



The Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel

## **Making the Bedouin Towns Work**

By

Harvey Lithwick

Jerusalem, June, 2002

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## Preface

The work of **the Center for Social Policy Studies** covers a wide spectrum of social and economic issues facing Israeli society. One major aspect of its work deals with the inequalities in society and in access to social services. It is part of the Center's *raison d'être*, in fact, to bring these issues into the official and public domain.

Center reports have emphasized the relative disadvantage of Arabs in Israel compared to the rest of the population. It is well documented in the Center's recent annual reports, in fact, that the Arab population as a whole, lags behind the Jewish population in terms of social status, income, access to education and social services, and so on. (See the chapters on education and health, for example, in the *2001 CSPA Annual Analysis of Social Expenditures*.)

In recent years, it has become evident that there are social and economic gaps not just between large social groups within Israel -- Arabs and Jews, immigrants and non-immigrants -- but also within aggregate populations. Thus, the Bedouin as a subgroup of the Arab population deserve special attention.

The idea of bringing the Bedouin, with their unique nomadic style of life, into the mainstream of Israeli society has posed a serious social, economic and political problem. Good intentions are simply not enough when dealing with social issues of such a profound nature. As the following report indicates, this seems to be the case with the treatment of its Bedouin population.

The Bedouin have always displayed overt sympathy for the State of Israel. This is evidenced by their participation in the armed services and their renown as scouts of distinguished service. They are, along with the Druze, an important non-Jewish community that participates actively in the army.

It is our hope that this report of the CSPA will be looked at closely by policy makers in order to change a worrisome trend and to do justice to the Bedouin and Israeli society as a whole.

Yaakov Kop

Jerusalem, June, 2002

# **Making the Bedouin Towns Work**

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# MAKING THE BEDOUIN TOWNS WORK\*

Harvey Lithwick<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Government of Israel has attempted to “solve” the problem of the Bedouins living in the Negev by moving a large number of them into seven towns near Beer Sheva. In 1999, the author prepared a monograph entitled *An Urban Development Strategy for the Negev’s Bedouin Community*.<sup>2</sup> The monograph provides an extensive analysis of the situation of the Bedouins in these towns and offers some explanations as to the causes. It also analyzes the policies that were pursued, and some of the reasons for their limited success. The study concludes with proposals for a strategic urban development approach to begin to rectify the situation. This paper provides a brief synopsis of the study, with emphasis on the proposed policy framework.

## 1. EVIDENCE ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

### Who Are the Negev Bedouins and How Did They Become Urbanized?

The Bedouins in Israel’s Negev have, in the past half-century, undergone a rapid transformation from nomadism to a sedentary rural lifestyle, and over the past few decades, more than half have become urbanized. We consider here only the latter transformation, the urbanization process. The consequences can be seen in any of the seven Bedouin towns. These towns are the result of an explicit governmental program over the past two decades to relocate the Bedouins in more concentrated “urban” areas, to provide health, education and social services more efficiently but also to move towards a resolution of the difficult land ownership issue. The

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<sup>2</sup> The study’s final report, *A Way Ahead: A Development Plan for the Bedouin Towns in the Negev* was published in November, 2000.

towns were “planned” with 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, overhead electric wires can be seen along with innumerable television satellite dishes. From a planner’s point of view, this might be, and has indeed been viewed as a success story. But when one enters the towns, this first impression is quickly reversed. The reality, of high unemployment, little commercial and industrial activity, inferior local services, and high rates of crime and violence, leads one inevitably to the conclusion that the urban experiment has failed.

**Some Data**

*The Statistical Yearbook of the Negev Bedouin* (SYNB)<sup>3</sup> provides a comprehensive overview of the Bedouin urban community, based on census data, municipal information, and administrative data from various government departments. It quotes a yearly official government ranking of local authorities in Israel according to a socio-economic index. For 1999, the most recent year for which data were available, the following was the ranking for the seven Bedouin towns in the Negev:

**Table 1**

**Socio-Economic Ranking (1-204) of Bedouin Local Authorities**

Rahat	1
Arara	2
Tel Sheva	3
Kseifa	4
Segev Shalom	6
Laqiya	7
Hura	17

Note: 1 denotes the *lowest* ranking among the 204 local authorities in Israel.

Source: SYNB, Table 7.13

Five of the seven Bedouin towns are the lowest ranked in Israel. The largest Bedouin town, Rahat, is the lowest ranked. By way of contrast, Beer Sheva ranks at 107, just over half way down the list. Dimona, one of the poorer development towns ranks 59th, and Arad, one of the more “successful” development towns, ranks 121<sup>st</sup>. Since the bedroom suburbs of Omer, Metar and Lehavim, which

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<sup>3</sup> The *Statistical Yearbook of the Negev Bedouin* is produced by the Negev Center for Regional Development and the Center for Bedouin Studies and Development both at Ben-Gurion University.

border on some of these towns are ranked highest, invidious comparisons are bound to occur.

### Economic Resources

The picture is further supported by the following income data. Although there are problems with published income data, they do help indicate the extent of the gap between these communities, which is not readily gauged from the previous indexes.

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

	<u>Average Monthly Salary NIS</u>		Ratio Relative to		Ratio of
	<u>Per Month</u>	<u>Over the</u>	<u>Beer Sheva</u>		<u>Yearly</u>
	<u>Of Work</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Monthly</u>	<u>Yearly</u>	<u>to Monthly</u>
Rahat	3516	2470	.69	.62	.70
Arara	3692	2596	.73	.65	.70
Tel Sheva	3775	2669	.74	.67	.71
Kseifa	3823	2758	.75	.69	.72
Segev Shalom	3796	2754	.75	.69	.73
Hura	3835	2840	.76	.71	.74
Beer Sheva	5076	3987			.79

Source: SYN 2000, Table VII.5

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% in these rates. The income disparities are greater, due to the fewer number of months Bedouins are able to find work, with the result that annual take home pay is between 30 and 40% 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% 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 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.<sup>4</sup> In consequence, *family* earned income is even more seriously affected, as can be seen in Table 3.

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<sup>4</sup> SYN, Table VII. 14.

**Table 3**

**Family Salaries for Bedouin and Jewish Towns, 1996**

	<u>Average Family Salary for the Year</u>	
	<u>NIS</u>	<u>Index Beer Sheva=100</u>
<u>Bedouin Towns</u>		
Rahat	3989	45
Arara	3583	41
Tel Sheva	3860	44
Kseifa	3878	44
Segev Shalom	3787	43
Hura	3955	45
 <u>Jewish Towns</u>		
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's 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% of that of Beer Sheva and perhaps as low as 20% of the Israeli average.

In theory, these gaps could be offset by means of disproportionately larger benefits in the form of financial transfer payments from the government to Bedouins. Among these would be allowances for larger families, but many families do not receive them.<sup>5</sup> Unemployment benefits are also lower than warranted.

Government transfers of services such as health and education also tend to be less inequitable than the private income gaps, but they are not without their own problems. In the field of education, most comprehensively documented in the (still unimplemented) Katz Report,<sup>6</sup> 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 a basic

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<sup>5</sup> SYN, Table VII. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Y. Katz et. al., *Report of the Investigating Committee on the Bedouin Education System in the Negev*, March 1998.



urban amenity, is also a problem for the Bedouin towns, which receive on average between 25 and 50% of the water allocation to the Jewish towns<sup>7</sup>. Prof. Razin presents evidence on the under-allocation of government grants to Bedouin towns although the situation has improved recently.<sup>8</sup>

## **The Demographic Explosion**

Demographic pressures in the context of non-functional cities make things significantly worse. 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 birth rate combined with a death rate that is higher than that of the national level but low relative to most countries, and declining. One consequence is that the Bedouins contribute a significantly higher amount to the growth of the Negev's population. Even in the 1990s decade of recent rapid Jewish growth due to immigration from abroad, the Bedouin contribution was significant. Between 1983 and 1996, just under 40% of the Negev's population growth was the result of increase in the Bedouin population, despite the fact that they accounted for less than one-quarter of the Negev's population.

Since there is overall net in-migration from rural areas to the Bedouin towns, despite their limited availability of land for expansion, their overall rate of population growth is even higher.

The direct consequences of this demographic pressure are relatively obvious. *Even without immigration*, the rate of natural increase of over 5% per year in all the Bedouin towns will mean that their respective population will have doubled by 2010. Since immigration 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, part of the consequence of high rates of natural increase is that families are very large with the average number of children being over eight per family. There is, therefore, a high rate of dependency on the working age population. Pressures on the educational system are enormous.

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<sup>7</sup> SYN, Tables X.4 and XII.1

<sup>8</sup> Eran Razin, *Fiscal Disparities between Arab and Jewish Local Authorities: Is the Gap Narrowing?* Policy Paper for The Florsheimer Institute for Policy Studies, Jerusalem, 1999.

## **The Employment Problem**

The Bedouin towns have virtually no economic base, so few jobs are provided locally. For the Bedouins to acquire jobs at the major employment nodes, such as Qiryat Gat, the Dead Sea Works and Beer Sheva, they need appropriate education and the means to get to work. The Katz report highlights educational shortcomings. As for transportation, until this year there was no public transportation into any of the Bedouin towns.

The consequences can be seen in the absence of Bedouin employment in the key nodes. A recent survey of industries in the Negev confirms that most of the larger, more successful firms, such as Motorola, Dell-Vishay, the Dead Sea conglomerate, and so forth, employ few if any Bedouins. (Monograph, Appendix Table 2.1). Bedouins held 2.5% of all the industrial jobs in the Negev in 1998. Our research discovered that there are at least several hundred Bedouins in the region with education in practical engineering and related fields, and there were 125 Bedouin graduates from Ben-Gurion University over the past decade, so that poor education does not provide a complete explanation.

## **Implications**

The major indisputable fact is that 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 that will be close to that of the city of Beer Sheva. 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.

Policy changes 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 will not work for many of the younger, more mobile Bedouins, and it will simply keep the 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 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.

## 2. ALTERNATIVE POLICY DIRECTIONS: SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section attempts to provide a framework for getting out of this morass. It attempts first to find out if there is potential for economic development in the urban community based on system-wide and individual urban opportunities.

### The Systemic Dimension

Urban centers operate within a complex system of spatial entities, involving other cities, as well as lower order, dependent towns and villages, and higher order, influential metropolitan areas and regions, and even nations. These units interact in a myriad of ways, positive and negative, so that the potentials and constraints facing any individual settlement are in important ways shaped by exogenous forces that are transmitted through systemic linkages. The smaller the unit, the greater the influence of exogenous forces. In simpler words, at any time, the nature of the systemic elements and their relationships determine in no small measure the viability of any individual urban center. Accounting for the nature of these interdependencies – what the relationships are and how they work – is essential if urban policy is to have any real world relevance. Strategic urban policy attempts to conserve resources and achieve overall efficiency by using these systemic relationships to create synergy and multiplier effects wherever possible.

However self-evident, such an understanding does not appear to inform the practical work of designing and expanding Israeli settlements. It is true for Tel Aviv and Jerusalem no less than the development towns in the Negev, and is just as true for the seven Bedouin towns, which are the subject of this paper. The development towns of the Negev provide the best-documented example of this fundamentally flawed policy.<sup>9</sup>

Turning to the seven Bedouin towns, it is difficult to discover even such minimal systemic rationales for their creation. To most disinterested observers, the first initiatives have been deemed to be serious failures.<sup>10</sup> 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.

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<sup>9</sup> For a lengthier analysis see Harvey Lithwick, Yehuda Gradus and Irwin Lithwick, "From Frontier to Periphery: The Development of Israel's Negev", in Y. Gradus and H. Lithwick, eds., *Frontiers in Regional Development*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, 1996, Chapter 7, esp. pp. 156-163.

<sup>10</sup> Avinoam Meir, *As Nomadism Ends: The Israeli Bedouin of the Negev*, 1997, Westview Press, Boulder Colorado, p. 97.

The major failure was a lack of an economic rationale for the towns. If they are to be bedroom communities, the corollary is that their labor force must be able to find jobs somewhere within commuting distance. But there are few jobs for this population anywhere in the region. Moreover, the size alone of the largest towns, Rahat (estimated to be over 30,000 in 2000) and Tel Sheva (13,000) are sufficient that neither can serve exclusively as a suburban residential area – size and complexity of their socio-demographic structure militate against that. An example of their inadequacy as urban places is that despite fairly large local consumer potential, neither city meets much of their domestic demand, as residents travel outside, to Beer Sheva and to the territories, to do their shopping.

Despite this situation, little has been done to adapt their status to systemic requirements. These two towns could conceivably play the role of service centers at least to their (Bedouin) hinterland, and to some modest extent they do. But the rural hinterland of the Bedouin towns consists of small, widely dispersed settlements based in large part on subsistence agriculture, providing low incomes and hence little effective service demand. Alternatively, efforts could have been made to link all these towns to each other to create a Bedouin urban subsystem with the two largest towns at the apex of the hierarchy. But most of the towns themselves are quite small and are widely dispersed and lack even the minimal level of endogenous economic activity to warrant other than the most modest of exchanges amongst themselves. Finally, they could have been linked to adjacent Jewish towns – Rahat to Lehavim; Tel Sheva and Segev Shalom to Omer and Beer Sheva; Hura and Laqiya to Metar, Arara to Dimona, and Kseifa to Arad. But Lehavim and Metar remain too small for most meaningful economic linkages, and Omer has pursued policies that have alienated rather than integrated Tel Sheva. So Beer Sheva is the only important if somewhat inaccessible focal point and to a very limited extent, it plays that role for employment and shopping, but not for most other economic linkages.

As a result the first task of a viable Bedouin urban policy is to situate the various units, and especially those being planned, within an appropriate system-based framework, in which the basis for their viability as other than marginalized pockets of poverty might be established. For each place, appropriate functions will determine and will in turn be shaped by location, size, and structure. No single model can be applied for all.

### **The Urban Development Dimension**

The second basic problem is that cities must be capable of development. By this we mean not simply growing – that is, expanding their scale – but fundamentally transforming their essential structure and hence character. Those transformations entail the accretion of new activities, more skilled workers and social relationships, which working together are capable of making the city increasingly complex, increasingly productive, increasingly stable, and increasingly capable of future progress.

Our principal thesis is that only authentic urban development can provide the potential for the future well being of its residents, and hence ought to be the overriding goal of urban policy. We stress potential, because we recognize that urban development without responsible public and private behavior can foster negative processes, such as environmental destruction and social inequities. Enhanced welfare is therefore not guaranteed. But without urban development, there is not even an opportunity to progress, whereas with it, the resources are generated that can help wise leaders forestall negative forces.

Planners will argue that development is indeed their concern, as evidenced by the assignment of industrial and commercial zones in their land use plans. And even the construction of warehouse space. But what specifically will take place in those zones, which firms will be attracted, and why they would move to these areas, are questions never asked and therefore never answered. A brief excursion through a large, new, but empty and now ramshackle industrial park in Mitzpe Ramon is silent witness to the dismal failure of the operative paradigm of urban policymaking. And this failure is repeated, if less dramatically, in virtually all the cities in the Negev. Amazingly, no lessons appear to have been learned.

What is most critical is that from the outset there must be a clearly articulated and long-term commitment to the success of the enterprise, to allow positive expectations to be formed, to attract entrepreneurial activity and to form a skilled labor force, all of which are essential to success. While there is arguably too much government intervention in Israel in a process that can succeed with modest incentives if properly structured, there is also little doubt that an urban development policy, *appropriately conceived*, can be of enormous help especially where major disadvantages exist.

Virtually none of the Bedouin towns has organized economic activity of any sort. The towns were formed and continue to grow because of major demographic pressure resulting from record birth rates and the immigration from rural areas in the Negev. But unlike youth in other towns in the Negev, this population has no outlet. Young Bedouins will not easily find work in the dynamic center of Israel and extended family ties make this sort of move more unattractive in any event. The towns have little to attract industry on their own. Until very recently, they had not even been granted the status of class A development zones for receiving tax relief for new industrial investments (under the Law for the Encouragement of Capital Investments), despite the fact that they are the poorest and most underdeveloped in the country. They are therefore unable to provide employment for their youth.

## **Is a Development-Oriented Urban System a Realistic Option for the Bedouin Towns?**

These two basic building blocks, *development of towns* as part of a *viable urban system*, must be dealt with simultaneously if we are to come up with a Bedouin urban policy that can “work”. It may be argued that since such a sophisticated approach does not inform Israeli urban policy in general, why should it be adopted when dealing with what is admittedly a very small component of urban society in this country? Our answer is that while the rest of Israeli society may be able to afford the luxury of making do with its many highly dysfunctional cities, the Bedouin community, with its obvious distress, cannot.

However, it is essential that any proposals be realistic within the context of national priorities, the preferences of the Bedouins themselves, and the capacity of the local communities to manage such a process. It is most likely that the government will not be able to provide the kinds of resources needed to both redress the massive distortions caused by past policies, and to enable this fragile community to achieve parity with its fellow citizens in the foreseeable future. And the Bedouin community has demonstrated internal division, making cooperative efforts rare and difficult. It is therefore particularly important that *strategic* urban policies be advanced that are able to utilize the modest resources that are made available most effectively. This requires that they provide effective incentives to encourage constructive action on the part of all involved, rather than relying on public funds alone, and that each initiative, insofar as is possible, be capable of inducing second and third round benefits and multiplier effects.

With improved transportation, and due recognition of the need for systemic linkages and a dynamic economic base, the existing towns could service a much larger internal population as well as their exploding peripheries. Several at least are of a size and situation that could, with appropriate policies, rapidly commence a process of economic transformation. Given limited resources, it would appear to make sense to focus initial efforts primarily on the more promising towns, which have the greatest opportunity from an early stage of transmitting some of their developmental dynamism to the other towns. For the latter, emphasis would be placed on strengthening linkages, and helping them to deliver lower order, less sophisticated services, at least in the near term. Such linkages would be based on specialization in certain areas of activity in each town, where comparative advantages can be found to achieve economies of scale and maximum strategic advantages. No less important is the building of strong trade linkages through enhanced transportation and communication ties.

However important it is to push for development of the Bedouin towns themselves, that is not enough. It is a necessary but not sufficient basis for their successful transformation. These towns will never be viable unless they are integrated into the development of the larger system of cities in the Negev. That means two things.

First, the Negev must be the locale of a major, national economic development initiative, and the focus must be Beer Sheva. For in the foreseeable future, the only way to generate economic development in the Negev is to make its dominant centers effective engines of development. Continuing to fragment initiatives, by placing a weak plant here and another there may appear to be politically savvy, but it precludes the creation of a critical mass at focal points that are essential for a true development thrust. Indeed, it merely ensures that these weak components in the Negev urban system drag the whole region down.

The latest effort to make the Negev's urban system viable, the Metropolitan Beer Sheva plan, did not provide a blueprint for restructuring the region's urban economic system, including the Bedouin towns. Rather, emphasis was given to the traditional planning activities, such as roads, housing developments, etc. More undifferentiated industry was projected, but why it would come was not researched. In that sense, it failed to make a radical departure into urban development policy. It deals with more and bigger, but not something fundamentally different. By 1998 Beer Sheva fell in city rankings by size in Israel, from fourth to fifth place, and within a few years it may rank as low as ninth if present trends continue. That is, unless a dramatic new developmental dynamic is fostered. And as its position erodes, Beer Sheva and with it the Negev will become increasingly politically marginal, with less and less ability to extract its share of national resources.

At present, most of what is being proposed lacks both strategic orientations and necessary public support. The university is advocating a hi-tech science park, which will, in the long run, add an important building block in the region's economy. In the short run, however, it will have little discernible effect on the overall economic base of the region, so that the Bedouin labor force cannot realize major gains from that initiative in the next decade or so. Indeed, our review of the preliminary plans unearthed no serious consideration of the role of the Bedouins.

It is therefore essential for the Bedouin towns' own self-interest to push very hard for this sort of development policy for the Beer Sheva Metropolitan region. While this appears to take us a long way from urban development for the Bedouin sector, we are convinced that in the end the Bedouins will advance only if the Negev advances. And that will happen only when those in charge get serious about the Negev.

Second, the Bedouin towns must also develop strong linkages with nearby Jewish towns and rural settlements, and most importantly with Beer Sheva. They must plug into the nascent high tech sector wherever possible, and must be active partners in the development of a region-wide tourism initiative. There are a number of unexplored opportunities for twinning similar sized communities to enable cooperative infrastructure development (sewage treatment plants,

recycling facilities) joint local tourism ventures, ambulance services, recreation programs, etc. The creation of informal ties can lead to a gradually deepening network of relationships that will, over time, extend into economic linkages.

Because of past history, there are strong barriers to building the sorts of interpersonal and intercommunal relationships that are essential for the Bedouins to be integrated into the larger community. Yet doing so is costly only in terms of the necessary time, initiative and good will. Without such integration, the Bedouin towns are destined to remain marginal entities, which, in a region that is marginal itself, is the worst of all possible worlds.

### **The Issue of Cost**

As is always the case, those responsible for the nation's finances will contend that such an initiative cannot be afforded at this time. Two basic points to the contrary must be made. The first is that the argument about timeliness is always raised in the case of the Bedouins and it is no longer credible. By any standard of justice and equity, the Bedouins as full citizens of Israel have a right to a quality of urban life equivalent to that of their fellow Jewish citizens.

The bill will be a large one, but as we have argued, much of it will of necessity go to financing the development of the Negev as a whole, which is long overdue. The costs also tend to be overstated, based as they are on the prevailing model of dependency, in which the patron state is expected to pay the entire cost. Hence a number of proposals argue for something like a Marshall Plan effort. Not surprisingly, and perhaps intentionally, they tend to fall on deaf ears. We strongly believe that the most effective policies are those that encourage citizens to act in their own self interest using as much of their own (in this case limited) financial and human resources as possible. Public decisions that eliminate artificial barriers, that encourage activities that in the end generate income and hence tax revenues, which encourage foreign capital inflows, and so forth are capable of effecting major changes at much lower budgetary cost.

We prefer wherever possible to advocate precisely those sorts of policies as a way to avoid scaring off the defenders of the public purse. Israel has not often been creative about such devices, but in recent years, when fiscal discipline has begun to reign, and private entrepreneurs have succeeded without state slush funds, their efficacy has been demonstrated. In the case of the Bedouins, who have been made even more dependent on state handouts than most, weaning them away will be more difficult, but we believe it is doable. We would go farther, and say it is essential, to reshape attitudes towards independence, risk taking and innovation that are critical to sustain the development of their economic base.

### **Management Capacity**



High quality managerial capacity is required to conceive, manage, evaluate and adjust such a complex initiative. Any effective policy will require the full involvement of Bedouin managers at all levels, and this will entail some displacement of Jewish officials in the field and at head offices. The time has come to involve Bedouins centrally in shaping their own future. Any initiative that fails to do so is not serious.

### **3. OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

We begin this discussion with two cautions. First, we are able to present herein only a summary of a very complex and lengthy analysis. Second, the prescriptions are far from complete. In the first place, a number of technical elements remain to be added to translate the strategic plan into a plan of action: individual project assessments, budgets, critical paths, etc. Also, an implementation strategy is required, that would include resolving matters of policy assignment, organizational reforms, project staff, and so forth.

We identify two distinct sets of issues that must comprise a strategic plan: sets of *preconditions* for the region generally and for the towns specifically; and essential *urban development* strategies for each of the towns, to be considered in turn.

Even in the absence of a fully articulated urban development program for the Bedouin towns collectively and individually, a number of preconditions must be met to ensure that virtually any such initiative can proceed and upon which it can build. In the case of the Bedouin towns, these preconditions are in any event required to meet pressing current needs, regardless of other developmental considerations. Moreover, they offer the possibility of relatively immediate benefits for only marginal additions to projects under way or being planned. In other words, the case for moving ahead immediately to establish or consolidate these preconditions is extremely strong. We identify below preconditions that are important for both these reasons. We begin with an analysis of general *regional preconditions*, and then we turn in the following section to specifically *urban preconditions*.

## Regional Preconditions

- Regional Transportation

The spatial, social, cultural, economic and political fragmentation of this region of some 500,000 persons continues to prevent the Negev from mobilizing its latent developmental potential. A region of this size should be an important contributor to the national economy. But fragmented into a number of dysfunctional towns and detached rural settlements, it remains a drag on the economy, kept in a state of impoverishment and dependency by a steady inflow of non-productive investments and personal transfers. *No other component of infrastructure can be as effective in integrating the region into a viable economic entity as a regional transportation network.* Among the transportation projects we advocate are interregional rail and road services, a modest international airport (at Nevatim) for cargo and charter flights, and an intraregional bus service that provides public transit into and through all the Bedouin towns.

- Communications

Communications is one area where current deficiencies can be translated into a distinct advantage. In the absence of sufficient reliable line-based telephone services, the Bedouin communities (including the more remote rural sectors) might be more effectively integrated into the modern economy of Israel via wireless communications. Wireless telephone service is already available in the community and will spread rapidly as costs continue to fall. Important new wireless services are already on the market, such as internet/e-mail, paging, faxing, etc. We believe that a low cost pilot project, in cooperation with a major innovative company in the field and in the Negev, such as Motorola, or newcomers like Nortel, Nokia or Ericsson, could provide benefits all around. The Bedouin community, including the non-urbanized, might well find new economic niches.

We are particularly enthusiastic about the role Bedouin women might be enabled to play, as the new technology can accommodate the preference of a large number of them to remain at home, while offering the potential to engage in rewarding tasks from their home. A successful weaving cooperative based in Laqiya could vastly improve its efficiency through such wireless linkages. The Italian Benetton model of decentralized production with exacting quality control via communication suddenly becomes highly relevant. One or more of the Bedouin towns could become Israel's call center facility (base for 1-800 numbers, for example), combining low cost labor with modern technology (c.f. the case of New Brunswick in Atlantic Canada). From the perspective of a firm like Motorola, success in enabling new opportunities for such a community would open the doors to the billions of persons in the third world for whom wireless communications will be essential if they are to advance. The technology could be

diffused almost immediately to the rest of the Middle East, which has communications problems very similar to those of the Bedouin towns.

- Energy

In the absence of abundant domestic fossil fuels, the cost of energy in Israel remains extremely high. That makes acquiring it a serious problem for Bedouins in particular, not only for domestic purposes, but also for any businesses they may wish to develop. We believe there is scope for important new technologies that provide low cost energy for the sorts of needs the Bedouin community at present has – cooking, heating and cooling, small scale industry, intensive (hot house) agriculture, local, small scale water supply desalination and recycling, etc.

The solar energy researchers at Ben-Gurion University's Desert Research Institute at Sde Boqer and innovative companies such as Ormat could, with modest public support, work towards practical solutions for this latent market. Japanese companies have developed batteries (or hybrid systems) for cars that appear to be competitive and are already on the market. Fuel cell technology is beginning to take off, as companies such as Ballard Power Systems Inc, United Technologies, Avista Labs and Fuel Cell Energy Co. all are competing to get to market with their diverse alternatives in the near future. An effort to adapt these new possibilities for local public transportation, farm vehicles, and the like would link the Bedouins to leading edge technological advances. Again, the pent-up demand in poorer countries where western appliances are neither affordable nor appropriate appears to be unlimited – and an initiative to develop a Bedouin model of alternative (and clean) energy holds out great promise.

- Investing in Human Capital

Creating jobs for Bedouins, which we discuss more fully below, is clearly *the* urban development priority, but in itself provides only one component of an employment solution. The other immediate precondition is to create a literate and disciplined work force that can not only do the jobs, but do them well and productively so as to ensure the future of the Bedouin economy and hence its own future.

For Bedouin development to become a reality, a major initiative in education for the Bedouin sector is required without further delay. It is in everyone's interest that Bedouin society be strengthened to better cope with the challenges of modernization and urbanization. The many studies and reports on Bedouin education essentially agree on what has to be done, ranging from a dramatic increase in the number of trained teachers to improving the qualifications of existing teachers, upgrading facilities and working to reduce dropouts. There is no reason to delay getting on with this task. In addition to formal education, *training programs* are required to provide on-the-job practical skills for the proposed economic base.

- The Other Side of the Coin: Creating Jobs

A word of caution is required, however. Many well-meaning advocates of improving the lot of Bedouins, from within as well as outside the community, advocate massive investment in education as the sole human resource strategy. Without simultaneously putting in place a developmentally oriented economic strategy, this solution will in short order make matters worse, as it will add to the already large and rapidly growing number of graduates who are unable to find suitable work. Education raises expectations, and ensuring that they can realistically be met is of utmost importance to a serious development strategy. A targeted and integrated urban development strategy is essential to bring the supply of and the demand for labor into better balance.

- Mobilization of Financial Capital

One of the major reasons that there are insufficient jobs is that Negev businesses in general, and Bedouin businesses in particular have great difficulty raising investment funds. We would encourage the launching of a Bedouin Development Bank, modeled after similar banks in the Third World. It would be appropriate to seek assistance in the design and launch of such a facility from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. By guaranteeing loans, the Government of Israel could, at low cost, do for the Bedouin community what the United States did for Israel during the early 1990s. The purpose would be to attract savings from the community, however modest they may be to start with, and provide funding to small and middle-sized enterprises. This category of firm has been among the fastest growing everywhere, and tends to be labor intensive, so that the employment impact per dollar invested is maximized.

- Basic Health and Social Services

Our analysis confirms the current services deficiencies, reported upon time and again by official agencies and by objective researchers.<sup>11</sup> Again, on purely humanitarian and moral grounds, national service standards must be met for the Bedouin community as well, and immediately. Moreover, these services are essential for the building of a healthy, secure community, which can contribute to expanding, rather than drawing down, society's resources as its economy develops. Issues about the delivery of these services, to ensure high quality, invariably encounter the shortage of Bedouin professionals in this field. The obvious lesson is that investments in training more Bedouin professionals are of the highest priority. Ben-Gurion University's program to bring Bedouin women into the university framework has been uniquely successful, and is already beginning to fill this gap. Much more effort is required, however, with particular

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<sup>11</sup> Tovi Fenster, *Development Plan for Bedouin Settlement in the Negev*, for the Ministry of Housing, December 1995.

emphasis on the new growth fields of engineering, science, computer programming, biology, etc.

### **Urban Preconditions**

In this section, we turn to more purely local preconditions that are more narrowly conceived as serving an urban development strategy.

- **Equal Standards for Urban Infrastructure**

Cities are either productive or unproductive in large measure as a function of the efficacy of their internal physical infrastructure. We have already established that, due to inequities in funding, the Bedouin towns have severe deficiencies in virtually all aspects of their infrastructure, including paved roads, sidewalks, sewers, and public transportation into the heart of the community. The result is that many firms find the Bedouin towns incapable of meeting their infrastructure requirements, and are obliged to locate elsewhere. Similarly, educated young Bedouin couples who are tomorrow's leaders often find the conditions of public spaces unacceptable and choose to live elsewhere. Therefore, improving this urban infrastructure is clearly an immediate requirement.

Moreover, new infrastructure is required to meet needs other than the purely socio-demographic. It must serve as an incentive to attract those kinds of transformational activities upon which the city's economic development will be based. If the base is to be processing of agricultural/livestock products, then the infrastructure must be designed to deal with the traffic, environmental, water and sewage, and power needs of those activities. The activity would tend to locate at the edge of town. If the base is to be institutional (academic-health-governance), then a very different infrastructure is required. This activity would tend to locate in pleasantly landscaped office parks with secure parking and located in the center of town. It is inappropriate for the various government ministries to use boiler plate plans for infrastructure that completely disregard the unique nature of Bedouin settlements in general, and the potential economic role of each of the towns in particular.

- **Providing for Urban Expansion**

Several of the Bedouin towns have the capacity to expand, but lack the land to do so, owned as it is by the state or by kibbutzim or other interests. Just as private and/or public lands have been acquired by the JNF, the Jewish Agency and the Israel Lands Administration to enable Jewish towns and cities to expand (hopefully) to serve the greater good, so land must be made available to allow the Bedouin towns to grow normally and healthily.

- Housing

Although modest transfers of funds to families moving into the towns were approved by the government, in fact even these funds were sometimes withheld. While such promised funds must be released, we would not advocate major increases in such allocations if they are at the expense of other developmental projects. If there are very poor persons who must be accommodated, then public housing or shell housing (sweat equity) initiatives might be considered. However, if we are to help this community become more self-sufficient, those resources are better applied to creating jobs and generating earned income, which can then be spent as seen fit to enhance the welfare of the individual and his family with minimal bureaucratic control. We believe that only such an orientation can lead to the creation of suitable living arrangements for a community with distinctive needs and tastes in housing. Regrettably, in the past and in most situations, housing has been given planning priority. This distorts and compromises the urban development process as most communities have discovered. Other than the elderly and the infirm, well-housed residents will not stay if there are no jobs.

- External Land

The issue of land ownership outside the towns remains a thorn, and perhaps the major thorn, in relations between the Bedouins and the state. It has been extensively studied, and continues to defy easy solutions. We have avoided this issue for two reasons. First, it is not amenable to a conceptual solution but must be bargained out, and second, as we noted earlier, a very reasonable approach has been proposed by the former minister responsible for Bedouin affairs, Haim Oron. He advocated a clear separation between the ownership and the service provision issues. By tying the two together, that is, refusing to provide services until the land issue is resolved (to their satisfaction), the government authorities have deprived the Bedouins of some of their basic rights. Since our proposed development strategy is focused on the issue of service provision, it need not await the resolution of the land title issue to begin implementing Oron's approach.

- Investing in Community

All communities in Israel should be provided with at least basic amenities. And they should be funded on an equitable basis, guaranteed via complete transparency. It has been long known that Bedouin towns receive much lower levels of public transfers than comparable Jewish and Arab towns. Their ongoing complaints about inequities seem to fall on deaf ears. One result is that the Bedouin towns are lacking in recreational, cultural and sports facilities that are most urgently required.

In Table 4 we summarize the various components of infrastructure improvement that we are advocating. We provide in the table, a suggested assignment of responsibilities and our initial expectations about the order of magnitude of the costs that will be entailed:

**Table 4**  
**Infrastructure Components of an Urban Development Strategy**

	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Cost Category</u>
<b>REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE</b>			
<b>Transport</b>			
<u>Inter-regional</u>			
Rail	A	Gov	Modest
Trans Israel Highway	C	Gov/Priv	High
Airport Nevatim	A	Gov/Priv	High
<u>Intra-regional</u>			
Immediate: BTC	A	Priv/Subsid	Low
Interim: Busways + Rail	B	Gov	Modest
Longer Term: HSCN	C	Gov (BOT)	Modest
<b>Communications</b>			
Wireless Applications	B	Gov/Priv	Low
Call Center	A	Priv	Low
<b>Energy</b>			
Alternatives Research	B	Gov/Priv/Res	Low
<b>Human Capital</b>			
Formal Education - Katz Report	A	Gov	High
Informal Ed. - Colleges	A	Gov	Modest
- Distance Learning	B	Gov/Uni	Modest
<b>Financial Capital</b>			
Create a Bedouin Development Bank	B	Gov/Intl/Priv	Low
<b>Human and Social Services</b>			
Equal Standards	A	Gov	Modest
Investment in Professionals	A	Gov/Uni	Low
<b>URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE</b>			
Equal Standards	B	Gov	Modest
Infrastructure for Development	A	Gov	Modest
Land for Expansion	A	ILA/Courts	Low
Housing	C	Gov/Priv	Low
Community Facilities	B	Gov/Local	Low

Notes: Priority A is highest priority. Assignments to Gov (Government of Israel); Priv (Private Agents); Res (Research Bodies); Uni (Universities); Intl (International); Local (Local Governments).



## **Elements of an Urban Development Strategy**

The Bedouin community will be seriously short-changed if all it receives is the correction of some egregious and long-standing grievances. That is a necessary, but not sufficient result. Israel has a historical imperative and a unique opportunity to make a fundamental change for the Bedouin population by creating from their cities and towns a system of settlements that are instruments of creative, long term improvement, rather than ghettos for retardation, division and violence. Mindful of that challenge, the following section spells out the proposed components of an explicit urban development strategy.

The crucial requirement is to find a package of elements that through their scope and positive interaction will be sufficiently powerful to enable true economic development to occur. The belief that all towns can be turned around at once may appear to be appropriately aggressive, but may be fiscally and politically naive. However, within a systemic framework, a major, near term turnaround for one or two lead towns, strongly linked to the others, can produce important secondary effects that will ripple throughout the Bedouin urban community. Further strategic advantage will result from improvements throughout the rest of the urban system designed to strengthen linkages and these will in turn accelerate the spread of dynamic forces.

By emphasizing the Bedouin urban system, we do not suggest that some sort of Bedouin autarky is either feasible or desirable. On the contrary, most of the economic development in the Bedouin towns will be stimulated by the larger regional economy. The following constitutes an examination of the various spatial-systemic components of an urban development strategy.

- **Rahat's Role: An Administrative Pole**

Despite its dominant size, being home to more than half of the urbanized Bedouin population, Rahat is unlikely to be able to support a major industrial economic base. Its location at the northwestern periphery of the area of Bedouin settlement makes it too remote from the other towns, Bedouin as well as Jewish. And it will have no air link and possibly no rail link as well. In addition, it has fewer than 18% of its labor force working in industry. Therefore, the challenge is to find an alternative developmental role for this city that is less dependent on traditional locational factors.

Rahat could play a more limited, more inward looking role in which systemic linkages are less important, such as a tourist center. Its location, close to the main North-South highway (#40) where it intersects the Arad road (#31), places it at the gateway to the entire Negev. This would seem to be ideal, but the routing of the Trans-Israel Highway (Route #6) will, when completed over the next decade, tend to divert a portion of the traffic away from Rahat. It would be of inestimable

assistance to Rahat's development if the alignment of the proposed Route #6 were modified to come closer to the town, with an interchange nearby. Such a change would require an alteration of highway construction plans. More likely, no change will be made and Rahat's location, which may have been one of the factors contributing to its past rapid growth, will become relatively less advantageous, and reduce thereby its commercial potential.

What alternatives can be found to initiate a development process for Rahat? Most promising appears to be the focusing of efforts on its development as an *administrative* pole. For such a role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a city need not be spatially proximate to other components of the system. Communications offer an excellent substitute to many direct, interpersonal (face-to-face) and hence transportation-based linkages in these essentially service fields. The modern move towards devolution facilitates this trend. Rahat's size ensures that it has a core internal market and labor supply for providing administrative services. Already it has over 1200 workers in business and professional services. In brief we envision the following service functions as the core of its economy:

- a *Bedouin community college*
- a *second regional hospital*,
- head offices of the proposed *Bedouin Urban Development Authority* (BUDA), discussed below
- offices of *national and regional government agencies*
- head office of the *Bedouin Development Bank*

Rahat itself must very early on begin to develop commercial complements to its administrative base or it will stagnate. Professional services such as those of lawyers, architects, accountants, engineers, and so forth could be accommodated in a centrally located, imaginatively conceived business center. These services would then serve to attract new businesses to the community. And the current modest but important cluster of economic activities should be strengthened.

- Tel Sheva's Role: An Economic Pole

The next largest town is Tel Sheva, at about one-third Rahat's population, but it has the critical commercial advantage of greater centrality of location vis-à-vis other Bedouin settlements, and significantly greater proximity to Beer Sheva. What is required is a study of the comparative advantages in Tel Sheva as well as the other towns in the various sectors of the regional economy.

The following is a list of essential components of a business framework:

- *An industrial park* emphasizing modern, rather than traditional industries
  - *A business incubator* (hamama) facility
  - *An entrepreneurial training* program in connection with the Omer Industrial Park
  - *An industrial job training center* for youth
  - *A mentoring* program
- **Beyond the Pole: The Other Bedouin Towns**

For each of the other towns, its relative advantages must be identified, and appropriate linkages forged with external industries. We have space to highlight here the most important initial activities that they might pursue to begin the process of transforming their respective economies in a strategic fashion.

A key national initiative that could benefit many of the smaller Bedouin towns is the development of Nevatim airport as a civilian facility for cargo and charter flights. If it proceeds, proximate towns (Kseifa, Arara) could engage in produce processing and packing while others could specialize in servicing the many vehicles that would be required for handling cargo and for transporting charter tourists. These in turn could lead, over time, to related ventures, in shipping in the one case, and to private car, bus and truck repairs in the other. The development of the airport site itself, and the provision of services for the facility once completed ought to include Bedouin workers.

In addition, locational circumstances offer the towns the possibility to be increasingly linked not only to Beer Sheva and other Bedouin towns, but to Jewish cities as well. These cities can be important subregional linkages for a few of them, such as Arara to Dimona, and Kseifa to Arad. Both cities have modest economic structures, but a study of their potential reveals opportunities for these towns that must be systematically exploited. Arara should be able to benefit from its proximity to the large and successful Dell-Vishay plant in Dimona, and its proximity to the Dead Sea Industries, the Rotem Plain Industries, the Temed Hi-Tech Industrial Park should enable it to find niches in related fields. Kseifa should target firms such as Motorola, and the tourist sector of Arad and especially the rapidly growing Dead Sea area, around which to construct its appropriate economic base.

Hura and Laqiya are close to Metar, which is at the moment only a bedroom community, but which has plans to develop a potentially valuable commercial-industrial site at Shoqet junction. Scope exists to create a unique joint venture, possibly also including the nearby kibbutzim of Lahav and Keramim. The rapid growth of Metar as well as Lehavim and Omer offers unique opportunities in the field of construction. To date, much of the industry is dominated by Jewish

developers who use largely low-paid, unskilled workers from abroad and from the territories to build houses of inferior quality. Several construction firms that are modeled on Western practices, using skilled workers who are well paid to produce quality products may find a market in these affluent suburbs. A cooperative arrangement between Bedouin and Jewish partners (possibly a kibbutz), with profit sharing schemes to encourage employment stability and responsibility, might offer one vehicle along these lines

Segev Shalom is close to Beer Sheva, and will naturally wish to build ties there. It is also closest to the heavy industry site at Ramat Hovav, with which it already has some linkages. Its large agricultural hinterland will make agribusiness a very likely core of its economy. Indeed, we propose that a serious experimental station for modern Bedouin agriculture be located there, and that associated with it, a high school curriculum teaching modern agricultural methods to both urban and rural Bedouin youth be developed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The above constitutes the bare bones of our analysis and of our proposed strategic approach to developing the Bedouin urban sector that appears to offer a reasonable chance to make fundamental and effective changes to the no-win situation in which it now exists. We have provided a conceptual rationale for the more important steps that must be taken but are not in any position to provide detailed blueprints. Moving on to that stage requires first and foremost an extensive consultation process to ensure that the concepts we are advancing are both sound and acceptable. It then requires the creation of an implementation system that is capable of managing what will be a most challenging process. Such a system would have, as *its* mandate, the studying of the feasibility of the various elements in such a strategic plan. These matters are discussed at length in both the monograph and in the final report of the overall study.