

Renaming space and reshaping identities: The case of the Bedouin town of Hura in Israel¹

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ABSTRACT

By exploring several layers of spatiality in the Bedouin town of Hura, this paper illuminates the process of constructing place and identities in the Bedouin community in the Negev. For this purpose we integrate two central themes in human geography—place naming and sense of place. We begin by locating these two theoretical issues in the experiential context of the Bedouins as a multi-marginalized displaced minority. In the empirical stage, we present three spaces of place naming in the town: institutional, residential and economic. We then discuss the “sense of place naming,” that is, we interpret the cultural process which underlies the mechanisms of constructing spatial meanings and representations in Hura. Under harsh and hastened urbanization, urbanized Bedouins seem to prefer two basic fields of associations as a new indoctrination tool to their spaces. First and foremost is a “powerful Islam,” which dominates institutional and residential spaces. The second is the Israeli-Western-capitalistic inclination, which dominates the economic-business arena. After a long period of non-naming occurrences, these new and ambivalent naming trends suggest that positive bonds to local space have developed among some residents of Hura. However, two major worlds of meaning which prevailed in Bedouin spatiality in their more nomadic phases in the past—tribal-kinship and ecological-natural—are excluded from their contemporary new representation, indicating new urban Islamic non-tribal culture ideals and identity aspirations.

Introduction

Coercive settlement of pastoralists in rural and urban communities by modern states has been a major concern in recent decades (Khazanov, 1994). Settling processes, as a multi-dimensional transformation, raise some questions about the new spatiality of pastoralists in these new settings, such as how they develop a *sense of place* and reconstruct their space, and what mechanisms reconcile this space with their inherent sociopolitical territorial structures and cultural codes. One of the possible

mechanisms in such processes is naming and renaming of space, producing an “archeology of meanings” whereby “The names of locations within areas record the forms of human experience that have occurred within them...” (Stewart and Strathern, 2003:6). Given that pastoralists represent one of the most primary phases of human spatiality, these questions have received very little attention. In particular, studies of sedentarization have largely disregarded spatio-consciousness implications of changes in pastoral mechanisms of constructing space and place.

Hura was established in the late 1980s by the State of Israel in the northern Negev. To date, those two thirds of the designated population who have moved to the town have experienced various processes that inhibit the emergence of attachment to the place. In this paper we explore spatial naming in Hura as a mechanism through which the Bedouins mitigate various conflicts in search of a positive sense of place. We begin with a theoretical discussion of naming places, followed by a contextualization of our case study within recent Bedouin spatial history, the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict and place-naming politics in Israel. In the main analysis we present as raw data the process of naming town space. Finally we analyze the major social, political, cultural and historical dimensions through which this process can be understood and further studied.

Understanding these processes can contribute to further theoretical understanding of the issue of sense of place in human geography, as well as how this can be interpreted in development programs and planning for indigenous peoples. Furthermore, analyzing place naming among this ex-pastoral nomadic indigenous group may highlight cultural and political processes as they sedentarize and urbanize, as well as the emergent spatiality under conditions of marginality and resistance.

Sense of place and naming place

The issue of place names is related to that of “sense of place,” which has become a super-term hosting the entire complex of feelings and perceptions that are involved in the interactions of human beings with their space (Entrikin, 1991; Lobo, 2004; Low and Altman, 1992; Relph, 1976; Salvesen, 2002; Tuan, 1979). Viewed broadly, naming a place is a necessity without which its proper construction and human existence in it would be vague (Casey, 1993). The underlying assumption is that once a piece of space is named, it becomes a meaningful “place,” as it expropriates space from its uniformity, anonymity and neutrality. Language thus recreates place (Tuan, 1991); it loads space with extensive social and cultural meanings and deploys a web of networks of meanings over it. These reflect inner thoughts associated with the place, feelings and emotions of owning it and belonging to it, and even wider and fundamental ideologies about it (Relph, 1976).

Place names connect people to space at all levels—from the subjective-intimate to the collective and political. Two major perspectives have been adopted to examine this existential process. The first, the ethnographic-cultural approach, concerns naming space among indigenous peoples, first nations and nature cultures. The naming of a site among them implies its existential significance, whether for improving spatial orientation (Cassidy, 1984), organization of land and territory (Barleant-Schiller, 1991), access to physical resources or pursuing rituals. Studies on this indigenous naming process by geographers and anthropologists attempt to expose these groups' patterns of attachment to their space, and interpret them primarily through their practical and ritual-spiritual experiencing of their environment. Understanding these naming processes exposes the cultural codes of spatial organization and thus adds a significant layer to the complex of unique cultural perceptions, values, customs and *genre de vie* of these peoples (Basso, 1984, 1996; Jett, 1997).

A second major perspective in studying place names, originating mostly from political and historical geography, is political. It focuses on the interactions between political processes, space and landscape. Place names are found to reflect political, religious and social symbols that function as “warehouses of meanings” (Geertz, 1973). They embody ideals and establish collective consciousness and identity that serve political and religious institutions (Cohen and Kliot, 1992). Moreover, renaming a place is capable of eradicating its past meanings by imposing new ones that may originate from a mythical past or an anticipated future (Peterson, 1977; Tuan, 1991). Obviously, contested spaces are subject to a harsher political naming process.

The boundaries between these two perspectives on place naming have recently been crossed. Studies highlight the political perspective and the “right for place naming” of indigenous, migrant and ethnic groups (Alderman, 2000; Hay, Hughes and Tutton, 2004; Nash, 1999). Place naming is increasingly recognized as a vehicle in sociopolitical reconstruction of space. It is viewed as part of establishing a legitimized hegemonic social order and delegitimizing various others (ethnic, racial, gender minorities). At the same time, these groups have been awakening to resist this form of hegemony through alternative place naming, thus exposing the issue of power relations hidden in place names (Berg and Kearns, 1996). Critical research suggests a new reading of space that also exposes the poetic geography of names (Darzia, 1993). That is, the imagined and interpretative context of place naming is revealed, such as in yearnings of migrants or refugees for their homeland. All these socioethnic categories well conform to the case of the Bedouins in Israel.

Bedouin settlement: Historical contexts

An understanding of Bedouin spatiality is rooted primarily in their de facto control of the territories in the Negev under the weak Ottoman Empire up to the late nineteenth century (Kressel, 2003). The subsequent immigration of landless *fellaheen* (farmers) enhanced the agricultural economic value of pastoral lands, the social status of the Bedouins as their owners and their process of sedentarization (Ben-David and Gonen, 2001; Meir, 1997). However, the 1948 War of Independence of Israel undermined the emergent Bedouin settlement structure entirely, with considerable cross-border flight and expulsion and subsequent relocation of the remaining 11,000 Bedouins into an enclosure (the *seig*). Until 1966 this area was militarily administered by the State of Israel, with heavy mobility restrictions, thus destroying the Bedouins' historical hegemony in the Negev (Meir, 1999; Yiftachel, 2006). These harsh events, shared by other Arab groups in Palestine as well, are referred to by the Palestinians as the *Nakba* (catastrophe, disaster), a rhetoric infiltrating Negev Bedouin discourse in recent years as an empowering extroversion of the nationalistic-Palestinian component of their identity formation (Yona, Abu-Saad and Kaplan, 2004).

Thus, since 1948 the struggle for control over land and other territorial, material and symbolic resources stands at the root of the tense relationships between the Arab-Palestinian minority (Bedouins included) and the state. Barring the return of uprooted Bedouins to their territories, legal determination of Bedouin lands as *mawaf*² and their massive nationalization by the state (Kedar, 2001; Meir, 2006) inverted many of the previous "masters of the desert" into marginalized landless and resourceless internal refugees. Referring to them as intruders on state land, the state denied state-supported development of infrastructure and services from their squatter villages in the *seig*. Initial provision of these public goods began only after 1966 with the lifting of the military administration and state initiation of a semi-urban system of townships. Up to the late 1980s, seven towns, planned as semi-suburbs, were built for the Bedouins. While access to educational and medical services thus improved, farming and industrial opportunities were not offered there, further downgrading Bedouins socioeconomically into a proletariat. Half of the Bedouin population, primarily previous landowners, preferred to remain in their villages to protect their ownership claims over their historical territories (Ben-David, 2004), relying on their traditional tribal law and their power of holding. In the deep land dispute with the state, each side has been anchoring its claims in an entirely different interpretation of the basis of Bedouin spatiality (Meir, Forthcoming).

The principle of "seven towns" served the needs of the state rather than those of the Bedouins. By separating them from the Jewish settlements, building few places of residence, and exerting pressure on the Bedouins to relocate again, the state sought to maximize its territorial control in order to meet the targets of its Zionist Project (new Jewish settlements, military zones, afforestation and natural reserves).

Yiftachel (2006) framed this process within the ethnocratic context of the State of Israel. The state imposed many hardships on the Bedouins, thus enhancing their sense of deprivation, discrimination and alienation. It also ignored the symbolic needs of its Arab minority, Bedouins included. Memories of their lost private and national home, difficulties integrating internal refugees within Arab communities that remained intact, and efforts to erase the memory of uprootedness by state indoctrination mechanisms caused deep feelings of uprootedness and placelessness among them (Kassem, 2006; Mahmud, 1994). These emotions, in turn, encouraged attempts for insurgent and informal establishment of memorial sites or sites of belonging. They also enhanced trends of Islamization and Palestinization in the identity formation of the Bedouins (Hujeirat, 2003; Yona et al., 2004), which were already growing due to spatial social and economic proximity to the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Political place naming in Israel

Political place naming in Israel has been studied extensively from the instrumental perspective adopted by the Jewish Zionist Movement to reestablish the attachment of the Israeli “new Jews” to their new-old *moledet* (homeland), Tzion (Zion), and Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel) and to appropriate space for Zionist purposes (e.g., Cohen and Kliot, 1992; Katz, 1998). In contrast, Arab place naming as a political process has received little attention. In common with Jewish processes, this issue assumes a substantial role in the national-political struggle over spatial interpretation and the fixation of the “true” geographical memory. Various organizations are active in enlivening the pre-1948 map of Arab villages by restoring names of places destroyed during the *Nakba*,³ pursuing it by a map of their own which ignores Jewish existence in Israel and challenges the Zionist map (Cohen and Kliot, 1992; Rubinstein, 1990). Studying uprooted Arab women, Kassem (2006) claims that by preserving pre-1948 place names in their daily language, they articulate their resistance to Zionist discourse. Similarly, Arabs in mixed towns protested in 2006 against Jewish-Zionist naming of their neighborhoods and streets, demanding participation in this process to guarantee proper representation of their unique identity.⁴

Research on Negev Bedouin place naming is not much different. An exception is a study by Bailey (1976), who examined place naming among the Sinai Bedouins, describing their close association with environmental pastoral resources, particularly pasture and water, as well as some topographical features and wildlife. We refer to this as an environmentalized place naming.

In contrast, in a recent study on the Bedouins’ struggle for state recognition in their unrecognized settlements, Meir (2003, 2005) describes a tactic they adopted of enlivening place names that are argued to be the historical place names of Bedouin

tribes, sub-tribes or families. Similar to other basic resources, place names and naming have thus become another scarce symbolic resource within the tense negotiation between the state and the Bedouins. We refer to this as collateralized, socialized and politicized naming processes. The nature of these cases can serve as the basis for understanding place naming among the Bedouins.

Methodology

Hura was planned and established in the late 1980s to absorb several unrecognized villages and hamlets. Its target population (~14,000) was to originate from many tribal and agnatic groups that are highly variegated socially, culturally and economically. Actually, its population is now only ~11,000, the rest remaining in their pre-1948 villages or in the places that were given to them by the state in the 1950s. The town is divided into nine neighborhoods, each at a different stage of development and housing.

While Hura represents all ill products of historical governmental Bedouin policy regarding land, infrastructure, housing and development resources, its choice for this study lies in its uniqueness among Bedouin towns. That uniqueness lies first and foremost in having a central group which is historically of genuine noble Bedouin social lineage and which is relatively more educated and developed. This group was exceptional also in supporting the establishment of the town and in its longstanding active participation in its municipal affairs. Furthermore, land claims within Hura are relatively rare, facilitating the development of internal town spaces in the best public interest. Hura is unique also in its stable political structure, led by an Islamic Movement-affiliated municipal party. All these have awarded it a highly esteemed image. Thus, an examination of place naming can be pursued relatively independent of the heavy screening generated by the deep deprivation and underdevelopment generally common of Bedouin society.

This study was conducted using a phenomenological-qualitative methodology. Data were collected through a survey of all business units in Hura and their names, along with data on religious and educational institutes from official town sources and archives. A participant observer method was employed with respect to advanced stages of activities of Hura's Neighborhood and Street Names Committee (NSNC), the results of which were publicized in winter 2007. Finally in-depth interviews were conducted with officials in the municipality, the educational system and committee members as well as with lay inhabitants of Hura. Data were then analyzed and interpreted for their social, cultural and linguistic meanings.⁵

Naming Hura

Four different areas of naming and renaming in Hura are examined here: naming the town itself, and naming/renaming its institutional, business and residential spaces.

Naming the town

The term “town” (Hebrew: *a'yarah*, plural *a'yarot*) was attached by the state to the seven planned settlements (“Bedouin towns”), uniquely distinguishing them within Israeli geographical semantics. Its meaning is not neutral, as it underlies the Israeli establishment’s desire to render Bedouin communities an urban nature under the “Bedouin modernization through urbanization” project (Meir, 1999). It is noteworthy that the only settlement type in Israel to share this term with Bedouin settlements is the “development town” (Hebrew: *a'yarat pitu'ah*). Both categories are consistently situated in the lowest ranks of standard of living indices in Israel.⁶ In Hura, however, the term “town” has been omitted by its inhabitants, who say “I am living in Hura” in most cases, or “I am living in Hura village,” if the inquirer insists on clarifying the settlement type (Hebrew: *kfar Hura*; Arabic: *qariat Hura*).

The name “Hura” was determined by the state authorities. It originated in the pre-1948 name of the region and was taken from the local archeological site of Khirbat Hor or Tal Hor. The verbal meanings of Hor and Hura are not unequivocal, although they carry positive connotations implying eye-beautiful, a beautifully eyed woman, etc.⁷ (Sharoni, 1995). An attempt at the name Hawara (of the same radical) was ruled out flatly by representatives of the future inhabitants, fearing their place would be mistaken with the Palestinian village near Nablus in the West Bank (K. Abu al-Qia'an, local council spokesman, 2007, personal communication). The process of naming the town as Hura was successful and penetrated unopposed into the local daily jargon, probably as it represented safe continuity, which is highly crucial during far-reaching spatial transformations.⁸

Naming institutional space

By institutional space, we mean all public and private institutions, such as schools, kindergartens and mosques, that provide social and cultural services to various population groups. As primarily urban constructs, these institutions were relatively uncommon among the pre-urban ex-nomadic Bedouins.

Naming schools and kindergartens

The few schools that existed before the establishment of Hura were named after the dominant local tribe. For example, al-Afenish School and al-A'tawna School were located in their respective tribal places and territories, built as temporary soft structures. With the establishment of Hura, they were not abolished but supplemented with new permanent hard-structure buildings in situ, as well as new structures for kindergartens and new schools built within town. However, under the influence of state authorities, who wished for social inter-tribal integration within town, tribal affiliation and identity were replaced by neutral, technical and all-encompassing urban names, such as Hura School, Hura Elementary A and Hura Elementary B, common elsewhere in Israel.

Recently, several principals have begun renaming their schools. For example, al-Biader School (lit. granary) is the name of a new elementary school established in the early 2000s; al-Majd School (lit. glory, splendor) is the name of the elementary school in the civic center established just recently. In contrast, the al-A'tawna Elementary School in the oldest neighborhood retained its traditional tribal name.

There are two high schools: al-Nur Comprehensive (lit. light) and Rabin A'mal⁹ Comprehensive. The latter was established in the mid-1990s when the town was still administered by a committee appointed by the Ministry of Interior and composed of state officials and local representatives. The name it gave to the school commemorates the assassinated Prime Minister Izthak Rabin. Renaming of streets, squares and institutions after Rabin has been very common in Israel in the recent decade. Among the Bedouins, however, this is not self-evident:

They chose this name thinking it would bring in funds, but funds were made available only for the name sign at the entrance to the building, a few thousands shekels, that's nothing.... This name does not originate in our culture; in my opinion it should be replaced (A. Abu-al Qia'an, manager of the Community Center, 2005, personal communication).

The speaker, a prominent figure in Hura's leadership, looks upon this not as an expression of sympathy with the historical national figure and his legacy, but rather as a failed attempt to raise funds, explaining this name as an instrumental choice of the then externally appointed Jewish mayor.

There are two systems of kindergartens in Hura. The public municipal system has 39 kindergartens, only 17 of which have names. The second is a new system owned and run by a civil association for children who live in the vicinity of Hura; all six kindergartens have names.¹⁰ All kindergarten names can be classified by types of representations:

- Botanical nature (flowers): al-Narges (narcissus), al-Wurud (roses);

- Hope for change and a better future: al-Nuar (full of light); al-Salam (peace), al-Šuruk (sunrise) and al-Amal (hope);
- Traditional cultural assets: al-Hikmah (wisdom), al-Šuala (flame);
- Place names: Names of the unrecognized villages A'tir and Um al-Hiran were given to two of the association's kindergartens. These kindergartens are located in a residential house within Hura. In contrast to the others, whose names do not protrude or are not posted at all, the names of these two kindergartens are posted proudly (see Figure 1). They represent their uniqueness and their spatial attachment to their original territory, as well as political protest, restating the issue of the unrecognized settlements.

Figure 1: Um al-Hiran kindergarten, whose name serves as a protest against state policy of non-recognition of the majority of Bedouin villages



In setting up kindergarten names, the coordinator of the association, who was also among the leaders in setting the optimistic symbolism latent in most of these names, explained: “We want change ... the purpose is for the next generation to be more successful and the citizens to have light and recognition” (R. Abu al-Qia'an, coordinator of the association's kindergartens in Hura, 2006, personal communication).

The essence of the renaming process as transpiring from this data is the change from tribal naming to arbitrary neutral naming (mostly conjoining the town's name), and recently, further to cultural and political values and religious content capable of blurring tribal boundaries. The present educational and municipal leadership has

been leading this trend, rejecting meanings and representations imposed externally by the state.

Naming mosques

Mosques, even more than schools, have been novel to the Bedouins, as under nomadic pastoralism, congregation for daily prayer was impossible due to their low-density spatial genre de vie. Urbanization in high-density permanent places facilitated prayer congregation in sufficient numbers to afford building mosques as private ventures.

All neighborhood inhabitants, often also from adjacent neighborhoods, have participated in fundraising for building and running the neighborhood mosques. Establishing a mosque is one of the very few events in Bedouin's public life that can mobilize wide local communal forces from different neighborhoods and opponent groups. In Bedouin eyes, this voluntary community spirit and action is unusual in town life. Unlike other components of urban life, the mosque is not necessarily an exclusive neighborhood property, as all Muslims are most welcome in all mosques. Islam is thus approaching its pious Bedouins through pious comradeship, bypassing tribal-family networks where spatial group seclusion is traditionally highly immanent. Yet, there is considerable silent competition between groups and neighborhoods over their mosque's luxury and splendor, and higher muezzin towers represent in Bedouin eyes the extent of funds invested in them and their value to their respective neighborhood residents.

There are three formal mosques in Hura, with names given already at the fundraising stage. Ibn Taymiya Mosque in Neighborhood 3 is named after a fourteenth-century Islamic philosopher of the conservative Hanbali School—al Madhhab al-Hanbali—and one of the ideological fathers of the Wahabbia Islamic branch.¹¹ The name of al-Taqwa Mosque in Neighborhood 10 implies God-fearingness and extreme orthodoxy. Hittin Mosque in Neighborhood 1 is named after the mythical victory of Salah al-Din al-Ayubi over the Crusaders in 1187 at the famous Battle of Hittin (near the Lake of Galilee). Thus, the names of these new holy institutions in Hura most naturally originate in the relevant religious heritage of Islam, and in common with other religions, tend somewhat towards the more heroic and militant wing of this cultural tradition. Appealing thus to the widest audience, the tribal-neighborhood dimension of the mosques is repressed by their names.

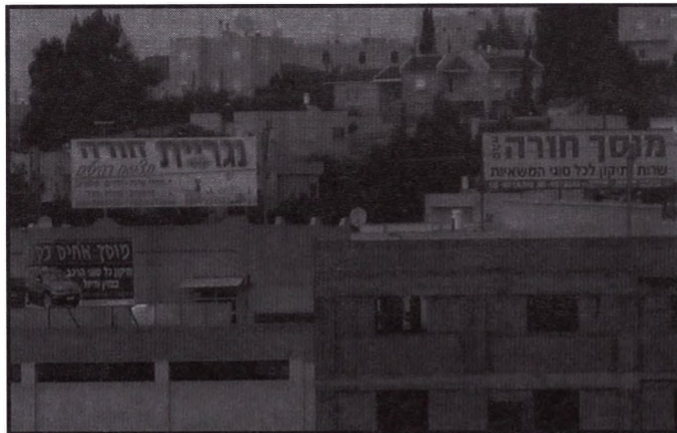
Naming business space

In contrast to naming the town or its institutions, there is no involvement of political or semi-political organized bodies in naming business space in Hura. Naming a

business outlet and posting it openly reflects the owners' business interests and attitudes. An analysis of Hura's business arena suggests three types of sub-spaces:

- **Major arterial roads:** These include Regional Road 31 at the edge of town and the main streets within town (see Figure 4 below). These arteries, from which family neighborhood internal roads branch off, are not assigned to particular families or tribes,¹² and thus allow for relatively unconstrained competition. These constitute extensive and dynamic concentrations of spontaneously erected business establishments, some of them in existence even before Hura itself. These businesses are owned by townsmen and people of the various tribes living in villages in the area. The business mix includes small manufacturing shops, clothing stores, school supplies, groceries, private clinics, a gas station, car sale lots, a restaurant, a hairdresser and so on.
- **The industrial zone:** This is a planned zone established in 2004 and located at the entrance of town, near Road 31. Business establishments include car sale lots, small manufacturing shops, mechanic shops, a cement factory, replacement parts, upholstery, a flour mill, a tire shop, a small mall and the like. Most business name signs, all in Hebrew, face the main regional highway rather than inward to town (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Hura's small industrial zone



- **Neighborhoods:** Belonging to the lowest hierarchical level, these businesses are very small, primarily selling groceries and building supplies. Most businesses inside the neighborhoods are named after the

agnatic tribal or family group, in contrast to only four out of 40 in the previous spatial categories. About 15 of them have added the suffix of “Hura” to their names (e.g., Minimarket Hura). According to Hura’s lay people and businessmen, adopting a non-familial name enables an outreach to the wider public and greater clientele. One of them asked rhetorically, “Who would walk into a business named [his own Bedouin Arabic last name]...?”¹³ Another analyzed it using ethnic terminology:

The businesses are aiming at the least problematic identity. The objective is to maximize profit; therefore they are blurring those identities perceived as distancing and separating. This is like the Bedouin businesses in Beer Sheva.¹⁴ They, too, are blurring their Bedouin names and are Hebraizing them in order to attract Jewish clientele.

The same economic logic that appeals to the consensual identity rather than to sub-ethnic ones works also among businesses located along Road 31. Some businesses there have even been posting the Israeli national flag. One of the owners commented about a business outlet there torn down by state authorities for illegality: “One should not go head on. Look, see that other business on the other side, he is of the same tribe, but he is smart, he posted the national flag, he is appealing to the consensus.”

Thus, among most businesses in Hura, economic considerations outweigh sociocultural ones highlighting tribal, ethnic or Arab-nationalistic linkages that could be harmful for business and profits. This is true not only in the Jewish-Arab arena but presumably also in the intra-Bedouin sub-ethnic one (see Meir and Baskind, 2006). In the economic arena, the dominant principles of naming are market-oriented, making identities more flexible and concealing from foreigner’s eyes the internal Bedouin sociocultural boundaries which are otherwise irreconcilable within Bedouin space.

Another complementary component of business naming in Hura is that of the language chosen for posting name signs. Among extra-neighborhood businesses, there is a process of hybridization, as many (21 out of 40) have chosen Hebrew exclusively (being the language of the well-off clientele; see Figure 2) and ten more use both Hebrew and Arabic, the rest using only Arabic. A closer look at the latter group reveals that for cultural-ethnic reasons they would not benefit much from using Hebrew signs, as their lines of business do not cater to Jewish clientele (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Salon Baris on Hura's main street; a gender-oriented business (bridal salon), thus using Arabic as the representative language



Given current relations of dominance and prestige in the Negev space as a whole, introducing Hebrew into business naming in Hura and adopting common Israeli patterns of business naming enable Bedouin business owners to upgrade their image in order to attract Jewish clientele and promote their economic interests. As Hebrew is the language of the majority, of the dominant group that is strongest economically and politically, Hebraizing business names labels this place considerably higher in Bedouin businessmen's eyes. This is a highly instrumental, linguistically "Israelicized" economic arena, resembling many other places in Israel, not the least of them Arab towns and villages.

Naming residential space

Residential space is perhaps the most important arena of naming and renaming, as it touches upon the closest personal level of sense of place. This may explain the trialectic of non-naming, naming and renaming among the Bedouins. Non-naming is very prominent in residential space, perhaps a necessary phase in the process of reaching place maturity that led to the recent process of naming this space.

Non-naming residential space

Upon establishment, Hura's residential space of neighborhoods and streets was not included in the literal naming process. Each neighborhood received a serial number in the town's zoning plan according to planners' arbitrary decisions,¹⁵ whereas streets remained entirely nameless. This non-named residential space remained effective until very recently, and neighborhood numbers have struck roots as local spatial signifiers. This is somewhat odd considering the very strict traditional sociopolitical spatial and territorial ordering within Bedouin society at large and Bedouin towns in particular. In fact, having constituted the first significant socio-spatial political arena for the new settlers within town, neighborhoods are viewed by them as separate communities and therefore are highly segregated and sharply distinguishable by extensive open spaces which function as boundaries.

Naming residential space

This is the most significant arena of naming in Hura. The state-appointed town council that ran Hura until 2000 attempted unsuccessfully to cope with this vacuum by nominating in 1999 a Committee for Improving Townscape. This committee submitted a draft proposal for naming neighborhoods and streets in coordination with neighborhood committees. The proposal was circulated to all town inhabitants and responses ranged from acceptance to indifference and rejection. Consequently, this initiative was aborted.

It took five more years and two major turnovers in Hura's political leadership before the naming initiative was resumed. The newly elected leadership established the Neighborhoods and Street Names Committee (NSNC) in 2005. Although legally required by the Local Council Ordinance, the NSNC would remain futile without significant pushing by this new vibrant leadership who were determined to pursue an organized naming procedure. Interestingly, while the committee was composed of representatives of all neighborhoods, the committee head was from a village in the area, but registered as a town resident. This implies that despite actually living outside town, some groups are considered an integral part of Hura's social, cultural and political life, and in fact are highly involved in it.

The committee distributed a call to all inhabitants for proposals. Public reactions to this naming initiative were again mixed, ranging from indifference and criticism to full support. Those viewing this innovation indifferently saw it as simply useless for their routine life, where spatial and territorial sociocultural codes of a desert milieu are still quite dominant. As put by a resident of Neighborhood 1: "The Bedouins never had street names; they only spoke of pieces of land and to whom they belonged.... We don't need this today; the committee does not represent the public but only the authorities, this is all for the protocol [lit. minutes]." To him,

naming residential space is counter productive, part of the compulsive spatial order imposed by the state via its agents in Hura's local government. It contradicts pastoralist and Bedouin traditional codes related to avoiding exposure to and contact with the authorities (see Fratkin and Meir, 2005; Khazanov, 1994), particularly considering the tense relationships with the State of Israel. For others, naming streets and neighborhoods is merely procedural: "There is no need for this; it serves nobody. This is only part of the book of Municipal Laws, and if not for this, no one in Hura would ask for it" (resident of Neighborhood 1). In contrast, a resident of Neighborhood 10 views the process positively from a practical perspective: "Instead of telling someone to go until he hits the mosque and then take the third turn to the right, I simply tell him the name of the street."

The non-supportive and critical part of public reaction is explained differently by the mayor, who resorts to lack of sense of community ("we have not yet become accustomed to partnership," M. al-Nabari, 2006, personal communication), insisting thus on public participation, as "...it is futile otherwise". The difference between these views is reflective of the more general conflict between the lay people and the leadership concerning the real and most pressing survival issues within the new urban setting.

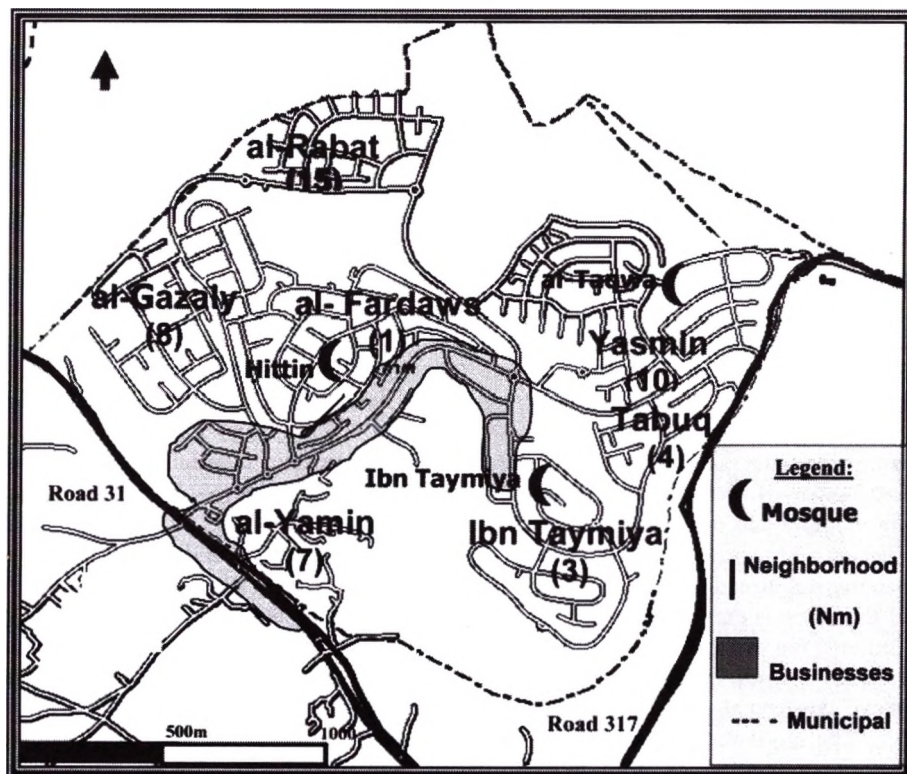
Aside from the demands of the law, the mayor explains the effort of renaming town space by his desire to "...issue Hura an ID card," and adds: "I want no numbers [for neighborhoods and streets]. You develop belonging to this settlement by naming" (2006, personal communication). For him, numbering represents lack of comprehensive place identity and therefore a lower level of individual identification and sense of belonging. His logic is that it is difficult to become attached emotionally and cognitively to a number and develop a positive emotion toward it. The very process of naming, that is, the public deliberations and decisions by the people, has already been enhancing identification with names and places. The spirit of this logic is expressed by a community worker and activist in Hura's Community Center: "We wish to make a linkage between belonging to town and to the place and a name; they are linked by the name, both the place and the name will belong to the place" (R. Abu al-Qia'an, 2006, personal communication).

The motivation of the mayor to initiate and push ahead the process of naming and renaming derives from his familiarity with neighboring Jewish settlements. "Yes, copying. This is how one learns. They have street names and organized [name] posting there." His vision is of a model of "public order" that will shape the Bedouin town. A senior municipal official also suggests that renaming may reduce prejudices concerning neighborhoods: "This is like in Neighborhood A and Neighborhood B in Beer Sheva; they have a stigma."

After publicizing the naming project, the task of preparing a tentative list of names was given to the NSNC. Each member was responsible for his own neighborhood. The committee's work was concluded in mid-2006 by suggesting names for eight neighborhoods (Figure 4) and 87 streets including planned future spaces. The list of names was approved by the city council and forwarded to the

Ministry of the Interior for formal approval with the aim of changing personal addresses in state records and on individual ID cards and for posting name signs.

Figure 4: Hura renaming map



The naming and renaming process embodies an attempt to cast a new ethos upon Hura's people. The most prominent motive in the restructured interpretation of residential space, as transpiring from the new names, originates from the Islamic-Arabic heritage at large: "I want the names of figures who had a positive fingerprint on history," says the mayor. One group of names reflects the glorious Islamic-Arabic history, such as A'li Bin abu-Taleb, Abu-Bakr al-S'adik, Salah al-Din and others. Another group represents terms and phrases in the Qor'an expressing religious morality and burning belief in Allah, as revealed by al-Taqwa (lit. fearness

of God and extreme orthodoxy), al-Majd (lit. glory, splendor), al-Furqan (lit. al-Qor'an), al-Israa (lit. Muhammed's pilgrimage to heaven), al-Hikmah (the wisdom), etc. A third category of names is that of heroic and famous battles of Islam and holy places, and includes al-Madina (Medina), al-Quds (Jerusalem), Hittin (see above), Bader and al-Qadsia.¹⁶

An absolute majority of the names are those directly and indirectly representing the victorious Islamic Golden Age, as illustrated by Neighborhood 4. The neighborhood was renamed Tabuq which, according to the traditional narrative of the Abu al-Qia'an tribal group, is its nineteenth-century place of origin in the Arab Peninsula. Streets were named after Haifa (once an Arab town in Palestine, now a Jewish metropolis in Israel), Harun al-Rašid (an A'basi khaliph, 786–809 AC), al-Hijra (the famous migration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina), al-Mua'tas'em (an A'basi khaliph, 833–842 AC), Hamza (Ibn A'li al-Mtaleb of the al-Sahabe—Muhammad's companions). Similarly, Neighborhood 8 was named for abu-Hamed al-Gazaly (an eleventh-century Sufi theosophist), and the streets there were named after Ahmad bin-Hanbal (founder of the conservative Hanbali School), A'li bin abu-Taleb (the last of the first four khaliphs), Muadh ibn Jabal (one of the first supporters of Muhammad in Yathrib-Medina), al-Furqan (the Qor'an) and Abu Samara, the pre-1948 tribal territory of the groups that inhabit this neighborhood.

The process of naming the residential space was set in motion by a popular leadership identified with the Islamic Movement in Israel. Members of this group belong to the educated young elite of school teachers and principals, advocates and academics. A leader of the process in one of the neighborhoods remarked that some of the residents were fearful that the Islamic-Arabic nature of the naming would be interpreted as subversion against state authorities: "They were shocked; it was inconceivable to them that this is permitted. They said '[the authorities] will regard Hura as Hamas; Hura is not Um al-Fahem'¹⁷....," but we demonstrated to them what pluralism is, that this is permitted, and ever since they went along."

Glorious Islamic-Arabic naming is perceived as assuming nationalistic dimensions, particularly by the elderly, whose memories of the constraining Israeli military administration in 1948–1966 are still fresh. In contrast, members of the younger educated generation perceive the nature of this naming as part of legitimate freedom of speech within a democratic state. Yet, all groups share a realization that blatant nationalistic Palestinian representations are taboo.

Thus, the new geography of names in Hura's residential space is one of mythological geography drawing primarily upon Islamic-Arabic identity. It ranges from "al-Andalus" to "al-Madina," highlighting religious-national motives in their wider national and transnational meanings.¹⁸

The sense of place naming in Hura

Thus far, we have described the processes of non-naming, arbitrary naming and renaming of Hura's institutional, economic and residential spaces. Although each has its own internal semantic naming codes, some broader cultural processes are discernible, related to the communal maturity sought by the political leadership. In the following discussion, we frame the three naming types as one process of generating place attachment in Hura, cast within the more general theoretical framework.

The process of naming in Hura reveals two theoretical issues: duration of root striking by the inhabitants (Hay, 1998; Tuan, 1977) and their freedom of choice of their particular place (Brown, Perkins and Brown, 2002; Fried, 2000). When these properties assume considerable positive dimensions, they may yield positive place attachment. This is not the case of Hura, particularly not in its earlier years following the nature of its establishment and the very long and tense negotiations with the state. For these people, who were uprooted again three decades after their first uprooting from traditional territories, the solution offered by authorities did not constitute a fulfillment of their deep wishes, but rather a least bad compromise. Therefore, the phases of non-naming of residential space (particularly streets) and arbitrary naming of institutional space (particularly schools), along with the technical rather than symbolic nature of names (including that of neighborhoods), may be conceived of as a negative response to the constitutive spatial constraint of establishing the town and the difficulties in accommodating the subsequent spatial changes. Non-naming thus reflects ill attachment to a relatively new place constructed under conditions of compulsory organization of space and passive acceptance of external dictates. Rejection of naming and indifference about it, which resurfaced recently in the public discourse, indicate that for some, Hura does not evoke strong feelings of attachment even 18 years after its establishment.

In contrast, the contemporary phases of naming neighborhoods and streets, renaming schools and variegated naming of businesses (with the town's name as a dominant element) indicate the onset of a positive sense of place and buds of attachment to and pride in the place. The very internal desire to award unique meanings to space and redefine attachment to it reflects people's attempts to further establish a positive sense of place and thus link space to the layout of their identities (see Casey, 1993; Twigger-Ross and Uzzel, 1996). Therefore, a ripened naming process reflects, at least for some of Hura's residents, processes of place longevity, communal maturation and the onset of renegotiating, acceptance and overcoming of past harsh spatial events. Generating a positive attachment to place and sense of home are not luxuries, but a universal existential need (Lewis, 1979). Thus, despite a disrupted initial sociocultural infrastructure in attaching to Hura, its people have, over time, begun to search for their particular points of connecting to this place,

manifested *inter alia* by shifting from technical to symbolic naming and renaming of their space.

At this phase, they are faced with four alternative worlds of representations as sources of spatial meanings: the sociopolitical tribal-group territorial organization; their pastoral-nomadic-farming natural environment; the glorious Islam; and modern-capitalist Israel. The first two of these worlds represent the traditional Bedouin-oriented identity. Kinship has been fundamental in Bedouin territoriality, spatial organization, inter-group boundary demarcation and management of sociopolitical relationships (Marx, 1967; Meir, 1997). The map of kinship social organization was interwoven into the imagined geographical map such that the tribe, sub-tribe or extended family functioned as geographical demarcating devices and as place names.

The natural environment supplemented this “geography of blood relations” as an additional vital source of spatial meanings and signs. Shortage of pastoral and farming resources in the arid desert environment rendered environmental knowledge extremely important to a point of symbolizing it into place names. This is reflective of the intimate existential linkages between the Bedouins and their natural environment, as demonstrated by the Sinai Bedouins during the 1970s (Bailey, 1976, 1984).

Furthermore, both mechanisms—the kinship territorial system and the natural environment—have been central in the Bedouin’s spiritual life. They consisted of ritual pilgrimage to the graves of ancestors, as well as rich mystical animism interacting symbolically with natural objects, such as trees, animals, rocks and landscape features (Bar-Tsvi, Kressel and Abu-Rabia, 1998; Marx, 1988). Apparently such an authentic sensing of place, as put by Relph (1976), was prevalent among pre-sedentarization Bedouins, similar to other stable cultural systems of nomadic pastoralists (Casey, 1993).

Under enhanced sedentarization, urbanization and modernization, the natural environment ceased being a major part of daily routine experience among the Negev Bedouins. Uprooting and spatial relocation resulted in loss of cultural-political hegemony in this region to the extent of becoming local or internal refugees (Abu-Rabia, 1994, 2002), followed by disruption of traditional mechanisms of sensing place. Detached thus from their natural environment, they were left with the kinship network as the sole mechanism for spatial organization and production of places. In Hura’s early years, its nature as a semi-urban place only intensified tribalism and inter-group frictions and rivalries by evoking inter-group competition over new resources. When the kinship-tribal mental map of the neighborhoods was self-evident and familiar to all, a map of new names was redundant, as manifested by non-naming of the tribally imagined space.

However, growing involvement of the urbanizing Bedouins in the Israeli labor market and in the culture of consumerism has exposed them to Israeli-Western capitalistic lifestyle, leading them to adopt its values as far as they could economically afford. They have also been exposed to “Israeli” mechanisms of

naming space. This is revealed in their emerging motivation to name and rename their residential space and by adopting Israeli patterns of naming their businesses. Moreover, the planning concept of Hura was adopted directly from the Israeli-Western suburban pattern, adding its share to the Westernization trend of cultural experiencing. These processes superimposed a new Western conceptualization of space upon Hura. Adopting the terminology of Descola and Palsson (1996) and Short (1991), which dichotomizes nature and culture, these processes have prioritized cultural dominance over nature.

For the Bedouins, urbanization and Westernization imply distancing away from their natural environment, but also de-spiritualization and secularization of their space. Traditional rituals and practices, which represent a holistic culture-nature approach of living with nature and being an immanent part of it, are no longer dominant in their experience. This partly explains the absence of the immediate natural-geographical environment from the new names of neighborhoods and streets in town.

Thus, with detachment from the natural environment and increased exposure to the Israeli-Westernized consumer culture, the ex-pastoral nomadic Bedouins are experiencing a spiritual void. The formal Islamic legacy becomes a legitimate cultural-spiritual compensation offering a reservoir of names for constructing Hura as a place and developing a sense of place. It serves as a value and moral platform, an alternative consciousness infrastructure offering the most appropriate emotional attachment to the place. As a grand and universal ideology, formal Islam conceives of the animistic rituals of natural objects as inferior and inappropriate worship (Lazarus-Yafe, 1985). Islamic naming thus attempts to fill this void by producing mechanisms for sanctifying the secular space, awarding the previously non-named residential space of Hura with religious content and a touch of sanctity.

Furthermore, formal Islam also rejects tribalism, sectionalism and ethnic sub-identities (Lazarus-Yafe, 1985), such as "Bedouin" identity. This is coupled by socioeconomic individualization and state cooptation under urbanization and modernization. These processes have contributed to weakened tribalism and its derivatives as major symbols in Bedouin culture, both in their historical commemoration and in their contemporary experiential dimensions (Marx, 2006; Meir, 1997). Thus, elements of traditional Bedouin identity and tribal legacy were also weakened in the renaming process. This heritage is no longer sufficiently appreciated to become a project for cultural indoctrination. As remarked by a senior municipal official, the elimination of neighborhoods' tribal affiliation by non-tribal renaming is vital for producing a more integrated, less tribally fractioned community.

In reinterpreting their space, Hura's namegivers wish to produce a new spatial dialectic for channeling positive emotions between the "big," wide, prideful, identifier, mythological Islamic-Arabic place and the "small" homely place. The prosperous small place will be grasped as part of the strengthening and success of *dar al-Islam* (the world of Islam) and the entire nation of pious Muslims, which

dialectically will project its spirit back onto this small place. By imagining a proud Islamic ethos, namegivers construct the place as a sphere of alternative to the Zionist spatial hegemony, an articulation of collective resistance within the borders of the 'permitted' expression.

The religious mythological renaming process is employed by the new leadership in an attempt to consciously disengage the town from both the close administrative-bureaucratic embracement of the State of Israel and past sociopolitical tribal constraints, laying the foundations for a greater, supra-tribal integrative identity. This newly produced imagined space constitutes a new interpretation of both their internal relationships within the Bedouin community and their external relationships with the state. And yet, the Islamic naming should not be interpreted as an attempt to close Hura to its neighboring Jewish population. By rendering this place an honorable Islamic identity, Hura's leadership wishes to welcome visitors. The new well-designed map printed (in Hebrew, Arabic and English) and distributed to the residents means to offer visitors an easy and safe orientation within town (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Image on the cover of the map of new street names, distributed by the local council to all residents immediately before the A'id al-Adha (Holiday of Sacrifice)—the most important annual religious event. This image was designed as a triple lens that emphasizes the town's three large mosques.



The process of naming in Hura reflects an actively growing powerful local leadership attempting to lead a major social and cultural change by casting new moral and integrative meanings for their town. They wish to shape a new ethos for a place whose current positive one, if any, is rather weak and whose contextual political framework, that of non-recognition of villages and compulsory urbanization

by the state, is perceived mostly as negative. This new ethos, they hope, will shape a new and positive place identity and sense of place for the people of Hura.

Conclusion

The process of reestablishing sense of place through naming and renaming Hura's space is complex and disrupted. From a perspective of institutionalized cultural alternatives (see Salzman, 1981), and given the major cultural changes, it turns out that the Bedouins' historical and contemporary cultural reservoir contains four major identity dimensions as legitimate sources for place naming: ecological (their intimate natural environment); social (their traditional tribal, sub-ethnic, and economic and political group structure); cultural (their religious Islamic-Arabic affiliation but also social and economic modernization); and national-political (Israeli state and society and global effects).

The first two of these dimensions, highly dominant throughout Bedouin history, are perceived as irrelevant and inappropriate for their contemporary and future-imagined lifeworlds. On the other hand, all symbols and representations associated with the national-political dimension of the Israeli state, a highly encompassing and dominant framework in their daily life, are excluded from the new system of meanings and identities. The almost exclusive source of naming remaining for their institutional and residential spaces is the world of Islam.

Thus, from places which were uniquely Bedouin in the past, whose previous interaction with Islam was not dominant in their pastoral-nomadic *genre de vie*, contemporary Bedouins have become highly embedded in this more universal world for reproducing their particular sense of place. Yet, they do not entirely exclude from their place-naming scheme the other part of their cultural dimension—that of economic modernization and Westernization. This reflects a degree of dualistic identity, namely emotional identification with Islam together with instrumental connection to Western culture and "Israeliness." It thus conforms to wider trends among Israeli Arabs, as revealed by Rouhana and Ghanem (1998).

Several questions deserve further investigation. First, the maturation of the naming process in Hura is not necessarily self-evident elsewhere in Bedouin towns. A comparative study across Bedouin society of both the process of naming and its sources of legitimacy may shed light on degrees of uniformity or difference in reconstructing space within this society, revealing more fundamental sociopolitical dimensions.

A second issue rests within the sociocultural level. It refers to the extent to which the Islamic component in naming is capable of bridging the internal inter-tribal, inter-ethnic¹⁹ and inter-group boundaries and barriers still dominant in the political and social practices of this society. This is particularly important under the

unique sociopolitical conditions of the Bedouins, who bitterly struggle internally for meager external public resources.

Third, there is a more practical issue. Assessing the contribution of positive sense of place through place naming to a healthier growth and development of these communities may be quite useful. This is particularly significant in the wake of the upcoming second wave of ten Bedouin towns planned by the State of Israel. Integration of naming procedures into the development programs and planning processes at their initial implementation phases, with full public participation, may serve as a useful tool for generating positive sense of place at early stages and an improved process of building healthier communities than those established in the first wave (until the 1990s).

The final issue is the relationship between this particular case study and a general understanding of sense of place and how it is reconstructed in human geography. Generally speaking, studies of pastoral nomads in their sedentarization processes may shed much light on understanding early evolutionary phases of spatiality by humankind. The question that remains is the relationship between this particular case study and those of other indigenous groups that have gone through this process. Taken as a dynamic process, this reconstruction draws considerably on the archeology of meanings, and understanding place naming and renaming by these peoples may contribute considerably to the general understanding of spatial reconstruction.

NOTES

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² Turkish for “dead land,” which therefore belongs legally to the state.

³ See, e.g., “Agudat HaArbaim” (<http://assoc40.org>) and “Women remembering” (<http://nakbainhebrew.org>) (Hebrew).

⁴ See report in *Yediot Akharonot* (<http://ynet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-3336083.00.html>) (Hebrew).

⁵ We are grateful to Dr. Alexander Borg, a linguistic anthropologist at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, for his generous advice on Bedouin dialect particulars of the Arabic names.

⁶ See the Central Bureau of Statistics, http://www.cbs.gov.il/publications/local_authorities01/pdf/t02.pdf.

⁷ *Huria* is the Arabic surname for a very beautiful woman, such as those virgins who are awaiting men in Heaven according to popular Islamic belief.

⁸ With the exception of Rahat, all Bedouin towns were named after a locally familiar site.

⁹ Amal is a national network of vocational high schools.

¹⁰ Due to lack of appropriate infrastructure in the unrecognized villages, Israeli law prohibits running kindergartens there. This vacuum has been filled by five private associations that rented buildings within town in order to enable the children from the unrecognized villages to use those services. The name of the association which operates kindergartens in Hura is "Mahat."

¹¹ This Islamic branch preaches literal interpretation of the Qor'an, asceticism, seclusion, closure to the external world and militant Jihad (religious war against agnostics).

¹² Bedouin territorial cultural codes dictate spatial separation of groups (tribes, sub-tribes, extended families, etc.) to guarantee internal social order (Meir, 1997). Under the new urban settings, neighborhoods are separated along the same principles. However, the highly dense spatial circumstances there are devoid of bypasses. This requires developing a new cultural code of safe throughroads in neighborhoods which allow trouble-free traffic by members of all local groups and foreigners.

¹³ For purposes of confidentiality, we dropped his and other respondents' names.

¹⁴ Beer Sheva is the regional Jewish metropolis.

¹⁵ The same spatial procedure was adopted for the development towns and some other Jewish cities established after 1948.

¹⁶ A famous battle against the Sassanid Empire occurred in 637 AC during the Islamic-Arabic conquest of Iraq and Persian regions.

¹⁷ This Arab town in northern Israel is known as the center of the northern wing of the Israeli Islamic Movement. The northern wing is considered to be more radical in its political agenda than the southern wing that has become dominant in the Negev.

¹⁸ Among the 95 names, only nine draw somehow upon Bedouin heritage: Jamama (a street named after the "fathers' space" of the al-A'tawna tribe 20 km northwest); Tabuq (the name of Neighborhood 4); al-Khansaa (a street named after a pre-Islamic Bedouin female poet), abu Samara (a street named after the "fathers' space" of the al-A'ssaiby tribe 15 km northwest), al-Wadi (a dry stream), al Haraba (a natural stockpile of water), al-Za'a'tar (a mixture of indigenous spices) and al-A'ukba (name of a tribe).

¹⁹ In Bedouin society, there are two major social-ethnic groups: the real Bedouins, who controlled most of the territorial resources, and the *fellaheen* Bedouins, who were landless. Their respective self and mutual perceptions of their roles within Bedouin culture and society vary greatly (see Ben-David and Gonen, 2001).

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