against feeble resistance (see Ben-David, 1995). Yet the struggle between these unequal forces continues unabated. It has gone through three major stages. First, in 1950 the government registered all the Negev as state land. As the new owner of the land, the ILA progressively seized all Bedouin common pasture

areas to which, incidentally, the Bedouin did not claim ownership. Gradually it also took over 80 per cent of the individually owned cultivated land (1 million out of 1.2 million dunams). Second, the authorities' efforts to expropriate the land still remaining in Bedouin hands eventually led to the establishment of Bedouin towns (see below), in which every Bedouin could acquire a subsidized building plot. Those Bedouin who had never owned land bought most of the building sites. Third, the struggle over land affected the Bedouin economy in a variety of ways: The Bedouin who decided to stay on their land did not improve their farms, had difficulty in obtaining pastures and received inferior government services. The authorities treated the hamlets in which they lived as 'unrecognized settlements'. Those who moved into the Bedouin towns sought to increase the areas controlled by their group, and paid scant interest to the development of local employment opportunities. The agencies of the state were concerned with concentrating the Bedouin in the towns, but did little to develop local public services, and less to foster local trade and industry.

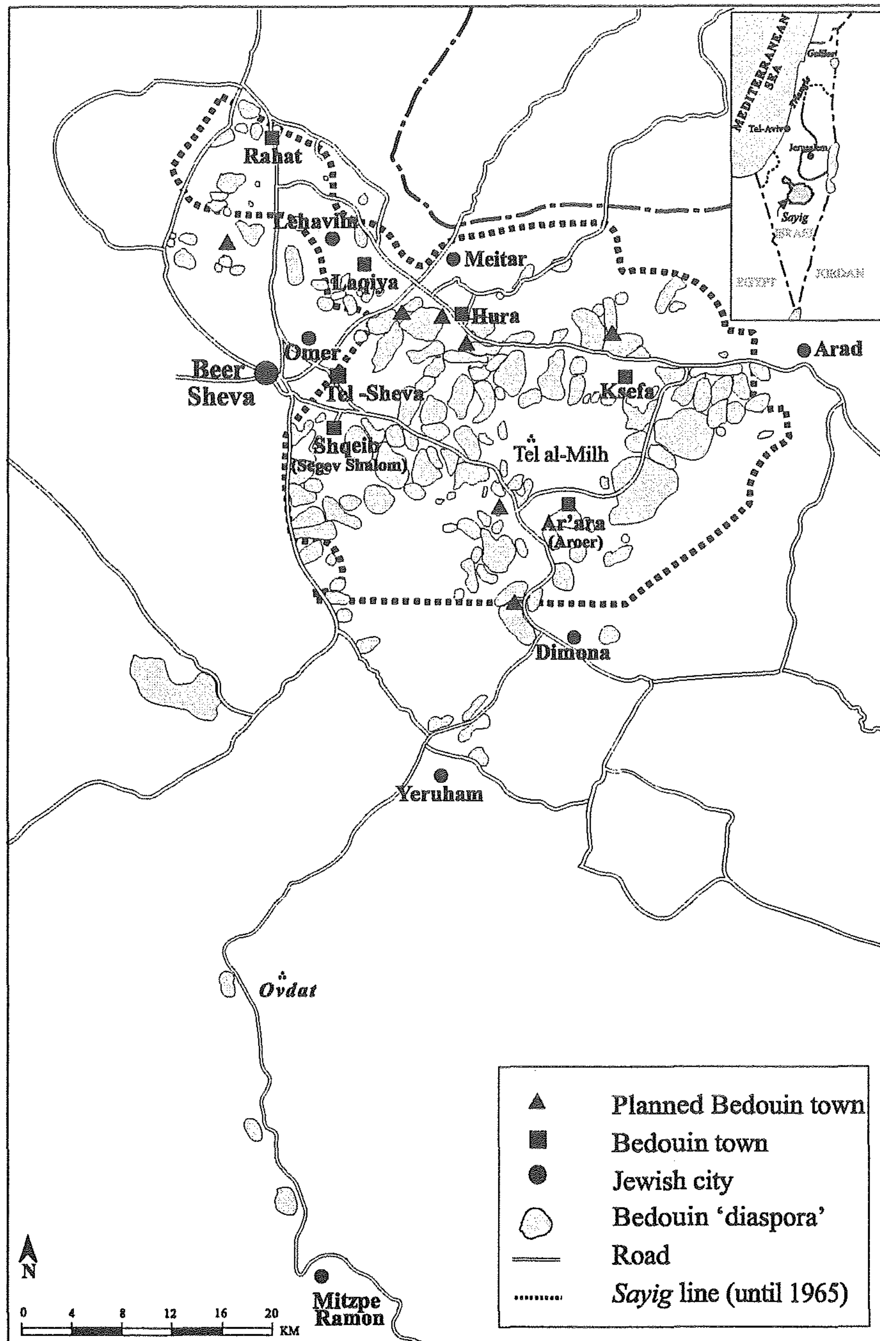
## LAND EXPROPRIATION

In the 1940s the Negev was inhabited by some 75,000 partially settled Bedouin, who had developed a differentiated economy in which nomadic pastoralism continued to play an important role. Most of the Bedouin were concentrated in the relatively fertile western Beersheva Plain, where they engaged in pastoralism and dry farming and worked in the numerous army camps in the region. Most of the farm land was owned by Bedouin tribesmen, who sold some of it to wealthy Gaza notables, to the Bedouin's 'peasant' clients and sharecroppers (the so-called *fellaheen Bedouin*), and to the Jewish National Fund, an arm of the Zionist organization. The Bedouin's main crops were barley and wheat. Many cultivators built mud-brick storerooms for grain (*baika*). These also doubled as shelters in winter, so that the Bedouin could be viewed alternately as settled when they engaged in farming, and as nomadic when they engaged in herding.

During the fighting that accompanied the establishment of Israel in 1948, most of the Bedouin were driven out or went into hiding. Some of them returned when the dust had settled, but most became refugees in the Gaza strip, in North Sinai and the West Bank. The new state set up a Military Administration that moved the remaining Bedouin to two reservations in the eastern Beer-Sheva Plain and north of Beer-Sheva, the so-called *Sayig* region (Figure 1).

During the following years the army expelled more Bedouin, so that the first Israeli national census in 1950 found only 11,000 Bedouin in the Negev. In 1950 the state declared all the Negev south of Beersheva as state land. This area of approximately 10 million dunam, nearly half the total area of Israel, included 1.2 million dunam (some 300,000 acres) owned and cultivated by individual Bedouin. Only those Bedouin who had previously lived and owned land in the reservation

Figure 1: Bedouin settlements in the Negev.



remained in tenuous possession, but even their rights were continually contested and challenged by the state. Those Bedouin households who had no access to land, whether they had owned land in the past or not, were each leased 100 to 150 dunams (about 25 to 35 acres) of this newly acquired state land, enough to cater to their subsistence requirements. This land was subject to annually renewable leases, and tenants were in the early years often moved around, in order to prevent them from acquiring rights of tenure. The Military Administration strictly controlled the movements of Bedouin by a pass system; these 'movement permits' were issued only for short periods and specific purposes. The Bedouin were thus constrained to rely on the resources available in the reservation, and inevitably became nomadic pastoralists and cultivators. As they were not allowed to settle and to construct houses they lived in black goat-hair tents.

This situation continued until the early 1960s, when the rapidly developing Israeli economy required ever growing numbers of workers. The restrictions on the movement of Bedouin were gradually lifted and the Military Administration finally abolished in 1966. The Bedouin gradually entered the wider economy, not only because it offered higher incomes, but also because the population in the reservation grew rapidly—it doubles about every fifteen years and now exceeds 150,000—while land became scarcer. The Bedouin entered many different occupations; they became factory and farm workers, builders, truck drivers and tractor operators, traders, artisans and building contractors, soldiers, policemen and civil servants. They are now relatively integrated—though on the lower rungs of the national economy. Yet many households continued to raise sheep, generally as one of several economic ventures, and some even owned large flocks of up to 500 heads.

Occupationally the Bedouin had become urbanized, but only a few households moved to the towns. Instead, the members of each descent group settled on their own or on leased land, in order to protect it against incursions from the authorities. Those who still owned land hoped that their physical presence, added to the regular cultivation of the land, would protect them against expropriation. Whereas the Bedouin who leased state land were no longer being moved around and were gradually establishing a hold on the land. These Bedouin felt so secure that some of them manured their land and planted trees. Thus sprang up some 150 hamlets that are spread over the cultivated parts of the Bedouin reservation. The goat-hair tents in which the residents of these hamlets first lived gave way to the much cheaper wood or tin shacks. Gradually they built houses of cement blocks, but without foundations. The idea was to construct a fixed abode without antagonizing the authorities.

The authorities feared that if these hamlets became permanent they would prevent alternative land uses and, because they were widely scattered, would require expensive infrastructures and services. Therefore they decided to remove the whole Bedouin population from their land and settle them in towns. The Jewish towns in the Negev refused to even consider the setting up of Bedouin quarters, although

Bedouin families trickled into Beersheva, Arad and other towns. Therefore the authorities decided to set up a number of towns for Bedouin only. First they made a false start. In 1965, they built a series of concrete houses at Tel Sheva, near the mound of ancient Beersheva. The plots were minute and left the occupiers little scope for extensions, storage space or a garden. The land was to remain the property of the ILA, as was standard practice all over the country, and the Bedouin tenants were to receive renewable 49-year leases. Furthermore, they were expected to sign away all claims to land owned in the past.

The ILA hired a town-planner, who knew what was good for the Bedouin and designed small two room houses, which emulated the customary division of the tent into two sections, one for men and the other for the family. But the Bedouin had enough experience in urban living not to want to live in such cramped conditions. The ILA did not consult with the Bedouin, and took it for granted that they would submit to its wishes. To facilitate this policy the authorities sought to curb the construction of permanent dwellings in the countryside. But the combined limitations were too much for the Bedouin to take. They did not trust the authorities, which in their experience had always sought to take away but not to yield up land. They did not buy the houses, even when the authorities offered valuable inducements, including one that was rather out of pattern, namely leases on farmland. The town became derelict, and only revived in the 1980s, in the wake of the construction of other Bedouin towns.

## TOWNS FOR THE BEDOUIN

### *The first phase: Rahat*

In the early 1970s the authorities came up with a new concept. They designated five sites for new Bedouin towns, in which they offered for sale developed building plots of about one dunam (1,000 square meters) each. In order to make them attractive to the Bedouin, the authorities charged nominal prices, amounting at first to about 10 per cent of the cost, gradually rising to 60 per cent today. Only Bedouin resident in the Negev were allowed to acquire these plots. Regulations as to size and style were kept to a minimum, but most Bedouin eventually constructed large homes. At this stage, the settlement scheme did not go into the land issue. Most Bedouin were still considered to have no title to any land. Therefore the new towns attracted buyers from among the landless Bedouin, who could thus improve their situation. Bedouin who still owned or had claims to land in the Negev held out in the hope of eventually regaining their land, or at least of obtaining fair compensation.

This plan was first applied in 1972 to an area sixteen kilometers north of Beersheva, which was densely settled by numerous Bedouin descent groups. Each group had

built several clusters of semi-permanent dwellings on a hilltop overlooking its tract of land. For over a decade they had successfully resisted attempts by the ILA to move or dislodge them. On this issue the members of the descent group were firmly united. Now the authorities sought to regularize the situation, and to prevent further expansion of the Bedouin, by incorporating the various hamlets in the framework of a town. They offered Bedouin the inducement of building plots in freehold (*mulk)* for each household head and for each son over the age of twenty-one.

This was a revolutionary step for the ILA, which had never voluntarily relinquished its hold over land. Under its regulations land could not even be leased to 'non-Jews' (Lehn with Davis, 1988). For the first time since the establishment of Israel it allowed large tracts of State land to revert to freehold and, in this case, to non-Jews. This time the Bedouin were not asked to forgo their claims on land and property confiscated by the State in the past. The Bedouin now demanded that each descent group reside in a separate neighborhood, so that strangers, including members of other Bedouin groups, should not see or molest their women. In this manner the members of a descent group sought to maintain effective control not only over a contiguous area with a large number of building sites, but also over a reserve of land that would supply building plots for their children and grandchildren. The government's experts on 'Bedouin mentality' considered these demands quite reasonable. They sought to overcome the Bedouin's 'natural' resistance to settling by complying with their wishes.

The town-planners appointed by the authorities took the situation on the ground as a starting-point. They left all the existing hamlets in place, but made provision for groups residing outside the boundaries to set up new quarters in the town. In consequence, they designed a town quite unlike any other in Israel. Its main features were a circular inner road from which feeder roads led like the spokes of a wheel to each neighborhood. The neighborhoods were separated by stretches of wasteland, and were not connected to one another by roads. At the hub of the wheel, public buildings and commercial premises were to be located (Kaplan and Amit, 1979). The neighborhoods were parceled into building sites of about 1,000 square meters each. The plots were leveled so as to be ready for construction, and asphalt roads, electricity, water and telephone lines were brought up to each plot. The authorities named the town Rahat (Hebrew for trough; they did not know that there was an Arabic word *raht,* leather loincloth), which could be interpreted as an allusion to the pastoral antecedents of the inhabitants. The elected Municipal Council that has run the town since 1994 has not changed the Hebrew name. It depends too heavily on the ILA and the Ministry of the Interior to take a step that could be construed as insubordination or an outright expression of Palestinian national sentiments.[2]

The town grew rapidly, as far as residential development was concerned. The settlers built spacious, comfortable houses; even the smaller ones had a floor space of at least 150 square meters. The Bedouin viewed the houses as a good investment, perhaps due to the absence of alternative investment opportunities. Each house is

inhabited by one household, which often includes unmarried grown up children of the head of the family, as well as elderly relatives. Extended families do not easily develop in a situation where every male adult can acquire a valuable building site at a low price, and must start construction almost immediately. But kinship and agnatic ties remain strong, for social control is facilitated by living in a neighborhood of agnates. Some descent groups have demonstrated their solidarity, and their adherence to the spirit of Islam and, through it, to the Arab world, by building their own neighborhood mosque. Each member subscribes according to his financial ability. The elders of the descent group tend to live near the entrance of the quarter, where they can watch and monitor the movements of members and visitors. While they have the leisure to take care of the interests of the neighborhood *vis-à-vis* the local authority, the pressure of local politics, often requiring sustained negotiations with a variety of authorities, is such that mostly younger men versed in Hebrew are elected to the Town Council.

The town provides little employment for its inhabitants. Only a handful of stores and workshops have been set up in private homes in some neighborhoods. In the first years, when a Jewish official assisted by an appointed Town Council ran the town, these entrepreneurs were prosecuted for infringing the planning regulations. A modest shopping centre was indeed constructed near the town hall and the police station, right in the middle of town, but even now, more than thirty years later, little business is conducted there. For the distance between the outlying neighborhoods and the centre is so great, the variety of goods on sale so limited, and the prices so high, that most inhabitants find it more convenient to do their shopping in Beersheva. Many men work regularly in and near the city, and make it their business to buy provisions, thus undermining the possibility of setting up well-stocked local food stores. Schools, nurseries and dispensaries had to be constructed all over the town, in order to provide easy access to the children, the sick and the elderly.

The physical layout turns the town into a dormitory suburb. The discriminatory practices of various state agencies, such as the small grants-in-aid by the Ministry of the Interior, the lack of funding for improvements in schools, the long delays in the provision of roads, water, electricity and public transport, all these further reduce the opportunities for local employment. A small number of civil servants, as well as some doctors and teachers, are employed in the local branches of ministries and in the municipality. Most men are compelled to commute to work places in and around Beersheva. A survey commissioned by Rahat Municipality in 1997 found that 66 per cent of the men over eighteen, and only 13 per cent of the women, work outside the home. A full 64 per cent of these men find work outside Rahat (Rahat Municipality, 1997), in construction, trucking, industry, agriculture and services (Jakubowska, 1992). Such a clear-cut sexual division of labor is found wherever a high proportion of the working population engages in migrant labor: the women generally stay behind to take care of the children and the home, while the men go out to work. Because of economic uncertainty people put their trust in children

and produce large families. With a natural increase rate of around 5 per cent (Meir, 1997) goes an absolute rate of unemployment of 29 per cent for men, and 85 per cent for women (Rahat Municipality, 1997). In our estimate, this is the highest rate of unemployment encountered anywhere in the country.[3]

This condition has persisted since the founding of Rahat, and is replicated in the entire Bedouin society. It is conducive to the growth of seemingly primordial beliefs about the nature of the genders, in which men are thought to be rational, hard and strong, and women are emotional, nurturing and dependent (Abu-Rabia, 2000). Indeed, most women in Rahat, women whose contribution to the pastoral economy had been and could have been considerable in favorable circumstances, now became housewives who relied on the income of their men folk.

### *The second phase: more Bedouin towns*

Rahat now has a population of 34,000, and is by far the largest Bedouin town in Israel. By the year 2020-2025 the number of inhabitants is expected to rise to 90,000. Two further towns were set up in the early 1980s, in entirely different circumstances. Under the terms of the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, Israel was to evacuate Sinai. The Israeli air bases in Sinai were to be relocated in the Negev, and one of them was to be constructed on Bedouin land in the Eastern Beersheva Plain, in the Tel al-Milh (Tel-Malchata) area. Most of the land still remaining in the Bedouin's possession was to be expropriated, and the 5,000 people living in it were to be resettled in new Bedouin towns. But when Bedouin in another part of the Negev fought police and officials of the ILA who were trying to build a road on land that had been earmarked for a new Bedouin town, the authorities realized that the Bedouin would resist their removal. In order to avoid a violent confrontation with Arabs, so soon after the conclusion of a peace treaty, the government decided to settle the matter by negotiating with the Bedouin. It appointed a committee that negotiated an agreement with elected representatives of the Bedouin community. The agreement was approved by government and ratified in a special law, commonly called 'The Peace Law of 1980' (Marx, 1990).

The agreement marked a new departure in the state's relations with the Bedouin and, by implication, with the Palestinian Arabs. For the first time the state recognized the rights of the Bedouin to receive equitable compensation for expropriated land. As the legal issue of land ownership was still being debated in the courts, the state now treated the Bedouin 'as if' they had such rights. The Bedouin entered the agreement on the assumption that it would set a new standard, which would be applied retroactively to those Bedouin whose land had been expropriated in the past and who had never been indemnified. One outcome of the agreement was that it immediately halved the area to be expropriated, from 65,000 to 35,000 dunams (16,000 to 8,500 acres). No less important was the principle that all the transactions would be handled at market values. Thus, on one hand, the Bedouin would receive the full market value of their land and chattels and, on the other, would pay the full

price of the building plots or irrigated land that the authorities would put at their disposal. This principle put an end to the coercive aspect of the resettlement project. Hitherto the government had paid only nominal sums for expropriated land, but also charged a nominal price for building plots in the new Bedouin towns. That arrangement had left the Bedouin no alternative but to move into the towns. Now they had the option to invest the compensation money in any manner they chose, even if in practice they knew that in a country where the state owned 93 per cent of the land, the value of privately owned land would rise faster than that of all other commodities. Every Bedouin to a man decided to put all his money into land.

The negotiated accord of 1980 between the state and the Bedouin offered a fair and workable solution to the seemingly intractable problem of Bedouin lands. It is likely to serve as a paradigm for negotiations with those Negev Bedouin who have never been compensated for land sequestered by the state in the early years. It may even serve as a point of departure for an agreed settlement with the Palestinian refugees in the framework of a comprehensive peace treaty between Palestine and Israel.

Two new towns were to be set up for the evacuees, 'Ar'ara and Ksefa. While the planners sought to apply the lessons learned in Rahat and to construct a more compact town with a commercial center and an industrial park, the Bedouin wished to retain as much land as possible. Therefore the new towns became almost identical with Rahat: they consisted of a series of widely dispersed neighborhoods, each inhabited by members of one descent group. Here too each family, and every man over the age of twenty-one, was entitled to acquire at least one developed building site. At first the negotiations proceeded to the satisfaction of the Bedouin. About 150 households received compensation, and the towns developed by leaps and bounds. But once the Bedouin had vacated the land the authorities lost interest and the negotiations slowed down. Some Bedouin are still negotiating with the authorities, while others have given up hope or are waiting for better times and terms. While the population of Rahat is constantly rising, and even Tel-Sheva is growing, 'Ar'ara and Ksefa are developing only slowly. During the early 1980s three more concentrations of Bedouin settlement were officially recognized as towns: Shqeib (Segev Shalom) Hura and Laqiya. Today over 80,000 Bedouin, more than half the population, reside in these seven new towns.

In spite of the setbacks, both the Bedouin and the authorities believe that they have achieved major objectives. The ILA and some other agencies of the State claim that they succeeded in vacating large areas in the Negev for alternative uses, and to concentrate the majority of the Bedouin in towns where they can pursue their own way of life. The authorities do not raise awkward questions, such as whether the Bedouin are receiving a fair share of state services, or whether the structure of the towns does not prevent the Bedouin from contributing adequately to the national economy and to political life. The same attitude has prevailed with regard to the new towns set up in the 1950s for new Jewish immigrants. Therefore, we must attribute

the neglect of the Bedouin not simply to discrimination on ethnic grounds, but rather to the fact that they still own some land that the state wants.

The state's efforts to establish its ownership over the rest of the remaining Bedouin areas continue unabated. A Bedouin Development Administration, affiliated to the ILA, was set up in 1980 and has since then attempted to move the 60,000-70,000 Bedouin living in 150 or so hamlets scattered in the Eastern Beersheva Plain to the existing towns. In order to put pressure on them, the Bedouin Development Administration holds back the provision of government services and infrastructure, like roads, water, electricity, public transport and telephones. The Ministries of Education and Health do not fully go along with this policy, and run schools and health services for the Bedouin. The Bedouin have also been able to make up for some of the missing services. Thus the advent of cellular phones has eliminated the need for telephone lines. Many Bedouin have acquired water tankers and mobile generators. They have organized an efficient and economically viable system of transportation for schoolchildren and workers. Only in 1999, following a Bedouin appeal to the Supreme Court and a court ruling, the Bedouin Development Administration came up with an alternative plan that would allow the inhabitants of the hamlets to retain some of their land. It would construct two or three new government service centers, which would attract the population of the hamlets like a magnet. Eventually these would become the nuclei of additional Bedouin towns. The project is underpinned by an ideology that views the Bedouin who live in the hamlets as a 'diaspora' (*pezurah*) (see Figure 1) that awaits ingathering. As the project has ignored the Bedouin's concern with land ownership, its success is not assured.

## BEDOUIN REACTIONS

### *Bedouin insurgent planning*

The Bedouin in the 'diaspora' do not share this ideology with the government. In the last decade they have been involved in a civil struggle against the state. It is partly related to provision of services to the numerous Bedouin hamlets. But the major motive for this struggle is that they have been excluded from the planning process and that all policies of the state in the 'diaspora' have been drafted and implemented without consulting them. The authorities have dubbed their hamlets as 'unrecognized settlements', as they regard their inhabitants as illegal intruders on state land. The Bedouin know very well that the government intends to evacuate them from their land. Their struggle for democratization in planning, reflecting a recent worldwide trend by minorities and indigenous peoples, is in fact a means of retaining their land.

The formal rational planning implemented so far by state authorities has almost completely ignored the cultural, social, economic and political dimensions of

Bedouin society. This was manifested in a top-down implementation of the policy of settling the Bedouin in seven towns, and in offering them no alternative options. It was offered to a society that was until recently agro-pastoral nomadic, still maintaining many of its traditional values, norms, cultural codes and modes of existence.

The Bedouin set out to change the situation. In 1997 they established an NGO called 'Regional Council for Bedouin Arab Unrecognized Villages in the Negev' (henceforth RCBUV). This organization functions as an informal shadow municipal authority for the unrecognized settlements, and obviously is not acknowledged by the government. In 1999, after spotting and defining forty-five Bedouin concentrations in the 'diaspora' as major settlements, the RCBUV prepared an alternative regional development master plan for the northern Negev as a whole (RCBUV et al. 1999). This plan should, from their perspective, become the official statutory regional plan that purports to grant *post factum* 'recognition' of the existing settlements. In this manner the Bedouin try to intensify their protest against the governmental principles of planning.

In this plan they have reconstructed the planning discourse and then positioned it against the prevailing conventional established plan. In analyzing the plan, Meir (2003) has borrowed from Sandercock (1998; 1999) the term 'insurgent planning' for this practice. For in the reconstruction the Bedouin present an interpretation of the historical and present reality, which is diametrically opposed to the state's interpretation. This hermeneutics deals with cultural, social and spatial meanings of their lifeworld as they conceive of it and which, they believe, the state planning authorities ought to accept and adopt.

*The culture-identity aspect*

The first aspect is related to cultural needs of the Bedouin, particularly the identity issue, and is composed of three themes arranged hierarchically. At the macro-national level the Bedouin attempt to reconstruct their ethno-national identity. The master plan of the RCBUV for the deployment of the settlements in the northern Negev bears the title 'Developing a Municipal Authority for the Arab Bedouin Unrecognized Villages in the Negev'. The inclusion of the adjective 'Arab' in the title is a relatively new practice among the Bedouin. It reflects a growing tendency in recent years to minimize and blur the identity differences between the Bedouin and the rest of the Arab community in Israel, which the state attempted over the years to maintain and even sharpen as part of a co-optation strategy (see also Yonah et al., 2004).

The second theme in the identity question concerns the role and function of these settlements within the Negev system and their relationships to the development of the Negev as a whole. The official master plan for metropolitan Beersheva issued in 1998 refers to the seven existing Bedouin towns as integral to the regional system. However, it only refers to the Bedouin population living in the 'diaspora' as a statistical, opaque and undefined entity devoid of any uniqueness and representation. The Bedouin are deeply concerned that it does not deal with the unrecognized set-

tlements, as defined in the RCBUV.

Given this discrepancy between reality and its representation by the authorities, one of the guiding principles of the RCBUV plan is that of 'bi-national metropolitan development'. This principle is meant to arouse the consciousness of the planning establishment and the general public to the national identity of the Arab-Bedouin in the planning area and to their right to live side by side with the Jewish national entity. It also seeks to embody the reality of a variegated, rather than monolithic, Arab-Bedouin society. That is, Bedouin society in the Negev is not only urban; it also has a rural component living in the unrecognized settlements. This population should be given free choice concerning the social and economic future of their habitat.

Finally, there is the question of place names of the unrecognized settlements, i.e. the Bedouin's territorial identity at the local level. The RCBUV plan specifically demands "...recognition of the unrecognized settlements according to their historical names". The Bedouin explain in the plan that all inhabitants of the 'diaspora' are divided into groups of several extended families, each inhabiting a place that has a common historical name. The spatial dispersion of the unrecognized settlements is based, inter alia, on "...the historical fact that these places, with their historical names, were already inhabited before, and immediately following, the establishment of the State of Israel". They argue that these places, along with their specific spatial coordinates, were even employed by the Ministry of the Interior for purposes of identification of Bedouin individuals in their places of residence towards the land entitlement regulation. This practice was abolished by the state in 1974 and the places were instead given tribal names according to the contemporary tribal affiliations.

*The socio-structural aspect*

This aspect concerns primarily the definition of the basic planning unit in the Bedouin 'diaspora'. The agencies of the state refer to all its inhabitants by their tribal identity. Such reference relies on the prevalent assumptions that the tribe is and has been a homogenous social entity, and that there is a clear-cut division of Bedouin society into tribes. Despite recent studies that have produced contrary evidence (Marx, 1977; Salzman and Fabietti, 1996; Salzman, 2000), these assumptions became the conceptual cornerstones for planning Bedouin towns. The RCBUV plan argues that the government continues to hold on to its conception and to employ the classic tribal entity as a basic planning unit, regarding it as "...an answer to the 'cultural need' of the Bedouin to sedentarize by 'tribes'...". Therefore, "...as long as the social tribal framework is maintained", the government assigns "...no significance to the physical connection between the individual and his place of residence..." The same view relates also to the numerous intra-tribal and intra-group neighborhoods in various locations in towns and mixed hamlets in the 'diaspora'. In the eyes of the planning authorities this does not necessarily constitute a reality relevant to the planning process.

The RCBUV plan reacts against this view of the basic planning unit. Bedouin

society has undergone far reaching processes of territorialization in recent decades. The Bedouin argue that subsequently a new reality has emerged in which Bedouin groups have become identified with predefined and familiar geographic areas. According to the Bedouin the state denies that such a socio-spatial evolution has taken place, on the ground that the population concerned never was attached to or owned any territory. They regard this type of argumentation as a tactic of the state designed to avoid recognition of land claims. The argument that the tribe was in the past an a-territorial nomadic entity, without fixed abode, is in the Bedouin's view a camouflage for the governmental attempt to deny land claims when these are submitted on a non-tribal individual basis. Moreover, the Bedouin submit that most hamlets are composed of an irregular assemblage of families from times immemorial, and are not necessarily tribally homogenous. In each such hamlet "...the inhabitants are dispersed according to a family key and their land ownership". Therefore, it is precisely the hamlet located on its own land, rather then the wider descent group or tribe, which should be regarded as the permanent and true planning unit. In their eyes such a conception is also the justification for transforming an unrecognized settlement into a recognized one.

These arguments provide an empirical input into several concepts that have recently been developed in the social sciences. They are Harvey's (1996) 'politics of identity and place', which is related to Benhabib's (1996) 'politics of difference' in their geographical and sociological interpretations. These political concepts rely on more fundamental and earlier ones such as Relph's (1976) 'sense of place' and Bourdieu's (1978) 'habitus', in the context of planning. The concepts help in understanding the struggle of the Negev Bedouin in the 'diaspora' for an appropriate and authentic representation of their view about their historical habitation of their territories. This representation provides them with a deep sense of place. They believe that the state must acknowledge this reality, as it is crucial for the spatial planning of the environment they live in.

*The spatial-structural aspect*

This aspect relates to Bedouin spatial settlement structure, its meaning and rootedness in Bedouin existence, and its crucial role in conducting their life normally. According to the RCBUV plan, the authorities are persistent in employing the same old strategy of re-grouping the Bedouin population "...into a few settlement centers around which all service systems are organized". The state justifies this conception by the classical principle of economies of scale in the provision of public services. The RCBUV argues that such a strategy may possibly be suitable to other cultures but does not meet the Bedouin's needs, which are considerably wider than simply receiving public services.

The Bedouin's unique approach to the meaning of space should be expounded here. In Bedouin perspective, it is precisely the existing spatial spread of settlements in the 'diaspora' (see Figure 1) which is the natural spatial structure suitable to a Bedouin population. Such dispersal reflects sustained short and long term socio-

political developments and experiences which have consolidated groups into local territories. These constitute the complex of hamlets that are the unrecognized settlements. Despite lack of recognition by the state, they regard this complex as a whole system that accommodates naturally its various parts, their interrelations and all their inherent socio-political paradoxes, such as the paradoxes of fluid affiliation of individuals and groups (see Marx, 2005). This whole maintains and protects internal economic, social and political harmony within Bedouin society in the Negev. Its structure is the essence of their existence in the 'diaspora', and has become a basic socio-political need. Protecting it is necessary for maintaining the internal fragile and sensitive social order and balance which are crucial in an era of deep changes. In this approach they present their subjective view of space vis-à-vis efforts to objectify it by the state which, based on the pretext of rational planning, alienates it from all human content other than the 'normal' content which is usually dealt with.

Two principles are inherent in adopting this approach to the planning discourse. The first, overtly expressed by the RCBUV, is that of "spatial justice." The second, a more latent principle, is that there are many types of space, that is a multi-spatiality. According to the Bedouin it is not necessary to adopt a unitary planning approach that advocates a single type of space—an urban space. In the case of the unrecognized settlements the planners should adopt the concept of a ruralized space, such that when recognition is granted these will also be planned as rural in nature. Even then it does not need to conform to the classical concept of rural communities prevailing in Israel and Western culture. Rather, multi-spatiality implies that several rural spatial options are possible. These options reflect the current research wisdom that, from a settlement-economic perspective, the changing Bedouin society contains presently the entire spectrum from semi-nomadic pastoralism to sedentary ruralism, semi-urbanism and urbanism, and that recent processes do not necessarily make any part of it redundant.

### *The impact of insurgent planning*

It is in these respects that the RCBUV plan constitutes insurgent planning: it offers an indigenous knowledge that originates in an alternative epistemology to the one presented over the years by the state. The plan was submitted to the state's planning authorities as a dissenting plan provided for in the planning laws, and as such they had to deal with it. Its impact has been quite considerable, although there has been a debate between representatives of the RCBUV, the state and other Bedouin bodies about who deserves credit for it (Meir, 2003). The government has withdrawn its 1999 plan for three service centers in the 'diaspora', and instead begun to look seriously into establishing and recognizing eight more villages for about a third of the 'diaspora' population (see Figure 1). In 2004 the government established a new formal Regional Council as a municipal body responsible for the establishment and planning of the villages for this population. During 2004-5 the state formally recognized the first two such villages.

## CONCLUSION

The agencies of the state have never accepted Bedouin's concern with the perennial issue of land ownership, nor understood the 'tribal organization' that defends their interests. Just as the descent groups allowed the Bedouin in the 1960s to maintain some control of their land under a repressive Military Administration, they now help them to obtain more land in the new towns. At the same time, the tribal organization is a fluid entity allowing different interpretations in the 'diaspora'. The issue of land has remained dominant in Bedouin thinking, and caused them to put the interests of future generations above short-term economic advantages. Only the Bedouin's bargaining position has improved over the years. They believe that the towns have provided them with a secure base on the ground, one that is capable of growth and expansion and will yield building sites for their descendants. They now hold the same belief with regard to the settlements in the 'diaspora'. They have employed the process of insurgent planning as a lever to protect their remaining land outside the towns from further encroachment by the state. Reconstructing the various aspects of the planning discourse is in fact a process in which they have produced an alternative space through alternative knowledge. In their view this should be the sole basis for governmental planning knowledge of Bedouin society and they have been quite successful. As the task of protecting land is unending, the continued survival of the descent group, not necessarily in the form of the classical tribal entity, is assured unless the parameters of land valuation change.

## NOTES

1. There are a few exceptions, such as the Oman government's attempt to revive pastoralism (Chatty, 1996).
2. The other six Bedouin towns retained their Arabic names. Only one of them, Shqeib, also received a Hebrew name, Segev Shalom.
3. Only the Ethiopian Jewish immigrants have such high rates of unemployment. A 1999 survey by the Brookdale Institute found that 68 per cent of the men, and 90 per cent of the women, were unemployed (quoted by J. Isaacs-Elazari, 1999, 58). The severity of the situation is not reflected in the official statistics, which count only the number of persons registered at a Labor Exchange.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Materials in this article were published partly in 2002 (Marx, 2000) and 2005 (Meir, 2005). Emanuel Marx wishes to thank Moshe Ravid, head of the Rahat town planning team, for four years of fruitful collaboration (see also Ravid, 1999), and Dawn Chatty, Ann Gardner, Avinoam Meir and Moshe Ravid for very useful

comments. Avinoam Meir wishes to thank Oren Yiftachel and Emanuel Marx for fruitful discussions of issues dealt with in this article.

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