

ETHNIC BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG URBANISING BEDOUIN IN THE NEGEV, ISRAEL

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Abstract

The Bedouin of the Negev in Israel have been forced by the State to give up their agro-pastoral mode of subsistence, but were not offered any meaningful economic alternatives. Business has become one significant option. It is regarded here as 'ethnic entrepreneurship', as many traditional cultural and social traits are employed by them to survive within an entrepreneurial business environment that is highly constrained both externally and internally. This paper discusses the nature of these enterprises and entrepreneurs. A spatial and socio-tribal analysis reveals no differences in these entities between the planned towns and the unrecognised informal settlements outside towns, but considerable differences were found between the fellahin Bedouin and the 'true' Bedouin which compete latently for socio-political and economic hegemony. The process of ethnic entrepreneurship bears implications for sub-ethnic internal relationships, for the Bedouin struggle to protect land to which they claim ownership from the State, and for the broader issue of ethnicity and business within the Bedouin community.

Keywords: Market economy, traditional practices, fellahin Bedouin, 'true' Bedouin, business environment, land, ethnicity

Introduction

The Negev Bedouins' disengagement from traditional semi-pastoral economic and social modes of existence has been taking place intensively ever since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. And yet, five decades later, their integration into the regional modern urban economy has by no means been complete, nor has it been beneficial to them. Consequently the Bedouin are the most underdeveloped and socio-economically deprived and underprivileged population in Israel.

This is due primarily to a consistent 'non-development' governmental attitude toward the community. This attitude of benign neglect has left them to pursue their own means of subsistence with virtually no public or institutional support. Situated within this economic situation, they are left with only the following

options: highly constrained semi-urban pastoral and farming opportunities; a very limited and mostly Bedouin-exclusive public and private labour market; the informal economy; and formal business entrepreneurship.

The first option has been studied extensively elsewhere (e.g., Ben-David 1988; Abu-Rabia 1994). The second is a widely publicised problem but has not been studied to any great degree. The third economic option, the pursuit of activity within the informal economy, is prosperous for some Bedouin community members, but due to its unique nature, does not easily lend itself to informed academic research and as a result is substantiated primarily through anecdotal evidence.

In this paper we explore the fourth option, that of formal business entrepreneurship. In particular, we seek to discuss and analyse the nature of Bedouin business entrepreneurship and the ethnic components within this practice, and to discuss some of the implications of this process. Although the Bedouin economy exists within the regional economy of the northern Negev, the Bedouin are barred from the opportunities of being fully integrated into this economy; nor are they free to maintain their traditional economy of pastoralism to any sustainable degree. Our underlying assumption is that business entrepreneurship, along with its unique ethnic components, is a necessary adaptive measure taken by the Bedouin as they strive to enter into the modern regional economy.

Why Business *Entrepreneurship*?

A question must first be posed as to why we adopt the term 'business *entrepreneurship*' rather than simply '*business*'. Indeed, from an objective capitalist economic perspective this process could be viewed as merely taking place in a group living within a totally market economy. The process would then be regarded as nothing more than a few individuals deciding to discontinue their previous economic practice in order to pursue a new business venture.

Given the nature of business among the Bedouin, nothing unique would emerge to warrant the term '*entrepreneurship*'. Indeed, from this perspective, Bedouin business enterprises would be too small in scale, non-innovative in nature, too 'old fashioned' and 'backward' in practice, and too marginal in terms of their contribution to regional development and growth in conservative input-output terms, to be considered significant.

However, when viewed from a Bedouin societal perspective, the term 'business entrepreneurship' is highly relevant and in order. The community in question was comprised of pastoral nomads up until the mid-nineteenth century; at that time the process of sedentarisation began and the Bedouin moved toward semi-nomadic pastoralism (Bar-Zvi and Ben-David 1978). The process of complete sedentarisation had begun by the 1930s, and accelerated only after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 (Ben-David 1982). Only then, in fact,

did the Bedouin become more actively involved in the capitalistic market-oriented Western economy in the Negev. And yet, the pastoral component of their economy is still quite significant (Degen et al. 2000).

It is for this reason that the whole concept of a business society and economy is largely alien to the Bedouin community. The monetised economy is relatively new in this society, only arriving in the early twentieth century (Ben-David 1989). Except for the exchange of goods in regional market towns (Ben-David and Kressel 1995), their active involvement in the labour, commodities, goods, financial and real estate markets is also relatively new. Many of these activities have in fact been innovations introduced to this society only in the last five or six decades (Meir 1983), and some are still considered as such.

As a result, any new economic activity carried out by Bedouin individuals not directly related to traditional subsistence pastoral nomadism and dry farming, and not conducted as hired labour within the regional labour market, is an entrepreneurial process. Any scale of such activity would be large enough, and any nature would be innovative enough for the person involved to be considered an entrepreneur and his activity an *entrepreneurial venture* in Western business terminology. Even becoming a hired labourer within the labour market is new and not necessarily highly desired among a people who, until recently, were accustomed to an almost entirely independent subsistence economy with only minor integration into the urban economy. As will be seen below, this process involves many aspects that are related from the Bedouin perspective, and also from an external perspective, to genuine entrepreneurship.

The Economic and Political Contexts

The economic environment that is being presented here is that of pastoral nomads, many of whom are among the most marginalised peoples on earth today, practising a primordial economy that might be radically and very rapidly transformed into a modern one. This is a unique situation. In very few cases elsewhere (e.g., the Saami in northern Scandinavia), does one find a primary pre-capitalist and pre-urban economy situated within a capitalist free-market tertiary and quaternary economy. Therefore their integration into the modern-urban economy has been a complicated problem for both the State and for many of the Bedouin. Studying such a process of integration requires an understanding of the full evolutionary range of all possible circumstances that might be theoretically relevant along this spectrum of change.

Figure 1 presents the knowledge-body contexts that might be most relevant for studying the Negev Bedouin ethnic business enterprise. It is impossible to review all contexts in detail. Only some of the basic dimensions that are relevant to this study are presented here. First, we define business entrepreneurship. This is an economic activity conducted by an individual (or a group of individuals) who

is/are using his/her/their own (or otherwise independently mobilised) financial capital and other resources. The purpose of their entrepreneurial ventures is to generate outputs that carry economic and commercial values demanded by people, and revenues that are transformed into his/her/their income for survival and profit (Bird 1989).

Second, we refer to *ethnic* business entrepreneurship. Due to the increasing volume of international migration, this phenomenon has attracted a growing interest in recent decades. A number of studies have been undertaken concerning migrant businessmen of various ethnic origins and their unique business practices being carried out within western economies (e.g., Ward and Jenkins 1984; Waldinger et al. 1990; Trompenaars 1994; Gomelski et al. 1995; Razin and Light 1998; Wong 1998).

In order to fully understand the term it must be put within the proper context. An *ethnic* business enterprise usually takes place within a social context of a 'majority' (i.e., dominant group)-minority relationship. This context exists in two types of cases: ethnic minority migrants within a majority society (e.g., Chinese

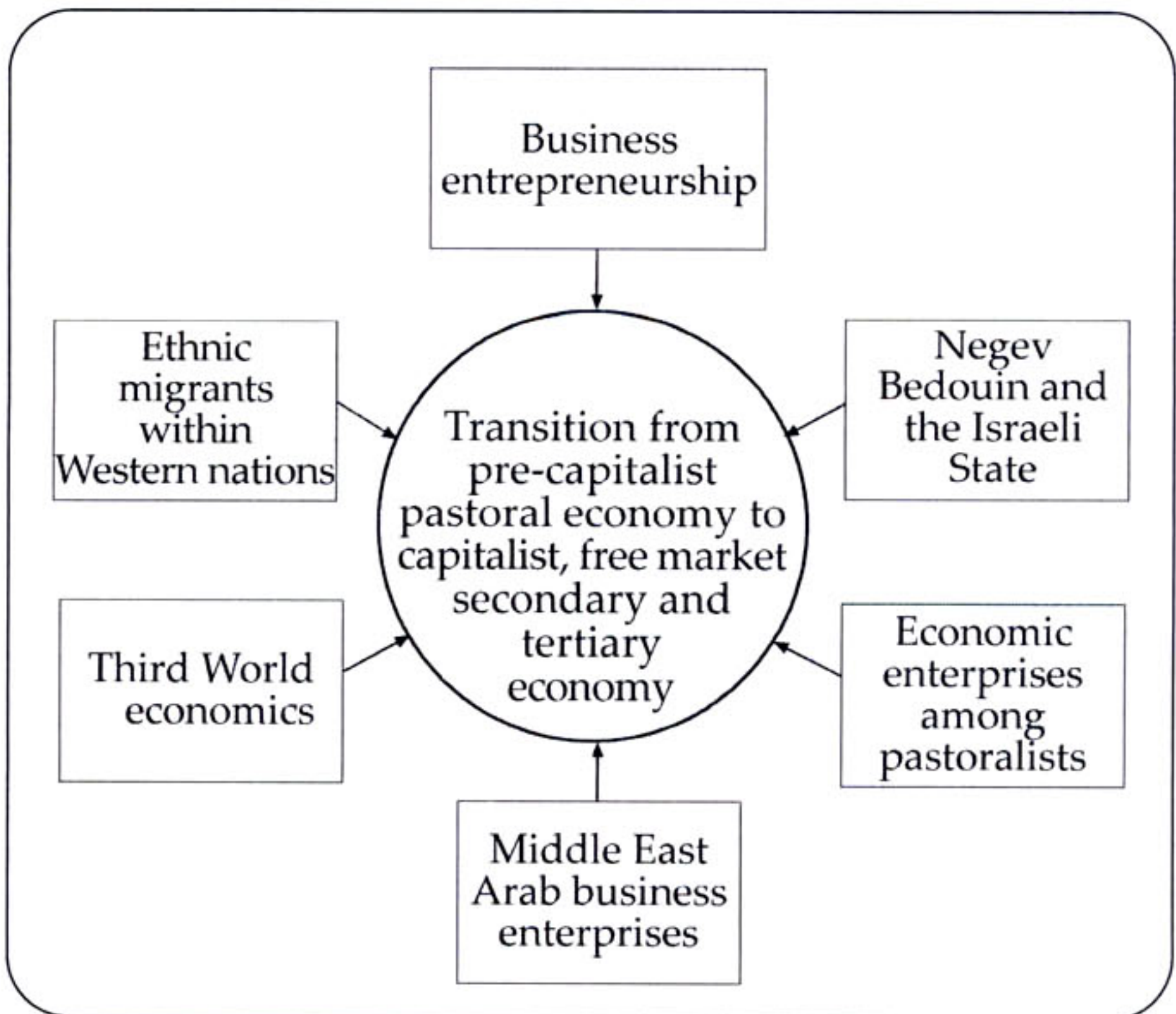


Figure 1. *The Knowledge-Body Contexts*

in Canada), and First Nation or indigenous peoples within a settler society (e.g., Aborigines in Australia or the Negev Bedouin in Israel). In both cases the business enterprises that are created involve the accommodation of unique cultural and/or traditional components and considerations that distinguish the minority group from the majority population.

Usually some form of social or economic change takes place within the minority group during its introduction and accommodation into the new society and economy. Yet such groups also seek out traditional and familiar niches and appropriate economic types and organisational structures. In this process cultural continuity of the components mentioned above will be manifest in economic ventures within the new host economy. Salzman's (1981) theory of change is relevant here. When applied to our research question, it suggests that culturally institutionalised practices that historically and traditionally were active within the population are retained in the group's 'reservoir' of alternatives, recruited by the ethnic entrepreneurs in due time, brought into the economic arena and activated there, while being adjusted to the emerging circumstances within the modern economy.

It is here that the changing culture of pastoral nomads, such as that of the Bedouin, becomes relevant. One of the most common characteristics of business entrepreneurship refers to risk-taking and management. Entrepreneurs in general are subject to considerably higher economic risk-taking than other economic actors. Risk and uncertainty are quite common features of pastoral nomadic activity as well. Many studies have highlighted the high-risk nature of the pastoral enterprise, given the uncertain ecological and often political conditions within which nomadic pastoralists operate (e.g., Scoones 1994).

And yet, the context of extreme uncertainty involved in integration into a new economy is unparalleled among many ethnic groups. Therefore, as early as the late 1970s Marx (1978) suggested the 'dual-economy strategy' hypothesis for Bedouin throughout the Middle East. In such a strategy, Middle Eastern Bedouin conduct their economic practices in both the pastoral and the capitalist economies concurrently, in effect relying upon traditional practices as a 'safety valve' of sorts in case of failure in the new economy. And while risk minimisation is common in all kinds of entrepreneurship, the tendency among ethnic groups to avoid or to minimise risk rather than maximising profit is considerably more acute.

There appear to be several ways of achieving this goal. One way relies upon the dominance of the family, not only in the social sphere, but also in the economic one. The latter is manifested in several respects: maintaining traditional family resources and connections as a 'base stronghold' for possible failures (Marx 1980, 1984), recruiting nuclear and extended family members as partners and workers, and mobilising family human and financial resources.

Another development, which is quite common among pastoral nomads, is the evolution of a traditional-modern economic continuum that conforms to the pastoral-rural-urban economic axis (Meir 1997). This refers not only to cultural

continuity at the individual level, but also at the inter-generational level. Thus communities like the Bedouin attempt to conduct their new business enterprises in historically familiar and well-experienced fields and in culturally appropriate ways that are adjusted and augmented to the new circumstances. In so doing they are materially and ideologically mobilising their past towards a sustainable future.

All these general dimensions have to be contextualised within the unique conditions of Bedouin life in Israel. The Bedouin, as shown above, have become an ethnic minority within a settler society in Israel (Yiftachel 2002). A growing tension has developed between them and the Israeli state in recent decades. This tension revolves around issues of social, spatial and environmental justice such as land ownership, recognition of spontaneous/non-planned villages, provision of public social and municipal goods (education, health, welfare, water, electricity and environmental services), economic aid, urban policy and local municipal power (Meir 1997, 1999, 2005).

Thus, the process here is not simply the transition from the pre-modern to the more modern world that some pastoral nomadic groups worldwide have recently experienced, nor is it only the more general and now familiar process of the tension and conflict between pastoral nomads and the state (Fratkin 1994, 1997). Rather, the economic process described here is developing within particularly constraining Israeli political and cultural contexts, which may also be viewed through the lens of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These contexts make the issue of business entrepreneurship among the Negev Bedouin a highly complex one.

The following are some major milestones in Israeli Bedouin history during the last six decades that are relevant for understanding this issue:

1. The 1948 Israeli War of Independence, with its immediate consequences of Bedouin flight and expulsion at numbers that reduced their population by about 85 percent to ~11,000.
2. Relocation of the remaining Bedouin population into an enclosure (*Hebrew Seig*, see Figure 2) that was militarily administered until 1966, with its dire consequences for an already economically and socially unsustainable nomadic pastoral community.
3. The undertaking in the mid-1960s of a long-term governmental policy of further relocating the Bedouin, this time into state-planned towns (see Figure 3), with its territorial implications of the Bedouins' gradual loss of control over their traditional pastoral and dry-farming territorial resources.
4. The production of a (not entirely exclusive) geographically bifurcated Bedouin society within metropolitan Beer-Sheva: a semi-urban space, that is the towns that are inhabited mostly by about 80,000 landless Bedouin (annexed fellaheen-farmers) in seven recognized towns lacking economic infrastructure; and a mostly undeveloped rural space (known as 'the dispersion', *Hebrew pezurah*), made of dozens of spontaneous, unplanned and unrecognised villages whose ~75,000 population, mostly of 'True' Bedouin origin, refuse to

risk the loss of their claimed traditional land ownership rights by relocating to these towns;

5. The emergence of a dependent Bedouin economy, with high unemployment rates and large informal and illegal sectors amidst a tense territorial conflict (Marx 2000), accompanied by Bedouin protest, several grass-root development attempts, political and cultural centrifugal tendencies and alternative planning by the Bedouin (Meir 2003).

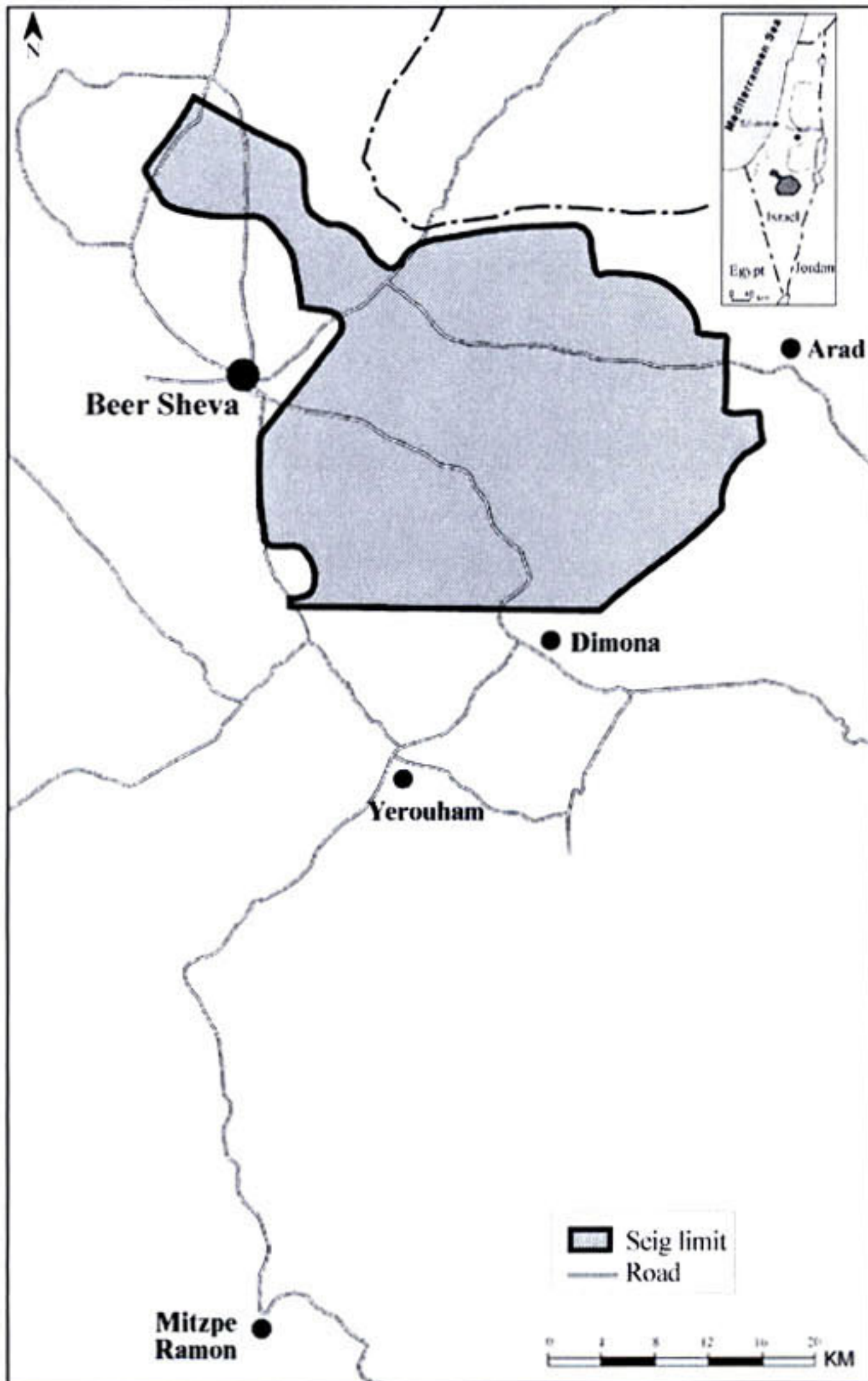


Figure 2. *The Seig region, 1948–1965*

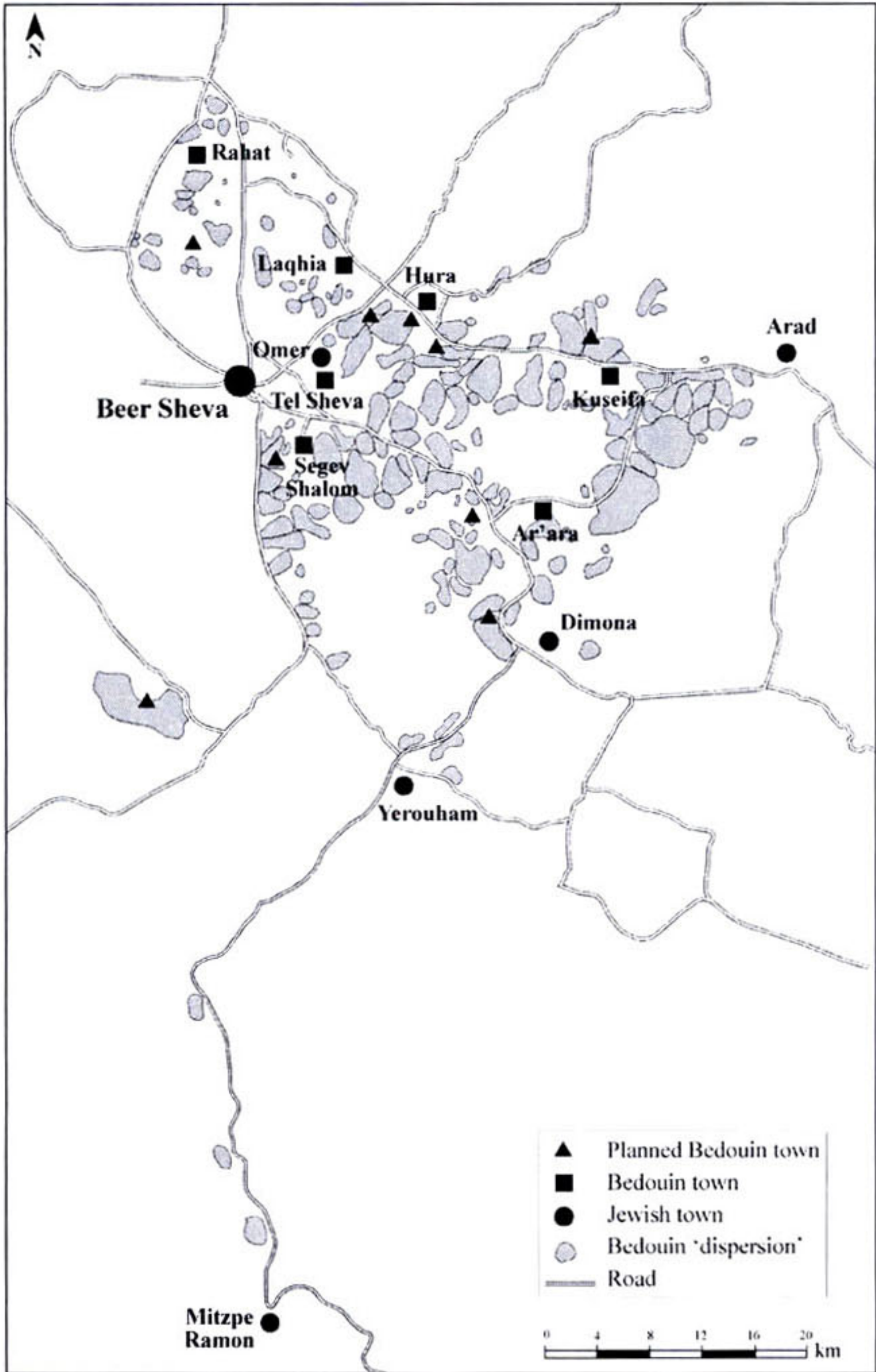


Figure 3. *Bedouin settlements in the Negev, 2002*

Source: Meir, 2002.

Under such circumstances, the major hypothesis of this study is that Bedouin business enterprises contain strong ethnic components that serve as buffers and cushions against failure or difficulty in a highly uncertain process of integration into the modern Israeli economy.

In order to substantiate this hypothesis and analyse Bedouin business entrepreneurship, data were gathered from several sources. Following a pilot study, we conducted a questionnaire survey of seventy-five Bedouin entrepreneurs. They constitute approximately 7 percent of the estimated total of Bedouin entrepreneurs, representing an estimated 4–5 percent of Bedouin households. The entrepreneurs were assembled using a ‘snowballing’ method, resulting in what was necessarily a non-random sample. The substantial size of the sample, backed up by the pilot study findings, guarantees the reliability of the results well, especially given the nature of the community in question that is not very open to outsiders.

In these questionnaires respondents were asked closed questions about their personal background and about various aspects of their business enterprises. In addition they were allowed and encouraged to express their views verbally on each of the questions. These responses, as will be shown below, provided very important input into the analysis of the data. Following the survey, in-depth follow-up interviews with fifteen entrepreneurs were conducted. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain interviewee’s opinions and ideas about their business ventures in an open manner, without being constrained by the questions posed on the questionnaire. This phase was followed by in-depth interviews with eleven public Bedouin and non-Bedouin national and local government officials. These interviews were designed to obtain additional information concerning the general administrative and public policy context of Bedouin entrepreneurship.

Data from the questionnaires were coded and analysed in order to test for significance of differences of various properties of entrepreneurship along two major dimensions. We hypothesised that there would be significant differences among entrepreneurs and their ventures between the planned town dwellers and those of the ‘dispersion’ (*pezurah*), and between the fellahin Bedouin and the ‘true’ Bedouin, given that these dimensions reflect the major social and economic differences found within Bedouin society today. This analysis was then accompanied by an analysis of the interviews in order to understand the general and more specific contexts of the findings, particularly the operational environment within which Bedouin entrepreneurs carry out their businesses (Baskind 2004).

The discussion that follows presents the results of our data analysis and interpretation of the nature of the Bedouin entrepreneur; the nature of Bedouin business enterprises; town-‘dispersion’ and ‘true’ Bedouin-fellaheen Bedouin differences in economic enterprises; and the nature of the operational business environment.

The 'Ethnic' Nature of the Bedouin Entrepreneurs and their Business Enterprises

It is quite evident that the Bedouin entrepreneurship scene is an exclusively male world. This is related to fundamental gender differences that prevail within this society. In several respects these differences have widened even further following the semi-urbanisation process of recent decades.

Traditionally women were fully engaged in the pastoral and farming production process. At present, these options have diminished, and alternative economic activity is virtually non-existent. Furthermore, even if alternative activities existed, the public space in the settled environment of the towns and even parts of the 'dispersion' has become more densely populated, further confining Bedouin women to the private, 'permitted' realm and limiting their freedom of movement.

There are some tactics that enable women to widen their spatial realm formally and informally and thus maintain their interests in relation to the male realm (see, for example, Lewando-Hundt 1985; Dinero 1997; Fenster 1999; Pessate-Schubert 2003; Al-Krenawi 2004), but these are as yet insufficient for women to operate independently in the business world. True, some women are evidently engaged in minor home or local marketplace sales of home products and self-made food products, adding to their personal or their family income. Such ventures, however, are limited in size and scope, and cannot truly be considered as entrepreneurial business enterprises.

The male entrepreneurs, or businessmen, that were surveyed for this study may be characterised as follows:

- they ranged in age from 30–45;
- they had an average of 11 years of formal schooling;
- 97 percent of them were married, 20 percent were in polygynous marriages;
- all of them have multiple-children families (or households, in case of polygynous marriages);
- most of them (80 percent) lived in planned/recognised Bedouin towns, while a few resided in Beer-Sheva.

These characteristics suggest that Bedouin business enterprise is a relatively new phenomenon that does not require higher education, concentrates mostly in Bedouin towns rather than in the 'dispersion' (*pezurah*) and therefore, by implication, is mostly a fellaheen-Bedouin venture. This issue will be returned to later.

Table 1 shows the major findings from the questionnaire survey and the interviews that pertain to the nature of the business enterprises represented in the study. These will be followed by an interpretation of the findings in terms of the research questions noted above.

Table 1. Nature of Business Enterprise: Major Findings

<p>Extent of enterprise: 77 percent of the entrepreneurs own one business unit, the others own 2-4 units;</p> <p>Employees – size: most of the units (9 percent are small businesses in Israeli standards (under 70 employees) and 63 percent are under 10 employees;</p> <p>Employees – gender: 55 percent do not employ women. Those that do, employ exclusively either Jewish women or close family members (sisters or nephews);</p> <p>Type of business: the most popular business types are: earth clearing works, trucking and mini-transportation in vans (50 percent; manufacturing and sales of construction materials (cement, metal, marble etc.) (20 percent; and retailing and mechanic shops (17 percent; only few interviewees are engaged in primary activities (livestock trade, large-scale irrigated farming and greenhouse farming);</p> <p>Location of enterprise: more than one-third (36 percent) chose to locate their businesses <i>outside</i> Bedouin towns and hamlets, 43 percent are within Bedouin settlements;</p> <p>Mobility: half of the entrepreneurs regarded their businesses as mobile or semi-mobile;</p> <p>Choice of business type: in general, 50 percent indicated a close link to their past types of economic engagements; 32 percent continue their parents/family business line or imitate success by other Bedouin; 43 percent worked previously as employees in the same kind of business;</p> <p>Family component – partners: 53 percent of the interviewees have partners, of which the crucial majority (92.5 percent) are close family members;</p> <p>Family component – employees: more than half (56 percent) employ their brothers and close to half (43 percent) employ their cousins, others employ sons and nephews. In all cases, all Bedouin employees are close family members;</p> <p>Family component – suppliers: about 15 percent are family members;</p> <p>Family component – finance: in all cases businesses were established and run based exclusively on self or family financial resources (brothers, cousins and even spouse's jewellery).</p>
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In observing the characteristics of Bedouin entrepreneurship, it emerges that many contain strong ethnic components. The fact that Bedouin women are excluded from employment in these businesses (except for very close family members in some cases), and from the labour market in general, is related again to their roles and mobility. Comparable with their exclusion from the business scene, Bedouin women's economic roles in their new urbanised environment are dominated primarily by reproduction and home economics, in sharp contrast with their past intensive involvement in the pastoral production process.

Also, women's mobility outside the private home sphere, which has always been constrained except for direct pastoral activities, has been shown by Lewando-Hundt (1985), Tal (1995) and others to have become even more constrained in recent decades. The emerging dense urban environment imposes constraints enforced upon them by their families in order to avoid potential violation of family honour.

The gender conflict over these issues climaxed recently when the Center of The Association for the Improvement of the Status of Women located in the town of Laqiya was set on fire (Global Fund for Women 2005). For several years this grass-roots organisation has been a centre of economic empowerment for Bedouin women seeking to make a living from embroidery works sold locally and elsewhere by agents. The work of the Center reflected one way in which some women seek to formally widen the private, 'permitted', sphere in order to protect and further their interests in the new urbanised realm.

Another ethnic component, echoed extensively in the literature on ethnic entrepreneurship (e.g., Sofer et al. 1995 on Arabs in central and northern Israel), refers to the tendency of Bedouin businessmen to concentrate their ventures in a limited number of business types. Some of these niches were previously dominated by Jewish entrepreneurs. As the Bedouin began to move into these sectors due to economies of scale facilitating the effective pooling of internal and traditional resources (capital and labour) at low costs and with considerably narrower margins of profit, many Jewish businessmen lost in the competition and vacated them. Subsequently, the Bedouin have reached a high degree of expertise and even domination of the wider regional market in these business types.

One explanation of the tendency to gravitate to these particular fields also is the narrow educational base of the Bedouin entrepreneurs, which prevents them from entrance into a wider range of enterprises. One interviewee, however, suggested another, alternative but symptomatic explanation: despite having academic degrees he could not get a job in his profession with a Jewish business and was compelled to start a business in another field which required no formal education.

Imitation also plays a major role here. This practice is common in developed economies as well. However, when viewed through Western economic eyes, it sometimes reaches the point of what appears to be irrational proportions. Yet, this unprofitable business practice is quite rational in Bedouin eyes, but their rationality is different from that prevailing in Western economic theory. One interviewee, for example, noted that he himself provided business advice to new businessmen in his own field, only for these very businessmen to later become his direct competitors. This practice is furthered by the highly intense and committing social interactions and obligations existing in this *gemeinschaft* society.

The concentration in the particular business types shown above is to some extent also evidence of a cultural link to the Bedouin's previous traditional pastoral-related practices and activities (see also Chatty 1980). The virtual absence of large-scale farming, an enterprise many Bedouin would still prefer to

undertake were conditions favourable, is related to governmental denial of Bedouin access to local land and water resources in sufficient quantities.

On the other hand, there were several interviewees who regarded themselves as 'livestock businessmen.' They hold flocks of sheep and goats (and some camels) for sale either internally to other Bedouin for ceremonial purposes, or externally for trade in the regional meat market. According to one municipal official, interest in this kind of business within towns has recently been increasing, especially among younger Bedouin. This phenomenon takes place despite spatial difficulty (e.g., remoteness from grazing resources, lack of space for pens) and the environmental nuisances (noise, odour, animal waste) that prevail while raising livestock within the densely populated towns.

A further ethnic element of Bedouin businesses is their mobility. These business enterprises have no office base; the businessmen often use their private vehicles and mobile phones as an 'office.' It should be emphasised that this characterisation is not a conclusion derived from our analysis, but was insisted upon by many Bedouin respondents in interviews and in the open explanations they provided on the questionnaire. Many suggested that: 'I am a Bedouin, a nomad by tradition. One day I am here, the next day elsewhere.' Mobility of their modern businesses is thus materially and ideally rooted in their traditional pastoral nomadic culture.

Aside from their own particular ethnic relevance, the latter two components, that is, linkage to previous traditional pastoral practices and the mobility of their enterprises, have an even more profound relevance. They imply quite strong cultural continuity stemming from familiar economic methods and practices. Such strategies are aimed at minimising the uncertainty involved in the risky enterprises which the Bedouin undertake within an unfriendly and unsupportive economic business environment.

It is for this particular reason that many Bedouin entrepreneurs have adopted an orthodox view on what might be called a 'family enterprise strategy'. They prefer the close circles of the extended family over external sources as suppliers of human and capital resources for their business enterprises. This may have two explanations. Internally, being a conflict-ridden society with historical inter-tribal rivalries requires intensive maintenance of intimate extended family relationships for emergent crises within the new dense urban circumstances imposed upon them (Bar 1985, 1989). Externally, they have to cope with the neighbouring unfriendly non-Bedouin Jewish state environment. Interviewees time and again pointed to a situation in which the external labour market and financial sources which are interest-rate and collateral-oriented are neither accessible nor attractive to them. In such circumstances they trust their own family members most, both in terms of loyalty and the sense of belonging that the new ventures require.

But these relationships and dependence are bi-directional. Often the extended family members apply pressures on the entrepreneur to hire them or their relatives to work in his new business. Even those in this study who opposed the

incorporation of family members and relatives into their business enterprises were compelled by higher family authorities over time to hire them. Some others, who insisted on rejecting the inclusion of family members, explained that they did so in order to protect the coherence of the family in case of business conflicts, disputes or failure. In most Bedouin towns a sense of an urban community, *gesselscahft*, that would facilitate transcendence of tribal, *hamuleh* (a socio-political group of several agnatic extended families common among Arabs) and even extended family boundaries of certainty and security, has not developed yet to a degree that would allow abandoning this strategy.

Spatial and Social Aspects of Bedouin Business Enterprise

Earlier we presented the geographically bifurcated nature of Bedouin society, that is, its division into planned towns and unplanned, unrecognised villages in the 'dispersion' (*pezurah*). A major question raised in this research is related to spatial differences in business entrepreneurship with regard to this division. We make the assumption here that degrees of development and well-being, exposure to development and to a modern business environment, and friendliness and comfort of the operational business environment, are all more favourable in towns than in the underdeveloped unrecognised settlements in the 'dispersion'. These differences would be echoed in differences between the towns and the 'dispersion' in terms of both the nature of the entrepreneurs and of the nature of the business enterprise.

In some minor respects different trends were indeed found, based on some statistical evidence, but these *were not* substantiated when tested for statistical significance. The implication is that with respect to both the nature of entrepreneurs and the nature of their enterprises (except for the very ventures themselves, as is shown below) all are similar throughout Bedouin space, regardless of the nature of the place where they live.

This might imply further that there are no differences between town-dwellers and 'dispersion' dwellers in their degrees of development, exposure to development and to a modern business environment, and the consequences of these in terms of business entrepreneurship. The explanation for this may be found in the issue of the infrastructure and economic bases of the planned towns. The government promised public investment in these towns in the 1970s and 1980s in order to attract Bedouin from the 'dispersion' to relocate there. This could have generated a significant difference in degrees of economic growth and development between these spaces, making the towns more attractive. In fact, however, these investments have been negligible (Meir 1999; Abu-Saad et al. 2004).

Moreover, we could infer that there is little if any difference in economic lifestyles (e.g., patterns of employment and consumption) between the towns and the 'dispersion', as contextually the spatial extent of the region inhabited by the

Bedouin in the northern Negev is quite small (see Figure 3) and social interaction between members of Bedouin society within it is very intensive, resulting in little variation. These implications, however, require yet further and thorough substantiation. Nevertheless, despite the difference in the nature of these settlements, most Bedouin live and make their living within the metropolitan region of Beer-Sheva. They are exposed to similar degrees to both the economic benefits of this environment, as well as to the barriers encountered by all in the Bedouin sector who seek to pursue business entrepreneurial ventures.

Another major dimension of ethnic business entrepreneurship relates to internal ethnic and tribal structure. During the mid-nineteenth century Arab fellaheen (farmers) began to migrate from nearby and remote areas to Bedouin territories in the northern Negev, mostly in search of subsistence (Kressel 1986; Grossman 2004). Since then Bedouin society at large has evolved primarily as a double-class, and possibly also as a double-ethnic society, composed of the 'true' Bedouin and the fellaheen Bedouin. These groups compose the vast majority of Bedouin society. A third group, that of the 'Black Bedouin', descendants of the slaves brought from the Sudan in the nineteenth century, are a very small minority.

The 'true' Bedouin have been considered masters of the desert, controlling through nomadic pastoralism all territories and pastoral and farming resources in their clan and tribal territories. The fellaheen, in principle, were only annexed sharecropper farmers, tenants and subjects with virtually no formal land ownership rights. Having originated from various places in the Near East and North Africa including Gaza and the Nile Valley, there is no ethnic homogeneity among them yet an internal ethnic division has existed until present times between them and the Bedouin. The social boundaries have in time become somewhat blurred, but in many crucial respects (such as marriage) this socio-ethnic structure still prevails. Presently about 55 percent of Bedouin society are of fellah and other annexed origin, while the rest are 'true' Bedouin (Meir 1997).

The fellahin Bedouin, striving for internal equality, usually tend to downplay the relevance of this structure whereas the 'true' Bedouin tend to emphasise its relevance in order to maintain their historical socio-political dominance (Ben-David and Gonen 2001). This remains a very sensitive issue within Bedouin society and has been the basis for much tension, conflict, internal struggles and even bloodshed. Therefore many interviewees of fellah origin were reluctant to acknowledge it as a problem, some negating its existence altogether. Some others, however, of 'true' Bedouin and also of fellah origin, insisted on its relevance to present Bedouin society in all possible arenas: social, political and, as will be seen below, economic as well.

Table 2. *Major Differences and Similarities Between the Fellaheen and the 'True' Bedouin Entrepreneurs*

<p>Age of businessman: the fellaheen businessmen are on average older than their Bedouin fellows (born in 1960 vs. 1966);</p> <p>Age of enterprise: fellaheen enterprises are almost twice the average age than those of Bedouin enterprises (11 years vs. 6 years);</p> <p>Duration of enterprise: more fellaheen businesses than those of real Bedouin are owned or run for a second generation in a row (16 percent vs. 0 percent);</p> <p>Size of enterprise – of business units: multi-unit business entrepreneurs are more common among the fellaheen than among the real Bedouin (21 percent vs. 0.1 percent);</p> <p>Size of enterprise – employees: more fellaheen business units employ larger number of employees than the real Bedouin (69 percent vs. 31 percent);</p> <p>Women employment: a stronger tendency of fellaheen businessmen to employ women than among the Bedouin (52 percent vs. 27 percent);</p> <p>Education and specialisation: no differences between the real Bedouin and the fellaheen Bedouin were found.</p>

Earlier we noted that the planned Bedouin towns are inhabited mostly by fellaheen Bedouin. Being largely landless, many fellaheen have migrated to the planned towns since the mid-1960s to receive land ownership title there, seeing the move as an opportunity to improve their lot and social class position within Bedouin society relative to the 'true' Bedouin. Meir (1997) has argued that within the latent internal tension that exists between these groups, this process was meant by the fellaheen to serve later as a 'lever' of sorts, projecting the fellahin Bedouin forward towards faster economic development in the modern economy.

Data on business entrepreneurship from both the questionnaires and interviews support this assertion. It appears that while there are no specific differences in entrepreneurship between urban and non-urban places (as shown above), considerable differences may be found between the fellaheen Bedouin and the 'true' Bedouin. In fact, fifty-eight of the seventy-five businessmen surveyed in the sample were of a fellah origin, while only fifteen were of 'True' Bedouin origin and the origins of two others are unidentified. The differences in these proportions are considerably larger than those of the populations of the two groups at large.

Table 2 above reveals some of the major differences and similarities between the fellaheen and 'true' Bedouin (all tested for significance). The older age of fellaheen businessmen reflects their earlier entrance into the business world. Consequently there are also clear differences in the ages of their enterprises. Fellaheen enterprises averaged almost twice the age of those of the 'true' Bedouin. This is related to the fact that the fellaheen, by settling in towns earlier,

were compelled also to detach themselves earlier from traditional economic activities associated with farming and livestock, while the 'true' Bedouin began this process (including migration to towns) much later, and in fact some have recently slowed this process still further by leaving the towns, returning to the 'pezurah' (Atzmon 2000).

Furthermore, among the fellaheen there are more businesses that are owned or run by second-generation businessmen. The 'true' Bedouin businessmen, in contrast, are only first-generation entrepreneurs, whereas their fathers, until recently, continued to undertake more traditional economic activities by maintaining small-scale livestock.

It is for these reasons that multi-unit business entrepreneurial ventures are more common among the fellaheen, who tend to have two to four business units each, whereas the 'true' Bedouin mostly have one unit. This also reflects historical differences in entrepreneurship initiation and accumulation. Yet, this difference did not prove statistically significant. These differences are also reflected in the size of the enterprises in terms of employees: fellaheen business units are larger than those of the 'true' Bedouin. Almost all of them, however, may be categorised as 'small' to 'very small' (under 70 employees); in most cases the enterprises have under twenty employees each.

To some extent, gender too serves as a dividing line. Although not statistically significant, there is a stronger tendency of fellaheen businessmen to employ women than do their 'true' Bedouin counterparts. This possibly reflects the temporal differences of entrepreneurship between the two groups. The time factor, along with the exposure of men to the external culture, tends to weaken the fellaheen's resistance to exposure of their women to the external sphere. This stands in sharp contrast to the more conservative nature and strict attitudes of the 'True' Bedouin toward exposure of females, which also is echoed in such related fields as education (Ben-David 2000).

In terms of education, no differences were found in the average number of formal years of schooling between the fellahin and the 'true' Bedouin. All businessmen in this study had obtained no more than twelve years of schooling. This finding, which can be explained by the nature of the sample, contradicts the general wisdom in some circles that given the better opportunities taken advantage of by the fellaheen in towns compared to the Bedouin in the 'dispersion', they are more educated than the 'true' Bedouin.

From a public policy perspective however, the lack of differences is not surprising. In both areas governmental investments in the educational system are not sufficient or substantially different enough to generate differences in the educational levels between the various groups of entrepreneurs, at least not at the times when they attended school (Meir 1999). There were also no differences found in the degree of specialisation or concentration in particular business types. In both groups, the businesses tended to be comparable, mostly in the same sub-

sector of the tertiary activities, namely in those fields of business that do not require heavy capital investments.

The Nature of the Operational Business Environment

The previous discussion has brought the issue of the operational business environment of Bedouin entrepreneurs to the fore of our discussion. In specifying the major components of this environment we refer in fact to the barriers and obstacles they confront in both establishing and promoting their business. These include the following issues: finance, business consulting, confidence in external agents, bureaucracy, and real estate.

Finance

Finance has been a major barrier to the establishment, growth and routine management of Bedouin businesses. Here we refer again to the above finding that Bedouin businessmen rely quite heavily upon family financial resources. One of the major reasons is that, contrary to what is a common procedure among banks elsewhere, the banks in Israel present the Bedouin with considerable difficulties and obstacles which limit their ability to receive start-up loans. Banks in general consider financing Bedouin enterprises as highly risky investments in terms of returns; moreover, the Bedouin typically lack the collateral needed to support such risky investments.

Symptomatic of the general atmosphere in this regard is an event with a commercial bank branch that opened in the mid-1990s in Rahat, the largest Bedouin town (present population 40,000; see Figure 3). This was the only bank that had ever operated within a Bedouin town. During the Bedouin riots in sympathy with the Palestinian *Intifada* in October 2000 this bank was set on fire, an apparent act against the State symbolised by the bank. By so doing the Bedouin expressed their disregard for this institution as relevant for conducting their business and daily affairs. The bank subsequently shut down and for several years (until its recent opening) its Bedouin patrons had to drive to Beer-Sheva, half an hour away, to conduct their business.

In addition, some banks have had unsuccessful experiences with finance returns and collaterals of Bedouin businessmen. Consequently, in most cases banks will not grant finance to Bedouin entrepreneurs. Therefore, most Bedouin businessmen are compelled to conduct their financial affairs independently.

Business Consulting

Business consulting and information is the second obstacle faced by most Bedouin entrepreneurs. In the early 1990s, several organisations, for example, gathered to provide funding to establish a Center for Fostering Bedouin Entrepreneurship (CFBE). This center also was located in Rahat. These

organisations included both governmental and non-governmental agencies, such as the Authority for Small Businesses in the Ministry of Commerce, the City of Rahat, the commercial bank mentioned above and the Jewish-Arab Center for Economic Development (an NGO). In its first years the Center indeed directed its efforts towards fostering and developing small businesses for the entire Bedouin community by conducting several beneficial activities in the areas of finance and general professional advice.

However, following the economic depression in Israel between 2000 and 2004, the consequent lack of funds, the closure of the bank branch and the remoteness of the CFBE from many other Bedouin settlements in the Negev, it also was shut down and its activities were never resumed. A government document plan, entitled 'A Plan to Handle the Bedouin Sector in the Negev' (2003), has no specific economic development chapter included in it to solve these problems, aside from a general statement concerning allocation of funds.

Confidence in External Agents

This issue relates to another component of the operational business environment: that of suspicion and lack of confidence in external agents. The tension between Bedouin society and the State at the macro scale has already been shown above and described in detail elsewhere (Meir 1997, 1999). This tension apparently can be found at the local and individual levels, and thus extends into the business arena. It refers in particular to young entrepreneurs, especially those who have only recently started their businesses. It is manifest primarily in a deep mistrust of government officials, whose task is to handle support of all kinds to the Bedouin in many aspects of their lives, including the business realm. It is important to note here that most Bedouin businessmen interviewees did not discuss this themselves; rather, it arose only in interviews with public officers, some of whom are themselves Bedouin.

This is perhaps best exemplified by a personal business mentoring programme developed in the Bedouin community. The programme was one of the major services offered for small businesses by the CFBE and by other organisations. This programme involved the recruitment of an external advisor who would be nominated by the Center to 'escort' new business enterprises for some time, providing advice on finance, management, sales and marketing. In most of the cases the advisor would be a Jewish Israeli who was a government official or an experienced businessman himself.

One of the major requirements for successful mentoring was that all information concerning a business would be openly revealed to the mentor by the entrepreneur. Such openness, however, is often contrary to the traditional attitudes of the Bedouin towards outsiders. Also, it involved taking the risk of revealing internal, potentially sensitive family information. Most of the businessmen involved were hesitant to cooperate and in fact concealed information from their

mentors. Eventually, many chose to cut off their connections with their advisors and leave the programme altogether.

As one official, himself a Bedouin, suggested, it was the almost total distrust in the governmental establishment that was the major drive for these entrepreneurs. As a substitute they have resorted to internal sources of business information and advice such as that from already established, experienced and successful businessmen. One interviewee described a special meeting place (an equivalent of the traditional 'shig' – the hospitality tent) that serves as a 'business club' in which businessmen would meet regularly and discuss business issues and provide advice to young entrepreneurs.

As for the few entrepreneurs who continued on with the CFBE programme, they were primarily those who were already more established in their business ventures. Their experiences in the external business world brought them to appreciate the value of this service for conducting their enterprises within the modern regional economic system, and most benefited from the service. Many others, who tended to be younger entrepreneurs, did not share such appreciation, however.

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy plays a discouraging role against the entrepreneurial spirit as well. The overall relationship between the Israeli bureaucracy and the Bedouin society at large has already been discussed elsewhere (Kressel 1994). According to some interviewees this affects the business environment as well. Many entrepreneurs in this study felt that the authorities impose considerable and disproportionate obstacles on establishing businesses, particularly when these are established in Bedouin towns. Many interviewees contended that the major source of obstacles is the Administration for the Advancement of the Bedouin. This is a governmental body established in a different form in the early 1980s to handle the evacuation of 6,000 Bedouin in order to build a military airbase following the evacuation from the Sinai as a result of the Camp David Accords (Marx 1990). Presently it is involved in and regulates many aspects of life of all the Bedouin, both those in the 'dispersion' as well as those residing in towns (Meir 2003).

For this reason, many Bedouin businessman would prefer to establish their businesses, if these are not particularly local and Bedouin-oriented or Bedouin-dependent, in Jewish towns. One interviewee, having two business units, indicated that the business unit located within a Jewish town suffers considerably less from the tyranny of bureaucracy than the one located in a Bedouin town. Others complained about what they consider to be continual harassment by the Internal Revenue Service, the VAT service, and the police. As is true among many pastoralists elsewhere, for many of the Bedouin of the Negev any contact with the authorities is usually an unwanted and counter-beneficial experience.

Real Estate

Lastly, real estate issues provide an additional obstacle in the Bedouin business environment. The complicated problem of land ownership among the Bedouin, and the long-standing land dispute between them and the Israeli government, have also been studied and discussed in detail elsewhere (see, for example, Ben-David 1995, 1996). About 250,000 acres have not been land-titled yet in the Negev. Of these about 200,000 acres are being claimed by the Bedouin, mostly 'true' Bedouin, by virtue of their long historic ties to these lands.

According to traditional internal Bedouin law, these lands may not be claimed or used by any other Bedouin who wishes to settle or place his home there. This practice ignores the State law, which regards virtually all of the Negev as state-owned land and not Bedouin land.

The real-estate issue has an impact on the performance of businesses as well. It affects particularly those enterprises that are located in the planned towns, especially in those areas designated by the statutory town master plans as light-industry zones. Interviewees complained that the only locations available for them to establish their business enterprises are in these zones. However, land in these zones has not been titled yet. Therefore the entrepreneurs would not risk their life, property, and families' futures by locating the businesses there, even though the government tries to legally lease these land parcels to them.

The land problem is related also to the internal ethnic division between the 'true' Bedouin and the fellaheen Bedouin (Ben-David and Gonen 2001). The major implications of this ethnic division for the entrepreneurship process are discussed below. Here it refers to the general landless nature of the fellaheen Bedouin, from whose ranks comes the majority of the entrepreneurs. This does not necessarily imply that all fellaheen Bedouin are landless or that all fellaheen businessmen face this obstacle. Some have prospered, allowing them to purchase land from 'true' Bedouin for various purposes, including entrepreneurial pursuits.

This latter exception attests to the more general process of differential economic development and growth between the fellaheen Bedouin and the 'true' Bedouin. As shown above, the landless fellaheen Bedouin were the earliest newcomers to the planned towns built during the late 1960s and early 1970s, as they received land leases from the State by virtue of settling there. They considered migration into towns as an opportunity to improve their lot and social class position within Bedouin society. Most of the 'true' Bedouin, on the other hand, have refrained from moving into towns. Fearing loss of their land rights and claims, they preferred communally and individually to remain on their claimed land in the 'dispersion,' where they continue living in unsustainable and economically underdeveloped conditions. Their lands there, by virtue of being located in unrecognised settlements, have very low real estate values. And yet the State seems extremely anxious to get its hold on these lands, despite their limited value.

Recently, however, some processes have begun to take place in this regard. First, planning has commenced by the government for the establishment of an additional nine towns (see Figure 3; Meir 2003). Prospects for the creation and development of a land entitlement process there are quite considerable. Second, in seeking new income many Bedouin in the 'dispersion' have established informal small roadside business enterprises along regional and local routes in the Negev that are unrecognised by the authorities. These include grocery, gardening and building supply shops, gas stations, buffet restaurants and tourist interests. Some of these enterprises are financially successful.

However, as they are deemed illegal by the state, in some cases constituting environmental hazards (such as sub-standard, unlicensed backyard gas and petrol stations), many have been subject to demolition by state agencies. Some have recently been demolished under a tightened implementation policy of blocking 'illegal' construction outside towns.

And yet, demand for this kind of land has recently increased. This is explained by a latent increase in land values in these locations even though land sales within this real estate market are yet on a small scale (Alfasi, Meir and Al-Asad, in progress). Land availability for establishing businesses is apparently more abundant for business purposes there (even illegal businesses) than it is within towns. The situation in towns is more constraining as the authorities there are obliged to conduct their municipal affairs legally under the regulations of the Planning and Construction Law. In this respect, 'true' Bedouin entrepreneurs in the 'dispersion' seem to be at an improved future position compared to their fellaheen kin in towns, as they control more land that can produce more income coming from business.

Discussion and Conclusions

The above analysis of data from the questionnaires and interviews, and the other issues brought above, have several implications. These are related to the following major issues of Bedouin society internally, and to its relationship with the government externally: the sub-ethnic internal relations, the land question, and the issue of ethnicity within Bedouin businesses.

Sub-ethnic Internal Relations

There appear to be considerable differences between the fellaheen and the 'true' Bedouin in many aspects of business entrepreneurship. These differences are quite meaningful in terms of internal sub-ethnic relations, social balance and politics of identity. Although the process shown above is primarily economic by nature, it carries socio-political implications as well.

The 'True' Bedouin are in fact witnessing a profound social process of far-reaching changes: the fellaheen, who formerly were their subjects and thus

socially and politically inferior by virtue of being landless farmer migrants (or their descendents), are now becoming economically more prosperous and are accumulating considerable wealth and resources.

One of the interviewees, for example, a 'true' Bedouin by origin, pointed to a very grave and symptomatic case, from his perspective, of a Bedouin family and a fellah family in one of the towns who previously had a patron-subject pattern relationship. Now the situation has reversed completely: today the fellah family head is a large-scale entrepreneur running large projects, and is accumulating considerable capital, whereas the 'true' Bedouin family head is compelled to resort to government welfare. This is not an uncommon case within Bedouin society, generating latent but potentially harmful and even violent internal tensions.

Given comments made by other 'true' and fellah Bedouin interviewees, it is evident that the 'true' Bedouin are beginning to fear a loss of historical economic (and possibly also social and political) primacy within Bedouin society. They are therefore compelled to react, and are doing this by business avoidance and spatial business competition. Some interviewees commented, for example, that 'true' Bedouin customers avoid shopping at fellaheen stores, or otherwise resist conducting or making business with these businessmen.

Others regarded the 'true' Bedouin manoeuvres to establish informal roadside businesses as a form of unfair competition. Evidence was gathered suggesting that there may also be similar motivations behind the behaviours of 'true' Bedouin as they tend to establish retail business outlets at the gates of, or along local access roads to, planned towns within which there are many fellaheen business outlets. This business practice is carried out in areas in which the 'true' Bedouin do not even reside. It suggests that this is simply a business tactic designed to intercept and capture local commercial exchange, while strategically stopping, or at least slowing, the generally faster economic growth of the fellaheen economic sector. They can morally rationalise undertaking this practice by virtue of their historical territorial hegemony in these places.

Still, the loss of economic primacy by the 'true' Bedouin adds to the loss of demographic primacy that has already taken place in recent decades (Meir 1997). This latter process has already had an impact on municipal politics, another arena of ethnic competition. 'true' Bedouin in mixed 'true'-fellaheen towns are no more capable of exercising political control without the support of the fellaheen, in some cases even losing political primacy to them (Ben-David and Gonen 2001). The historic 'True' Bedouin socio-cultural and political sense of sub-ethnic supremacy is thus losing ground to the better-positioned fellaheen in terms of their ability and willingness to become fully integrated into the modern, globalised Israeli economy and society.

For in this process, the terms of the internal socio-political game have been changing. Capitalistic, modern Western-style achievement status has begun to challenge the traditional terms of ascribed status that has long shaped social

relations, social structure and social order within Bedouin society (see also Kressel 1976). The implication of this dynamic change is that more economic and political power may accumulate among the fellaheen – and the signs of such accumulation are now increasingly apparent. Such power, when exercised in municipal politics, may have its own implications for future business entrepreneurial opportunities for the rapidly urbanising fellaheen Bedouin of Israel's northern Negev Desert.

The Land Question

The possible onset of land dynamics shown above (that is, the transformation in land uses and increased competition for commercial sites) may be followed by other processes as well. These, too, may have far-reaching implications for Bedouin society at large. So far land simply has been regarded by the Bedouin as a traditional pastoral tribal territory in which they have lived in the past and for which they have claims at present. With deep emotional value attached to it, this land should in their eyes be guarded and protected against the greed of the State.

However, as shown above, the components of valuation of this land, at least in several types of locations, are being transformed gradually. Land begins to assume properties of an urban real estate asset by virtue of the emerging properties of strategic location and potential use other than for grazing and farming. These properties may subject land to different forces and pressures that may shape its nature and future use. As in many Arab villages elsewhere in Israel (Khamaisi 1986), this could possibly signify the onset of the emergence of an internal Bedouin urban real estate market even if they do not formally own the land under Israeli law (Alfasi, Meir, and Al-Asad, in progress).

Another implication would be that this new kind of land valuation by the Bedouin might complicate further the attempts by the government to protect state land from further encroachment by them. It is worthwhile to relate here to the land-work linkage suggested by Marx (2000). Marx submitted quite reasonably that, given the present circumstances, neglect of the Bedouin by the government in terms of lack of employment opportunities is attributed '... to the fact that they still control and own valuable land ...' and are unwilling to give it up by moving to planned towns. Therefore, in these underdeveloped conditions, the Bedouin react by further putting their trust in land (Marx 2000: 116–117).

It is, however, this very neglect within the circular land-work equation that drives many Bedouin into business that in some cases, as suggested above, may change the components and method of land valuation. The Bedouin have thus gone a long way over a path of conceptual transformation in the meaning of their space since historical times (Figure 4): from *terra nullius* (that is, 'no-men's land' or 'everybody's land') to clan territory and tribal territory, from territory to private lands (Meir 1996; Kressel et al. 1991), and now possibly from private lands to a real estate asset, and from there (possibly) still further to viewing land as a real estate commodity.

In this transformation they paradoxically recruit and empower their traditional-ethnic internal land laws to serve as a defence mechanism against both the State and kin, but concurrently, they keep their eyes open towards other, more market-oriented trends. Business entrepreneurship serves as one vehicle in this conflictual arena.

Ethnicity and Bedouin Business

Our study, analysis and discussion are based on the assumption that Negev Bedouin society in Israel is an ethnic group, regardless of the obvious internal divisions. Therefore we hypothesise, based on ethnic entrepreneurship knowledge and literature, that their business and entrepreneurship strategies are strongly ethnically oriented. However, the very issue of ethnicity with regard to the Bedouin is admittedly debatable.

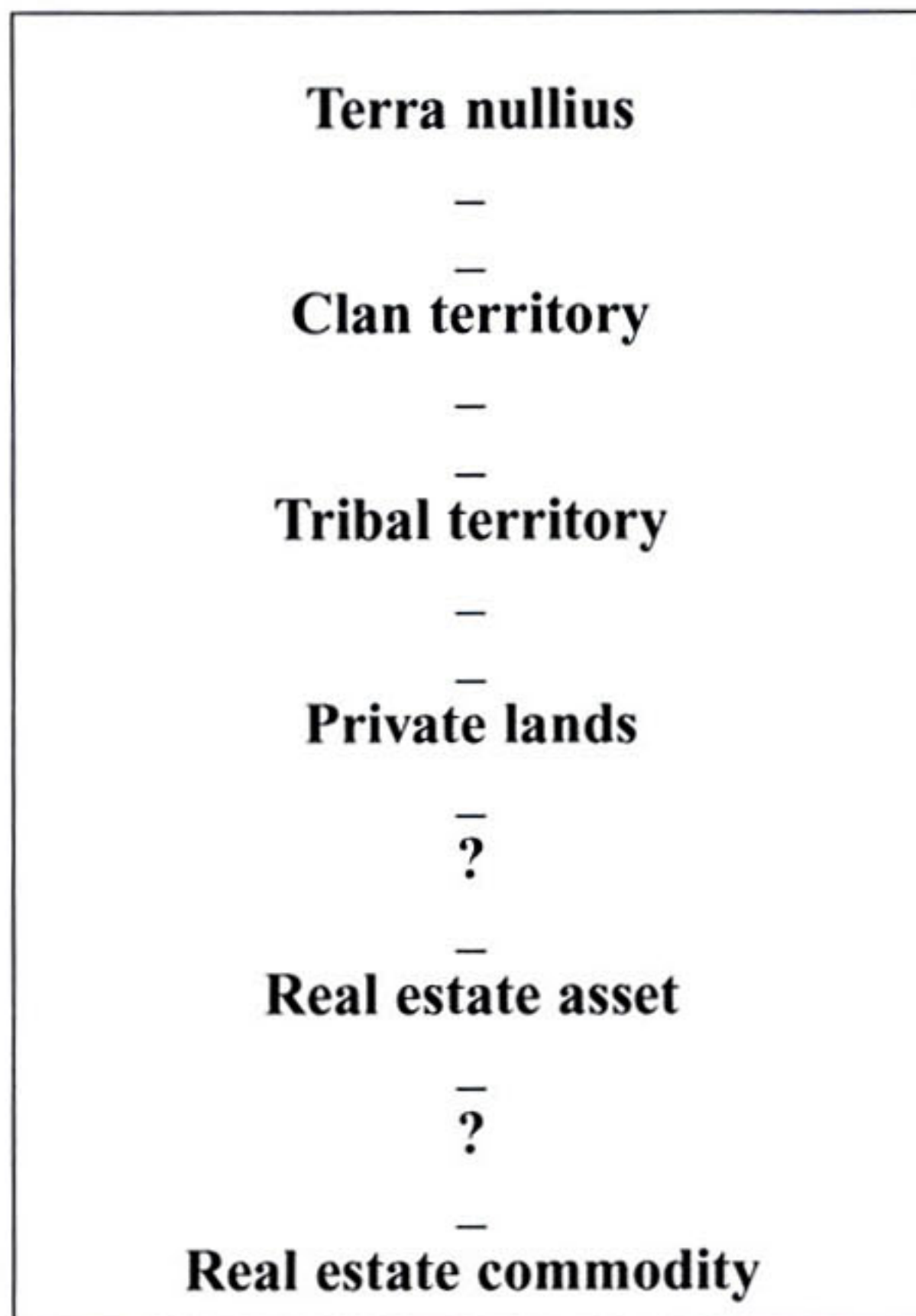


Figure 4. *Historical Transition in Status of Territory and Land among the Bedouin*

More than a decade ago Jakubowska (1994) questioned whether the Bedouin in the Negev are an ethnic group. She submitted that a distinction should be made between ethnicity and identity, the former being a political construct imposed by the State and therefore resisted by the Bedouin. She used an example of Bedouin resistance to the acceptance of governmental proposals to develop 'ethnic' tourism on the grounds that they are not ethnically different from other Palestinian Arabs in Israel. A similar view is submitted by Abu-Saad (2002) and Yonah et al. (2004). However, Bedouin culture has been a destination for considerable heritage tourism in other areas in the Middle East, such as Sinai in Egypt and Jordan (Shoup 1985; Lavie 1990; Layne 1996), and there are opposing views to the one presented by Jakubowska. For example, Dinero (2000) has shown that ethnicity plays a major role in Bedouin tourism enterprises, as this particular field lends itself easily to ethnic traits due to the unique contents of the 'product' that is being sold.

The question of whether the Bedouin are an ethnic group or not is worth studying, as it remains unresolved. Therefore, we will not argue here other than to suggest that the 'ethnicity' of the Bedouin, or of pastoral nomads in general, should be contextualised. Holding tribalism constant, Bedouin in Jordan or Saudi Arabia, or any of the many pastoral groups in East Africa for that matter, may not be considered ethnic groups within their states because they all belong to the same macro-culture, although even this statement is debatable (e.g., Galaty 2005).

It is difficult to adopt the same argument with regard to the Bedouin in Israel, because they are not part of the dominant majority culture. Even Jakubowska's example about ethnic tourism must be put in perspective: presently there is a growing evidence, including from our own study (see also *Kol HaNegev* 2003), that Bedouin are wilfully and independently attempting to develop Bedouin-oriented tourism that relies heavily precisely on the cultural differences between the majority and minority groups in Israel and the uniqueness of their separate Bedouin heritage within their Arabness (see also Dinero 1999, 2004).

The most that can be said in support of Jakubowska's argument, and still with some reservations, is that within Israeli Arab-Palestinian society the Bedouin are not a separate ethnic group. In order to substantiate this, however, a study would have to be made that takes into account not only the similarities and differences between these two groups, but also the real or virtual internal sub-ethnic division between the 'true' Bedouin and the fellaheen Bedouin. One also cannot ignore the macro-scale reality that at least with regard to the 'true' Bedouin, they are also culturally and origin-wise different from the Palestinian Arabs, originating historically from the Arabian Peninsula (Kressel 1986).

Until then, one cannot escape the major conclusion of this study: there are clear ethnic components in Negev Bedouin business entrepreneurship both externally and internally. These are practiced by them intensively as a strategy in their struggle for survival when seeking integration into the wider regional and

metropolitan Western-capitalistic economic milieu that is not hospitable to them, and yet denies their return to their traditional pastoral and farming practices.

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