

URBANIZATION POLICY FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:

A Case Study of Israel's Negev Bedouins



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INTRODUCTION

Much has been written on the ideology of sedentarization and urbanization, but there has been inadequate analysis from a policy perspective and little if any documentation of the consequences. Recently, a study in Israel undertaken by the author and colleagues has attempted to provide detailed evidence, drawn from national statistical data, from local administrative information, and from an extensive survey (Lithwick 2000a). This chapter summarizes those results, which confirm that in the case under review there was a significant policy failure. A policy analysis to explain that failure is then presented. Since many of the same policy failures occur with respect to other indigenous peoples, the lessons learned from this case study should be of wider interest.

BRIEF BACKGROUND TO THE BEDOUIN URBANIZATION POLICY

For centuries prior to the founding of the state of Israel, the Bedouins in the Negev engaged in traditional activities of raising livestock and agriculture in a seminomadic fashion. Like many indigenous peoples, they claimed title to land that they lived upon, or utilized, but these claims were not recognized in Ottoman or British laws that the newly created state of Israel adopted. Policies of evicting and denying residence as well as herding on those lands followed. Official reasons for these policies included a desire to rationalize

the provision of health, educational, and welfare services for the Bedouins. However, many observers have concluded that the overriding reason was to enable the state to assume control over most of the lands in the Negev, for Zionist or security reasons.

To accommodate these Bedouins, in 1968 the government built the first urban center at Tel Sheva, a few kilometers northeast of Beer-Sheva, the major city in Israel's Negev. By 1990, the remaining six towns had been established in the region. A number of planning mistakes made the Tel Sheva initiative a failure. Most of these errors reflected insensitivity to the special needs and concerns of the Bedouin community. Units were too small and neighborhoods too congested. Nor did persons from different tribes or families mix very well. Some greater attention was paid to the planning of Rahat, founded in 1972, and the town succeeded in achieving a very rapid rate of population growth. In 1982, after the withdrawal from Sinai, the area that is now the Nevatim air base was claimed by the government, leading to the displacement of Bedouin families in that area. The new towns of Kseifa and Arara were established to accommodate them. Two years later, Segev Shalom was established, and Hura and Laqiya, the newest, were established about a decade ago. The result is that by the year 2000, approximately 70,000 persons lived in the seven towns, constituting slightly over one-half of the Bedouin population, which itself is one-quarter of the total population of the Negev.

PLANNING FOR FAILURE

Israel's approach virtually ensured that the Bedouin urban experience would be a failure. It was based on the following major elements:

- *Insufficient lands:* The amount of land made available in the towns was not sufficient to enable orderly expansion and introduction of the necessary range of urban amenities, including infrastructure, social and communal facilities, business enterprises, and so forth. Our survey indicated a lack of sewers and sidewalks, inferior roads, and an absence of playgrounds, child-care centers, and industry.
- *Restrictive planning regulations:* Rules and regulations restricted even the most inoffensive types of economic activities and prevented the free workings of the land market, making land unavailable and land costs unreasonably high.
- *Insufficient local budgets:* Local regular budgets come from two sources—transfers from the central government and self-generated funds from local taxes. In addition, there are extraordinary grants for development projects. Razin's research (2000) confirms the findings of the Suwari report that there remains systematic discrimination against Bedouin municipalities by national funding agencies.¹ Formulas are biased against the Bedouin towns, and the development grants provided are miniscule compared to urgent needs

and to what is provided to comparable Jewish towns. The absence of an economic base and high unemployment means that local tax collections are insignificant. This failure was officially recognized in the 1999 report of the state comptroller.² Recommendations to eliminate these biases have only been implemented to a limited extent.

- Absence of local autonomy: Until September 2000, the mayors of the four youngest Bedouin towns were appointed. The previous appointees were not Bedouins responsible to the community, but outsiders with loyalty only to the party that appointed them.

- Absence of an economic base: An industrial survey conducted for the Bedouin Urban Project (Lithwick 2000b) revealed only a handful of private enterprises in the Bedouin towns, mostly small and backward. The result is that virtually the entire potential labor force is obliged to try to find work outside the towns, where they encounter systematic discrimination. In the whole of the Negev, less than 400 Bedouins were employed in manufacturing firms, out of a total sectoral labor force of 15,000. Few were employed in the large modern industrial plants, and none were employed in the high tech sector (Lithwick 2000a, Appendix 2.1). The results are extremely high rates of unemployment and underemployment, in particular among the female segment of the labor force, for whom travel to work outside the home is less acceptable.³

- Absence of government jobs: A total of fifteen Bedouins are employed by government agencies excluding education, culture, and religious affairs (Lithwick, Table 6.1), a result unambiguously reflecting systemic discrimination.

- Inferior education: The Katz report (1998) documented the massive failure of education policies for the Bedouin sector generally. It cited inadequate teaching staff, major shortages of classrooms, poor matriculation (*bagrut*) results, high dropout rates, special problems of girls, and so forth. Its many sensible recommendations have been and continue to be ignored.

- Inadequate health services: The towns continue to have much lower levels of health services and poorer quality of such services, despite their greater needs.

- Inadequate social and recreational services: There are inadequate social service professionals and few recreational facilities in the towns, despite major problems of youth violence, crime, abuse of women, and an urgent need for child care facilities. The number of social workers, for example, is about one-quarter to one-fifth those in comparable Jewish towns. Few towns have proper sports fields, youth centers, libraries, and so forth.

The urban plans for the Bedouin, based on these elements, reflected neither the needs nor the interests of the Bedouin community whose members were not party to the planning process in any meaningful sense. Moreover, often-repeated government commitments to rectify wrongs, to meet obligations, and to correct discrimination have almost never been honored. One is

tempted to conclude that the failure of the Bedouin urbanization process was by design, since it is hard to believe that so much could have gone wrong by accident or by sheer incompetence.

THE CONSEQUENCES

The seven Bedouin towns were "planned" with nicely subdivided lots, rights of way for infrastructure, schools, clinics, and public spaces. And they have grown quite rapidly. Stone houses are springing up, entrance roads are paved, and overhead electric wires can be seen, along with innumerable television satellite dishes. From a traditional planner's point of view, this might be viewed as a success story, and it is being so treated with plans to build even more towns along the same lines. But upon closer inspection, the superficiality of this first impression is quickly demonstrated. The roads are filthy, and many are unpaved. Newly laid sidewalks are crumbling. Little commercial and virtually no industrial activity is taking place. Public buildings are defaced, and there are few if any playgrounds for youngsters. Young men hang about, with little to do. Yet even this impression is misleading. The real-ity—of unemployment, of inferior local services, of crime and violence, of seething anger and frustration with decades of broken promises—is not immediately visible. But these are the phenomena that inexorably lead to the conclusion that the urban experiment has failed.

THE EVIDENCE

It is now possible to document the scope of this failure. Recently published data provide solid evidence that can corroborate and even reinforce the narrative. Earlier data hinted at certain areas of deprivation, as did selected surveys and studies on specific topics. But as a result of the pioneering work of the Negev Center for Regional Development as well as the Center for Bedouin Studies and Development, both at Ben-Gurion University, there is now a *Statistical Yearbook of the Negev Bedouin*. This yearbook, the first edition of which was published in 1999, provides for the first time a comprehensive overview of the Bedouin urban community based on census data, municipal information, and administrative data from various government departments. We present in this chapter some of the essential data regarding the situation in the seven urban areas. We have been fortunate in being able to update some of the information, based on *The Statistical Yearbook of the Negev (SYN)* for the year 2000, published by the Negev Center for Regional Development.

Each year an official government document is produced ranking local authorities in Israel according to a socioeconomic index. For 1995, the most recent year for which data were available, the following was the ranking for the seven Bedouin towns in the Negev, compared with Beer-Sheva and their neighboring Jewish towns:

Table 1
Socioeconomic Ranking of Local Authorities

Bedouin Towns	Rahat	1
	Arara	2
	Tel Sheva	3
	Kseifa	4
	Segev Shalom	6
	Laqiya	7
	Hura	17
Jewish Towns	Beer-Sheva	107
	Dimona	59
	Arad	121
	Metar	190
	Lehavim	192
	Omer	201

Note: 1 denotes the lowest ranking among the 204 local authorities in Israel.
Source: Lithwick, 2000a, Table 1.1.

Five of the seven Bedouin towns are the lowest ranked in Israel. The largest Bedouin town, Rahat, is the lowest ranked. And the "best" of these, Hura, is very new so that the relatively better ranking may be premature. By way of contrast, the Jewish towns that are neighbors of many of these Bedouin towns (Omer, Metar, and Lehavim) rank among the highest in the country. Beer-Sheva ranks at 107, just over halfway down the list.

Such rankings are not without problems, as they derive from simplistic, unweighted arithmetic aggregates of a small number of disparate indicators. Moreover, they indicate only rankings, without providing any appreciation as to how wide the actual gap is, say, between Rahat, now the second largest city in the Negev, and Beer-Sheva, the largest city and the regional capital, only a dozen kilometers away. Such an indicator cannot hope to convey the relative deprivation of citizens in the Bedouin towns, and the depth of the tensions that the massive socioeconomic gaps with their affluent neighbors is bound to create.

Economic Resources

Although with the published income data also are problematic, they do convey a more accurate measure of the extent of the gap between communities. Table 2 presents some data on these economic gaps.

Table 2
Economic Statistics for Bedouin Towns and Beer-Sheva, 1996

	Average Monthly Salary NIS*		Ratio Relative to Beer-Sheva	
	Per Month of Work	Over the Year	Monthly	Yearly
Rahat	3516	2470	.69	.62
Arara	3692	2596	.73	.65
Tel Sheva	3775	2669	.74	.67
Kseifa	3823	2758	.75	.69
Segev Shalom	3796	2754	.75	.69
Hura	3835	2840	.76	.71
Beer-Sheva	5076	3987		.79

*New Israel Shekels

Source: Lithwick 2000a, Table 1.2.

Several important facts emerge from these data. First, the salary per month reflects rates of pay, rather than total income. There is a substantial gap of between 25 and 30 percent in these rates. The income disparities are greater due to the lesser number of months Bedouins are able to find work, with the result that annual take-home pay is between 30 and 40 percent below that of the typical population in Beer-Sheva. Furthermore, the ratio of yearly to monthly salary in the final column is an interesting indicator of unemployment disparities, which are about 10 percent higher in the Bedouin towns than in Beer-Sheva. In sum, the average urban Bedouin's income is lower mainly because of a lower rate of pay, but also due to lower rates of employment over the course of the year. The bottom line is that it is significantly harder for a breadwinner to support a family if one is a Bedouin. But the problem is further aggravated by the fact that Bedouin women work much less than do others, on average under seven months a year, compared to the Beer-Sheva average of nine months (Statistical Yearbook 2000, Table vii.4). In consequence, family earned income is even more seriously affected, as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3
Family Salaries for Bedouin and Jewish Towns, 1996

	Average Family Salary for the Year	
	NIS	Index Beer-Sheva=100
Bedouin Towns		
Rahat	3989	45
Arara	3583	41
Tel Sheva	3860	44
Kseifa	3878	44
Segev Shalom	3787	43
Hura	3955	45
Jewish Towns		
Beer Sheva	8792	100
Ofaqim	5593	64
Dimona	7791	89
Arad	9237	105
Metar	16707	190
Lehavim	19048	217
Omer	21739	247

Source: SYN 2000, Table VII.9.

The family salary income of Bedouins in the towns is thus less than half that of the average family in Beer-Sheva, and Beer-Sheva is lower than the Israeli average. Add to that the fact that the average household size in the Bedouin towns is roughly double that of Beer-Sheva, and the family salary per person (per capita earned income) declines to under 25 percent of that of Beer-Sheva and perhaps as low as 20 percent of the Israeli average.

It is reasonable to ask whether Beer-Sheva or even Israel is the correct basis of comparison. The suburban towns of Omer, Lehavim, and Metar are closer to four of the Bedouin towns, and the latter's average family income is about one-fifth that of the most affluent, Omer. If we consider the per capita earned income gap, the Bedouin level is about one-tenth of that in Omer. But salary income is only part of total family income. Many families have additional sources of income, especially from real and financial assets. It is reasonable to assume that Bedouins with their low income levels save very little and hence have acquired at best very modest amounts of property, so that compared to the rest of the population, this source would not add significantly to their total income and would therefore widen further the economic gaps already noted. One reason that the land issue is so critical is that for a number of Bedouins it represents their only additional property. Policies that

fail to compensate them fairly for the land that has been expropriated, or that do not permit them to use their land for the most profitable purposes, effectively increase the already large gaps.

It is widely believed that Bedouins receive compensation for these gaps in the form of greater benefits from financial transfer payments from the government. Allowances for larger families are a clear ameliorating factor, but many families do not receive them. In Israel as a whole, 98 percent of children receive child support allowances, but in the Bedouin towns, the proportion ranges from 49 to 92 percent (*Statistical Yearbook 2000*, Table vii.4). Unemployment benefits should also be higher, but again, their payments are lower than for non-Bedouins. The net corrective effect of these transfers cannot be estimated as the data are not available, but it would appear to be modest at best.

Government transfers of services in kind, such as health and education, also tend to be less inequitable than the private income gaps. But numerous studies confirm that they also discriminate against the Bedouins so that the absolute private gaps are not in any way ameliorated. For illustrative purposes, Table 4 presents two indicators of the service gaps that exist between Jewish and Bedouin towns. In the field of education, most comprehensively documented in the (still unimplemented) Katz Report, the shortage of classrooms and teachers is deemed to be at a crisis level. Yet without a major educational initiative, the Bedouin population is destined to continue to be unemployed or underemployed, and income gaps are destined to widen further. The allocation of water, which is such a basic urban amenity, further demonstrates the bias against urban Bedouins in the provision of public services. The latter receive on average between 25 and 50 percent of the water allocation to the Jewish towns. Razin's evidence on the allocation of government grants to towns reinforces this phenomenon of public discrimination against the Bedouin towns, although admittedly the size of these gaps has been narrowing in recent years. Thus, the family and per capita income gaps are extremely high, reflecting lower earned income, higher unemployment rates, and the limited offset provided by public transfers of goods and services.

Table 4
Public Service Gaps between Bedouin and Jewish Towns

Bedouin Towns	Pupils per Classroom		Water Consumption (M ³) per Resident
	Primary	Secondary	
Rahat	33.8	37.2	46
Arara	31.2	32.4	39
Tel Sheva	32.1	32.7	42
Kseifa	n/a	40.7	36
Segev Shalom	33.8	36.7	n/a
Laqiya	35.2	34.1	n/a
Hura	n/a	30.4	n/a
Average	31.3	34.0	n/a
Jewish Towns			
Beer-Sheva	27.8	27.0	88
Metar	30.1	n/a	138
Lehavim	n/a	n/a	n/a
Omer	34.2	n/a	128
Average	27.9	31.1	

Source: SYN, 2000. Tables X.4 and XII.1.

Impact of Low Incomes

Low incomes, aggravated by unequal service provision, result in a much lower standard of private and public consumption. The former can be seen in the lower levels of asset ownership. Cars per household average .92 in Omer and .47 in Beer-Sheva, but only .34 in Rahat and .25 in Arara (*Statistical Yearbook 2000*, preliminary, table unnumbered). The average age of cars in these towns is five years in Omer, six years in Beer-Sheva, and between nine and ten in the Bedouin towns. Computer ownership follows the same trend, being about one for every four households in Beer-Sheva, and one in twenty-five for the Bedouin towns. Washing machines for clothes are owned to the extent of .86 per household in Beer-Sheva, and around one-third that rate in the Bedouin towns.

Public consumption has the same general deficiency, as already noted above. The major determinant of the budgetary gaps of the Bedouin local authorities has been found to be the miniscule size of the local tax base. Low incomes make it very difficult for many if not most households to pay local taxes. And the absence of local businesses deprives the communities of what is, for many towns, an important component of local government revenues. Add to that the discriminatory transfers from the government, and the inadequacy of local services can be largely explained.

In the above comparisons, we have not contrasted the Bedouin situation to that of Israel as a whole, but to Beer-Sheva, one of the poorer communities in Israel. Even by that low standard, the Bedouins lag far behind. While these descriptions do not provide explanations, they do indicate the breadth and depth of the problems of the Bedouin towns, and perhaps help explain why these towns may fairly be judged to be failures.

Some International Comparisons

It is often argued that the Bedouins should not complain, since even if they have not done so well relative to the majority in Israel, they have done much better than their brethren in adjacent countries. Presumably, had Israel not existed, they would have a standard of living somewhat like those other countries. Table 5 provides some recent data on relevant measures of living standards in those countries. From the table, we observe that using the more accurate Purchasing Power Parity measure, average per capita gross national product in Israel is four to six times as high as that in the immediately adjoining countries. It is almost twice as high as in Saudi Arabia. But if urban Bedouin incomes are only one-quarter of the national average (above), then their economic status would not be much different than that of residents in those neighboring countries. It is true that Israel's Bedouins have access to much higher standards of service in some sectors, notably health care. On the other hand, their limited access to many of Israel's other fine facilities—such as universities, the professions, and high-tech jobs—means that living standards for the vast majority are hardly improved as a result. In other words, the argument that Bedouins in Israel have done much better than might have been expected is highly overstated.

Table 5
Comparative Living Standards
GNP per Capita, 1998

	Using Exchange Rates		Using Purchasing Power	
	In US Dollars	Index US=100	In US Dollars	Index US=100
Egypt	1290	4	3146	11
Jordan	1150	4	2615	9
Lebanon	3560	12	4144	14
Syria	1020	3	2702	9
Saudi Arabia	6910	24	10408	36
Israel	17790	61	17420	60
United Kingdom	21410	73	20314	69
United States	29240	100	29240	100

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators, 2000*, Table 1.1 (website).

The Demographic Explosion and Its Contribution

Although not the cause of urban policy failure, demographic pressures in the context of nonfunctional cities make things significantly worse, as we saw in the case of their impact on per capita incomes. A few additional observations on the nature of the demographic phenomena are therefore warranted. The Bedouin community has one of the highest rates of natural increase and hence population growth in the world. While the rate of natural increase of the total population in Israel (including Bedouins) is around 15 per 1,000, the rate for the Bedouin population is almost three times as high. This is due to a record-high birth rate combined with a death rate that is higher than that of the national level but low relative to most countries, and declining. Since there is overall net in-migration from rural areas to the Bedouin towns, despite their limited availability of land for expansion, the overall rate of urban population growth is even higher. Some basic statistics and comparisons for the most recent year for which data are available are provided in Table 6.

Table 6
Demographic Statistics for Bedouin Towns and Beer-Sheva, 1996-1997

	Rate of Natural Increase (per 1000)	Net In-Migration (per 1000)	Total Rate of Growth (%)
Rahat	53.2	2.5	5.6
Arara	43.3	13.2	5.6
Tel Sheva	54.2	34.6	8.9
Kseifa	51.3	74.0	12.5
Segev Shalom	52.7	40.7	9.3
Laqiya	53.0	238.2	29.5
Hura	52.9	153.4	20.6
Beer-Sheva	9.5	15.6	2.5

Source: SYN 2000, Table II.2.

The direct consequences of this demographic pressure are relatively obvious. Even without in-migration, the rate of natural increase of more than 5 percent per year in all the Bedouin towns will mean that their respective population will have doubled by 2010. Since in-migration is much more important than natural increase for the newest towns (Hura and Laqiya), their growth over the next decade will be even more explosive. In addition, high rates of natural increase result in very large families, with the average number of children being more than eight per family. There is, therefore, a high rate of

dependency on the working-age population. Pressures on the educational system are enormous. In the face of severely limited incomes, the material standard of living is bound to be adversely affected.

Recent Trends

If matters were improving, the judgment that the towns have failed might be viewed as shortsighted. Unfortunately, longitudinal data on most of the towns are very limited. Even though selected measures of absolute increases in facilities such as roads, recreational facilities, and numbers of students exist, these figures fail to document the even faster increase in needs due to the rapidly growing urban population. Furthermore, they fail to indicate how much better the neighboring Jewish towns are faring, which, for better or worse, is seen by Bedouins as an appropriate basis of comparison.

The data that we were able to gather, summarized in Table 7, are very selective, and hence do not constitute definitive comparative evidence on trends. They show modest absolute and even relative improvement for two of the Bedouin towns for which such data are available, and these are compared to Beer-Sheva. Relative to Omer, however, in almost all areas they are falling farther behind. The one factor that continues to pose a problem is the demographic. As the table shows, while natural increase is slowing in the other towns, in the Bedouin towns it is increasing due to a decline in death rates. This demographic behavior will continue to impose a barrier to economic improvement for the average Bedouin family. As a result, the overall trends we have been able to track do not reassure us that the massive current gaps can be overcome in the foreseeable future.

Table 7
Comparative Trends in Key Indicators (% Increase)

INDICATOR	PERIOD				
	1992-97	Rahat	Tel Sheva	Beer-Sheva	Omer
Total Water Consumption per Resident (SYN, 1994 T. 15.3; 2000, T. 13.1)	19%	26%	40%	6%	64%
Private Cars per 1000 Persons (SYN, 1994, T. 8.3; 2000, T. 8.3)	19%	19%	31%	16%	30%
Rate of Natural Increase in the Population (SYN: 1994, T. 3.1; 2000, T. 3.1)	17%	17%	n/a	-19%	-27%
Average Family Salary per Average Month (SYN: 1991, T. 7.2; 2000, T. 7.9)	133%	133%	125%	114%	123%

IMPLICATIONS

Within a few years, and without any policy change, the Bedouin towns in the Negev will be of a size that will make them highly visible components of the Negev urban system. They will have a combined population close to that of the city of Beer-Sheva (Lithwick 2000a, 20–22). The seven Bedouin towns are therefore rapidly becoming an important component of the demographic and social structure of the Negev as a whole. Their evolution will either contribute to the well-being of the Negev, or detract from it, depending on the measures adopted to promote their development so as to systematically and effectively reduce the gaps.

Without fundamental policy changes this rapid growth will guarantee a social upheaval in the community and in the region as a whole. A critical mass of urban unemployed (mostly youth) and poor will ensure that. Provision of basic urban services will become increasingly difficult for the municipal authorities, whose legitimacy is already highly questionable in the eyes of residents. And the consequences will be felt in the larger Jewish community in ways that can only be vaguely anticipated from our current perspective.

Already, the tensions between at least one Bedouin town, Tel Sheva, and its affluent Jewish neighbor, Omer, have reached crisis proportions. Disputes over land have been resolved by force majeure rather than due legal process and transparent administrative procedures. Widening and highly visible gaps have provoked strong feelings of deprivation and injustice on the part of the Bedouins. Insecurity on the part of the Jews of Omer, as crime and theft increases, makes life less and less livable in what is deemed by official statistics to be one of the most livable towns in Israel. For example, the rate of car theft in Omer is reputed to be the highest in the country. Our concern is that this downward spiral in intercommunal relations may be a prototype for other paired towns: Rahat and Lehavim, Hura and Metar, and even Kseifa-Arad and Arara-Dimona.

Policy changes are being considered that may alter these projections, including the creation of additional Bedouin towns, along with attempts to retain the Bedouins in unrecognized settlements outside the existing towns. The latter may not work for many of the younger, more mobile Bedouins. And it will simply keep the overall rate of natural increase at a very high level. The former may well postpone the problem, but will make it worse in the long run. Meanwhile, failure to address the real, underlying policy problems immediately and seriously, while there is still time to effect fundamental change, will make the future task that much greater, that much more costly, and therefore that much more unlikely. No less than the future of the Bedouins and hence the future of the Negev is at stake.

ANATOMY OF POLICY FAILURE

Detailing the record of failures in urban policy for the Bedouins is an important step in beginning to correct the situation. Unfortunately, if policy analysis stops at that point, the likelihood is that cosmetic solutions will be applied to selected issues, but no fundamental changes will be forthcoming. Indeed, the cosmetic changes are usually selected precisely to camouflage an unwillingness to address underlying problems. For that reason, we have chosen not to get enmeshed in a fine level of detail, describing and quantifying every issue in each of the towns. We do not propose to detail the shortage of classrooms, the location of pollution problems, the parcels of land being contested, and so forth. Those matters can and should be dealt with by the responsible authorities as a matter of course. What is essential is an appreciation of the larger picture, of the fundamental factors that foster this myriad of interrelated problems. We intend to identify them in this section, and to demonstrate how they play a central role in creating and sustaining those problems. We believe that these kinds of core problems are relevant for a number of similar situations facing indigenous peoples.

The Problem of Policy Orientation

At many times and in many places, purely reactive, fragmented policy is appropriate to fixing problems. Indeed, that would appear to be the task of most administrations. But some problems are so deeply rooted in fundamental processes gone awry that trying to patch them up piecemeal doesn't work. It is costly, rarely has much effect, and indeed may make matters worse. Fixing roads won't make much difference if there are no funds to maintain them, but the option of patching them may actually prevent setting aside funds for proper maintenance. To avoid this kind of negative policy feedback loop, it is preferable to try to get at the heart of the issue and to reconceptualize it so as to generate purposive, synergetic responses.

The Bedouin urban situation would appear to be such a policy issue. It is evident that the fundamental thrust of the policy was doomed to failure. The policy was designed primarily to meet the needs of the state, rather than those of the Bedouins, and no effective spatial policy can operate in that manner. Once introduced to pursue that goal, however well-intentioned various steps were, they could not help correct the situation. More precisely, if the goal is to help modernize services for the Bedouins who so chose them, then a settlement system compatible with that goal would have been created, taking into account the preferences of the community and the constraints imposed by its values, background, and social organization. There are models of urbanization for indigenous nomadic peoples—although most are of greatest help in indicating what not to do—and they should have helped shape the policy conception.

We have been unable to discover any such conception in the case of Israel's Bedouins. At best, some simplistic models based on general Israeli experience were introduced. These models, applied to more than thirty development towns, had not worked very well for that purpose, but lessons appear not to have been learned. In any event, there was no reason to believe that they would be applicable to the Bedouin situation in the Negev. Tribal rivalries, lack of economic development potential, massive educational deficits, and a nonfunctioning spatial system were hardly a basis upon which a viable urbanization program for the Bedouins could be erected. The first town, Tel Sheva, which should have had the greatest opportunity for success given its excellent location, proved to be a great failure. Some minor lessons were learned, but not enough to radically reorient the planning process for its successors. No economic base was considered, no discussion of appropriate size, dispersion, and interconnections between towns took place, no coherent programs to develop future urban administrators were launched, and so forth. Without these elements, the towns were bound to evolve without direction and without development. Only some mechanisms to accommodate the expected growth, such as land use, social services, and infrastructure were planned. While these are important, they do not determine the ultimate viability of a settlement. Indeed, a truly viable settlement will soon address these issues in an orderly fashion. In the absence of such a conception, the various policy initiatives could at best temporarily ameliorate the situation. Since they could not control the fundamental dysfunction, however, the impacts proved to be short-lived and led to increasing frustration all around.

We will refer to the most worrisome example, already discussed: the downward spiral of relations between Tel Sheva and Omer. Had Tel Sheva been given sufficient prospects for developmental success, its labor force would by now have good jobs and be earning decent incomes. Municipal tax revenues would have financed a number of services, the town would have attracted a cohort of forward-looking young families, and an attractive addition to the Negev region would have emerged. Instead, unable to provide jobs, a community of angry young men grew up, blaming the state and by inference its wealthy citizens next door for their dismal prospects. Hostile acts against Omer such as thefts of cars, home break-ins, and vandalism of orchards and public spaces led to efforts to control them, to punish them by dealing harshly with their land claims, and to shut them out of local jobs and facilities. This provoked further hostility, making the present situation of increasing animosity almost hopeless from the perspective of both sides.

We do not wish in this example to assign all the blame to Omer. The initial problem was the result of the wholly inadequate policies that created Tel Sheva itself. And while the responses by the Bedouins were no doubt excessive and self-destructive, the community was unable or unwilling to deal with

it. Should this occur in the other towns, the whole settlement system of the Negev will become a series of armed camps, with the two ethnic communities virtually at war with each other. Unless there is a fundamental change in policy, no amount of patchwork will rectify a situation that appears to be spinning out of control. The rhetoric of government officials, including those who are genuinely concerned with the welfare of the Bedouins, sounds increasingly hollow because their remedies are known to be ineffective, and their unwillingness or inability to deal with fundamentals renders them impotent.

The Problem of Policy Management

The previous analysis is hardly original or complicated. It should be self-evident to anyone with an acquaintance with policymaking. That it has not been internalized and acted upon forces us to add a second element to the explanation of basic causes of policy failure, and that is the lack of interest by those in charge to do what they know is required and what is right. There are two levels at which these questions must be raised. The first is the highest policy level, with the ministers of the government of Israel. Why have they not acted to address this issue? The standard reply would be that this is not a "big" problem, so they have little interest in it. War and peace, the religious-secular conflict, the ethnic conflicts among Jews themselves, and economic restructuring are so overwhelming that such a relatively minor issue simply cannot be addressed until the others are resolved. It also explains why the Negev in general has never received adequate attention. Whenever a problem arises, a minister or two comes down, promises that he or she is different, opens or reopens some plant or public building, and escapes at very low cost. If that is how the Negev as a whole is treated, it is not surprising that the Bedouin minority in the Negev should fade into the policy woodwork.

This inattention is reinforced by considerations of pure self-interest. At best, the Negev as a whole can account for a handful of representatives to the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. And ambitious politicians in a system of proportional rather than constituency representation know that their future lies in meeting the needs of the center, not the periphery. Few if any will choose to speak for the Negev, whereas for the Bedouins, if there is occasionally a solitary voice crying in the wilderness, it will not be enough to change matters.

Therefore, one need not see political leaders as somehow anti-Bedouin to explain their neglect. Devoting time and resources to the Bedouin issue may prove to be counterproductive, for it alienates potential allies needlessly. There have been instances of well-intentioned policy initiatives, such as reforming the budgetary transfer system, improving medical care, endorsing educational reform. But these often fail, and to understand how that is possible we must turn to the second level, the public administrators or bureaucracy, where much of the policy problem lies. Even promising policies

from the top are thwarted by a bureaucracy with its own agenda, which may involve continuing to do things as they've always been done or withholding funds already voted and allocated on technicalities because of different priorities. One major reason that so few of the problems created by this level of policy management are known is that it is inaccessible to the very community it purports to serve. If senior levels of the various ministries included a critical mass rather than a few token Bedouins, such efforts to stymie policy would be open to public scrutiny and would not likely be tolerated. How else can one explain the virtual absence of Bedouins in government administration (which we noted above)?

We must once more take care not to tarnish everyone's reputation. There are able administrators who do want to improve matters because they genuinely care. But the centralized, powerful system in which they find themselves is not tolerant of independent thought and action, and it takes a very courageous official to swim against the tide knowing that in the end small changes will not make a fundamental difference. We are convinced that given a receptive administration with strong political leadership, these persons would be instrumental in effecting positive change.

A WAY OUT?

When the two problems of policy misdirection and policy mismanagement are combined, reforming policy becomes an almost impossible task. Each feeds off the other, reducing possible avenues of action and frustrating any and every effort. One can best explain this by a military analogy. Once a misdirected policy choice is made, such as US intervention in Vietnam, Soviet policy in Afghanistan and Chechnya, or Israeli policy in Lebanon, efforts to "solve" the problem that do not include a rethinking of the policy itself tend to make matters worse. More weaponry or changes in regime do not turn things around. And the bureaucracy (military in this case) that rationalizes these misguided policies is the one that acquires the power to continue along the same trajectory. Once an alternative policy is chosen, the knot may be untied, new officials are able to follow the new directions, and a viable solution is possible, if not assured.

In Lebanon, Israel recently came up with a radical paradigm shift—unilateral withdrawal—that could have permanently altered a mutually destructive state of affairs. Whether a similar new paradigm regarding the urbanization of Israel's Bedouins in the Negev might be forthcoming remains to be seen. A report by the Bedouin Urban Project (Abu-Saad and Lithwick 2001) attempts just such a rethinking. It proposes a strategic plan for Bedouin urban development based on local needs and local opportunities. It identifies the manpower and organizational requirements for implementation, and stresses the importance of Bedouin leadership seizing the initiative. It also represents a different

approach to planning insofar as Bedouins have been involved and have provided input throughout the planning process. One of the university centers cosponsoring the project is the Bedouin-directed Center for Bedouin Studies and Development. Bedouin community leaders and elected officials were interviewed, and Bedouin interviewers conducted an extensive survey of Bedouin living in the towns. The draft plan developed was based both on Bedouin community input and professional economic and urban planning expertise. The draft plan has been submitted to the Bedouin leadership of the seven towns so that their feedback and input can be included.

The outcome bears watching, not just by the Negev's Bedouins but by the wider community of indigenous peoples. For although the details of their circumstances may appear to be radically different, the general developmental approach being proposed may contain many ideas that can be adapted to these unique circumstances.

Notes

1. For further discussion, see an earlier paper by Razin (1999).
2. *State Comptroller's Report*. 1999. 498–522.
3. The rather ideologically typed notion that Bedouin urbanization was designed to create an industrial proletariat is put into serious question by this evidence. It appears that no employment strategy of any sort was contemplated.

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