

Chapter 1

Planning in the Negev Bedouin Sector

The life of a Bedouin is a tent-pole on a camel.

—Bailey, *A Culture of Desert Survival: Bedouin Proverbs
from Sinai and the Negev*

A desert waste is preferable to a contentious neighbor.

—Bailey, *A Culture of Desert Survival: Bedouin Proverbs
from Sinai and the Negev*

In an ideal world, new town planners operate in the realm of Utopianism. The true planner, the authentic planner, the planner on the cutting edge, is he or she who sits and dreams, who is willing to ask the most dangerous of questions, such as “What if?” The planner of the twenty-first century does not even think of these as dreams, but rather as the blueprints of a new reality in the making; the planner is simply the mechanism and the catalyst that makes these dreams come true.

The planned town then is the actualization of the dream, that which is brought to life by the will and whim of those willing to go outside of themselves, beyond the limitations of what is, and, if the planner is truly inspired, by what is even deemed possible. The planned new town is—or at least it can be—that which no one ever believed could come to pass. It is, in effect, Tomorrow’s city, Today.

And yet, one basic proviso must always apply: new towns only have the potential to be Utopian so long as they are planned with the interests of the potential residents as their guiding principle, and not in the interests of the planners. So long as the planners plan for their own self-interests, dystopian outcomes and unintended consequences can be assured. It is a clichéd truism that a town is only a reflection of the people who reside there. This is all the more true when one considers the new town or community; until human inhabitants arrive, the town is not a town at all, it is merely an empty shell.

And so it is with the state–forced resettlement of the bedouin Arabs of the Negev Desert in southern Israel into the planned new towns that have been created for them since the 1960s. The successful implementation of this planning initiative has been jeopardized since the outset, it was ill conceived, poorly designed, and is, to the present day, questionable in every facet of the ways in which the bedouin continue to be resettled. Planned with no bedouin input until very late in the process, the new bedouin towns have long struggled to serve the community’s needs. This was not accidental, but was part of the state’s agenda to relocate the bedouin off of the land and into concentrated areas as quickly as possible for its own political ends. Moreover, this failure to work with the community also played a key role in the towns’ inability to attract in-migrants. At the same time, those who did relocate found “towns” barely meeting the definition of the word, and that only recently are beginning to develop into viable, livable communities.

In the following chapters, I will seek to show that there are numerous examples of ways in which the towns *are* succeeding in performing a role as nodes of social and economic development in the Negev bedouin community. Israel’s state planners might be tempted to suggest (as many do) that in the areas of health, education, women’s status, and other social status indices, the bedouin are developing remarkably, following a “modernization” curve well in line with most hopes and expectations. One can only conclude, then, of how tragic it is that despite these successes, many if not most in the bedouin community as a whole perceive the resettlement initiative as nothing short of a dismal failure. Rather than being viewed in this light, the Utopian “dream” remains elusive, as many Negev bedouin yet struggle to awaken from what they perceive to be nothing short of a living nightmare.

A History of the Bedouin New Town Planning Initiative*

The literature is replete with descriptions of the story of the Negev bedouin community’s urbanization process into planned towns. The narrative has been repeated a number of times (see, for example, Meir 1997; Kressel 2003), and need not be retold in full yet again on these pages. However, certain elements of how the bedouin community has, over time, been divided, concentrated, and resettled, and an explanation of how the initiative was planned and re-planned over time, is necessary in order to fully understand and appreciate the role that displacement has played historically in the new town initiative, and how, to an extent, these past events still impact the program’s successes and failures in the present temporal context.

According to the Israeli Land Authority, four million *dunams* (approximately one million acres) of land in the Negev Desert were under control of the bedouin prior to the creation of the State of Israel (Shapira, 24 November 1992), lands upon which, in many instances, many tribes lived in semi-permanent, “fixed” residences (Marx 1967: 10). Between 60,000 and 90,000 bedouin resided throughout the region prior to the 1948 War of Israeli Independence (Boneh, 1983: 47), comprising seven major “macro-tribes” (Arabic: *kabila*): the Tarabeen, Tiyaha, Hanajira, Jibarat, Sa’idiyin, Ahyawat, and the Azazmeh. The Azazmeh—the tribe providing the focus of most of this monograph—had, since the late 1910s, lived within a territory demarcated by the “arid mountains” of the Negev interior, as the stronger Tiyaha and Tarabeen tribes had moved into better quality grazing lands further north (Marx 1967: 9).

After the 1948 War, only 11,000 bedouin total remained in the Negev, the majority having fled or been expelled to the West and East banks of the Jordan River, the Gaza district, and the Sinai Peninsula. Of these, 90 percent were Tiyaha; only a few hundred were Azazmeh, and “even fewer” were Tarabeen (Marx 1967: 12). While the Jibarat, Hanajira, Sa’idiyin, and most of Tarabeen fled altogether from the region, the Ahyawat moved southward into the Sinai. The majority of the Tiyaha did not flee during the War, but waited out the outcome of the War to determine the new political dynamics in the region (Boneh 1983: 53).

As for the Azazmeh, the tribe was split into sections, but experienced no wholesale flight during the War. Still, of the twelve major sub-tribes that originally comprised the Azazmeh, only the Mas’udiyin remained intact. Some one thousand remnants of several other tribes were thus united under a few Azazmeh sheikhs by 1960 (Marx 1967: 13), using the same “Azazmeh” name as their tribal identification. Disparate groups of bedouin, including some Tarabeen, Subhiyan, Sbeihat, Sarahin El-Ryati, and others, were now included within the tribe’s structure (Boneh 1983: 53).

Upon the establishment of Israel, the entire Southern District was placed under indefinite Military Administration. Part of the Administration’s responsibilities was to remove all remaining bedouin groups from their various locations and relocate them within a *siyag* (Hebrew: translated as a “restricted” or “fenced-in place”), a reservation-like region of some 1,000 square kilometers (see Map 1.1), that is, one-tenth the size of the original area of habitation in which the bedouin originally resided (Boneh 1983: 55–56).

With few exceptions, the vast majority of Negev bedouin complied with the removal order. In addition, the Administration required that the bedouin obtained permits in order to exit the *siyag*, which were given out on a limited basis and then only for purposes of travel, or to those who worked outside of the closed area in various occupations, including non-pastoral

activities. In reality, however, bedouin families living south of Be'er Sheva in the Mitzpe Ramon and Avdat areas were able to escape removal into the *siyag* because of their remote areas of residence. The Israelis did not in truth control the Negev and its borders fully until 1956—only then, two years after nearly all other Negev bedouin, did the bedouin in the more peripheral regions of the southern Negev take on Israeli citizenship. Moreover, the *siyag* was not totally closed. It was possible to leave, but only in one direction: Jordan (Hamamdi, 7 February 2007).

The *siyag's* purported purpose was to serve as a control and security mechanism, utilized both to protect the Jewish population of the new country from potential violence at the hands of the bedouin, as well as to concentrate the bedouin in one relatively small geographic area and remove them from “state lands.” From this point onward, state policy in the Negev served to encourage permanent bedouin settlement within a concentrated area, and effectively to eliminate nomadic activity as a whole (Marx 1967: 53–54). These efforts were based in part upon assumptions, expressed throughout the literature, that the passing of nomadism is a “natural” phenomenon (Meir 1997: 2), as peoples move from the pole of “traditionalism” to the pole of “modernity.” But in the Israeli case, this process may be further politicized and problemacized; with sedentarization and the active ceasing of nomadism, the bedouin would, some contended, experience changing political contexts, and a “cultural orientation away from the Arab culture of the Middle East toward a more modern Western culture” (Meir 1997: 5), most naturally embodied by the newly evolving Israeli State.

And yet, any measures to permanently settle, at the state's behest, on lands that were not traditionally their own were met with resistance and vigilance on the part of the community. Rather, the bedouin sought to maintain a continuity with past land holdings, viewing resettlement in the *siyag* as but a temporary development (Marx 1967: 54).

Four major areas of settlement soon resulted from the relocation: the Huzaiyil (Rahat), Hura, Laqiya, and Tel Sheva areas. These settlements initially had no government-directed plan, and no services other than schools. In the four settlements, some water provision was specially arranged. Settlement site location within the *siyag* was chosen based upon a variety of criteria, including proximity to highways in instances where residents sought easy transport access (Boneh 1983: 71).

The evacuation of the bedouin to the *siyag* led to restricted movement of the bedouin, whose free-ranging pastoral practices required large geographic areas in order to remain economically viable. Therefore, while this concentration did not bring an end to the pastoral aspects of bedouin society, it did signify the discontinuation of the active nomadic lifestyle by a majority of the bedouin population. The whole area was placed under

almost continuous cultivation, especially in barley and other cereals. Overuse of the soil was inevitable; erosion, though recognized as a danger, was simply accepted, as there seemed no way to conserve land in such a limited area (Marx 1967: 19). With the desire to control certain areas of the Negev for military purposes, the government placed further limitations on where animals could graze. But the need for pasture outside of the *siyag* continued throughout the mid to late 1950s, as flocks were increased in order to maximize potential profits. Conflicts with Jewish newcomers to the Negev led to additional political stresses, and further reluctance by the Administration to open more lands to the bedouin for pasturage.

The combination of landlessness and the difficulties of raising flocks on limited grazing land led to alternative activity in the wage labor economy. By the mid-1960s, 45 percent of bedouin male laborers worked in agriculture, 23 percent in construction, transport, and services, and 32 percent were “unemployed” (that is, they lacked employment in the wage labor economy; Meir 1988: 261). Still, pastoral activity and traditional

dry farming continued to provide a known alternative to the uncertainties of employment in the modern economy (Meir 1988: 263).

As Be'er Sheva was further developed as the regional center of the Negev during the early 1960s, its pull for bedouin labor increased. The founding



Map 1.1. Location of the Recognized/ Legal Negev Bedouin Towns as of 2000. Used by permission, courtesy of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.

in 1961 of the new Jewish development town of Arad created a variety of job opportunities for bedouin wage labor as well, with light construction proving particularly attractive (Boneh 1983: 60).

As bedouin men increasingly turned to wage labor outside of their community, women, girls, elder community members, and others unable to work in these areas took over the responsibilities of tending flocks (though men remained responsible for camel herding; Marx 1967: 47). Like other Arab laborers in Israel, bedouin men were not allowed to remain in the cities or take their families there, thereby ensuring that they acquired only temporarily employment outside of the *siyag* (Marx 1967: 51).

Socially, the creation of the *siyag* led to severely crowded conditions, at least by bedouin standards. The population density in the area under Military Administration was 15 persons/square kilometer, as compared to 2 in the Sinai and 220 in the rest of Israel (Marx 1967: 14). Nearly 3,300 families were located there, intensively utilizing the available land as best as was possible for all agricultural, pastoral, and residential needs (Marx 1967: 19). This lack of freedom of mobility, particularly amidst a population that had previously moved about relatively freely without limits or borders, produced a number of societal impacts. The close geographic proximity of various groups who historically had remained distant from one another due to social, cultural, or familial reasons, were now brought together in a new social dynamic.

To be sure, some degree of spontaneous settlement had occurred prior to the creation of the State of Israel in the late 1940s. Some bedouin settled during the Ottoman period in the latter part of the nineteenth century, responding to market forces and opportunities that presented themselves in the areas of agricultural production and animal husbandry (Kressel 2003: 56). Moreover, as Abu-Rabia notes, the Ottomans strove to settle the bedouin by the turn of the twentieth century, a process that continued throughout the British Mandate period, as well as towns for some tribes that were developed in the western Negev (1994: 13). Thus, the imposition of the *siyag* served to disrupt the lives not only of those who were yet nomadic, but of those who had begun to settle as well.

Beginning in 1959, only one group member was allowed to go outside of the *siyag* (in the beginning of May) with the flocks in search of summer grazing. Usually a youth, the shepherd would follow his flocks, while his family would stay behind. "The camp thus [became] a more permanent center of the [Bedouin] group, while hitherto the members of the group had joined [the group] only at ploughing and harvest time" (Marx 1967: 85).

This led to perhaps the greatest social shift to take place in the bedouin community during this period, the transition from mobile to fixed camp locations (Marx 1967: 87). The permanence of the spontaneous settlements

inside the *siyag* provided fixed points of reference, and a sense of place previously foreign to the bedouin life experience. This development was to have profound repercussions later on, as the government sought to relocate the bedouin a second time, and to further concentrate the population into even fewer settlements.

The crux of the political conflict over land ownership typical of pastoral nomad-resettlement projects and access had thus begun. From the outset of the creation of the Military Administration of the Negev, the Lands Department of the Ministry of Agriculture sought to assert ownership over all of the land in the Negev, using the Ottoman Land Laws of 1858 and 1859 as the basis of its claims (Boneh 1983: 117).

Although the bedouin themselves were able to choose their settlement locations within the *siyag*, the “spontaneity” of this settlement clearly had been initiated by the state’s removal program (see Map 1.2). Therefore, the move from nomadism to semi-nomadism to permanent settlement was not spontaneous in nature. Rather, observers such as Boneh suggest that, “an alternative way of articulating the phenomenon of Bedouin settlement in the Negev [during the period of the *siyag*] is to view the Bedouin as *reluctant participants* in the process of sedentarization” (Boneh 1983: 72; emphasis added).

In this relatively enclosed environment, the Administration practiced indirect rule over the bedouin tribes by acquiring the assistance of various tribal sheikhs, in effect co-opting them, by granting favors and utilizing their respected positions in the community in order to exercise effective communal control. Allocation of land, for example, was undertaken via distribution through local sheikhs. They were thus empowered to decide who received which lands, and how much was received.

The sheikhs’ power thereby increased to the point that, by the mid 1950s, even tractors could only be purchased by permit—and again, permits were distributed via the tribal sheikhs. According to Marx, “a chief [sheikh] who had access to the Military Administration could gain many advantages for his tribesmen and, therefore, greatly increase their dependence on him. This put him in a position effectively to carry out the Administration’s instructions in the tribe” (Marx 1967: 44–45). At the same time, the relationship with the government allowed the sheikhs to influence where schools or other facilities might be placed in order to increase their prestige among their tribes (Meir 1990: 772); this in turn also implied that services were in effect “favors” rewarded for good behavior, rather than necessary facilities for all to utilize and to enjoy.

By conferring such powers and privilege upon the sheikhs, the state introduced what Boneh has contrasted with “the egalitarian status of Sheikhs typical of nomadic Bedouin” (1983: 59). Thus, it may be contended that a



Map 1.2. The Location of the Recognized Towns in Relation to Nearby Jewish Communities and the *Siyag*.

Used by permission, courtesy of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.

more top-down style of rule previously unknown in the community began to develop. To this point, bedouin society had been relatively decentralized, with each man having equal say and decisions being made largely based upon the Islamic principles of consensus (Arabic: *ijma'a*). But throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the community was controlled in a manner of concentration, encapsulation, and co-optation, with the traditional leadership increasingly playing a key role in helping the state carry out its agenda of what Boneh (1983: 59) calls “indirect rule.”

The bedouin were granted Israeli citizenship in 1954, soon after the *siyag* was created (Marx 1967: 54). A permanent leasing program was enforced beginning in the mid 1950s, despite hopes that citizenship would serve as a vehicle through which land might be returned to the community, as the bedouin had hoped. Citizenship also served to formalize the community's severed ties with other Arab and bedouin groups in the region. It also put

an end to cross border movement, by further encouraging a vested economic, if not political, interest in the Israeli State (Boneh 1983: 54).

In addition, by conferring citizenship upon the community, the state also took on the responsibility of providing the group with adequate healthcare, schools, and other facilities (Shapira, 24 November 1992). Such provisions were both costly and difficult, however, due to the geographic dispersion of the population, even within the *siyag* area itself.

It was within this context that the bedouin new town planning initiative was developed. In the early 1960s, the state determined that the creation of a limited number of sites would best serve the state and the community alike by permanently settling these nomads, which would act as an attractive tool to draw people together and to further concentrate them in urban areas. In addition, these services, which were not provided in the unplanned camp setting due to various logistical and budgetary limitations, could serve to further the socioeconomic development and modernization of the community into a contributing element of the broader Israeli society and economy. As Dudu Cohen, Director of the Ministry of the Interior, Southern District (24 April 2007) explains:

One of the reasons that the government decided to open development towns for the bedouin is that the government is not able to distribute services to such a widely distributed population ... If the government wants to put up a school—where should it put it? It's got to deliver educational services, social work services. A government can only deliver services in a central location.

And so, it's not just this government, all governments make the decision that they need to build settlements, [and that] within this framework the residents will be able to establish their life routines, to receive all the services that a government is obligated to give to its citizens, and also to allow the residents to progress and develop...

But if you want Internet [a later addition, to be sure], university, a little higher education, academics, you can't do it in the wilderness. You need the 'stuff': media, electricity, educational services, healthcare, higher education for the children. You need to create contact with and availability of all these services for the bedouin, or else their children will remain in the same situation that their parents are in.

And yet, there are those who would contend that when the resettlement plan was born on 19 September 1965, the primary impetus of the program was nothing of the kind, but was in fact the removal of the bedouin from the land, with the ultimate purpose of putting an end to their claims of land ownership throughout the Negev region (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 17).

Israel's bedouin new town program began in earnest with the designation of Tel Sheva as the first planned bedouin town, which followed the formal removal of the *siyag* (Boneh 1983: 74). By 1968, forty-three buildings had been constructed in the town by the Israeli government. The central business district included a community center, space for shops, a restaurant, and a youth club. Each house was built with a separation between the guest room and the rest of the house, in an attempt to replicate the design of a traditional bedouin tent.

According to outside observers, the town initially proved to be a failure (Boneh 1983; Horner 1982). Tel Sheva's planners failed to fully understand the nature of bedouin society, or the needs and desires of the community for whom the town was designed. Tel Sheva's houses, for example, were only 70 m² in size (Gradus & Stern 1985: 53), too small to house the large bedouin families for whom they were built. Windows were similarly designed too small for people who were accustomed to the wide-open expanses and the freedom of the open desert. Land lots were also only 400 m², large by Jewish Israeli standards, but still unable to accommodate both houses and outbuildings for livestock. Many new residents simply used the houses to house their animals, while they lived in traditional tents in their backyards (Gradus & Stern 1985: 54). Moreover, the town's center did not function well. Members of the community tended to shop once per week, generally at the Be'er Sheva Thursday *suq* (Arabic: market); as a result, the center's stores had little or no activity during much of the week.

By the mid 1970s, only 25 of the 46 houses built by the government were occupied (Boneh 1983: 74). Opposition to relocating to the town was based upon the mixed tribal living that Tel Sheva encouraged, and the inability adequately to maintain traditional modesty and privacy practices given the town's physical layout and design. Planners' attempts to quickly integrate disparate bedouin groups through physical planning failed to recognize the strength of ongoing tribal rivalries (Ben-David 1993: 44). Still, many bedouin groups did relocate to the area *around* the town, attracted by the services provided there, even if they did not want to live *in* the town.

Those who did move into Tel Sheva itself were overwhelmingly *fellahi* bedouin in origin (see Chapter 5). These bedouin had originally come to the Negev from Egypt via the Gaza district beginning at the turn of the twentieth century (Kressel et al. 1991: 29), fleeing difficult living conditions in the Nile Valley that encouraged a significant out-migration (Kressel 2003: 29). Following their movement eastward, they had found protection, assistance to earn their livelihoods, and, most importantly, land for agriculture, which they did not own but leased from the "True" *Arab* bedouin tribes in the area (see Marx 1967: 66).

Though these *fellahi* groups were accepted into the “True” bedouin community, they acted as landless tenants to these bedouin (particularly as agriculturalists), and held an inferior social position in relation to them (Kressel et al. 1991: 31). While Boneh suggests that “annexed” *fellahi* bedouin groups were expected to pay patronage to their “True” bedouin advocates by offering them their daughters as wives (especially second wives), for example, to further seal the *fellahi*-“True” bedouin arrangement (1983: 96), Marx (1967: 67) states that this behavior was not common when he conducted his fieldwork.

Despite their social inferiority, the *fellahi* bedouins’ role in the resettlement of the Negev bedouin is a crucial factor. For the most part, the *fellahin* took on the material culture and lifestyle of the “True” bedouin when they came to the Negev, becoming virtually indistinguishable in appearance. But this acculturation process moved in two directions (Kressel et al. 1991: 45), with an inter-penetration between both cultures, sets of values, and lifestyles. The *fellahin* impacted the “True” bedouin, as they brought agricultural behaviors and practices to the Negev, while they took on the residential patterns of the local culture and lifestyle, living in tents and dressing and behaving as the local bedouin behaved.

Unlike their “True” brethren, the landless *fellahi* bedouin, who had once lived in adobe huts in the Nile Valley, sought permanent settlement in the Negev, and relied upon settled agriculture more than livestock raising as their primary economic activity. The *fellahi* bedouin also helped introduce modern tools and machinery into bedouin society (Kressel et al. 1991: 43), particularly in the field of agriculture.

Although the processes of environmental adaptation to agriculture and sedentarization in the Negev appear to correlate with the existence or lack of *fellahi* bedouin in a given area in the Negev, researchers have been unable to confirm this hypothesis (Kressel et al. 1991: 45–46). Still, what is clear is that by the beginning of the British Mandate period after World War I, only 86 percent of the bedouin, “True” and *fellahi* combined, were nomadic tent dwellers (quoted in Meir 1988: 259). The rest, primarily the *fellahi* bedouin, had already begun to settle in more permanent settlements, the precursors to today’s spontaneous and planned settlements.

Given the history and social environment of bedouin society, it is not surprising then that the *fellahi* bedouin led the way to settlement in the planned towns, beginning with Tel Sheva. These bedouin were more culturally receptive to the sedentary lifestyle of the planned town, given their backgrounds in sedentary agricultural villages and their desire to move up socially (which was impossible within the framework of the “True” bedouin tribal structure; Boneh 1983: 101).

As non-landowners and “lower class” bedouin, the *fellahi* bedouin therefore had little to lose in relocating and more to gain. The *fellahin* saw relocation to the town as a vehicle for upward mobility and land ownership. Resettlement also allowed them finally to separate themselves and become independent from the “True” bedouin tribes to whom they were indebted (Boneh 1983: 102).

Thus, the outstanding political and social divisions in the planned town of Tel Sheva remained between groups of *fellahi* and “True” bedouin origins. While “True” bedouin mostly refused relocation for fear of settling upon lands previously belonging to other “True” bedouin, the *fellahin* felt little reluctance to enjoy the fruits of the state’s initiative. Therefore, concerns over land ownership questions, which tended to follow along *fellahi*/“True” lines, continued to form the primary distinction between those groups choosing to relocate into Tel Sheva, and those who remained in non-planned settlements (Boneh 1983: 81).

Lastly, it is important to point out that the role of the *fellahin* in the bedouin’s resettlement in Tel Sheva and elsewhere was not universal. Neither *fellahi* newcomers, the Ottoman government, nor even traders penetrated the geographically harsh Azazmeh territory in the southern Negev Highlands to any degree throughout the aforementioned period of *fellahi* migration into the Negev. Therefore, the Azazmeh experienced limited exposure to outsiders, with the introduction of modern farm machinery, for example, occurring in the Highlands only well after the creation of Israel (Kressel et al. 1991: 46). The Azazmeh’s reliance upon their flocks, even when engaging in limited agriculture—using camels to pull plows for example (Kressel et al. 1991: 47)—reveals the degree to which the traditional preference for livestock helped to perpetuate a nomadic lifestyle in the southern interior reaches of the Negev. It may therefore be argued that the limited exposure to the *fellahin*, and a continued preference for livestock rearing even as its status was in decline (Kressel et al. 1991: 47), would prove to be contributing factors in later resistance on the part of the Azazmeh to settle in permanent locations.

Planning Since the 1960s

Overall, the outcome of the Tel Sheva relocation was at best mixed. A new approach to bedouin new town planning, which took the bedouin’s land use and social interests into greater account, began in the early 1970s with the construction of Rahat, twenty kilometers northwest of Be’er Sheva. Though the Rahat region was already home to a large spontaneous concentration of Huzaiyil bedouin, the town was planned and officially recognized as a legal

new town settlement by the government in 1973 (Boneh 1983: 77), when residents began to receive electricity and running water.

Unlike Tel Sheva’s plan, traditional bedouin sociocultural functions were expressed spatially in the Rahat plan (Gradus & Stern 1985: 55). The town was broken down into neighborhoods comprised of self-built homes, and was designed exclusively for related “True,” *fellahi*, or *Abid* (former black slave; see Chapter 5) bedouin groups. Outsider groups or tribes could no longer move into just any area, but had specific neighborhoods designated and preserved solely for their use. These large neighborhoods, which were connected by the town’s primary roads, served separate communities and helped to preserve tribal hierarchies. Circular roads, cul-de-sacs, and green spaces helped lend definition to the different neighborhoods.

As Fenster explains: “ethnic identity interests of the Bedouin can be identified as those which retain their cultural or national identity. In planning terms, [those interests take on] spatial expression [which] relates to meeting their landownership needs, respecting the privacy of the Bedouin clan, especially at the level of the nuclear and extended family, and the privacy of women” (Fenster 1991: 37). The physical layout of the towns also reflected the social engineering interests of the state. “From a social standpoint, the planners saw a social advantage in the tribal integration that would take place in large scale settlements, when agricultural settlements had up till then been inhabited by only one tribe” (Fenster 1991: 146). The social dynamic envisioned is diagrammed in Figure 1.1.

Additionally, economic opportunity, such as light industry, was introduced in the Rahat plan. Negev regional planners sought to centralize industry in specific areas and not to place industry in residential areas. In Jewish and Arab towns alike, the need for electricity, sewerage, and other major infrastructure are too expensive to provide to a variety of areas. The

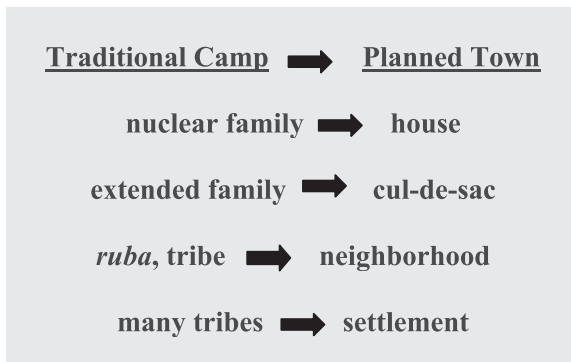


Figure 1.1 Bedouin Town Physical Layout Model.

Adapted from Fenster, 1991: cited, 150.

creation of concentrated industry zones for the maximization of economies of scale is, then, considered to be far more cost-effective (Gur, 18 May 1993).

The new policies and design features in Rahat helped to make the town a much greater success than Tel Sheva was in attracting residents. In the late 1980s, Tel Sheva underwent a replanning program in order to rectify previous planning errors, and to learn from the successes of the Rahat program (Abu-Saad, 2 November 1992; Gradus & Stern, 1985: 56).

Thus, by 1982, some ten to twelve thousand people were living in Rahat (Boneh 1983: 77), though the majority still remained, like Tel Sheva's immigrants, largely of *fellahi* origin. The population had nearly doubled by the early 1990s, and by 2007, the town had grown into a city, the largest bedouin community in the world, with a population of at least 42,000 residents (Dudu Cohen, 24 April 2007).

Soon after the creation of Rahat, in 1975 a group known as the Albeck Committee was created to discuss and address the ongoing "bedouin problem" and to seek some resolution to it. The problem, simply stated, was (and is) the ongoing challenge for how to relocate the bedouin into the towns, that is, to concentrate them into ever-increasingly smaller geographic living environments. There are three principles that developed out of this committee that are relevant to present-day concerns. First, it was restated that the state does not recognize that the bedouin own the land upon which they live (i.e., what is referred to throughout this volume as the "*pezurah*," (Hebrew: dispersion); that is, the term used by the state as well as the literature when referring to the unrecognized, informal, "illegal" settlements built by the bedouin on lands they claim as historically under their ownership). Second, the bedouin can be compensated for these lands when they relocate (despite the fact that they do not have a legitimate land ownership claim from the state's perspective). Lastly, this compensation to the bedouin would be premised upon the tacit agreement that they would only receive such monies so long as they then agreed to move to one of the planned towns (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 21).

Thus, following the construction of Tel Sheva and Rahat in the late 1960s and early 1970s, construction of K'seifa and Aroer ushered in a new era of planning. Unlike the four aforementioned large areas of bedouin concentration, the two towns were built as part of an effort to expropriate lands from the bedouin that were needed for a specific construction project. Moreover, bedouin town planning in the early 1980s shifted in emphasis, moving away from reliance upon a predominantly physical planning approach to one of greater concern for social and economic development. Increased awareness of tribal cleavages, an attempt to recognize and accept some agriculture activity in the urban areas, and a concern not only over

service *provision* but also service *quality* all contributed toward this trend (Ben-David 1993: 74–77).

The history of the building of K'seifa and Aroer (later renamed Arara B'Negev) in 1982 as a result of the Tel Malhata project had been discussed at length in Fenster's comprehensive dissertation (1991) and need not be detailed here. However, a brief review of some of the planning events of this period is relevant to understanding today's planning activities. In particular, the evolution of the resettlement program was a major turning point, due to the time pressures associated with this particular area of bedouin spontaneous settlement. For the first time, the government undertook a more inclusive, comprehensive, and intensified planning approach, utilizing development anthropological methods as part of the bedouin resettlement project.

The K'seifa and Aroer relocation project developed out of a 1976 plan for the northern Negev. The plan included construction of a military air base at Tel Malhata, which was eventually carried out in response to the withdrawal from the Sinai as a part of the Camp David Accords (Fenster 1991: 121). The base project required an area of 150,000 *dunams* (nearly 40,000 acres), upon which some five to seven thousand Negev bedouin resided (Fenster 1991: 161). At the time, 1,273 tents existed in the region; by 1979, nearly another 1,200 had been erected (2,464 in total, quoted in Fenster 1991: 129), largely in an effort to combat the government's removal plans. Families also expanded the building of tin, wood, and stone houses to create more "facts on the ground" (a strategy repeated often throughout the Negev, see below). Nearly 5,000 of these structures were built in 1982 alone (Fenster 1991: 130).

The need to quickly construct the base following the military pull-out from Sinai, and the realization that the bedouin would remain intransigent against the state's land expropriation efforts, demanded a reorientation of the resettlement process, which took into greater account the demands and land claims of the area's population. The government first had hoped that the bedouin would move from the land with little hesitance. When this failed to occur, however, the 1979 Land Law was passed with the intent to seize it. The resulting fears, anxieties, and rumors only further complicated state efforts to pursue its relocation agenda (Marx 1990: 233).

A "Bedouin Team" was created to help facilitate the removal order and to offer a comfortable alternative to the 1979 Land Law. The Team included anthropologists, planners, and others sympathetic to bedouin concerns (Fenster 1991: 163) and knowledgeable of their interests. Through the use of advocacy, mediation, and negotiation, the Team sought a pluralistic approach to the recognition of the bedouin's land rights, and to their essential participation in the planning and resettlement of K'seifa and Aroer (Fenster

1991: 171). The Team also sought to bring the state and the bedouin communities together in order to reduce the tension and conflict between the two, and to integrate the bedouin into Israeli society through improved services and a higher living standard.

In 1980, the Implementation Authority of the Camp David Accords Land Acquisition Law of 1980 was created by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Justice to carry out the building of the base (Shoshani, 7 December 1992). The Bedouin Team was incorporated into the Authority as a think tank to assist in pursuing bedouin cooperation through relocation (Fenster 1991: 166). This organizational change from the Bedouin Team to the Authority, that is, “from a pressure advocate group to a bureaucratic executive” (Fenster 1991: 178), revealed a shift in the project’s need for timely implementation.

The Implementation Authority acted as an umbrella group with four sections: 1) the Negotiating Team, responsible for questions of compensation and resettlement; 2) a think tank, (essentially the Bedouin Team), which served as problem solvers; 3) the Planning Team, which planned the settlements themselves, and included Ministry of Housing representatives; and, 4) the Administrative Team, which held the financial responsibilities of implementation. Other responsibilities included writing plans, town construction, preparation of irrigated land, data gathering, bedouin planning preferences, compensation agreements, supervision of evacuation, logistics, and accounting (Fenster 1991: 193).

Implementation occurred through a step-by-step process, in which there were a number of levels to accomplish the removal task. The preliminary level was to provide basic public services to the two towns, including schools, clinics, and neighborhood facilities, and then to wait and to see who would voluntarily relocate. The Authority then brought the plans to the bedouin to hear their opinions. The Authority found a number of limitations in its efforts, however. As one member explained, “[the bedouin] didn’t have a total understanding from maps, from descriptions on paper. So we went to the places themselves to show how development would actually appear, and where” (Shoshani, 7 December 1992). These leaders included sheikhs, heads of *hamulas*, teachers, and various people with some education or knowledge; that is, “not just simple people.”

Despite the seemingly “obvious” improvements that the new town living had to offer, the bedouin still proved unwilling to accept the relocation plan, refusing to trust totally those in positions of authority. The initial approach of the Bedouin Team and the Implementation Authority had been to approach and to work through the sheikhs and other traditional leadership in order to gain the trust of the community in pursuit of the government’s goals (Fenster 1991: 176). When, after a short time, it became apparent that

the sheikhs were similarly reluctant to cooperate with the removal effort, the government shifted away from the traditional leadership to the younger bedouin leadership, which they expected would prove more amenable to relocation and resettlement (Fenster 1991: 177), rather than to admit that inherent problems might be found within the allocation initiative itself.

Still, bedouin negotiators in these meetings were part of the community elite. They therefore were unable to speak for the whole of the community without first seeking group consensus. This desire to gain broader approval stemmed from Islamic principles of shared, democratic leadership, which call for group member agreement in the context of the decision-making process (*ijma'a*; Arabic: consensus). And yet, predictably, as more people were brought into the planning process, implementation of the project became that much more complex and ineffective (Fenster 1991: 178). The desire to get the relocation job done quickly led the Chief Negotiator to accept demands of various pressure groups, particularly the *fellahi* tribes in the area. These agreements did not necessarily serve the Authority or the bedouin, for that matter, in the long term, but they did help facilitate relocation (Fenster 1991: 195).

Various promises to individuals, such as “securing nomination of leaders of the clans as official sheikhs, licenses for weapons, licenses for driving taxis, and also promises relating to the development of services for each neighborhood such as schools and mosques” (Fenster 1991: 236), later backfired when it was revealed that the Authority lacked the power to deliver on such promises. Such agreements also served to create a system of reward for those who held out the longest (Fenster 1991: 237). Those with the most land also gained more than those with little or no land (Shoshani, 7 December 1992).

The building of K'seifa and Aroer well epitomizes the problems inherent in the bedouin resettlement project during this period. In particular, “the negative response of nomads to ‘top down’ sedentarization, even with positive incentive, stems from the simple fact that planning has not met their pluralist needs, either in cases when the physical layout of the settlement has not suited their ethnic needs, or where the very sedentarization process itself failed to provide their citizen needs” (Fenster 1991: 119–120).

Overall, the removal of bedouin to Aroer and K'seifa was unique because of the use of development anthropological methods and the inclusion of public participation in the towns' planning process. Experts and other advocates were engaged to facilitate a development anthropological approach previously lacking in Negev bedouin town planning. One could, therefore, conclude that the towns would better succeed in serving their residents because of the Implementation Authority's greater efforts to address the bedouin community's demands.

In the final analysis, the primary concern of the government was that of land appropriation for the military base, and it offered little in terms of the development of the existing community there. "We just wanted to build the air strip, that was our job," offered one of the planners involved in the project. "That was the final goal" (Shoshani, 7 December 1992). That said, the social and economic status of K'seifa and Arara B'Negev today differ little from the other towns in the bedouin system.

Throughout the 1980s, Negev bedouin resettlement moved slowly forward, oftentimes relying upon forced, rather than voluntary, relocation undertaken by the Green Patrol, an aggressive quasi-military entity created by Ariel Sharon in 1978 and operating out of the Israel Land Administration with the sole purpose of relocating the bedouin off of the land and into the towns, seemingly at any cost. As the first town in the system, Tel Sheva received considerable attention during this period as it was redeveloped toward the end of the decade in response to the more positive results experienced in other towns. Rahat, as the second town in the system, both learned from and contributed to the Tel Sheva planning experience, and was rapidly becoming the most successful of all of the towns in terms of attracting in-migrants. K'seifa and Aroer, as products of Camp David and the Sinai land agreement, offered unique compensation and incentives to area tribes in return for their relatively quick relocation off of the land needed by the state. By their very creation through the relocation of the population from the Tel Malhata region, they were automatically viewed as "successful" in terms of meeting the state's regional development needs; that is, the military base was built, so the relocation was a success.

In 1986, the Bedouin Authority, which developed out of the Tel Malhata initiative, was created. Although the Land Authority remains the overarching body overseeing bedouin concerns, this body to the present-day has direct jurisdiction over the daily interests and concerns of the bedouin community throughout the Negev. Since its creation, the Authority has a "monopoly" on planning and development in the community (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 39), playing a significant role in virtually every aspect of the bedouin's lives, both inside the planned towns and in the so-called "*pe-zurah*" (the "dispersed," unrecognized settlements).

The Authority has been criticized by some for having such considerable concentrated power. No other population in Israel is similarly governed by such an agency, which has been compared to the United States Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 33), an agency similarly criticized for being too paternalistic and controlling of Native American concerns and, for all intents and purposes, a "state within a state." Further, as Swirski & Hasson point out (2006: 44), all administrative positions in the Bedouin Authority are headed by Jews. The Director

confirms that this is the case and, he contends, it is for a good reason (Yeshuran, 10 May 2007):

Everyone who works here [in the Bedouin Authority] is Jewish. I had three bedouin working here when I first took over [just last year], but they soon left. They had difficulty doing the work. Bedouin don't wish to speak with other bedouin, they don't want them to know their business, to have them know their private affairs. Everyone now admits that having bedouin mayors was [also] a mistake. No one will get along or listen. In Arara [B'Negev] they now have two governments, as they have two competing groups and no one group will listen to the other.

As for the final two of the seven original bedouin towns, Hura (1989) and Laqiya (1985), (the development of Segev Shalom will be addressed in detail in Chapter 2), their creation was somewhat unique as well. As noted above, they, along with the Tel Sheva and Rahat regions, were home to substantial numbers of spontaneously settled bedouin since the time of the *siyag* in the 1950s and 1960s. Their recognition in the mid 1980s as legal "towns" (as opposed to the "unrecognized settlements"), to be formally developed and included within the planned town system, was a logical move on the part of a government anxious to provide for the most bedouin families at the least cost. Throughout the implementation period, the Land Authority continually sought to facilitate more voluntary resettlement whenever possible. Emphases were therefore placed upon greater provision of comforts and services, rather than upon removal by force or through monetary incentives.

Still, implementation of the resettlement project became standardized by the Land Authority during this period as well. A series of physical planning steps, in which town design reflected the potential demand for housing at the level of the sub-tribe, was developed and regularly utilized. The government approach to physical planning of neighborhoods, which developed in the late 1980s, was a byproduct of the design problems previously experienced. The planning steps were as follows (Shapira, 24 Nov 1992):

1. Take aerial photos of a spontaneous settlement, and try to count/estimate how many households exist there. Then, designate an adequate number of neighborhood lots in an appropriate town;
2. Enter the community on foot and actually survey the number of residents. Reach a closer estimate;
3. Plan a neighborhood based upon the tribal breakdown and population numbers involved.

Almost all of the lots in the towns were improved with basic infrastructure prior to their sale. These up-front costs were difficult for the government to absorb, particularly when the bedouin were resistant to relocation. On average, it cost the government 40,000 New Israeli Shekels [NIS] (about \$15,000 in early 1990s NIS) to develop a single, one *dunam* lot. Purchasers were charged 8,000 NIS (\$3,000) as part of the purchase price toward this infrastructure, and the government absorbed the difference. Services, such as sewers, were lacking in the bedouin towns when initially built because of the expense, as they were deemed too “rural and *moshav*-like, with houses too far apart to make sewers cost-efficient” (Shapira, 24 November 1992).

Eligible land-buyers in the bedouin new towns were required to fit into one of a number of specific categories. Those who could acquire lots included families comprised of a man, his wife, and children (both the man and the wife own the house, contrary to Muslim law in this regard); a woman with children; and single men over the age of 21 years, who have served in the Israeli army (Shapira, 24 November 1992). Single women and widows, regardless of age, could not acquire lots in the towns. This policy was based on the belief that if a woman then married, the resulting family would own two *dunams* of land. Though clearly undemocratic, the Land Authority argued at the time that, “we can’t afford for a family to have more than one *dunam*. Even today, one *dunam* is too large, because there is not enough land planned and allotted to the municipalities to adequately absorb present population demand” (Shapira, 24 November 1992).

A fourth and final step in the planning process was actively to encourage family group/*hamula* relocation following the near completion of a sub-neighborhood. This step, however, often proved to be the most challenging of all. On average, though 90 percent of the lots in a given neighborhood may be purchased, the Land Authority determined that only 40 percent were actually improved and occupied by their landowners during this period in the early 1990s. The remaining purchasers tended to remain in spontaneous settlements in the area, but did not choose to relocate into the towns.

Thus, the planning, development, and selling of the lots in a bedouin town were only the first stage in the relocation process. To measure proximity to completion of its planning goals, the Israeli Land Authority also looked at the ratio of lots planned, developed, and improved *to houses actually built and occupied*—that is, the relationship between the first steps of the government development of lots, and the final goal of getting people into houses upon those lots—and, I would add, off of the land claimed by the state.

A policy that continues to be followed to the present-day to address this issue allows resettlers to move into town before a house is actually built.

Families then have nine months to provide the Bedouin Authority (previously, it was the Land Authority) with a house design for a structure to be built, and then have two to three years to actually build the structure. However, if the structure is not built on time, the Authority will take no recourse against the family in question (Shapira, 24 November 1992). In the meantime, families are allowed to build shacks or tents in which they may live while preparing to build a permanent stone home, and while accumulating the necessary funds to support its construction (see Images).

The ease with which this process is implemented is, like most aspects of the resettlement initiative, a subject of widespread disagreement between the state and the bedouin community. Moreover, from the state's perspective, the process has been streamlined over the past 15 years, so that today, few families should encounter any difficulties in relocating to a town (Yeshuran, 10 May 2007):

Someone in the *pezurah* can apply to purchase a *migrash* [Hebrew: town lot] and have the process completed in a month. They need to know the number of the *migrash* they wish to buy, have photos, a town map, and put in an application. There are people here [in the Bedouin Authority] to help them through the process, to "walk them through." But anyone who wants to do it knows what to do. We have a lawyer here whose only job is to help them with this. If they need a ride to take them around we can help with that too.

The bedouin who must go through the process, however, offer a different viewpoint. In 2007, a 28-year old bedouin man, who already lives in a bedouin town, stated:

There's a lot of bureaucracy [to obtain a *migrash*], and it's not at all clear how to go through all the steps. But you have to go through the Bedouin Authority, and you have to show them a plan for at least a 100 meter² house [that you intend to build on the site]. Within 3 years it has to be built, and a house of this size will cost around 170,000 NIS (U.S.\$42,500).

Over the years, the ability effectively to attract newcomers has largely hinged upon a policy of seeking first to attract the new local bedouin leadership (*not* the local sheikhs, who often resist relocation for fear of lessened power or prestige in the new environment). If these leaders were not interested in resettling, the Land Authority would seek out people who were and would work with them to encourage tribal resettlement through its assistance.

As Authority officials explain, "we can't do it alone because [the bedouin] don't trust the Government. We find out who is interested in moving, and

go from there” (Shapira, 24 November 1992). Although this dynamic can prove useful for the state, insofar as it can work with designated individuals who in turn exercise considerable influence over family members, over the years, the issue of working with *hamula* resettlement as opposed to nuclear family resettlement presents additional challenges to state planners:

There's an additional problem that from our perspective is making the normalization process in the bedouin population more difficult, and that is that bedouin are only willing to come as families, as *hamulas*. And so there's no situation in this population in which a contractor gets a piece of land from the government and develops it, and then sells the units, in all the settlements. A contractor, if you can get him interested at all in building 300 living units, builds them, develops them, markets and sells them.

With the bedouin, it won't work this way at all, because the people who will move there are only the people that the family will agree to live with. No one will go there with force. So you need to plan specifically for them. You can't use a plan with a free market approach. You start to plan with relatives, the tribe, the *hamula* and you know that not everyone can live opposite the other. You know that there's a large group that won't live with a second group.

It's an obstacle to planning, because this is not a sophisticated free market that you can come and say, 'I'll plan, and the market forces will function. The contractor can raise the prices, lower the prices, everyone can live with everyone else.' It's not like this with the bedouin population. (Dudu Cohen, 24 April 2007)

In a “worst case” scenario, the Land Authority will take bedouin groups or sub-tribes to court in order to remove them from the land. By law, bedouin living outside of the town system in the *pezurah* are illegal squatters; there have been no successful attempts to fight the government relocation in the court system. After residents move out of an unrecognized settlement (and sometimes before), the government razes the settlement with bulldozers in an attempt to discourage residents from returning. The rationale for this policy, beyond the service provision discourse set out in September of 1965, has, forty years later, simply come down to a question of the rule of law. The Director of the Bedouin Authority states: “To be a modern, planned state, you have to have order. Look at this map! Look at all the unrecognized settlements all over the place. This isn't order” (Yeshuran, 10 May 2007).

As recently as the early 2000s, it was possible to say that “several thousand” bedouin still resided in tents in the Negev (Kressel 2003: 89). By the end of the decade, however, this was no longer true, and very few tents

could be found anywhere in the region other than in the tourist areas (see Chapter 7). Rather, following a pattern that appears, to the Western observer at least, to be modeled on the children's story of the "Three Little Pigs," those bedouin who do not wish to relocate to the towns, some 40 percent of the population (Dudu Cohen, 24 April 2007; Yeshuran, 10 May 2007), are instead increasingly replacing their tents with tin shacks, and their tin shacks with cinder block structures. They are laying down cement pads for walkways and sitting areas as well. The rationale for these efforts is clear; the more "permanent" such communities appear, the bedouin believe, the less likely they will be destroyed, uprooted, and forced out by the Green Patrol and its army of bulldozers. By using ever-stronger building materials, the bedouin are seeking to communicate a message to the state of: "we're here to stay; we're not going anywhere—your huffing and puffing notwithstanding."

Thus, planning for the urbanization and resettlement of the Negev bedouin has evolved considerably since its inception in the 1960s, relying upon a top-down model typical of a centralized, state-centered planning approach. Only in recent years have the views of community members been incorporated into the planning agenda through the use of regional, and later local, councils (see Chapter 2). While these councils in theory exercise direct control over the daily affairs of the planned bedouin towns, the reality is that their role in the planning process is largely limited, serving as agents of "resistance" and "resilience" to the state's efforts (Meir 2007: 205), while most if not all of the actual planning and governing of the towns remains divided, shared, and largely contested under the aegis and jurisdictions of the Land Authority, the Bedouin Authority, and the Ministry of the Interior. As Meir sums up the issue,

The state used its hegemonic power in this regard to impose the scientific rationality of the planning process. Thereby, planning was employed in its classical traditional mode, that is a rational and objective activity viewing all human agents in space as one type. By regarding the western style of urban life as the only viable option for the Bedouin, and by excluding them from participating in decision making, the state in fact considered its knowledge superior to that of the Bedouin. It acknowledged no "otherness" in this respect. (2007: 212)

As a result, planning for healthcare services, education, infrastructure, and social welfare services in concentrated urban locations, the bulwark of the resettlement and modernization initiative and the main attraction to be offered to potential resettlers, remains primarily in the hands of the Israeli State with limited local control. Moreover, over forty years later, the bed-

ouin new towns are the subject of much criticism and controversy. Rather than serving as nodes of social and economic development and modernization, many contend that they are nothing less than violent, impoverished, crime-infested slums.

The Outcome—The Socioeconomic Viability of the First Seven Planned Towns

While explanations for the causes will vary, few do not acknowledge in the early twenty-first century that the first seven bedouin new towns that were planned in the Negev are in crisis. The extent of the situation, the level of concern, and the answers for how to move forward vary, most especially between state and bedouin observers. One thing can be stated with certainty: poverty and the malaise found in the towns today can be traced directly to a lack of access to a variety of resources, beginning with the land itself.

Several statistics bear out this contention. First, between 65 percent and 75 percent of the Negev bedouin population as a whole lives below the national poverty line (Katz and De Schutter 2001: 24). Second, while 27 percent of the Negev population is bedouin, the community today lives upon 2 percent of the land. In Segev Shalom, for example, an area of 5,500 km², the population was 6005 residents in 2005, providing a density of 915.8 people/km² (Bustan Report 2005: 3). And yet, according to Dudu Cohen of the Interior Ministry (24 April 2007), even this density is not adequate. “Land is a finite obstacle, it is not something you can produce, it is a given, a fact. You must use the land in the most correct way, the most intelligent way. You can’t waste land, because if you waste it, you can’t find new land to replace it. So you must do good planning that looks at the future needs, not just in the next five, ten years, but fifty years into the future and ask, what will be? And so it will not be possible to continue to live as the bedouin do in the density that they live today.”

A few places that a bedouin can go, at least to visit if not necessarily to live, are neighboring Jewish communities near and around Be’er Sheva. Meitar, population 6,400 in 2005, has a density of 381.5 residents/km²; Omer, population 5,900 in 2005, has a density of 293.8 residents/km²; and, Mitzpe-Ramon to the south, population 5,000, has a density of 78.1 Jewish Israeli residents/km² (Bustan Report 2005: 4).

But, of course, the dearth of land is only one resource that is notable in the bedouin towns. In truth, resources of all kinds are in fact lacking, and land is but one of many scarce commodities. Lithwick, for example, in his study of the first seven towns, notes that the average family income in the

bedouin towns is less than half of that in Be'er Sheva (2002: 9). And yet, given the extremely high bedouin birthrate, three times the national average, the urban population is increasing at 5 percent per year based on natural increase alone; excluding migration numbers, the population in the towns was expected to double between 2002 and 2010 (Lithwick 2002: 11).

As of 2002, the total population of the planned communities was 76,364, according to the Negev Regional Development Center (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 66)—suggesting that some 150,000 bedouin live in the seven urban communities, not to mention the additional nine communities that have since been added to the bedouin planned settlement system within the Abu-Basma agreement (see below). Were one to measure the “success” of the resettlement initiative in these numbers alone, there is no doubt that the urbanized bedouin population, and more to the point, the percentage of the population living in one of the planned towns, is very clearly on a skyward trajectory.

With a natural growth rate of 5.5 percent, the Negev bedouin population doubles itself every fourteen to fifteen years. This issue alone, the state contends, is enough to provide a barrier against effective, realistic service provision, as planners simply cannot keep up with the growth of the community (Dudu Cohen, 24 April 2007).

Lithwick also notes one of the most commonly held criticisms of all of the towns: they have no economic rationale to offset the community's population “explosion” (2002: 10). The towns have been planned with limited commercial or industrial infrastructure, no transportation or communication links, and thus little ability to attract investment. “[Regarding] the seven Bedouin towns, it is difficult to discover even ... minimal systematic rationales for their creation. To most disinterested observers, the first initiatives have been deemed to be serious failures. Later towns were based on minor modifications and improvements but in the large, they tended to follow the same if not always clearly stated formula that could hardly be appropriate for such diverse entities” (Lithwick 2002: 12–13).

As Swirski and Hasson note, low level budgeting and limited follow through in terms of using the allocated funding appropriately explains many of the financial difficulties experienced by the bedouin towns (2006: 58–59), which, since their creation, consistently have remained amongst the ten poorest communities in the State of Israel. Rahat, they note, has a library, but no books had been purchased for it over a year after it was built (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 57).

In 2003, the Israeli Land Authority allocated 4.5 million NIS for the Bedouin Authority. In the same budget, it allocated 25.8 million NIS for “Land protection” and 121 million NIS for “Planning and development in the minorities sector.” And yet, while three-quarters of the budget for “Land

protection” was actually used, only half of the funding set aside for “Planning and development” was used; half the funds simply were not taken up (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 81).

The economic difficulties of the towns are clearly evident when it also comes to the vicious cycle of limited tax bases upon which further to build and to extend infrastructure and growth. While the state is willing to provide its share, the assumption is that the bedouin town residents, living within a market-based economy, will provide theirs as well. “The government undertook to finance the development costs, while residents of the new localities were asked to finance housing construction, with the help of a mortgage amounting to 70 percent of the basic cost of building a dwelling unit” (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 17).

While such expectations appear to be fair and equitable and are found across the country in the Arab and Jewish sectors alike, the situation in the Negev bedouin towns is a familiar Catch-22; without adequate job opportunities, incomes are low or nonexistent. The unemployment rate in the bedouin towns as a whole, for example, is approximately 35 percent, compared to 12 percent in nearby Be’er Sheva. Over 64 percent of those who are employed occupy “blue collar” positions (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 95). The state planners are aware that such issues are a concern, but believe that over time things will change:

We need to bring employment that is appropriate in today’s contemporary times that can include the bedouin. If we were to bring just any industry that requires high levels of knowledge or technology, they won’t be included in it. They end up being janitors, landscapers, and service workers ... So we are talking about industries like carpentry, metalworking, vegetable [growing], greenhouses—things like they do in Gaza. That’s the first phase. Of course, we’re also bringing high tech here mainly because of the university and the young people we want to keep here.

In another fifteen or twenty years, if the young bedouin also will change the character of his educational level and preparedness a bit and wants to integrate, there will be a place for him to go. But we are working on these two levels simultaneously because we need to bring employment that’s suitable to both the bedouin population and the Jewish population. But you always need the carpenter, the car mechanic and also the high tech guy in every society ... that’s everywhere in the world. (Dudu Cohen, 24 April 2007)

Moreover, cultural restraints limit female participation in the workforce, although this is changing (see Chapter 6). According to an analysis conducted in the mid 2000s, 87 percent of bedouin women living in the planned towns

are not considered “in the labor force.” As for those who are considered a part of the force (i.e., the remaining 13 percent), 80 percent of these women are employed (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 96).

Nonetheless, whether male or female, monthly wages for urbanized Negev bedouin average about 3,000 NIS/month less (males) and 1,700 NIS/month less (females) than their counterparts in Be’er Sheva. The gap is slightly less when compared to workers in the neighboring Negev town of Yeruham (1,750 NIS/900 NIS, respectively), one of the poorest Jewish communities in the State of Israel (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 97).

Regardless, the bedouin towns are poorly planned in terms of offering any realistic way of being self-supporting or self-sustaining; lacking virtually any economic infrastructure, a reliance upon market forces to attract badly needed investment or employment opportunities is not very realistic, particularly when the Jewish sector in the Negev finds itself similarly neglected much of the time by a state that limits its attention or investment anywhere south of Qiryat Gat. Thus, the creation of the planned towns may have solved some of the state’s concerns, but from the perspective of the bedouin community, they have done nothing of the kind:

From the viewpoint of the country’s leaders, concentrating the Bedouin in townships is a ‘solution’ with clear advantages, the chief among which is to reduce the visibility of ‘the [Bedouin] problem.’ The Bedouin will be neatly confined in their townships, and the concentration of camps and tin shacks will no longer constitute an eyesore for those traveling the Negev highways and byways.

However, it is a moot point whether this will suffice to solve ‘the problem,’ since all the problems that today trouble the residents of the ‘recognized’ [that is, planned] localities are likely to surface for those who have been resettled: the lack of infrastructure, the low quality of public services, the absence of economic development, and the dearth of economic opportunities. (Swirski & Hasson 2006: 99)

The cyclical nature of the unemployed bedouin’s inability to support the tax bases of their own communities is exacerbated by the fact that those bedouin living informally in the *pezurah* are well aware of the lack of employment in the towns, the higher cost of living due to taxes and fees, and the increased tensions with other tribes. Rather than the towns serving as magnets and drawing more in-migrants in to help further support their struggling economies, the towns appear to offer disincentives for resettlement. To coin the old adage, “good news travels fast,” among the bedouin of the Negev, “bad news travels faster.” Thus, many bedouin refuse to relocate to town because of this growing recognition. “This awareness [of eco-

conomic struggles and unemployment] became associated with their refusal to evacuate the lands they claimed until the issue of ownership is settled. They believe that the drawbacks of life in towns outweigh the benefits” (Meir 1997: 199).

And yet, from the perspective of the government and the planners who are most directly responsible for the state of the bedouin towns, any fault for their slow development or progress seems to lie everywhere but in the towns’ planning. There is some concession that perhaps the towns offer too few options, but this is an area that the state now hopes to rectify with the establishment of nine additional towns under the Abu Basma agreement (2000; Swirski & Hasson 2006: 50). As Cohen explains (24 April 2007): “we know that we failed in the fact that we planned only one model of settlement for them ... we didn’t create other models of settlement, for example, like *moshavim*, to enable them to carry out agricultural activities ... and so, in the framework of the plans for the settlements of Abu Basma we’ve fixed that, and all the new settlements are mixed ..., and whoever wants to raise herds or agriculture will have a neighborhood that’s planned for it.”

Cohen explains that, already, there are residents of Rahat who are now raising flocks, as in the past, but these flocks have now been removed outside of the city into an area comparable to an industrial zone, which is isolated from the residential part of the community. A main road provides a water system, sewerage, and infrastructure in order that those who wish can maintain their animals, but in a manner that is healthy and more acceptable to the community as a whole. He explains: “That’s how we can take out all the herds that are now inside the city, and manage the livestock all under a cooperative management system, like a ‘mall’ for raising herds. Each one has his own area, but it’s cooperatively managed because it is a large number of animals, and there’s a large movement of trucks bringing in and taking out the feed, [and] providing water ... but today, in the newer settlements, we’re doing this integrated design right at the start.”

Such a concept clearly offers promise and is reminiscent of Prof. Gideon Kressel’s idea of developing “Villages for Shepherds” (1988), which he first publicized in his 2003 volume, though he had broached the idea with colleagues years earlier. Such a plan serves as a culturally appropriate response to past economic difficulties, when many bedouin tribesmen were forced to give up their income from pastoralism and farming, only to discover that there was no compensation to be found in wage labor opportunity in the towns (Meir 1997: 201).

From Cohen’s perspective, the state has little to lose in making such compromises. Rather, he believes that the shift to modernity and “progress” is well under way, and there is little the bedouin (or anyone else for that matter) can do to stop it. And yet, despite his optimism, the Abu-Basma plan,

which seeks to integrate urban life with some aspects of agriculture production and pastoralism, reveals that Israel's planners have begun to accept the fact, perhaps begrudgingly, that not only do the bedouin resist planning that fails to consider their best interests, but they also refuse to conform to it. As the bedouin become more educated and as bedouin society becomes increasingly integrated with Jewish society, as Cohen describes, an unintended outcome is that the bedouin are also that much more aware that the services and provisions in their towns are inferior to those in the Jewish sector. As a result, they are becoming increasingly more assertive and sophisticated, are embracing greater expectations, and are more demanding that their concerns be addressed than they ever have been before (Meir 1997: 201–203).

The outcome is in stark contrast to the planning approach of the past. Still, in the final analysis, it is clear that the planners in charge of implementing Israel's bedouin resettlement initiative are, above all, seeking ways in which to pacify the bedouin community, while simultaneously accomplishing the greater goal of getting the bedouin off what is believed to be state land. As Moshe, planner for the Bedouin Authority, explains it:

When we give solutions to the immediate situation, we give them to the bedouin in such a way that it says in the future, in another ten of fifteen years if the head of the family wants to *change* the nature of these [agricultural/pastoral] lots to residential, there'll be that option. We leave it open in the mechanism of the plan to change it. They'll have to pay a few *agorot* [Hebrew: pennies] in order to change it, but that's okay. That's a natural thing.

But we leave in, and that's the built-in idea of the plan—that's the way it should be, *what [the bedouin] wants*. You see the goal? The goal is the usage of the lot. If for now it's agricultural, he can change it to residential in a very short process, a localized, short process. This is the biggest change in the planning, and in my opinion, the greatest change that we have made in the past few years. (15 February 2007)

Conclusions—The Unclear Benefits of Urban Living

This account of the bedouin resettlement initiative over the past five decades allows for a number of inter-related conclusions at this juncture. First, many state planners argue that the issue of bedouin concern over their losing ownership over the land when they resettle is a red herring. They contend that the resettlement initiative is, first and foremost, recognition of the

changes that are happening naturally within bedouin society. Resistance to relocation, they contend, is simply strategic; why relocate without gaining financially from the state? The longer one waits and “squats” on the land, the more this will force the government’s hand; or better still, the more likely that one will not have to move at all. Or so the argument goes.

It is my contention, conversely, that it is the potential loss of their land to the state that forestalls most bedouin resettlement, but for many today it is more than this. Ultimately, the reason so many bedouin, 40 percent of the approximate population of 175,000 who currently do not move, is directly due to the failure of the planned towns to serve as the Utopian magnets they might have been, which were supposed to be designed to draw in resettlers. This, despite the fact that living in the so-called *pezurah* is illegal and that the approximately 40 settlements located in the *pezurah* are subject to demolition at any time. In essence, I have argued with the various government officials with whom I have spoken that if the bedouin do not feel that living in the towns is an improvement over living in the *pezurah* (or further, if they believe that such a move is for the worse), they will have no incentive, other than the rule of law, to relocate.

Interestingly, in time, I found that these officials and I shared a meeting of the minds. Ilan Sagie, for example, an Interior Ministry official, stated his view this way (24 March 2007):

All the Azazmeh are supposed to go into Segev Shalom. But they are saying that they don't want to. Why? You know exactly why. Today the bedouin are 'playing on the eyes' of the Government. And in my opinion it's a good game. If I was on their side, I would behave exactly the same way. First there were seven bedouin cities, now there are sixteen since the Government approved another nine [under Abu-Basma]. And they're saying, 'If we sit and wait, they'll approve more' ... [Among] the bedouin, everybody wants to live exactly where they're living right now [in the *pezurah*].

They just want the Government to approve a settlement and bring them roads, water, and electricity, and a clinic, and a kindergarten ... and then they can stay there, each one on top of his own hill. That's what they want. The State cannot allow such a thing for many reasons. So they're playing a waiting game. 'If we hold out longer, we'll get more of what we want.'

And yet, no sooner did he complete his thought that he then conceded:

But you're right, that's exactly the reason that people aren't moving to Segev Shalom. They think differently than we do. They think they're losing [when they come to town] because for them, living alone with your wife and children is preferable. It's not important under what conditions, it's

preferable alone [to] them, because they live with their extended family, their sub-tribe.

To live with others invites troubles. That's their thinking. So if they think they are inviting trouble, they will come up with all kinds of reasons why it's better to sit there and not move. Look, if you were to ask me if I would be willing to live under the conditions the way they're living today in the *pezurah*, I'd say, 'What, have you fallen on your head?' I'd be willing to go and live in Segev Shalom. Under no circumstances would I be willing to live in the *pezurah* ... But it's a different mentality, the bedouin mentality, and you can't erase it in a few or ten or even twenty years.

Given this logic, one could argue that even the best-planned towns would not attract in-migrants, as the bedouin have motivations that simply defy the interests of the state. But when one adds to this the further realization that, in truth, the towns are not in any way the "best planned," it should be a surprise to no one that bedouin attitudes toward the resettlement initiative remain at best skeptical.

In truth, it is well recognized that the towns have been victims of benign neglect (or worse) since their creation. As such, the differences between the town and the informal settlements (see Chapter 3) are less blatant than Sagie implies. On the one hand, housing cannot be compared; most houses in the towns are far larger and of a higher quality than the temporary dwellings of the *pezurah*. On the other hand, being able to afford to initiate *and complete* a permanent stone home is an ongoing challenge that many simply cannot accomplish and thus, they live inside the town but in temporary homes, including some tents, which are no different from those in the *pezurah*.

Like Sagie, however, Cohen does not see things in this light. From his perspective, the planned town is clearly an improvement over the unplanned one, although he grudgingly offers that some improvements to the towns may be appropriate (24 April 2007):

One of the most important things today is to raise the attractiveness of the permanent settlements. We know that today, perhaps, it's not so attractive, but it's more attractive than living in some tent somewhere, without a road, with sewage running in the street, without water so you have to bring it in drums. But that's what we in the Bedouin Authority do, raise the attractiveness of the permanent settlements.

Again, it should be noted here that all unrecognized settlements have access to running water (though not at each individual dwelling or household) and residents no longer are reliant upon wells or cisterns. None have sewage in the streets; the bedouin are incredibly clean, and their culture

demands that they take great care in how they handle human waste. The unrecognized towns do in truth have roads, which are not necessarily paved, of course.

But then, many of the streets of the planned towns are not paved. Not all planned town residents have access to electricity or telephone service. For years, Israel's bedouin in the *pezurah* and towns alike have used cell phones, not relying upon the landline option. While some informal settlements have Internet access via satellite dish, many parts of the planned towns lacking phone lines do not. And yet, Cohen continues:

If a bedouin in the *pezurah* prefers to live in the wilderness without water and without electricity, relying on a generator, the sewage flowing by him, and afterwards he becomes ill and comes and complains to the State saying 'why is he sick,' I have no answer for this. This is a conflict that always exists. His son is studying in Segev Shalom, that's true, but he meets in the school, let's suppose, the son of someone else who lives in Segev. But the son of the one who lives in Segev, when he comes home to his house there, he has electricity, he can connect to the Internet, he can study and do things, and he tells the son who lives in the *pezurah* what he did the night before. And the one from the *pezurah* can't do it, because he hasn't got these things.

So through that connection, you create a stimulus in the children of the *pezurah* who put pressure on the parents, 'why don't I have electricity? Why can't I connect to the Internet?' This is a situation that we call non-formal education.

It can be argued that the model the state is embracing is one of development, which relies upon the bedouin residents' innate jealous and competitive nature and desire to "keep up with the Hamamdis" by relocating to these "Levittowns," as Americans sought to "keep up with the Joneses" during the height of rapid suburbanization in the 1950s and 1960s. But more to the point, it is a development strategy that will only work so long as the "boy" in the town can actually connect to the Internet (in Segev Shalom, half of the neighborhoods do not have phone lines and therefore no Internet access), can frequent the Community Center (Segev Shalom does not have a *Matnas* community center), can participate in after-school clubs or activities, or for that matter, can participate in affordable camps (as very little of this exists in the planned towns, see Chapter 3).

Moreover, the state believes that it must continue to provide services in the *pezurah*, if not simply because the bedouin are citizens who have a right to these provisions, then because "you believe that education and enlightenment will help the bedouin society to progress, and not the op-

posite.” In theory, in other words, the state could withhold these services in an attempt to place further pressure upon the bedouin to resettle, “but then the state would’ve shot itself in the foot, because the instant there is no education, then you start with problems like violence, and problems like [bearing large] numbers of children and polygamy. When someone has education and enlightenment, automatically, these numbers are reduced. We have surveys that show that the instant that people moved to an urban settlement, they tend to marry fewer wives and have fewer children” (Dudu Cohen, 24 April 2007).

The idea then is not to make the settlements of the *pezurah* unlivable, but to make the towns attractive. But, it is argued, this is not solely the job of the state, nor is it a budgeting matter alone. The desire to make the towns attractive to in-migrants, and to respond to the criticisms often leveled concerning inadequate jobs, infrastructure, and the like often raises other difficulties that many planners may not consider.

There’s always someone who thinks that whatever you try to do, someone from your *hamula* needs to profit from it. It’s hard to manage things this way. The bedouin were never in a situation when they had to come to an agreement between themselves. When you’re in the wilderness, you don’t have to reach agreements with anyone. This is your territory, this is his territory, you don’t trespass on him, he doesn’t trespass on you. But it isn’t the same when you have to live together and you have to reach agreements.

There are places where we haven’t succeeded in putting in a sewage line 300 meters, because it passes through the territory of ‘*Hamula A*’ and they will not agree to have a sewage line in their territory. And what’s a sewage line for goodness sakes, you don’t disturb anything! You dig, put in the pipe line, and cover it up, and there’s no problem. Lord Above! ... It’s difficult. Also for the people who work here it gives the feeling that “Well, if they don’t want it why on earth should we help them?”

Ultimately, what comes out of the discussions with Cohen and the other state planners can be enumerated as follows:

1. Plans for the bedouin towns were poorly designed from the outset, failing to take bedouin participation, cultural interests or other concerns into account;
2. Budgeting for true development in a variety of areas has, since the creation of the program, been offered at a level that suggests that the initiative was halfhearted at best;

3. The state planners appear, despite a lack of funding and foresight, to be seeking to implement the initiative as well as they are able, although their directive is, ultimately, to get the bedouin community off of the land and into the towns;

Lastly, it is quite apparent that:

4. The bedouin community is skeptical of state planning efforts, distrustful of government motives, and reluctant to conform to its demands, even when, at times, the state's actions have the potential to benefit the community.

In conclusion, then, I began this chapter speaking about Utopianism. Needless to say, the bedouin towns of the Negev desert are dystopian at best. State planners and residents alike find themselves in a situation today in which there is much criticism and blame to go around, yet few easy answers exist to resolve the crisis plaguing these communities. In the final analysis, more than forty years after the resettlement initiative was implemented, the state and the bedouin, the planners and the residents, still appear to be missing one another, literally and figuratively, by speaking a different language, holding differing expectations, goals, dreams, and desires.

Ultimately, it appears that in many ways, the major distinction between the planned towns and the informal settlements is, for the bedouin at least, the fact that the state has deemed these densely concentrated areas that have enjoyed a certain level of planning as “legal,” while those lands upon which the bedouin sit today, lands the state lays claim to as it continues to consolidate its hold on what was once Arab Palestine, are deemed illegal. Indeed, not only do many in the bedouin community perceive that there is little difference in this regard, but even those involved with administering the resettlement initiative similarly note that this distinction can to a certain extent be put into question (Yeshuran, 10 May 2007):

Moving to town because living in an unrecognized settlement is against the law is no small thing. But there are other reasons: electricity is more expensive in the *pezurah* than in town, especially when they are using generators. Water in town is easy to get, you just turn on the faucet. The towns are orderly, unlike the *pezurah*.

But yes, if the State brings the services [education, healthcare] to the bedouin in the *pezurah*, then you're right, what's the point of moving? There is a conflict right here in this state. This is a governmental problem, not a bedouin problem. The courts say that the bedouin in the *pezurah* must

have these services, and so they get them [even though they live in the *pezurah*] and even though the State also says they are living illegally. It's a real controversy, and there's no agreement.

Until there is an agreement, one can appreciate the ambivalence that many bedouin, some 75,000 or so, feel about relocating to one of the towns.

And yet, in the meantime, despite all of the negative concerns expressed above, the irony is that living in the towns *does* have its benefits. In the chapters that follow, I will analyze data gathered in one of the recognized towns, Segev Shalom, between late 1992 through to early 2007, that will reveal that overall, residents who have resettled there are in many ways better off socially and economically than their family and friends in the neighboring *pezurah*. At the same time, however, I will reveal as well that despite these improvements in virtually every possible area of growth, the residents of Segev Shalom are less satisfied with their conditions and circumstances than one might anticipate. Not only are many of the bedouin today *less* content with their lot than in the past when they lived in more difficult and challenging circumstances, but the community as a whole has become more politicized, agitated, and resentful—all unanticipated consequences of the bedouin planned town initiative.

NOTE

*Some of the historical information in this chapter comes from Dinero, Steven C. 1995. "Human Settlement in Post-Nomadic Bedouin Society: An Assessment of Social and Economic Transformation in Segev Shalom, Israel." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Program in Urban Planning and Policy Development. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Chapter 4.