What Public, Whose Interest: The Negev Bedouin and the Roots of Planning from Below

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The Bedouin submission of an independent plan in 1999 was a major milestone in their long struggle for land rights and recognition and development of forty-five unrecognized villages. Bedouin interest is counter to the interest of the State, which attempted to convince them that settling in the seven towns planned until the 1980s was the best possible avenue for modernization and development. The Bedouin are, in fact, involved in a struggle for recognition of a major "public" ignored by the State. The entire process is an evolution of "planning-from-below" that began with attempts by the Bedouin to escape the planning oligarchy of the State in the early years, by resorting to various forms of planning advocacy. It continued by practicing various forms of centrifugality as an immanent component of their culture, versus the centripetal tendencies of the State. It culminated in the generation of planning empowerment actions of various types, intended to produce spatial realities that the State cannot ignore in its planning processes of Bedouin space in the Negev.

Kewords: *Bedouin "public", planning from below, planning advocacy, centrifugality, planning empowerment.*

In late 1999, a newly established Bedouin NGO, *The Regional Council for Unrecognized Arab Bedouin Villages in the Negev* (henceforth *RCBUV*), prepared a plan for the northern Negev as an alternative to formal State plans. This plan, submitted as an objection to *National Master Plan No.31* (NMP 31) and *Regional Master Plan No.4* (RMP 4), was called *A Master Plan for the Deployment of the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev, 2020*. It had four objectives: 1) recognition of the forty-five Bedouin villages organized within the NGO; 2) establishing a municipal authority for these villages, by adopting the Israeli local government model of regional councils; 3) realization of the right to municipal elections for inhabitants of these villages; and 4) delivering public, social and municipal services to the villages, as required by law. The major principle underlying these objectives was that they should be realized regardless of settling the land ownership conflict, as conditioned in practice by the State (RCBUV et al., 1999).

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This planning maneuver is very unique. The Bedouin are a typical marginal ethnic group, which is also unique in being an ex-pastoral-farmer society that was drifted rapidly and intensively into an urbanized modern and political reality. This has been accompanied by far reaching processes of economic, social and cultural change that, nonetheless, have not reduced their multi-layer marginality. They have been ethnically marginal to the Israeli Arab-Palestinian population, which itself is marginal to the Jewish population, and spatially marginal in Israel, by being located in the marginal Negev region in the south of the country. While these layers of marginality have not been uncommon for Bedouin elsewhere, being at times even beneficial for them (Kressel, 1993; Meir, 1999a), under conditions of the modern State, they are now manifested quite acutely in many indicators of considerable social and economic gaps (Lithwick, 2000; Abu-Saad and Lithwick, 2000).

These layers of marginality are coupled by that of political marginality. Previously experienced by all Bedouin, this type is now relevant, particularly for the inhabitants of the unrecognized settlements, which comprise about half of the total Bedouin population of ~190,000. In addition to their complete absence in formal representation in local government, this political marginality is manifested in their exclusion from the planning process in all possible respects, a situation that is unparalleled by any measure vis-a-vis other groups in Israel.

It is this context that makes the above planning maneuver by the Bedouin highly significant. It constitutes part of their conflict with the State over the territorial resource problem of land ownership, an issue studied quite extensively (Ben David, 2004; Meir, 2009; Marx, 2000; Yiftachel, 2002, 2006). This particular planning maneuver too has been studied within the context of globalization-localization processes and tensions between "planning-from-above" by a settler State and planning insurgency by an indigenous group (Meir, 2005).

Yet, this maneuver by the Bedouin should not be viewed as a discrete event, independent of any contextual historical process. Rather, it may be viewed as the culmination of a long-term process of "planning-from-below" facilitated by various forms of a civil struggle over land resources since early Statehood. The central concern of this paper is the evolution of these forms by the marginal indigenous Bedouin, as a vehicle to mitigate the very critical change in their life caused by their detachment from agro-pastoralism.

The major thesis is that the *planning oligarchy* (Yiftachel, 2001) is the planning regime within which the Bedouin were situated in early decades of the State. In such a situation, the planning clients received almost no access to information, power, or participation in planning decisions concerning their future. These capacities were held almost exclusively by just a few governmental bodies, each equipped with considerable authoritative power, often imposed upon this group in conjunction. Consequently, in those years, the Bedouin resorted to *planning advocacy*, which provided them with some minimal protection against State planning initiatives. By contrast, in recent decades *centrifugal processes* have been taking place in Bedouin re-

lationships with the State and its agencies, intertwined with *planning empowerment* in various fields and origins, resulting in *self-independent planning* that eventually has generated the above planning maneuver of the RCBUV.

Underlying this process is the overriding State intention to relocate the Bedouin into planned towns as the only way to "modernize" them, with the subtext of appropriating their traditional pastoral land. The state has time and again explained these goals as a major interest of the Bedouin, if they wish to improve their quality of life and become integrated within Israeli society. The major question here is what public has exactly been referred to and whose interests are indeed being served by setting up these goals? More specifically, by ignoring the unrecognized settlements and their population, the State has been arguing here that Bedouin society constitutes one homogenous "public," whose interests are uniform in respect of relating to territorial resources and becoming a modern Western urban community. Furthermore, by setting up the objective of urbanizing the Bedouin, the State has likened them uni-culturally to the rest of the Israeli public, holding similar interests. As this article attempts to show, both questions of the identity of the public concerned and the nature of interests involved have been viewed by the Bedouin in an entirely different way.

The evolution of independent planning among the Negev Bedouin may thus be regarded as a macro-socio-political process of this society within the Israeli State, in conjunction with similar civil processes among the Israeli Arab-Palestinians in general (Rabinowich and Abu-Bakhr, 2002; Rekhes, 2002). Despite being part of this population, Bedouin integration within it has begun to gain momentum only very recently. Yet, it is precisely their uniqueness and marginality that makes worthy an independent study on these questions among them. By studying the forms of civil struggle highlighted above as one continuous process of *planning from below,* we shall shed light on an issue that, thus far, has received only scant attention.

THE BEDOUIN AND PLANNING OLIGARCHY

Ever since State establishment in1948, the issue of shaping Bedouin-inhabited space in the northern Negev has been highly problematic for the Israeli planning authorities. A considerable part of this space became a Bedouin reservation called the *seig* (enclosure), into which all Bedouin were relocated in the early 1950s and subjected to military administration until 1966 (see Figure 1). For about two decades, until the first State-planned town, Tel-Sheva, was established in 1966, no significant spatial development acts were taken, in sharp contrast to considerable spatial development of Jewish space in the Negev. The development vacuum was highly substantial, even relative to the wider Arab population in Israel. Research evidence on the 1950s state of affairs has been scant (but see Marx, 1974; Zivan, 1990; Meir and Zivan, 1998), as official sources of information regarding State activities in this regard have only recently become public and open to research (Porat, 2000, 2007).

Figure 1: Jewish and Bedouin Arab Settlements and the Seig Area.
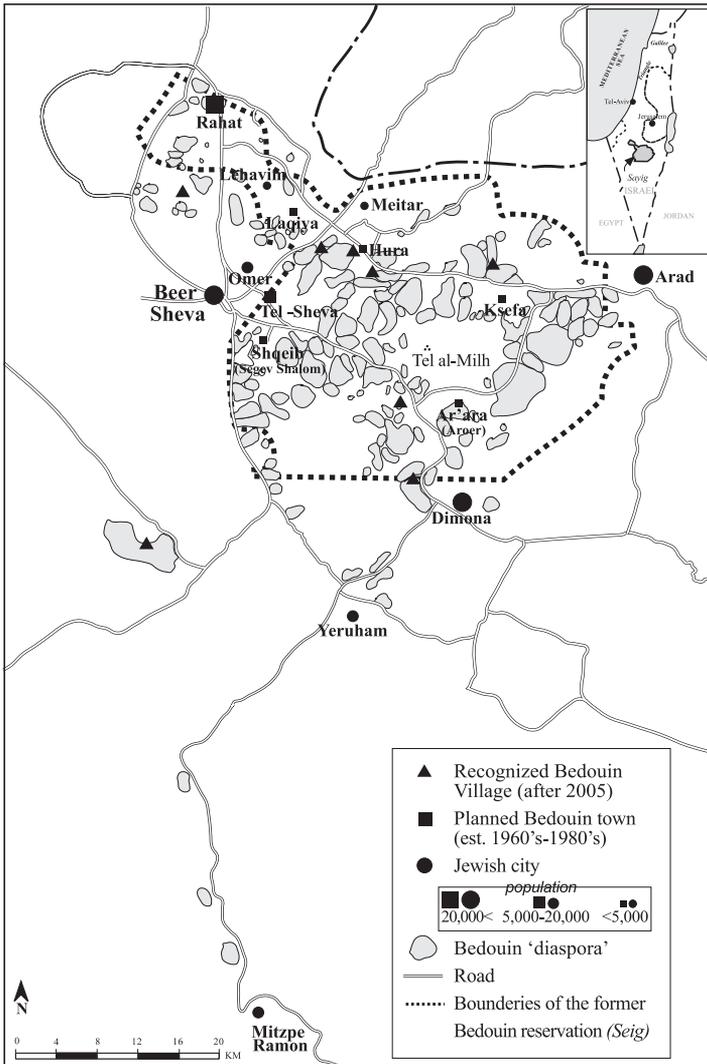
Underlying the Bedouin problematics has been the attempt by the State to appropriate all Bedouin land that had been legally declared State land under the 1858 Othman Land law. The major practical question concerned the most efficient way of evacuating the Bedouin from these lands and their settlement and providing them with subsistence alternatives. Porat (2000) points to several planning ideas, originating in various State agencies, which, until the late 1960s, however, never matured into real plans. Thus, for example, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) prepared a document in 1958 called *A Permanent Settlement of the Bedouin Seig Area in the Negev;* in the same year, the Ministry of the Interior completed the first *Master Plan*

for Development of the Negev, which included specific and detailed reference to the Bedouin population; in 1959, the Minister of Agriculture, Moshe Dayan, formulated a plan for the solution of the civil and land ownership status of the Bedouin; a year later, the same ministry submitted the *Aloni Plan* as an alternative to 'Dayan's plan; in 1960, it was the turn of the Ministry of Development to offer another plan for settling the Bedouin in permanent settlements; by 1962, the Supreme Ministerial Committee for Bedouin Affairs had revised the Bedouin chapter of the 1958 *Master Plan* into a narrower version; and so forth.

The details of these ideas, as a reflection of contemporary planning discourse toward the Bedouin, deserve an independent study. For our purpose here, it suffices to note that they dealt with a variety of Bedouin-related issues and problems. This began with the general issue of whether to settle the Bedouin within the Negev or elsewhere in Israel. Another issue was whether they should remain in their traditional territories (whether tribally owned by them originally or not), or be relocated elsewhere in the Negev. Also on the agenda was the urban-rural dilemma, as an alternative to their traditional forms of settlements, a matter that affected the issue of providing them with traditional vs. modern sources of subsistence. Even the issue of changing their cultural nature was seriously considered. The Bedouin were perceived as having conducted a purely pastoral nomadic mode of living until then. Hence, common with all these issues and in compliance with its legal approach to land ownership, there were State attempts to gain as much control of land in the Negev as possible and thus, of the Bedouin population itself.

Furthermore, the management of these planning ideas assumed several characteristics that are relevant here. First, they originated from and were submitted by several authorities of various natures and interests, both military and civil. The very fact of a military body dealing with the civil act of planning for State citizens is highly significant for appreciating the denial of Bedouin access to the planning process as a client population. For their part, the civil bodies represented different governmental organizations and had varying perspectives on Bedouin society. Thus, while the civil bodies had political-parliamentary, economic and civil interests concerning Bedouin occupation of space in the Negev, the military bodies were directed by national security, military war time mobility, and local routine military administrative considerations. Despite these differences, management of the planning ideas was yet common in several ways: all originated from above, without sharing them with the Bedouin, the interests of whom were only marginally considered at best, or completely ignored.

This state of affairs may be characterized as "planning oligarchy" that is, a few civil and military bodies holding almost absolute authority over the Bedouin separately and in conjunction, whereas the latter have had minimal access to information and political power in planning matters concerning their future. From a Bedouin perspective, several explanations may be suggested. First, similar to typical nomadic-pastoralist societies elsewhere, their very recognition of a political system—of a

sovereign State and its authorities and laws—was problematic in itself. In addition, their familiarity with the bureaucratic and legal procedures of a modern State was very limited. This was a consequence of their late introduction into this system and of their very low level of education, which acted as a bar to their civil socialization into it.

Second, mobility for pastoral and other daily subsistence needs, under contemporary harsh conditions of military administration and regional security, was severely constrained. Often subsisting on the verge of sheer survival, their interest with principal or procedural planning issues in these years was almost nil. Each of the few sub-tribes or tribal fractions that remained in Israel in the aftermath of the 1948 war, was concerned primarily with its own affairs. Given historical intertribal rivalries and a unique tribal social structure, any cooperation and mobilization attempts, in order to repel planning initiatives by the State, proved insignificant. Third and not least important, Bedouin demographic weight in those years was too light to generate any political impact. In the mid-1950s, they numbered only about 14,000 and the well-known acceleration in their annual natural increase rate—generating the present population size (about 20% of the total Negev population), begun only in the mid-1960s.

This State of affairs should be contextualized. The Bedouin society of those years was lacking internal democratic components necessary to persuade the State into a different form of planning. On the contrary, its sheikh-dominated and gerontocratic socio-political structure actually encouraged State cooptation. This was coupled by the internal socio-ethnic stratification and division between the "real" Bedouin—those who traditionally controlled all territories and claimed ownership of this land—and the tenant-annexed farmer-origin (*fellaheen*) landless Bedouin. This structure supported the sustained hierarchical anti-democratic nature of this society.

Yet, this is not to suggest that, in those years, the Bedouin were completely powerless and submissive. The unsettled land conflict had been a major obstacle, even before State planning and development for the Bedouin begun. Various struggles, at times even violent, had taken place with State bodies. However, these were highly passive, localized and insignificant as a planning-from-below process. And yet, it was precisely these harsh political conditions that provided the infrastructure for igniting a process of relief and escape from the chains of planning oligarchy, even if, as yet, with external aid only.

THE BEDOUIN AND ADVOCACY PLANNING

Advocacy is a voluntary action on behalf and in favor of a weak group, conducted against the planning or ruling establishment by a third party (Heskin, 1980; Forester, 1994). Its objectives are to assist individuals, or the entire group, which are

ill-equipped to cope with the authorities. It may involve various kinds of advocate: lay people (neighbors and friends or other unrelated persons), who are motivated ideologically or altruistically; or by professionals, mostly from academic circles, whose occupation has generated profound acquaintance with and genuine understanding of the *genre de vie* and problems of the group concerned. In the case of an ethnic minority of a first nation nature, such as the Bedouin, this understanding is particularly significant in making manifest their central and most important cultural codes, with which State authorities are unfamiliar, or to which they are insufficiently sensitive. Most often, this task has been handled by anthropologists (see e.g. Gulliver, 1969; Paine, 1985), but also by social and cultural geographers as well as political scientists.

Advocacy is normally an extra-establishment practice in its nature but involves considerable cooperation with it and its various branches. As described by Marx (1981; 1990) this action may include preparing reports, submitting petitions and representing the population before the authorities. Yet, this practice often becomes bi-lateral. The familiarity of the practitioner, especially one of a professional origin, with both the socio-cultural nature of the advocated group and with the intricacies of the bureaucratic system, are essential for reaching constructive understanding and agreement between the parties. Often the advocates may themselves become involved in the very planning process and its actual pursuance in the field, in order for their actions to become successful. Thus, the advocacy, as Marx suggests, is primarily a political process, in which all the three parties involved are engaged in power relationships.

An analysis of advocacy planning for the Bedouin reveals four types of this practice: 1) parliamentary; 2) personal; 3) academic; and 4) organizational. Obviously, they are not exclusive to each other or to a particular time period, although some periodicity may be traced. However, the advantage of this classification is rooted in suggesting a certain trend in this component of planning spatial reconstruction from below.

Parliamentary Advocacy

In contrast to the other types discussed below, the nature of this type is indirect in terms of planning, as it relies on the involvement of members of parliament. Approaching them may be done directly by members of the group, or by a third party, when direct access to them is blocked or disrupted. The practices of these advocates may vary. Those with good access to bodies or individuals in the planning authorities may present to them the case of the group advocated for, a practice that is usually conducted behind closed doors. The more open practice takes place in the form of public deliberations in the plenary, or the various house committees. Highlighting this latter practice is of significance, as it is has been officially recorded and can thus be traced.

The practice of advocacy planning, as representative of embryonic phases of plan-

ning-from-below among the Bedouin, had begun already in the 1950s, under the military administration. Its early manifestation (see Porat, 2000) was quite intensive activity by left wing members of the Knesset (the Israeli parliament), particularly of *Mapam* (The United Labor Party). This took place primarily in plenary deliberations and by submitting questions to the various ministries of defense, police, law, interior, agriculture, health, education, and development, all of whom were in charge of Bedouin affairs. It also involved writing newspaper articles and talking in open party deliberations and forums. This range of activities included various issues of Bedouin life, beginning with military administrative decrees concerning daily life, through a wide range of procedures concerning camp permits, mobility, livestock range, farming, leasing State land, legal status of various land parcels and ownership, and to short and long range plans for the Bedouin.

Those planning ideas of the 1950s and 1960s were a major target for advocacy. As shown above, their major objective was to decide and arrange the forms of Bedouin settlement that would facilitate maximum appropriation of their land by the State. This objective, which was never stated publicly, stood in conflict with ideological positions of the Israeli political left wing. In 1960, under pressure of his comrade party house members, the Minister of Development, a Mapam member, submitted the abovementioned plan for settling the Bedouin as an alternative to that submitted earlier by the Minister of Agriculture, who was a member of the major ruling party in the coalition government (Porat, 2000). This plan, itself, also attempted to advance Bedouin settlement in towns, yet in contrast to all the others, it highlighted the principle of planning them in conformity with Bedouin cultural, social and economic traditions.

The Bedouin themselves were quite passive in this indirect parliamentary advocacy. Most of it in fact did not deal with the planning itself, but rather with its legal and political ramifications. The advocates were possibly motivated by electoral interests, but also by Bedouin criticism leveled at the constituency of *Mapam* in the northern Negev, which was based on kibbutz settlements, which themselves were sited on absentee Bedouin lands (Zivan, 1990). Nonetheless, all these actions helped the Bedouin to cope with planning situations that they, alone, could not influence. The bottom line is that by the late 1960s, only a small portion of them had been relocated from the places into which they had been confined in the early 1950s.

Personal Advocacy

Practiced in the same years, personal advocacy involved extra-establishment individuals, particularly members of kibbutz settlements of the various ideological streams in the Negev and elsewhere. Studies of the encounters and spatio-social relationships between kibbutz settlements and the Bedouin in the 1940s and 1950s (Zivan, 1990; Porat, 2000) reveal that some of these individuals were acting independently and on their own initiative, motivated primarily by personal acquaintance or altruism. Others were local representatives of neighboring kibbutzim, or of

kibbutz associations, motivated by a socialistic ideology or by electoral interests of the left wing parties.

This activity was manifested in various forms of aid and support for the Bedouin. It focused on specific field implementation of themes brought up under parliamentary advocacy and involved humanitarian aid and the solution of routine problems at the tribal, family and individual levels. In terms of strict planning advocacy, this kind of advocacy was indirect too. Yet, some of these themes were related to planning, such as when several local kibbutz members served on a public advisory committee on Bedouin land ownership questions (Zivan, 1990), an issue which has been of supreme importance for all planning issues in the northern Negev.

Yet, it is noteworthy that these indirect planning advocacy actions took place under considerable tension between the Bedouin and their Jewish neighbors, particularly given the poor security conditions for the latter in the 1950s. Despite this, the advocacy efforts, together with Bedouin passive resistance, helped to repel State initiatives that conflicted with Bedouin interests. It is conceivable that the small size of the Bedouin population and ignorance to their evolving high birth rate were also responsible for those planning failures by the State.

Academic Advocacy

This type of planning advocacy is more direct and classical in nature. It has been pursued by individuals whose engagement in research generates profound familiarity with essential cultural codes and social and economic structures and practices of Bedouin society. The first such case this study can record took place during 1979-80 when, following the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Accord, the State intended to evacuate about 6,000 Bedouin from the area of Tel-Malkhata and take over their land, in order to build a military airbase (see Figure 1). In general, the process began with governmental attempts to handle this case with old methods and little consultation with the Bedouin, but ended with a significant landmark in State practices towards them. The advocate was a professor of anthropology, one of the few experts on Bedouin affairs and particularly the group concerned at that time. Being familiar with him, the local Bedouin approached him for his help in removing this threat. In a series of articles written by him during and following the event (Marx, 1980, 1981, 1990) he describes his involvement in this process. Acting between both parties, he gained their complete trust and engaged in legal aspects of the land ownership question, evaluation of its real estate value, and various planning aspects of the towns that were planned by the State to accommodate the evacuees.

Some similarities with past events are evident. Once again, the major issue was land ownership, but now with the addition of its financial value and the fact that the Bedouin population had increased considerably to about 40,000, with implications to which the authorities could no longer remain indifferent. Also, several ministries were again involved, compelling the advocate to maneuver among them intensely and to deal with complex political administrative and bureaucratic aspects of the

problem.

This involvement of the advocate was very productive. First, for the first time land rights of Bedouin residing outside official towns were recognized, albeit only within the opportune framework of the Peace Law. This law was a step forward in the long but very sluggish process of land entitlement that had begun in the mid-1970s, when the State invited the Bedouin to register their claims, but which was later halted for political reasons. Second, the process of planning and construction of the Bedouin town of Aro'er (today Ar'ara BaNegev) was set in motion for accommodating the evacuees of Tel Malkhata. This was a significant initiative, not only in itself, but primarily in that it set in motion the planning and construction of five more Bedouin towns, which, by the late 1980s were added to the first two towns that had been built in the previous decades. Finally, following this process, a State body, *The Bedouin Implementation Administration,* was established to implement all land settlement and town planning decisions. In the mid-1990s, the name of this body was changed to *The Administration for Advancement of the Bedouin in the Negev (*or Bedouin Administration as it is commonly known), in charge of all Bedouin in the Negev in all land related matters.

The involvement of the advocate in direct planning was a significant manifestation of planning from below, albeit not directly practiced by the Bedouin. Yet, the Bedouin were not powerless in this process. As noted by Marx (1990), the power of advocates originates in their internal resources, as well as from those of their clients—that is, powerful clients can empower the advocates as well. This insight about the internal power required from and mobilized by the client population is highly significant to our present case.

Another set of academic advocacy events took place in the early 1990s, when all seven of the planned Bedouin towns were already inhabited. This time, the practice almost naturally centered on the municipal affairs of these towns. The background was the policy of the Ministry of the Interior imposed on these towns with regard to the nature of their local municipal government. In the case of Tel-Sheva (as in Rahat before it), after declaring it as a Local Council municipality in 1984, the Ministry nominated an appointed council composed of a non-resident Jewish mayor and official Jewish representatives of the relevant ministries, with resident Bedouin members in the minority. The other five towns were incorporated into two newly established Regional Council (RC) municipalities as follows: Kuseifa, Aro'er and Segev Shalom in Masos RC, and Laqhia and Hura in Shoket RC. In contrast to other regional councils in Israel, these councils included only the territory within the town boundaries, with the in-between open spaces excluded from municipal control (Meir, 1999a). In this case, the State adopted the same model of governance as in Tel Sheva and Rahat, thus guaranteeing State control in municipal affairs. This control also reflected various political interests of the ruling parties at the national level.

By 1991, twenty five years after the birth of their town, the people of Tel Sheva

demanded free elections to the council and mayor. When rejected by the Ministry, they appealed to the Supreme Court, requesting that the Ministry be ordered to declare free elections. In this process, they recruited two experts on Bedouin affairs from academe as advocates —an anthropologist and a geographer. In its reply, the State explained the reasons for rejecting the elections as follows: 1) the danger of igniting a process of Islamic fundamentalization in the town; 2) the possible emergence of municipal chaos, due to inter-tribal or inter-family conflicts over control of the council and the fringe benefits accruing from it; and 3) the inability of the Bedouin population, only a recent emergent from pastoral nomadism, to practice modern and proper municipal administration. In their report submitted to the Supreme Court (Kressel and Ben-David, 1991), the advocates refuted these arguments and convinced the judges to accept the appeal. Two years later, the first free municipal elections took place in Tel Sheva.

Other Bedouin appeals to the Supreme Court in this arena concerned the towns in the Regional Councils. By 1994, representatives of the towns that were incorporated into the Masos RC appealed against the Ministry's intention to declare municipal elections. They requested, instead, that the regional council be dismantled altogether and that separate elections take place in each of the individual towns. A group of academic experts was recruited again to submit a report to the court. This report referred to the entire circumference of the problems concerned—spatial, social, civil rights and State interests (Meir, Kressel and Ben-David, 1994). The court accepted their opinion once again, the Masos RC was dismantled and by 1996 its three towns were declared by the Ministry as Local Councils. Following this precedence, the same model was adopted for Shoket RC and its two towns. However, several additional appeals to the Supreme Court were required in the following years before free municipal elections took place in all five Bedouin towns; since then, they have been run independently by their own elected representatives.

It can thus be seen that, during the 1990s, the practice of academic advocacy gained considerable momentum, increasingly involving group and individual action by academics of different disciplines and generations, with more advocates of both expertise and personal motives joining the process. In addition, research on the Bedouin has grown exponentially in the last two decades. This is manifested not only in printed publications, but also in two other ways. First, various academic and public forums have been conferencing to voice growing criticism of governmental policies and practices toward the Bedouin. Second, the State nominated the Justice Goldberg Committee in 2008 to investigate the problem of Bedouin settlement in the Negev and submit policy recommendations. Following its announcement a large number of applications to testify before it have been submitted by scholars from various fields and institutes.

Organizational Advocacy

Typical since the early 1990s, this type of planning advocacy is part of a world-wide growth of civil society (Yishai, 2003). Various voluntary non-governmental organizations have been mobilizing to aid ethnic, social marginalized and weakened groups in protecting their rights and in confronting governmental authorities in various arenas. Recently, several such organizations in Israel have become active in advocacy planning for the Bedouin. For example, in 1995, various organizations joined in submitting to the Knesset a conceptual planning framework dealing with the major issues of Bedouin land and settlements. The document (Association of Civil Rights in Israel et al., 1995) proposed that a variety of settlement forms be adopted by the State as a principal planning approach, rather then the narrow and single semi-urban approach. It also formulated several principles for settling the land conflict, including a more flexible method of compensation for expropriated land than that the State was ready to offer.

The circle of these organizations has expanded considerably to include four types: 1) national organizations active among all citizen groups in Israel (e.g. *Shatil, Bimkom*); 2) Arab organizations intended for the Arab population exclusively (e.g. *Agudat Ha-Arba'im, The Arab Center for Alternative Planning; Adallah*); 3) joint Jewish/Arab organizations operating within the Arab population (e.g., *The Jewish Arab Center for Economic Development*) and; 4) Joint Jewish/Arab organizations active among the Negev Bedouin exclusively (e.g., *The Jewish-Arab Forum for Co-Existence in the Negev, Forum Hakara*). Their activities range from informing the Bedouin population of their planning rights, through assistance in preparing and submitting plans and planning objections, to legal aid in preparing and submitting appeals to the Supreme Court concerning planning matters (see also Greenspan, 2005). Some are engaged only in providing the Bedouin with tools to deal with the planning establishment (e.g., workshops on planning rights for the local people), which may be viewed as indirect advocacy (see Fenster, 2009 in this volume). In recent years, a trend of Arab organizations to work in complete independence of Jewish involvement can also be traced.

Organizational advocacy has been the most recent of all types of planning advocacy. Reviewing their order of appearance in the Bedouin arena, it transpires that advocacy evolved from spotty, random and haphazard activity by private individuals to a widespread and sustained operation that is publicly organized and at times, even concerted. While they vary in nature and direct relationship to planning and its procedures, as well as in methods and motives, they variously participate in repelling the State strategy of urban Bedouin settlements as a vehicle to appropriate land claimed by them. Their combined impact on the State has generated the onset of change, albeit somewhat constrained, in its moral attitude toward the Bedouin. This has also been followed by a greater understanding of their needs and the onset of a practical change in the general attitude toward them.

Yet the role of the Bedouin themselves, in terms of planning democracy in this arena, has still been quite passive; that is, their access to and participation in the planning process and its procedures, thus far, have been less consequential (although, this apparent passivity is qualified in the discussion below). Hence, while becoming a necessary agent of shaping Bedouin space, planning advocacy has been primarily a humanitarian action, with relatively limited initiatives carrying a direct "planning-from-below" nature. Its major contribution for the evolution of this avenue has been in preparing the ground for the coming phases of this process, those in which Bedouin's own role becomes increasingly significant.

BEDOUIN CENTRIFUGALITY

The above discussion on planning-from-below among the Bedouin implies that they have been treated as merely an economically marginal group, lacking any social and cultural uniqueness. Furthermore, little attention has been paid to the fact that planning processes are associated with political issues of power relations between the establishment and the public and majority-minority relationships which have been incorporated into planning theories and approaches only in the recent two decades (e.g. Yiftachel, 1998). These issues are elaborated below.

Pastoral nomadic societies provide a good example of what Hartshorne (1950) referred to as the conflicting powers within the modern state practicing opposite ideological, organizational and governance tendencies. The pastoralists adopt a centrifugal tendency of maximal dispersion and decentralization, and this is manifested in several dimensions: functional (type and management of economic activities); spatial (location of these economic activities and the population); and socio-political (voluntary adoption of marginality, seclusion and avoidance of contact with government as survival strategies). In contrast, the State is characterized by an opposite centripetal tendency that in each of these dimensions is manifested in maximal concentration, centralization and control of the entire population along with its economic activities, locations and resources.

The historical balance of these power relationships is subject to various interpretations. Up until recent decades, the popular approach maintained that the modern State is sufficiently strong to pull the pendulum in its favor (Swift, 1977; Davies, 1977). Accordingly, in order to meet its interests, the powerful State could impose upon pastoralists a considerable change in their subsistence practices, in terms of patterns of economic activity, their locations and their integration within the State. The underlying assumption of this approach was that the pastoral nomads are to a considerable degree a passive and submissive population.

The contemporary approach to understanding these relationships is different. It suggests that State expectations for far-reaching cultural changes are unrealistic. Recent research has revealed that pastoralists do not automatically and immediately

abandon their traditional culture in response to sedentarization and settlement, or to structural changes in their economy. On the contrary, many cultural elements are preserved by them in a reservoir of *established cultural alternatives* (Salzman, 1981). These are recruited, reproduced and reactivated in various forms that are suitable to their voluntarily or coercively changed life circumstances. We suggest that their centrifugal tendency is one such cultural element. It helps the settling pastoralists to cope with the oppressive centripetal power of the State and thus, to express their unique functional, spatial and inherent socio-political needs. These are vital for by-passing, negotiating and accommodating the barriers of the cultural crisis. In recent decades, this approach has been supported by evidence on indigenous peoples in general, of which pastoralists constitute a sub-group (Maybury-Lewis, 1992; Perry, 1996).

With respect to the Bedouin, this approach was already referred to above in discussing Bedouin objections throughout the years to various State initiatives. Furthermore, their very resort to various types of advocacy reveals their activism, in contrast to what might otherwise be viewed as passivity. Yet, the major change has surfaced in recent decades, when the Bedouin have begun to react in a significantly centrifugal manner to the accumulating centripetal moves by the State. These processes (Meir, 1997; 1999b) have been manifested in various ways in the functional, spatial and socio-political dimensions. However, they were preceded by several social-organizational manifestations. The first was evolution of social protest against State public policy. In the decade following the military administration, the Bedouin were already at ease in approaching the media and conducting mass demonstrations and sit-in strikes, often quite violent, as well as taking local legal action, even before their advocates begun practicing the appeals to the Supreme Court..

The second initiative, particularly since the 1980s, was organizing voluntary associations for promoting various public issues. These focused on fields where State action was failing or discriminative, such as social services (education, health and welfare) or civil rights (particularly land rights). Over time, this line of action has expanded into wider circles within Bedouin society and into fields which were previously a taboo, such as the improvement in the status of women.

These political protest and social action initiatives generated a considerable centrifugal momentum. Its most direct spatial planning manifestations were naturally related to the land ownership issue. Already earlier, as we have shown, advocacy in the case of Tel- Malkhata paved the road for a new legislative approach toward Bedouin land, which, in principle, acknowledged Bedouin land rights there. Still earlier however, and in response to mounting pressures from the Bedouin and others, the State had begun (in 1974) to register Bedouin land claims toward land entitlement (Ben David, 1996). Even though the process was later frozen, its role in providing the infrastructure for future land entitlement was quite important.

Another spatial planning manifestation of Bedouin centrifugality is related to settlement and, particularly, the very idea of urbanization. At present, about four

decades after the Bedouin urbanization project was initiated by the State in the late 1960s, only half of the population has moved to the planned towns. In recent decades a new return migration wave has been traced, in which families have been leaving towns in order to return to their claimed land in the outlying areas (Atzmon, 2000; Sagi, 2002). While the extent of this wave is yet unknown, it nevertheless points toward the low attractiveness of this governmental project.

This obstinate Bedouin centrifugal position has had its effect on State planning concepts, particularly concerning number of towns and their size and nature. Already in the early 1980s the original number of towns to be established had increased from two to seven. This was a consequence of State realization that its original intentions to transfer all Bedouin tribes into a small number of big towns reflected a profound misunderstanding of internal socio-political structure and tensions. Furthermore, even those who chose to settle in the towns, the majority of whom were of a fellaheen origin (previously landless farmers) (Ben-David and Gonen, 2001), applied centrifugal pressures that required further reassessment by the State of its policy toward the internal planning and economic base of Bedouin towns. During the late 1980s and the 1990s, these pressures resulted in changes in planning principles leading to spatial separation between tribal groups on a neighborhood basis, with all the ensuing implications for the quantity, deployment and location of public social service facilities, and some governmental aid for local economic enterprises and projects.

Finally, during the late 1990s, another major issue surfaced very intensely, concerning the now highly debated question of the "unrecognized villages" in the "dispersion." These dozens of villages are perhaps the greatest manifestation of Bedouin spatial centrifugality as against the "seven towns" imperative, to which the governing establishment attempted to cling. Yet, as will be demonstrated below, the government has recently become more flexible in its recognition policy.

In addition to these two major fields (land ownership and settling in towns), centrifugality was manifested in several other fields, such as State allocation of agro-pastoral resources (pasture, farming land and water), social resources (education welfare and health services) and political resources (granting permits for self-municipal local government in Bedouin towns).

At this juncture, further illumination of Bedouin centrifugality may be benefitted by a discussion of the discursive trends with regard to settlement and urbanization. Until the 1980s, the planning and development establishment, as well as academic circles (e.g. Amiran et al., 1979; Ben David, 1982), quite commonly adopted the terminology that distinguished between spontaneous settlement and planned settlement. Spontaneous settlement referred to the dozens of small hamlets that sprouted within the *seig* and lacked physical infrastructure, social services, economic base, or internal and external spatial ordering. The contemporary prevailing discourse maintained that these settlements were erected by the Bedouin on a quite voluntary basis, as an expected and quite a natural response to their changing spatial-environmental

circumstances. These processes of sedentarization and settlement indeed carried this nature in the pre-State period (Bar-Zvi and Ben-David, 1978). Yet conceptually, this nature drifted into the post-State years when it became the only option available to the Bedouin after the State banned much livestock grazing. It follows that this nature of settlement in the post-State period did not carry any natural choice that might have developed spontaneously.

The "planned towns" concept was offered by the State in contrast to spontaneous settlement, referring to those seven towns established by the State between the late 1960s and late 1980s. The State has been using this discourse for promoting its interest in moving all Bedouin to towns. These towns were thus portrayed with a positive image by the establishment (Ben-David, 1993), the primary goal being to highlight their superiority as a product of organized modern rational planning over the spontaneous villages, which lacked this very component of positive planning. Yet, as we have already seen, the freedom of choice enjoyed by the Bedouin in this respect was quite limited too. Furthermore, along with the overt agenda of the State—using urbanization as a leverage for accelerated modernization of Bedouin society—there has been a covert one, that of using these very goals as tools for appropriating Bedouin land by detaching them from their pre-modern pastoral nomadic culture.

Towards the late 1980s and perhaps following the growing public debate over core-periphery relationships at the national development discourse, a new term was introduced that attempted to further distinguish between these two settlement types. The term that now became preferable by the authorities for the villages in the "dispersion" was the "periphery" of the towns in contrast to the Bedouin 'core' urban settlements. A corollary of this discourse involved an account of the development of Bedouin urban hierarchy (Ben-David, 1993) as a product of western classic urban geography spatial discourse. The unplanned Bedouin villages were thus portrayed as marginal and inferior to the planned urban places, in terms of development, despite the fact that Bedouin society was already aware of the problematic social pathology of the planned towns that barred their sustained inhabitation (Ben-David, 1993; Meir, 1997). This, as shown above, has been one of the major reasons that the towns were largely avoided by the real Bedouin, those of the landed class.

During the 1990s, the discourse has taken a turn with further centrifugal implication when the "Bedouin dispersion", shown above, was introduced with regard to the outlying villages. The flat meaning of this term is a wide dispersal of villages around a large and dense core, with the English term "diaspora" as a synonym—that is, a dispersed exiled population away from its homeland. Its origin is uncertain and is value-laden in two contrasting respects. On the one hand, it may have reflected again an attempt by the State to positively portray the core concentration as strong and vital, as against the dispersion, which is remote, detached and weak. On the other hand Kressel (2001) suggested that it was first raised by a group of Bedouin, who intended to parallel Bedouin dispersion around the planned towns with the Jewish world diaspora. Its goal was to imbue the dispersion precisely with a positive

meaning, centered on the notion of a moral obligation to award public recognition to the villages and to relate to their social and economic needs in a humanitarian way. Either way, "Bedouin dispersion" has struck roots in the past decade, carrying, in general, a negative connotation although seemingly less so in recent years, compared to the previous terms.

We suggest that the most remarkable indication of the changing established planning discourse in response to Bedouin centrifugality is the introduction of the term "unrecognized settlements." This term was introduced into the discourse towards the mid-1990s, primarily under the impact of municipal recognition awarded to unrecognized Bedouin settlements in the Galilee in northern Israel. Since then, all Negev Bedouin villages outside towns have been referred to as such. Yet, since the State regards their land as State land into which the Bedouin have intruded, they carry no official names, municipal status, or formal State record, and have no formal or approved local and regional master plans. Being illegal inhabitants by State standards, they are ineligible to receive public services or participate in any local elections. In fact, the authorities refer to them as having no spatial identity, despite being citizens. As indicated above, only very recently have some changes occurred in this state of affairs.

The introduction of this term first to the public discourse and later into the professional planning and academic ones, was initiated by the Negev Bedouin themselves, by various means. A major one was the establishment, in 1996, of a voluntary Bedouin organization called *The Committee for Strategic Planning for the Bedouin,* which gave birth a year later to the NGO *The Regional Council for Unrecognized Arab Bedouin Villages in the Negev (*RCBUV). This council published a map showing all forty-five unrecognized villages with their Arabic names. The major goal of this initiative was to position them in the eyes of their inhabitants and those of the Bedouin towns, as well as the authorities, as legal spatial entities with basic needs that must be fulfilled by law and according to moral standards.

The attempt to legitimize these settlements generates a centrifugal power in both spatial and functional manners, and these have been counterbalancing the centripetal power of the State manifested in de-legitimizing them. Yet, despite the ideological polarity, the term "unrecognized settlements" is no longer inconceivable by the authorities and has become widespread and acceptable among various circles. This linguistic legitimacy has been quite an important milestone in the process of spatial legitimacy. It is of special relevance here to add that the Ministry of the Interior has, itself, recently mapped the villages for its own purposes and identified about 200 clusters that have since received intra-ministerial codes (Sagi, 2002). While this initiative was taken for purposes of collecting information concerning illegal construction and its control and the authorities have been using it for various planning purposes, this is the first incidence of any practical reference by the State to the settlements in the dispersion. Thus, despite being of technical significance, this move constitutes a major change, compared to the anonymous way the unrecognized villages were related to previously by the State.

The changing discourse by the planning establishment reflects several trends. On the one hand, desperate State attempts to de-legitimize all Bedouin life systems outside the towns are viewed quite ironically, in light of failure of the State to transform the towns it established for them into attractive urban communities. From a governance perspective, this failure is strangely counter-productive to State attempts to appropriate Bedouin land.

On the other hand, the very terminological turnover reflects State attempts to find avenues into Bedouin circles, by trying to convince them in the advantages and benefits of planned urbanization and is, first and foremost, a dialectical process. The very friction with reality entails a change in consciousness among the planning establishment in terms of grasping the problem and relating to it. The recent weakening denial of the Bedouin community in the "dispersion" by State authorities is indicative of their becoming more advertent to their needs. This is largely an outcome of the centrifugal campaign practiced by the Bedouin. However, in addition to this sustained natural and inherent cultural centrifugality, Bedouin society has been producing more active and direct methods of realizing from below their planning needs, as outlined in the following discussion.

PLANNING EMPOWERMENT

Indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and marginal groups in developing, as well as developed countries, have been mobilizing and organizing in recent decades, locally, nationally and often internationally, within NGOs and other extra-establishment organizations (Wellard and Copestake, 1993; Blant, 1996). The objective of these organizations has been to take action toward what the development discourse has referred to, since the 1970s, as "grass roots development."

In recent decades, a more elaborate approach has been proposed that presents these social and political actions as "development empowerment." The concept of empowerment surfaced in the planning and development literature in the early 1990s (Friedmann, 1992), when marginalized groups (indigenous peoples, first nations and marginal regions) realized their weakness and inferiority vis-à-vis the political economic and social dominance of the ruling establishment and core regions. This realization has led these underprivileged groups to search legitimate power sources for their socio-political empowerment in their struggle to control their own development resources. Quite often the objective has been to gain control over resources expropriated from them by the State and its agencies, including the right for their future development.

Until the 1970s, these groups were not particularly familiar with the State apparatus of the *planning process* of spatial and environmental resources, or with the various perspectives of research, procedural and legal actions associated with it. Empowerment is therefore intended to fill in precisely these gaps, by highlighting

several fields such as autonomy in decision making, self-reliance, direct democratic participation, and experiential social learning.

This approach, as John Friedmann suggests, constitutes an alternative paradigm for development vis-à-vis the conventional paradigm for shaping State policies. The major motivation for the growth of alternative planning and development approaches is epistemological. It is rooted in the criticism leveled at the knowledge and ideological infrastructures of conventional and established modernist approaches. The traditional and classical conceptualization of the planning process views it as a technical action, intended merely to determine physical land uses. Within this tradition, positivistic science, as a major source of legitimacy of discourse in contemporary Western society, has assumed a central position and planners have accordingly become accustomed to view planning as a rational scientific action.

This planning discourse has spread from the western, modern, more developed world, outwards into the less developed world, and it is this kind of hegemony that has sparked heavy criticism. The major criticism (Friedman, 1987; Hillier, 1993; Tauxe, 1995; Sandercock, 1998) claims that by overlooking other epistemological modes, this western-based modernist epistemology tends to marginalize and weaken local groups. Yet, there are many ways other than those of western cultures for knowing, familiarizing and experiencing the world that have been practiced by local groups. Such approaches include, for example, grasping the traditional and spiritual meaning of land and other environmental resources; comprehending the multifaceted nature, rules and arrangements of a human settlement; and understanding the nature of elementary social units of reference in development. However, these modes have been pushed aside by the hegemonic western rationalized discourse. The alternative approach suggests that if reality can only be grasped in a positivistic mode, it is conceivable that the same mode should be adopted for designing it. However, if different modes exist for understanding the same reality, then the reality of the relevant people may be designed and planned in ways that are different from the rational-positivistic one. This idea has been cast within the general debate between social constructionist postmodern planning theory and modernistic-positivistic planning practices (Rydin, 2007).

Presently, and more than previously, many local and marginal groups worldwide are already aware of this wisdom and of its practical implications for their livelihood. It carries significant implications for understanding the process of planning empowerment for the Bedouin and this is demonstrated below through two cases. The first one may be conceptualized as *spatial* planning empowerment, which involves, in particular, a material change, whereby the group concerned takes a spatial initiative of self-relocation into a long and highly desired place (often historically significant for them), thus confronting the authorities with a new planning reality with which to cope. Alternatively, the group may initiate changes in the organizational or material conditions *in situ* of their livelihood. The second type is *consciousness* planning empowerment. It involves action by the indigenous group toward gen-

erating a change in conventional-established planning knowledge, by introducing an alternative indigenous or local knowledge through which the "other" is viewed by the hegemonic as equally valuable. The underlying assumption in both types is that they carry a potential for changing the planning circumstances of their desired space of habitation. The following discussion presents two cases of Bedouin planning empowerment.

Spatial Planning Empowerment

The case presented here is a milestone event that took place in the mid-1990s, with the Abu-Gardud section of the Al-Azazmeh Bedouin tribe (Meir, 2003). This tribe is the southernmost of all Bedouin tribes in the Negev and has been strongly inclined towards pastoral-nomadism and less toward sedentary farming practices, compared to others (Bar-Zvi and Ben-David, 1978). Its past territory stretched from the Central Negev Highlands to the north-eastern Sinai Peninsula (Figure 2). Following the 1948 war, most of the tribe's population fled and some were even expelled to Sinai, with only a few hundred remaining in the Negev.

The sub-territory of the Abu-Gardud section also extended westward across the new Israeli-Egyptian border. In common with other tribes of cross-border territories, this group was evacuated for security reasons away from its border territory and relocated some 20 kms closer to its main tribal kinsmen. Since then, they approached the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and State authorities several times, requesting permission to return to their traditional home territory. Time and again they were rejected, on the basis of military and security excuses, such as proximity to the Egyptian border, or IDF land uses and needs. In the years following the 1981 Peace Accord with Egypt, their claim that the accord rendered these excuses redundant was rejected again the State.

In the early 1990s, the IDF decided to yield the area allocated for military uses in this region in favor of civil needs that excluded those of the Bedouin. Realizing this, the Abu-Gardud resubmitted their request on the grounds that they have a priority over all other civil land uses. Needless to say, this request was rejected again, but now the group decided to ignore the rejection. By 1994, eleven families (~80 people) self-relocated to their previous location in Bier-Hadaj (Hebrew: Beer-Khail), located now within the rural municipality of the Regional Council of Ramat Negev, which is composed exclusively of Jewish villages. Some months later, other families joined the original group and by mid-1995, the settlement numbered 150 families. Since then, this original nucleus has grown, due to both in-migration and natural increase, to 600 families and a total population of 4,000, constituting about a quarter of the entire El-Azazmeh tribal population.

Despite allegations by the authorities of intrusion into State land (as against the Bedouin's narrative that they simply returned home), the government decided, for political reasons, to refrain from action. However, the considerable population growth of the Bedouin there began to generate problems typical of the unrecognized

Bedouin settlements elsewhere, particularly those that are located within the territory of a Jewish regional municipality. These included lack of public services and the right to vote in the municipal elections, both of which denied by the State, as well as friction with neighboring Jewish settlements over territorial resources and property crime against Jewish homes and farms. When these problems rose to an intolerable level, the regional council demanded that the State provide solutions. Following the activities of the *Administration for Advancement of the Bedouin,* with regard to the Metropolitan Plan of the city of Beer-Sheva, the government decided in 1999 to establish an independent settlement for the Bedouin at Bier Hadaj. The *Administration* began to implement the relevant planning and construction procedures required by law, including establishment of a committee to explore and decide on the village's territorial boundary. Presently these procedures are handled by a new municipality named the Regional Council of Abu-Basma. This municipality was established by the State in 2005 precisely to administer the similar problems of eight (now twelve) new Bedouin settlements that are to be recognized, planned and established from among the unrecognized settlements, Bier Hadaj included.

Figure 2: Abu-Gardud territorial movements.
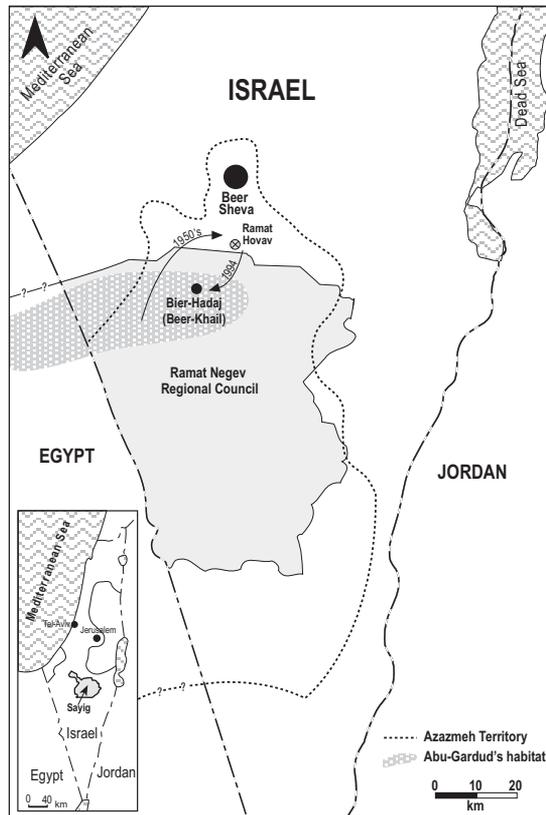
The Bedouin, who in recent decades have become sedentary and partly urbanized, have accumulated considerable territorial organizational capabilities (Meir, 1996). In conducting the above empowerment action, the particular group concerned took autonomous action concerning land and other territorial resources. Their claim for ownership of these resources is anchored in their own cultural traditional and customary law of land ownership. From an epistemological perspective, this perception of land ownership and land use contradicts the doctrine adopted by the planning and administration bodies originating in the rationalist approach (Meir, 2009). The State was thus compelled to accept the Bedouin position, that is, to acknowledge in principle, the historical Bedouin rights to the territory, to initiate the process of recognition of this new place and begin its legal planning and development within formal State frameworks. By becoming recognized, this settlement is now entitled to all civil rights, that is, provision of public social services (education, health and welfare), municipal services (water, electricity, sewage, and public utilities), and access to and integration with national, regional and local physical infrastructures. By establishing the Abu Basma Regional Council the issue of municipal elections was solved too, albeit only temporarily.

Consciousness Planning Empowerment

The second type of planning empowerment is demonstrated by the regional plan for the Northern Negev, as an alternative to the official plans prepared by the State. As elaborated in the opening paragraphs of this article, the plan was submitted in 1999 by *The Regional Council for the Bedouin-Arab Unrecognized Villages (RCBUV)*. It constituted an oppositional plan, a procedure made possible through the Planning and Construction Law. Its objectives were as follows: 1) recognition of all 45 unrecognized villages in the "dispersion;" 2) development of a municipal authority for these villages, based on the regional council model of rural government in Israel; 3) realization of voting rights for local government for the inhabitants of the villages; and finally 4) provision of all social and municipal services as required by law and common elsewhere in rural Israel. The underlying principle of all these goals was that their realization should not be contingent on the strategy adopted by the State that demanded settlement of the land conflict as a prior condition.

The very act of establishing the *RCBUV* is still another manifestation of spatial planning empowerment. It is of the kind discussed above involving change initiated from below by the local people *in-situ* in the governing-administrative conditions of their space. This was followed by the establishment of several short lived similar organizations, further substantiating its considerable empowerment role. However, the *RCBUV* was only a shadow organization of local government, with a purely symbolic meaning. This act was primarily a protest, from which the Bedouin did not have any real practical expectations. Its major contribution, as a planning-from-below process and shaping space, lies in the plan they submitted that challenged the conventionally established planning knowledge and wisdom concerning Bedouin

society. This, in fact, involved reconstructing the prevailing conventional planning knowledge and discourse in all cultural, socio-political and spatial aspects of indigenous Bedouin society (Meir, 2003; 2005).

Thus, in the cultural field, the conventional planning discourse had portrayed Bedouin identity in a highly narrow and singular "Bedouinness" stereotype. This met the hegemonic needs of the State at the national, regional and local levels and the ensuing planning solutions, primarily by corralling the Bedouin into urbanism. By contrast, in their plan, the Bedouin portrayed the same identity as rather multi-dimensional and far more complex. They elaborated upon this in several respects: 1) on the national level, their linkage to the Palestinian-Arab minority in Israel; 2) on the regional level, their role in enriching cultural diversity within the northern Negev metropolitan area; and 3) at the local level, their historical linkage to the specific places of their habitat in the unrecognized settlements. According to their alternative plan, all these dimensions of Bedouin identity require diverse planning solutions rather than the exclusive urban model adopted by the State.

The socio-political field in the *RCBUV* plan represents an alternative knowledge concerning the organization of the tribal, sub-tribal and extended family structures. This knowledge, too, challenges the simplistic State narrative, which regards the Bedouin tribe as the exclusive and elementary subsistence entity and therefore planning unit, with the derivative of only recognizing uni-tribal new settlements. Again, the *RCBUV* plan counter portrays a considerably broader and more complex socio-political structure, with which the State has to cope. It constitutes an alternative reality in planning the municipal-organizational structure of Bedouin settlements, rather than an epistemology chosen by the State that supports of transformation of *all* Bedouin into an urban society and thus detaching them from their land.

Finally, in the spatial arena, the plan challenges the principles of spatial organization governing the modern urban world and its accompanying rational planning approach, as they are imposed on Bedouin space by hegemonic State planning. This planning approach blatantly ignores the unique spatial organization and spatiality developed by the Bedouin over time as an inherent necessity deeply rooted in their culture. This spatiality has become one of the most elementary socio-political sustainable development principles for the Bedouin, as a semi-nomadic agro-pastoral indigenous group, forced into a metropolitan reality.

The new knowledge in all three fields, suggested in the Bedouin plan, constitutes novel insights, as an input to conventional planning. In particular, it provides different points of departure for understanding this society and for formulating an appropriate planning policy by the Israeli planning establishment. It primarily comprises pooling cultural resources, which refer to their imagined space. They have empowered themselves and their civil struggle through these conceptual tools, in order to gain recognition of their villages and the territorial resources necessary to make them socially and economically sustainable communities.

As suggested above, this form of a consciousness planning empowerment consti-

tutes the culmination of the evolution of planning-from-below among the Bedouin. In contrast to the former form of empowerment, which is material in nature, this one is conceptual-ideal. As such, its potential impingement on the planning establishment is considerable. It has become the most beneficial of all other forms of planning-from-below discussed earlier. The Bedouin regard this form of empowerment as highly responsible for the recent changes in the planning approach, concepts and procedures adopted by the State. These changes are embodied partly in the decision made by the State to establish the twelve more recognized settlements incorporated into the Regional Council of Abu-Basma. It seems that the major success lies in Bedouin self-realization of the political weight of this empowerment initiative and the necessity to sustain this high threshold of alternative planning achieved by them. Indeed, the *RCBUV* has undertaken this sustained goal of alternative planning (Abu-Sumur and Yiftachel, 2007), parallel to the activities of the Abu-Basma Regional Council, in both the general planning of Bedouin space and the detailed planning of the individual settlements.

CONCLUSION

This article analyzes the early stages of the evolution of planning-from-below among the Bedouin, as part of shaping their space in the northern Negev. As a marginalized group, the Bedouin have focused on one of the vertices of the power relations triangle proposed by Hasson (2009), with regulative and initiatory planning and market forces standing on the others. In this process, they have been gradually escaping the hegemony of the established planning oligarchy, toward the opposite ideal pole of independent planning, passing through the necessary stages of advocacy planning, centrifugalization of their relationships with the State and planning empowerment.

This historical formation constitutes a total process, in which each stage has led to the next one, with the interim effects generating significant planning changes in shaping space. The degree of Bedouin civil desistance has declined and their communal-group assertiveness has constantly increased. This has been followed by the intensity of their entrepreneurship and motivation in planning-from-below of the land resources to which they claim ownership, as means of shaping their space.

In fact, the Bedouin have been engaged in the formation of a different system of power relations with the State, mobilizing their endogenous organizational and professional competences. This new trend of empowerment has nourished, inter alia, on their inherent centrifugal powers. It stresses the various meanings of "otherness" and the "alternative" and the insistence of viewing them as essential resources, particularly in terms of "what public and whose interest", and reflects very profoundly the idea of planning-from-below. We are thus faced here with a political process of struggle for rights, identity, place, and spatial-organizational diversity.

One major question remains open. Our analysis has assumed that the population of the unrecognized settlements and the planned towns are each homogenous in terms of their public interests. This relies, in turn, on the modernistic assumption that modes of subsistence of the Bedouin have been transformed into capitalistic and market-oriented homogenous forms. Furthermore, it relies on the assumption that traditional Bedouin pastoral nomadic tribality has also disappeared with urbanization. Recent research (Ben-Israel, 2009; Karplus and Meir, 2009) has revealed, however, that in terms of Bedouin spatiality, these assumptions are still a far cry from reality. Thus, Bedouin socio-spatial diversity again calls into question the issue of "what public and whose interest." That is, who is the public being "represented" by the various "representatives" (*RCBUV*, other NGOs) and what interests are indeed being reflected in these processes? In other words, we suggest that there is a possible multi layer conflict over the public interest, worthy of further research: the exogenous conflict between the group concerned and the State, and the endogenous conflict within the group itself. Studying these issues will shed more light on the highly debated question of the public interest in planning.

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