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Trans-Local Civic Networking: An Alternative Planning Praxis

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ABSTRACT
Various theories of planning have offered methods for (professional) planning to promote alternatives that are considered ideologically better and more just. Nonetheless, it is not always clear how these alternatives are able to overcome the constraints of state power, within which planning operates and upon which it relies, causing a drift towards 'post-planning' approaches. In contrast, we present a newly-emerging (professional) planning praxis that relies on trans-local civic networks. This means separating the concept of planning from planners, enabling the planners to promote their alternatives and confront the state politically. We describe a 40-year-old alternative planning tradition that promoted the formalization of informal Bedouin settlements in the outer-rings of Be'er Sheva metropolis in Israel, which is a deeply contested planning issue. The tradition started with planning specialists and solitary grass-roots organizations (GROs) who achieved negligible results when they encountered the state's persistent refusal to formalize. It continued with the growth of a complex trans-local civic network of loosely interacting NGOs, GROs, local councils, funds, social movements, global institutions, and political parties. The network proposed (professional) alternative plans, as part of a broader political project manifested in various arenas, and achieved significant results in challenging state power and policies. We describe the evolution and form of the praxis, its impact on the formalization of Bedouin space, and we analyze some of the aspects that enabled the alternative planners to increase their influence on policy decisions.

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Introduction

This article's contribution lies at the juncture of long-standing writing on advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965), and more recent interest in activist planning (Sager, 2016, 2018), insurgent planning (Holston, 2009; Miraftab, 2009), the politics of informality (Bayat, 2013; Roy, 2005), and more broadly, the complex and contested connections between (professional)[1] planning and civil society (Alfasi, 2003; Goonewardena & Rankin, 2004; Yacobi, 2007). Thus, we uncover new evolvements in these fields at the opening of the 21st century, which are engendered by the simultaneous rise of globalization, network societies, new media, and the (professional) third sector.

Theoreticians of planning frequently express discontent with (professional) planning's disengagement with material reality, and deal instead with planning cultures, ethics, and due process (collaborative, pragmatic, etc.) (Allmendinger, 2017; Harrison, 2014; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017). Often, it appears, planning fails to produce democratic visions, as collaborative planners encounter

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an "uncollaborative reality" (Brand & Gaffikin, 2007) where policymaking is determined according to interests and power (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002; Huxley, 2017). One explanation might be that planning theory tends to conflate planning and planners. If so, the unproblematized logic goes; (professional) planning is the product of planners, and planners are products of planning education. Therefore theoreticians just need to decipher the 'right' approach and educate the planners on the 'right' values and methods (whether positivist or communicative, etc.), so planning will end up producing the 'right' results (see Albrechts, 2015; Grange, 2014; Rankin, 2010). Putting aside the (important) question of 'would such results be right?' it should be also asked 'can this be achieved under the auspices of planning?'

Those who have substantial criticism of and deep conflicts of interest with the centers of power that animate the planning apparatus – meaning, above all, the state – have little hope of achieving satisfying results from planning deliberation (Huxley, 2017; Law-Yone, 2007; Yiftachel, 1998). This is particularly true in regard to informal spaces, prevalent throughout the global southeast, that experience the harshest outcomes of planning's disapproval of their existence (Dekel, Meir, & Alfasi, 2019; Miraftab, 2009; Roy, 2005). The constant quest of theoreticians to formulate yet another planning theory, evermore incorporating and democratic, often leaves out the fact that planning is inherently an organic part of the state, a political entity, which probably cannot and will not forfeit its deep interests, even in the face of genuine collaborative processes. The planner – regardless of his/her moral and professional inclination – is, thus, discursively and institutionally structured to serve these interests, and will have a hard time contesting them (Harvey, 1985; Huxley, 2017; Law-Yone, 2007).

Such critiques have caused a drift towards post- and anti-statist (and anti-professionalism) theories (Hillier, 2017; Newman, 2011; Purcell, 2017), which might be termed 'post-planning.' They advocate for a profound shift in planning, moving away from professionalism and scientific knowledge, encouraging antagonism towards the state and neoliberalism. This trend carries with it some interesting insights, yet it risks putting the baby out with the bathwater by denying the state's (and professional planning's) ability to do 'good' despite its tendencies to also do 'bad' (Alexander, 2010; Hibbard, Lane, & Rasmussen, 2008; Sanyal, 2005). Completely unregulated and unplanned spaces seem undesirable to most, especially the people living there. The post-planning drift leaves many people in search of alternative paths for a (professional) planning praxis – a moral public action (Friedmann, 1989), informed but not determined by theory (Rankin, 2010; Tayebi, 2013). As of now, this remains more an ideological fantasy, counting on the planner's 'right' morals and goodwill (a problematic presumption as of itself; see, Uitermark & Nicholls, 2017) and less of a concrete prescription for structured action and engagement with power.

One such path can be revealed if we do 'the unthinkable' and separate the concept of planning from the planners themselves. If a planner, who is a (political) agent with professional skills, acts outside the auspices of a (political) state apparatus of planning, that planner can strive to promote implementation of specific planning goals, even when these are at odds with the interests of the apparatus. In this manner, planning breaks down into a confined state-controlled practice on the one side, and a counter-hegemonic – yet professional – praxis on the other (see Law-Yone, 2007). We shift here the meaning of 'alternative planning,' from an alternative plan proposed by state-employed planners (a product of professional work, deliberation etc.), to an alternative planner, neither employed by nor committed to the state apparatuses, and drawing legitimacy, resources, and power from civil society. The alternative aspect is not just the plan and its content, but also the organizational context itself. Civil society here is conceptualized not as something to work with, but as somewhere to work from. We describe a 40-year-old tradition of alternative planning

for informal Bedouin settlements in the environs surrounding Be'er Sheva metropolis, Israel. The study draws from alternative plans, protocols, media coverage, and interviews with the planners and activists themselves. We expose an evolutionary case with three organizational stages: individual specialists, grassroots, and a trans-local civic network, in which alternative planning was gradually wielded by networked agents and institutions, used in a politicized manner and challenged state policies regarding (what they perceived as) the strategic issue of formalization and land ownership.

Civil Society and Planning Praxis

State-centric planning theory traditionally glorified civil society as the embodiment of democracy and social justice (Appadurai, 2001). Planners enthusiastically embraced civil society as a party to include, work with, and learn from, but not as the place where planning occurs – the planner is almost never seen as civil society. In fact, several critics have commented that civil sociFVety can represent regressive, as well as progressive values and that it is often highly structured by the state (Goonewardena & Rankin, 2004; Miraftab, 2009). When civil society agents raise alternatives to state planning, they usually end with limited reforms that do not threaten state interests (Alfasi, 2003; Özdemir & Eraydin, 2017; Yacobi, 2007).

This critique has culminated in a turn to the widespread phenomenon of informal occupation and development outside the confinements of bureaucracy, law, and planning (Watson, 2009). Informal "quiet encroachment" by the poor and marginalized challenges the foundations of modern-western (professional) planning, as a type of "non-movement," of "ordinary" people resisting power in their everyday acts of space-making (Bayat, 2013). Critics also glorify grassroots radical and 'insurgent planning,' acts of counter-politics and resistance to state repression by the marginalized. Informal and insurgent planning is considered a proper and moral response to the oppression of neoliberalism, the state, and the obedient NGOs it nurtures (Beard, 2003; Holston, 2009; Miraftab, 2009). Critics all see (professional) planning as suspect or they utterly reject it, forming a dichotomic separation: planning vs. insurgency and therefore also state vs. ('genuine') civil society.

Some writers though have dismantled this dichotomy. Drawing from the influential tradition of advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965), they argue that ideologically committed (professional) planners can act as civil society activists. They lend their abilities to communities, NGOs or social movements by lobbying, writing expert statements, conveying information, knowing how to file complaints or submit formal proposals, and proposing alternative plans (De-Souza, 2006; Parker & Street, 2018; Sager, 2016, 2018; Tayebi, 2013). This is closely tied to twenty-first-century changes in power structures stemming from the growth of global civil society and networks (Castells, 2011; Munck, 2010). These include the rise of the (professional) third sector, new social movements and global networking, the internet and social media and similar phenomena (Sager, 2016; Tayebi, 2013). These changes already have some profound implications for the ability to mobilize political power from the inside – outside of the state apparatus – molding state (professional) planning in new alternative ways. Yet, these shifts remain an under-studied and under-theorized avenue. There is a need for more case studies, and more attention paid to structural and organizational aspects that determine the form of such planning praxis and its outcomes.

Below, we delve into a case study in which the goal of the planners was to challenge a foundational principle of the state apparatus. For alternative (professional) planning to challenge centers of power within such a conflictual environment, goodwill and activist spirit are far from sufficient. Any alternative planning praxis must be tied to alternative sources of power – meaning

it must itself become part of a broader (counter-) political project. In light of this, our primary interest in the following is to explore the ways in which local and global civil society networks – conceptualized here as trans-local civic networks – provide new prospects for alternative (professional) planning, and how this new planning praxis looks and functions. We wish to understand how professionality is absorbed into networks of organizations that mostly are not affiliated with any part of the state apparatus; and how such an assemblage of organizations interact and act, and within which social arenas. Lastly, our focus is on what enabled the network to promote actual and significant (though not revolutionary) change. A comparison between different stages in the growth of the network provides us with important answers.

The literature on alternative planning is overwhelmingly sympathetic to radical ethics and visions, seeing any alternative to the state as intrinsically moral and democratic. But the agendas of the subaltern and insurgents "are by no means necessarily just, good, or egalitarian. They may be nativist, racist, communalist, and elitist" (Holston, 2009, p. 248). We side with Goonewardena and Rankin (2004) who reject as a myth the idea that civil society is an inherently just sphere. Any planner, with any moral inclination, can promote his/her goals through civil society. Therefore, we review the complex political struggles and moral debates between the state and civil society, but unlike much of the literature on this specific case study (e.g. Fenster, 2009; Kedar, Amara, & Yiftachel, 2018; Yiftachel, 2009), we refrain from adopting the moral agenda of the surveyed political actors.

Politics of Informality

In the last decade there has been great interest in informality (Roy, 2005; Yiftachel, 2009), and the political struggles waged by informal inhabitants to gain infrastructures and services, win planning recognition, and especially, prevent eviction. While some still view them as passive "non-movements," lacking organization beyond the local scale (Bayat, 2013), others are increasingly aware of their capability to mobilize in grassroots movements and collaborate with other agents (local movements, NGOs, parties, and even foreign institutions and transnational movements) with whom they share interests or values, and who are sympathetic to their plight. These movements act strategically in multiple arenas, from public campaigns, court appeals, and/or riots, to the production of alternative knowledge, molding the state's policies for tenure and planning (Bautès, Dupont, & Landy, 2014; Dekel et al., 2019; Holston, 2009; Lovering & Türkmen, 2011; Miraftab, 2009).

This change relates to the rising significance of informality as a focal point for overall metropolitan and national politics, as the neo-liberalizing state neglects – for practical and political reasons – to provide work, housing, and other essential amenities for growing populations. The "quiet encroachers" gradually become "bold encroachers" who politically demand the state's attention to their plight (Gillespie, 2017; Holston, 2009), transforming from "a movement in itself" into "a movement for itself." The poor build strong alliances with other actors (even when these are not necessarily congruent with their ideology) and act in various arenas (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). They realize that the reforms they crave will not emerge from governments, except as "a result of intense social pressure, unrest and the threat of ungovernability" (ibid: 134).

As Dekel et al. (2019) have theorized, using Lefebvre, the seemingly detached actions of resistance in the production of space are all part of the same process, occurring in different dimensions:

> The production of informal space occurs through a continuous dialectic engagement between physical concrete aspects in perceived space (buildings, infrastructures, services, bodies), symbolic meanings in lived space that are attributed to them (identity, culture, ideology) and their effect over spatial conceived space of state laws and regulations (property rights, zoning and entitlement to services) (Dekel et al., 2019, p. 97).

Regarding Be'er Sheva metropolis, it has been shown how, when the informal Arab-Bedouin dwellers accumulated political influence, allies, practical capabilities, and capital, the once unimaginable option of formalization became tangible, and they further mobilized to pursue it. Such pursuit, naturally, goes straight through the planning apparatus. While Dekel et al. (ibid) focused on the practice of creating "facts-on-the-ground," we focus here on the production of alternative (professional) planning knowledge, a contest over "conceived space."

Background: Be'er Sheva Metropolis

Be'er Sheva metropolis is both a typical example of a metropolis torn by conflict between state agencies and informal dwellers, and a unique case where the geopolitical-nationalist struggle between Jews and Arabs also shapes this tension. Located in the Negev, Israel's southern district, it has nearly 600,000 inhabitants, of whom 250,000 are Arab-Bedouin. Be'er Sheva is a (mostly Jewish) industrial city that, beginning in the 1990's, took on the functional form of an emerging metropolis (Gradus, 2008; Kutuk, Dekel, & Naor, 2018). This process had profound implications for the some 100,000 Arab-Bedouin who now live in its outer-rings, in informal, impoverished settlements, including approximately 60,000 illegal structures, (Benita, 2015). The informal settlements are largely spatially continuous, although tribally segregated. They occupy roughly 400 km2, accounting for most of the metropolitan area to the north-east, east, and south of the city (see Figure 1).

Many disputes in academic, legal and political arenas concerned the legitimacy of these settlements and their right to exist as and where they were. The state defined them as shanty-towns erected by the formerly nomadic Bedouin, without formal state permission, on state-owned lands after the establishment of Israel in 1948 (Weinshall, 2018; Yahel, 2017). On the other hand, many Bedouin and supporting scholars claim that they had already become semi-sedentary before 1948. They assert that they are indigenous people with traditional land rights in historic settlements that ought to be recognized as such and therefore, formalized (Kedar et al., 2018; Meir, 2009; Yiftachel, 2009). The state side accuses the other side of the politicization of the Bedouin issue and a manipulative use of the term "indigenous" (Yahel, Kark, & Frantzman, 2017).

A common Zionist view sees the Bedouin's uncontrolled, informal development as Arabization, an encroachment on national land and a threat to state sovereignty and civil security (Sofer, 2008). The opposing side accuses its adversaries of promoting a state nationalist-colonial project to dispossess the Bedouin from their lands, to concentrate them in impoverished planned townships and to Judaize the rest of the region (Kedar et al., 2018). The two sides disagree on nearly every aspect of the conflict, creating a social climate in which it is nearly impossible to find paths to an agreement over future metropolitan planning and development. Regardless of who is right, it is evident that the planning of the region is determined by political 'arm-wrestling' in which the state has far more power, but power that is continuously undermined, as presented below.

While the conflict raged above their heads, most Bedouin continued to live insurgently and develop their informal habitats. Only in the 1990s, when the metropolitan growth of Be'er Sheva gained momentum, did the status quo start to change. With growing demand for land in the outer-rings, for infrastructure and middle-class (Jewish) suburbanization, the government

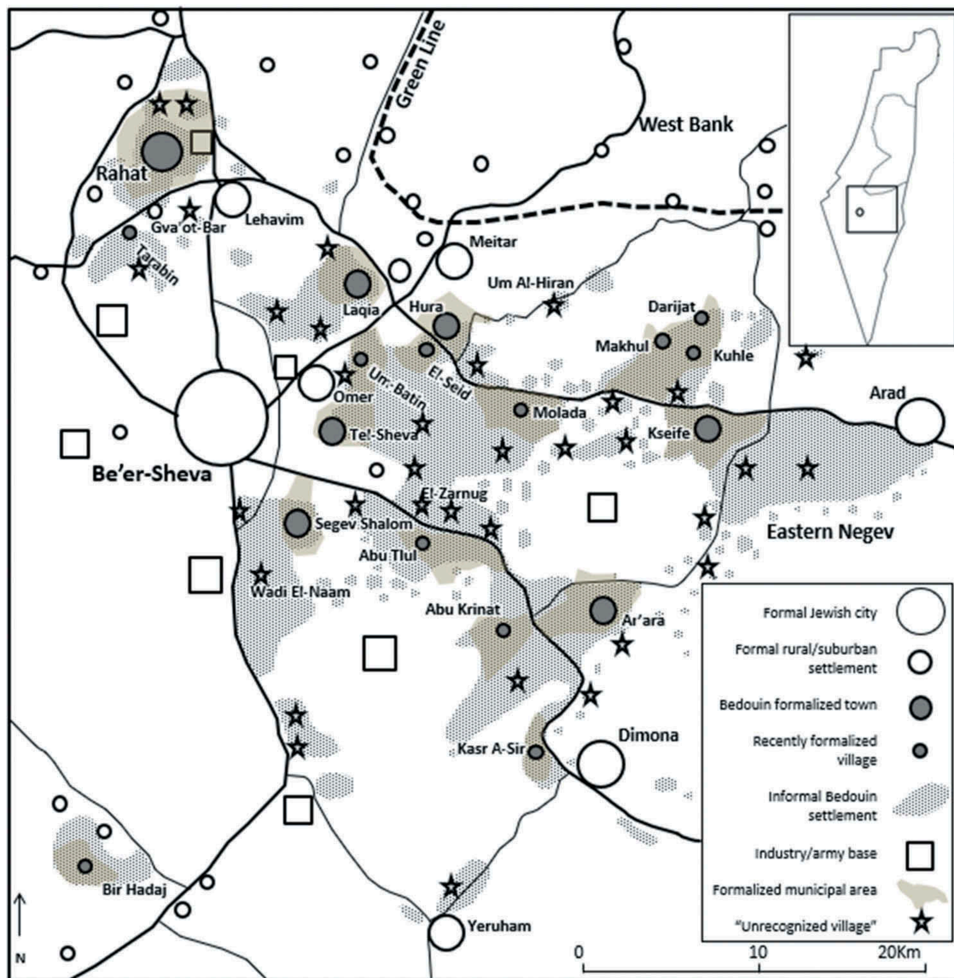

Figure 1. Be'er Sheva metropolitan area with informal locales and "unrecognized villages" as depicted in the alternative plan.

started issuing regional zoning plans to accommodate the process. These plans were developed hand-in-hand with intensifying the previously ineffective efforts to reconcile the conflict with the Bedouin, and enforce state tenure and zoning policies. There was increasing pressure to urbanize the Bedouin and evacuate them from what were now marked as illegal habitats. The Bedouin gradually became aware that they could no longer feel secure with their informal status and started struggling for the formalization of their settlements and land tenure. Planning became a prominent arena of interest since it held the possibility of removing the threat of eviction and attracting crucial development resources and services by changing the zoning schemes. The state, for its part, remained determined to go through with its spatial policy to evict informal settlements, whether by force or through negotiation and compensation arrangements for evacuees (Meir, 2005, 2009).

40 Years of Alternative Planning

Alternatives from Individual Specialists

The first attempts by the Bedouin to influence the government's policy were made through parliament representatives and achieved nearly nothing (Meir, 2003). By the end of the 1970s, geopolitical changes pushed the Bedouin to consolidate their struggle further. The state planned to relocate a large military airbase to the region, which necessitated evacuating hundreds of informal houses. Geographically and politically detached from decision-making centers, experiencing severe gaps in relevant spoken and professional language, and suffering from deficient connections and finances, the Bedouin could not exert any leverage on the process. Then Emanuel Marx entered the conflict. A Jewish anthropologist of Bedouin society and a member of a Jewish civic think-tank – the Negev Planning Team – which sketched alternative plans for the entire region, Marx was a liminal figure who gained the trust of both the establishment and the Bedouin; he could advocate for the latter while working in the think-tank. The Negev Planning Team lobbied governmental agencies intensely, and were eventually integrated into the formal, establishment task force that planned the airbase. With Marx's influence on the team, it implemented some participatory programs, drew up new plans and devised compensation agreements for resettling the evacuees. The generous compromise offered by the team's alternative plan represented the state's urgent need for quick and smooth evacuation while facing growing unrest. The plan, however, did not enjoy the legitimacy in the eyes of many Bedouin, especially since they were eventually forced out of their lands. With power relations so boldly manifested, many Bedouin did not consider the alternative plan a success (Marx, 1990; Yahel & Kark, 2016; also: Meir, 2003; interview: Marx, Negev Planning Team, 2016).

By the end of the 1980s, informal settlements were still an open problem, and no practical solution was in sight. Governmental committees recommended withholding demolition of illegal structures until resettlement or in-situ formalization schemes could happen. At the time, they related to an estimated 12,000 structures inhabited by almost 50,000 people (with approximately the same amount already formalized or resettled in formal towns). Nonetheless, informal building continued, primarily due to remarkable fertility rates, and no formalization took place (Goldberg, 2008; Sofer, 2008; Yahel, 2017). This brought several other Jewish anthropologists and geographers specializing in the Bedouin society, to formulate professional plans for formalization and development of Bedouin settlements. One of these plans was sponsored by a private research organization, the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, and the others were published as academic papers. All of the plans sought to create a rational settlement model that could meet the Bedouin social-cultural needs as traditional farmers-pastoralists, and still be economically viable, benefitting the region and the state (Ben-David, 1988; Kressel, 1988). Alternative planning endeavors continued, led by 'specialists' from varied fields, under the support of private research institutions and within academic frameworks.[2] The series of plans offered different methods for negotiating land tenure, formalizing settlements and developing them. Though somewhat varied in content, they shared common themes: all hoped to influence the establishment by presenting a solid rationale, backed by field surveys and enumerations, theoretical basis and the intellectual resumés of the editors and the supporting institutions. Yitzhak Meir (1989, p. 1) opened with a representative statement:

> This survey attempts to be objective and propose planning-technical solutions based on research in social and economic issues of the Bedouin sector. There is a clear intention to stay away from political issues [... so to propose] a broad alternative planning approach.

This approach, which relied on rational communication through planning schemes, did not produce any significant results, nor did it receive any meaningful attention from officials. Rationalist methods, when used in their own right to restructure a vital element of the power relations in Be'er Sheva metropolis, have proved insufficient.

Alternatives from Grassroots Organizations (GROs)

Since the 1990s similar alternatives have been authored by professionals, now working within GROs: the Association for Bedouin Rights (Khamaisi, 1990; Levinson, 1992; interview: Khamaisi, scholar and activist in Association for Bedouin Rights, 2019), a local GRO; and the Association of Forty (Law-Yone, 1996)[3] that had previously won struggles for formalizing Bedouin settlements in northern Israel[4] (interview: Yonash, Association of Forty, 2016). The leading authors were known academics who worked with the GROs, providing their practical knowledge and prestige. They set out to delineate existing settlements as autonomic entities – villages – contrasting with the state's definition of them as dispersed clusters that are recognized by tribal affiliation. In attempting to rationalize the demand for a formalization of settlements, according to professional principles of efficiency, demography, analysis of metropolitan dynamics and so forth, the plans kept a pragmatic approach regarding the expected results: the first two plans suggested the formalization of 15 settlements, and later plans suggested 35. As we will see, there were more settlements and people who, at the time, were not incorporated into the alternative plans.

These plans were being drawn up in the context of dramatic shifts in regional and national politics. On the one hand, there was the return of the left wing to the Israeli government, peace negotiations with neighboring Arab states, and the formalization of Bedouin settlements in northern Israel. On the other hand there was the promotion of the statutory Regional Master Plan for Be'er Sheva metropolis (RMP 4/14, 1998) that denied the need to formalize more settlements. These shifts promised both a political opportunity and a potential threat for the Bedouin. A special governmental committee appointed to study the issue declared: "The state today is more willing than in the past to solve the informal locales issues" (Mena, 1996). Despite decisive resistance by state officials to formalizing more settlements, the committee was influenced by the lobbying efforts of the above GROs and specialists, and ordered the government to draw up formalization plans for some settlements (ibid). Its decisions started a planning process in which the fate of many settlements would be determined, which pressured the Bedouin to mobilize in new ways in order to influence the process. In 1997, the Regional Council of the Unrecognized Arab-Bedouin Villages (RCUV), a grass-roots council devoted to this goal, was established (institutionalized as a formal NGO), (Meir, 2005; Qupty, 2004; interview: El-A'asem, RCUV, El-A'asem).

The RCUV declared 46 settlements "unrecognized villages," and helped them consolidate village committees. The villages' populations ranged between a few hundred or a few thousand, and there were many other small locales with several dozen inhabitants. Their representatives eventually peopled the council. The RCUV represented most of the informal settlements and defined its mission as the comprehensive formalization of all of them. It denounced the pragmatic attitudes that characterized prior alternative plans and planners, and embraced a politicized approach. In 1999, the RCUV published an alternative plan that was authored by a professional planning office (RCUV, 1999) and presented as an objection to the governmental regional master plan. Meir (2005) argued that the alternative plan aimed to reconstruct the hegemonic planning discourse, causing

an acknowledgement of the Arab-Bedouin's distinctive identity, cultural needs, territoriality and social structure (see also: Koensler, 2015).

Here we argue that, beyond being a practical proposal aimed at the planning apparatus, this was a political statement aimed at other arenas, too. We reached this conclusion by considering the context in which the plan was published: First, the RCUV rejected any cooperation with state agencies and was similarly ignored by them. Second, the demand raised by RCUV – unconditional recognition – was unthinkable for state officials at the time. Third, the RCUV purposefully defined itself and its constituencies as "Arabs," a bold statement, painted with nationalist colors, within an already intensifying ethnic conflict. The politicization of the alternative plan's demands eliminated the option of a pragmatic, professional discussion with planning authorities. It should be examined, therefore, in light of the RCUV's broader political project as it unfolded during the next decade.

Alternatives from Trans-Local Civic Networks

The RCUV's plan embodied important symbolic political aspects. Though not the first to demand formalization, this plan was the first to be handled by an organization with grounded legitimacy to represent the target population (Qupty, 2004). Moreover, the plan was a demand to recognize, not only physical settlements, but also their cultural uniqueness and municipal-political independence. Stating that no evacuation would be considered legitimate was an act of defiance that needed to lean on non-state sources of power to be sustained.

We can trace two (intertwined) sources of political power used by the RCUV. The first is its ethnonational-religious identity. Declaratively identifying with Arab-nationalism enabled the RCUV to join forces with the escalating Arab resistance to Israel in other spaces and arenas, as expressed through Palestinian and Islamic movements, NGOs and parties (e.g. the Supreme Council for Surveillance, the Islamic Movement, and later, indirectly, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement) (e.g. Dekel et al., 2019; Yiftachel, 2009; also: Jamal, 2011). The second is the Israeli and global left/liberal movement that sought to fight what it understood as Jewish colonization, thus sprouting strong cooperation with varied professional NGOs (see: Dekel, Kalush, & Bird-David, 2016; Greenspan, 2014; Koensler, 2015; Meir, 2003, 2005). The RCUV became the locus of a networked struggle: mobilizing local communities, representing them and connecting them with the professional capabilities of trans-local NGOs. The latter provided valuable expertise in the fields of litigation, protest, political lobbying (national and international) and more. They also connected the Bedouin to financial resources from foreign funds, (mainly European) states and the European Union (EU) (see: NGO Monitor, 2013).

The RCUV's plan functioned as an agenda for the civic network. It envisioned which settlements were to be formalized, and the different NGOs sought ways to manifest that vision. Alternative planning efforts became a central action route, led by Bimkom, an NGO that specializes in planning. Bimkom promoted progressive methods, among them participatory and ethnography-based planning. Cooperating directly with the RCUV and local committees of villages facing formalization processes, Bimkom informed the communities of their formal rights and wrote position papers based on local socio-cultural needs with them (e.g. Lerner, Fenster, & Ilan, 2003; see also: Ben-Arie, 2009; Fenster, 2009; interview: Lerner, Baruch, Ben-Arie, Hartman, Bimkom activists, 2012). Bimkom's members wrote alternative plans for places that were denied of formalization (e.g. Bimkom, 2010). Together with NGOs specializing in litigation, Bimkom presented expert opinions as part of the formal objections to governmental plans, presented before planning or legal instances. The NGO's planners published the alternative plans for the public and

professional community at conventions and in journals. In this way, they pushed gradual, persistent change in governmental planning discourse, gaining notable achievements in particular places, such as in the formalization of the village of Darijat (Dekel et al., 2016; Weinshall, 2018; interviews: Dromi, 2012; Hartman, 2012; Sherfi, Bedouin Regularization Authority [state agency], 2015). Lastly, Bimkom formulated agendas that were presented to the Goldberg Committee, a special governmental committee that addressed the issue of Bedouin informality in 2008 (Bimkom, 2008).

Again, when facing the committee, state representatives resisted formalization of new settlements (Bedouin Authority, 2008; Israel Land Authority, 2008; South Regional Administration, 2008). In opposition, several NGOs, together with intellectuals specializing in Bedouin society, presented reasoned alternatives. Though seemingly separate, most of the presenters were interlinked through the civic network, synchronized with the RCUV's agenda and presenting more-or-less correlated alternatives (Bimkom, 2008; RCUV, 2008; Yiftachel, 2008). These cumulative efforts brought about a substantial historic shift (Weinshall, 2018) when the Goldberg Committee declared: "In principle, and as much as possible, it is suggested to recognize [formalize] each one of the unrecognized villages that have a minimal population mass [...] as long as this does not contradict the regional masterplan" (Goldberg, 2008, p. 32). This meant that already dense settlements should be formalized.[5]

The Goldberg resolutions demanded dramatic changes in planning policy. Governmental agencies started implementing Goldberg's decisions, yet, they have gradually narrowed the (vaguely) outlined changes for practical and political reasons (e.g. Duchan, 2010; RMP 4/14/23, 2012). The most significant policy act for implementation of Goldberg's recommendations was named the "Prawer Plan." It outlined how to formalize settlements and develop them, aiming to bring a comprehensive resolution for all land claims and Bedouin informality, by way of (what was perceived as) an historic '50–50 compromise': half of the claims were to be recognized, and the other half would either be differentially compensated monetarily (according to agricultural value) or substituted by alternative lands in case of needed relocation. That said, the Plan targeted more than 3,000 families for resettlement. Though many Bedouin saw it as a welcome solution, dominant figures rejected it as being a plan for unjust dispossession (Weinshall, 2018). To counteract crystallization of the Prawer Plan, the civic network formulated an alternative masterplan. At first, the RCUV published a position paper, written with Bimkom and a prominent human rights NGO, the Association of Human Rights in Israel (RCUV et al., 2011). Other global NGO coalitions issued professional reports urging Israel to grasp "the Goldberg opportunity" (Habitat International, 2008). Later, the RCUV partnered with Bimkom, high-ranking academics in planning, and Sidre, a GRO devoted to Bedouin women's empowerment, in a project of considerable ambition. The new team won sufficient funding from the European Union (EU) for what was termed a 'development project.' The aim was to reassert the demand for formalization of the 35 unrecognized villages (at the time, because 11 were already marked for formalization because of the pressure exerted during the previous two decades (Yiftachel, 2009). The plan was grounded in "general Israeli planning standards" (RCUV et al., 2012, p. 5) – see Figure 1. The rationale was based on comprehensive modern development, yet was attentive to specific cultural needs. It also relied on familiarity with Bedouin culture (which governmental officials profoundly lacked), drawing from long-term mutual work with communities and representative councils, and from surveys, 'participation workshops,' and women's participation. Substantially different from the Prawer Plan, it avoided nearly all evictions, formalized and developed settlements in-situ, in accordance with the familiar divisions and traditional tenure (RCUV., Bimkom., and Sidre, 2012; interviews: Baruch, 2012; Ben-Arie, 2012; El-A'asem, 2016; Yiftachel, 2016).

Noteably, despite its declared inclusive intentions, the plan caused significant discontent: nationalist-Islamists rejected cooperation with the Israeli state; constituencies of the RCUV were agitated by the deep involvement of outside, Jewish planners in the planning process (interview: Jabarin, 2018; Yiftachel, 2016); and some informal communities favored siding with the state and thus sought to distance themselves from the RCUV and its related network. One community recruited their own specialist advocates and presented alternatives that won some recognition from the Goldberg Committee. However, without significant political power backing them, the recommendation to formalize their village was dismissed by the government (Abu-Sulb, 2008; interview: Abu-Sulb, Abu-Sulb local committee, 2016). In practice, 52 settlements declared themselves as villages and demanded formalization, compared with only 46 presented by the RCUV (Duchan, 2010).

Despite the intense work invested in it, government offices refused to debate the RCUV's alternative, declaring that its proposals were "disregarding reality" (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Nevertheless, the alternative plan was part and parcel of a wider political project underway, promoted by the civic network. Bimkom publicized it by speaking to varied audiences and at conventions of planners, geographers and engineering associations. Other NGOs published and advocated for the plan on their websites (e.g. Human Rights Watch, 2013; Rabbis for Human Rights, 2013a), and promoted it in the media (e.g. Dromi, 2014) and through research institutions (e.g. Middle East Research and Information Project, 2011). The plan's significance at the time was to assert there is an alternative to complying with the Prawer Plan. Prawer was intensely criticized by other NGOs too, through public campaigns (e.g. Rabbis for Human Rights, 2013b), professional papers (e.g. Abu-Ras, 2011) and international lobbies (e.g. Habitat International, 2011). Eventually, under pressure, the government promoted a new version of its plan, while leading a wide participatory process, and meeting with community leaders and NGOs (Weinshall, 2018). The end product, the 'Begin Report' (Begin, 2013), was a so-called softer version of the Prawer Plan, yet it was widely considered an insufficient gesture and thus it drew even more criticism, such as from civic research institutions (e.g. Arab Center for Alternative Planning, 2013; Levine-Schnur, 2013).

The alternative plan was targeted at political arenas, such as the international community. Different NGO coalitions lobbied the EU parliament (Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, 2013) and various UN committees (Adala and Negev Coexistence Forum, 2014; United Nations, 2013a, 2013b) to pressure Israel to withdraw its plans and adopt the alternative (also Yagna & Khoury, 2011). Their appeals drew strength from the fact that a professional plan existed, undermining the state's arguments that there was no 'serious' alternative that could replace its professional schemes. In such a context, the state's insistence was commonly depicted as a human rights violation, which had considerable significance in garnering the attention of international institutions. Indeed, these institutions published denunciations and demanded that the government's plan be withdrawn (Anaya, 2011; European Union, 2012, 2015; United Nations [CERD], 2012) and called on the government to consider alternatives from civil society (Rolnik, 2012; see also: NGO Monitor, 2013; United Nations, 2015).

Despite pretending a lack of interest, the government was pressured by those statements (e.g. Nathanson, Kerthcer, Brand, & Navon, 2011; interview: Peled, Urban planner, 2015), and by domestic political protest within the parliament, instigated by Arab and leftist (opposition) parties. The constant criticism pushed politicians and bureaucrats to seek new ways to mitigate public unrest. The political parties were largely informed and pushed to action by civic networks and GRO coalitions with which they had regular interaction and exchange, among them the Coalition of Organizations for Equality and Justice for the Bedouin and the Supreme Council for Surveillance (Adala, 2013; Ma'an, 2013; Interview: Abu-Ras, Adala, 2014). Multiple parliament members kept demanding to consider the alternative (e.g.

Committee of interior and environment, 2013), declaring that the Prawer Plan is a "crime against humanity" (Rettig-Gur, 2013). Lastly, the government was influenced by a public campaign within and outside Israel, on social media (Prawer Will Not Pass Campaign, 2013) and in repeated street protests. The protests culminated in late 2013 with mass demonstrations in the Negev (Khadder, 2013), Israeli cities and some other cities around the globe, all condemning the government's plans. Being informed and mobilized by the civic network, they demanded to consider the alternative plan (Ukbi, 2013). These protests were populated by a mix of liberals and pro-Palestinian participants, some of them straightforward anti-Israeli ideologists (Abu-Ras, 2013; Azem, 2013; interview: Abu-Gwider, Shatil, 2016).

The last round caused wide public criticism against the government's weakness and inability to implement its plan in the face of Bedouin resistance. The failure to receive legitimacy from the Bedouin and their allies caused the plan to be shelved (Berman, 2013; Weinshall, 2018). The civic network achieved an important victory, but its political project was not over. It is important to mention that the protest also opened up an opportunity for a Jewish right-wing coalition of NGOs and political parties to object to the plan as well, claiming it was too generous with rights and land allocation for the "Bedouin outlaws," which added a crucial political impact to the end result (Weinshall, 2018; interview: Yogev, Regavim, 2014). In 2014, the civic network's alternative plan moved to center stage when it was ceremonially presented to the President, after an emblematic four-day protest march from the Negev to Jerusalem, arranged and attended by hundreds of civil society activists and ideological supporters. The march was led by Aimen Ode, the head of the Joint List, the Arab-leftist political party. This was his first public act after election to office, putting the Bedouin struggle and the proposed alternative at the center of his attention, symbolically and practically (Boarini, 2015). The party continued pressuring for the alternative and threatening that any other plan "will bring unprecedented civic resistance" (Cohen, 2015). Yet, as of this writing there is still no new, governmental comprehensive plan to replace the Begin Plan.

To conclude, the networks' main achievements are exerting pressure on multiple professional and political fronts that gradually forced the government to withhold evictions and officially earmark an increasing number of Bedouin settlements for formalization, even if formalization remains unrealized. These achievements cannot (yet) be seen as revolutionary but rather as place-specific reforms. The alternative plan was not officially adopted, but importantly, none of the villages that it would formalize, despite being designated for eviction by the government, was actually evicted. It appears that the alternative it poses to government policies, when coupled with the concrete threat of resistance, substantially limits the latter's ability to promote any plan it finds unacceptable. Viewed from another perspective, the tremendous increase in the level of recognition from zero in the 1950s to 70–80% of the present Bedouin population, particularly in the recent two decades, and state consciousness of the need to bring the age old saga of unrecognized villages to an end after decades of sluggish action (Meir, forthcoming), are perhaps the main achievement of the trans-local civic network's struggle.

Conclusions

Our findings present the evolution of a politicized (professional) planning project for the formalization of informal Bedouin settlements, manifested through the workings of a trans-local civic network. Historically, many alternative plans were raised to promote formalization and development. Two earlier stages of alternative planning came from individual specialists and grassroots organizations, who leaned heavily on their professional attributes – professional writers, field surveys, rational methods and so forth. Nonetheless, these alone were insufficient. The alternatives gained power

only when a higher and more complex stage unfolded, when they were politicized and incorporated into broader projects in other arenas, including the courts, media, human rights reports, public protests, parliamentary lobbying, international institutions, and academia. This movement was possible only with the consolidation of a broad and complex trans-local civic network of NGOs, GROs, political parties, funds, village committees and foreign institutions and civic councils – whose agendas and actions were loosely coordinated.

The fact that special committees were influenced by the alternatives presented to them (the committees themselves were a product of civic networking, lobbying and protest) did not ensure implementation. The government always has vast flexibility to reconstruct its policy according to its agendas and interests. This was the case regarding the gap between Goldberg Committee's (vague) resolutions and the (more concrete) Prawer Plan. What eventually jeopardized the implementation of the Prawer Plan was not the (professional) alternative masterplan itself, but its integration into a vast political campaign in public, parliamentary and international arenas, pushed forward by numerous NGOs and activists. For these agents, the alternative plan was an agenda and a rationale for broader resistance to issues of allocation, identity, and power. It strengthened political and technical demands presented to the UN or EU, the Israeli parliament, supporting social movements and other publics, which later wielded increasing pressure on the state.

This assemblage of organizations should be seen as a new stage of alternative planning praxis. Beyond promoting an alternative planning agenda, it created an organizational platform for (professional) planning, detached from the state apparatus. This way, the civic network, instead of being an object for 'participation' with state planners, became a collective, political subject using (professional) planning within a broad (counter) political project. The rise of this network is an outcome of two factors – one is unique to the particular Israeli case and one shares more general aspects with other worldwide cases. The unique Israeli-Palestinian conflict, around which there is already political tension between two ethnonational groups, brought to the formation of a previously existing network of (leftist) human rights organizations, and a national and global concern about the fragile status of Arab citizens' (and non-citizens') rights in Israel. The general aspect is the tension, prevalent throughout the global southeast, between states (and associated higher-classes) and the lower-classes, living in impoverished, informal habitats. The particular Israeli-Arab aspect probably added significant magnitude to the mobilization but, as explained, is by-no-means unique to Israel. The general aspect drives informal groups (and others who critique planning policies) to mobilize and network in similar veins. Further research could shed more light on the ways in which the civic networks use their global connections and the power of new social media, to influence planning matters.

The praxis of alternative (professional) planning through trans-local civic networks should be seen from two, non-exclusive perspectives: on the one hand, it provides a new way to understand how resistance can operate and alternatives be proposed in today's globalizing world – an optimistic trail to climb for anyone looking to challenge deep structures of power. On the other hand, this may become a Janus-faced solution. The way civic networks wield political power is inherently tied to collaboration with (strong) political agents. This forces us to consider what kind of strings are attached to the funding and political support given by institutions with neo-liberal, nationalist or religious ideologies and with varied interests (in the above case, prominent examples are the EU, the Islamic Movement or BDS). These are not necessarily congruent with the values and interests of the receiving population and not necessarily in favor of so-called just and democratic goals, as several scholars contend (e.g. Fenster, 2009; Kedar et al., 2018). Further, we should consider whether foreign (even if indirect) intervention in a country's planning affairs is appropriate. Trans-local civic networks are an important rising phenomenon in actual planning praxis. They have extensive capabilities to push alternatives through, yet they

participate in moral controversies, which are never clear-cut, and always incur intense and often inconclusive public debate.

Notes

1. Professionalism is conceived as formal education, rational and coherent practice within codes and confinements of the planning milieu.
2. Examples: "A comprehensive plan for the problems of the Bedouin in the Negev" (Nathanson, Al-Huzail, Aelimi, Asan, &Tsameret, 1999: "Center of Legal and Economic Research in the Middle-East" and "Israeli Institution for Economic and Social Research"); "New model for land settlement with the Negev Bedouin" (Ben-David, 2004: Institution for Land Policy and Uses [Jewish National Fund]); "Recognized" (Hershkowitz, 2017), "Social Hub Technion"); "A way forward" (Abu-Saad & Lithwick, 2000: "Arno Institution" and "Negev Center for Regional Development").
3. The planning was aided by an academic institution: the "Center for Urban Studies", Haifa University.
4. It should be noted that group was different from the Negev Bedouin in origin, history, and lack of land claims.
5. The statement was important, since many Bedouin habitats have low-density and are remote from main infrastructure. The general national planning policy promotes urbanized, dense settlements, to prevent sprawl and reduce expenditures of infrastructure and service delivery. The scattered and sparse character of most Bedouin settlements traditionally justified, in the state's eyes, their delegitimization (see Dekel et al., 2019).

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