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Housing Others: Design and Identity in a Bedouin Village

Abstract

In the 1960s, the Israeli government decided to build towns for the Bedouin population of the Negev, a desert area in the southern part of Israel. These towns have often been interpreted as the outcome of an ill-intentioned history of colonization and expropriation. This article offers a different account of the Negev towns, by examining the first plan for a Bedouin settlement commissioned by the government in 1960 that was never built. The outcome of a collaboration between an Israeli Palestinian architect and a Jewish dilettante, the plan aimed at preserving what the two imagined to be a Bedouin identity at risk of being lost through the process of modernization. It thus modified modernist design principles so they would rehabilitate that identity. This article examines the conception and the reception of the plan. It argues that for the architects, the challenge of housing the Negev Bedouin was not a matter of expropriation, nor was it necessarily about accounting for the actual needs of the Bedouin; rather, the architects saw the commission as an opportunity to develop a counter-voice to high-modernism and to the state's project of blanket modernization.

Towards the end of 1948, just months after the establishment of the State of Israel, following the Arab-Israeli War, officials in the new Israeli government began debating the fate of the Bedouin population of the Negev (Naqab), a desert area in the southern part of the country. By the 1960s, they had decided to build a number of towns that would concentrate the historically nomadic group.¹ The first town, Tel Sheva, was inaugurated in 1969. Over the next two decades, Israel built six more towns in the Negev, where about 160,000 Bedouin currently reside.

Keywords

Bedouin Negev housing identity architecture modernisms These towns are often seen as the outcome of a history of colonization and expropriation. Some scholars claim that these towns were a veiled attempt to expropriate the lands where the Bedouin roamed.² Others have shown how the Negev Bedouin were excluded from the planning process, arguing that it was a top-down operation that often ignored the cultural, social, and economic needs of the Negev Bedouin.³ Indeed, the Bedouin were initially hesitant to relocate to these towns, not only because they suspected a ruse on the part of the state to confiscate their lands but also because the very idea of a town was such a radical departure from the built environments they were used to; and still today, some 80,000 Bedouin, about one third of the Negev Bedouin population, refuse to move in to these settlements.⁴ The reality of bureaucratic neglect – attested to in high unemployment rates and the lack of basic public services – has further increased the Bedouin's suspicions.⁵

This article offers a different account of the Negev towns, by focusing on a Bedouin settlement that was never built. It unearths the first plan for a modern Bedouin settlement in the Negev, commissioned by the government in 1960. The plan was the outcome of a collaboration between Rustum Bastuni, an Israeli Palestinian architect, and Simha Yom-Tov, a Jewish dilettante. In contrast to some of their successors, the two aimed at preserving what they imagined to be a Bedouin identity at risk of being lost through the process of modernization. They modified standardized building elements in order to rehabilitate that identity in ways that challenged planning conventions. They thus broke with the high modernism that characterized the work of the founding generation of architects in Israel, and aligned with a younger generation of Israeli-born architects who sought a more local aesthetic language.⁶ Their plan, however, was abandoned shortly after it was first conceived and was written out of history.

In chronicling the evolution of this un-built plan, I want to examine the ambiguous position Bastuni and Yom-Tov occupied in relation to both the Bedouin community and the planning agencies of the state. I suggest that that position of double externality – to the Negev Bedouin and their traditions on the one hand, and the established practices of architecture institutionalized by the government on the other – opened a particular angle of vision, from which Bastuni and Yom-Tov could see the tradition of the Bedouin community as providing a challenge to the reign of high modernism over Israeli architecture. My examination traces the ways in which Bastuni and Yom-Tov perceived Bedouin identity and formalized it into a distinct building tradition. I ultimately argue that the tradition they formalized was offered not so much as an ethnographic representation of a form of life but as a counter-voice to high-modernism and to the state's project of blanket modernization.

The Negev Bedouin

Until the twentieth century, the Bedouin adhered to a nomadic lifestyle. They roamed the Middle East in search of pasture and water. The majority of them practiced Sunni Islam, though they often combined Islamic rituals with other belief systems from the pre-Islamic era.⁷ In addition, they were organized into tribes, each of which claimed descent from a common ancestor. Thus, the members of each tribe shared some kind of blood relation.⁸ They would occasionally raid towns and villages, and sometimes engage each other in war over pastureland.⁹

Although Bedouin tribes have roamed the Negev desert for centuries, the population encountered by the Israeli state arrived only in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the Arabian Peninsula, Transjordan, and Egypt.¹⁰ By the time of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which brought the state of Israel into existence, they numbered about 65,000.¹¹ Among them were 'true Bedouin', who are believed to be of Bedouin origin, 'fellahin', who were peasants, and 'Abeds', said to be former slaves of Sudanese origin.¹² During the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, some of the Negev Bedouin fought against the Israeli forces. Others remained neutral or even collaborated with the Israelis.¹³ By the time the war ended, it was estimated that only 11,000 Bedouin remained in the Negev.¹⁴

The Bedouin who stayed lived under an Israeli Military Administration until 1966.¹⁵ The government concentrated the majority of them in the northeastern part of the Negev in an area that came to be known as the *Siyag* (meaning fence or demarcation in Hebrew). The *Siyag* consisted of some 1.2 million dunams. Six Bedouin tribes inhabited that area before the Arab-Israeli War. Now, it housed some 17 tribes.¹⁶ Life in the *Siyag* was hard on the Bedouin. Their mobility was limited, and there were not enough grazing lands. As a result, inter-tribal conflicts broke out over the limited resources.¹⁷ Nevertheless, by 1960, the population grew to approximately 16,000.¹⁸

Government officials were not indifferent to the growing Bedouin population. Many of them were concerned by the Bedouin's claims over large spans of land in the Negev. These claims threatened their plan to populate the Negev with Jewish immigrants who flocked to the country after 1948. They thus confiscated Bedouin lands across the Negev in the early 1950s in order to erect Jewish settlements and establish military bases.¹⁹ Government officials also set about Judaizing the Negev by giving Hebrew names to sites across the Negev desert.²⁰ Some left-leaning Israeli politicians, however, were worried about the harsh living conditions in the Siyag. Towards the late 1950s, they began advocating for the Bedouin, asking the government to eliminate the Military Administration and reach a settlement regarding the Bedouin land claims.²¹ At the same time, a number of Bedouin began replacing their tents with permanent structures they built without permits or master plans.²² Faced with pressure from within Israel to normalize the situation of the Bedouin, on the one hand, and illegal construction on the other, government officials began to take steps to find a permanent housing solution for this population of internal others.²³

An Unexpected Design Team

It was under these conditions that, in 1960, the Development Ministry commissioned Rustum Bastuni and Simha Yom-Tov to draw plans for the first modern settlement ever planned exclusively for the Negev Bedouin. Arguably, neither Bastuni nor Yom-Tov would have received a building commission to design a settlement of that scale for Jewish residents. Each in his own way was an outsider to official planning institutes.

Bastuni, on his part, belonged to the non-Bedouin Arab minority that remained in Israel after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. At the time, non-Bedouin Arabs constituted some ten percent of the total population that was living in Israel. Some of them resided in urban centers.²⁴ Even though the war had disrupted the lives of all Arab Palestinians, Non-Bedouin Arabs were able to rebuild their communal institutions and gain some political power faster than their Bedouin counterparts. Respectively, they enjoyed better schools and had a greater presence in Israeli universities and political life.²⁵ Bastuni, for one, attended the architecture school at the Technion in Haifa, and, upon graduation, got involved in the left-leaning *Mifleget HaPoalim HaMeuhedet* (United Workers Party)(MAPAM) that dominated the Development Ministry. He even served as a member of parliament for MAPAM between 1951 and 1955.

According to the historian Hanina Porat, officials at the Development Ministry selected Bastuni because they thought a Palestinian architect would know the needs of the Bedouin, sparing them the need to directly consult with the Bedouin.²⁶ Bastuni was indeed fluent in Arabic, and, like the Bedouin, he belonged to an often-marginalized non-Jewish minority in Israel. Nevertheless, as an Arab architect living in Haifa, he was hardly an insider to the Bedouin community. The two were separated by a considerable social gap. Bastuni therefore occupied an intermediary position.²⁷ He was an outsider to the state because he was not Jewish, but he was also an outsider to the Bedouin, who were further removed from the state. When working for the Negev Bedouin, he was an other planning for second-degree others.

It was Bastuni who invited Simha Yom-Tov to collaborate on the project. Yom-Tov was born to a Jewish family in Romania in 1914.²⁸ At a young age he joined the socialist-Zionist youth movement of *Hashomer Hatzair*, and in 1935 immigrated to Palestine, where he lived in a kibbutz outside Haifa and worked as a shepherd.²⁹ In his free time, he wrote poetry and taught himself sculpting. At one point, he took classes with the artist Ze'ev Ben-Zvi, who later became the head of the New Bezalel School for Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem.³⁰

Yom-Tov had met Bastuni in the 1950s. He had a special interest in Arab culture, and Bastuni helped him study Arabic.³¹ The two shared a commitment to developing mutual understanding between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians. They also enjoyed each other's company. In a letter from 1956, Yom-Tov expressed his affection to Bastuni, writing: 'Other than your dear mother and wife, is there anyone who could love you more than me?'³² Bastuni, for his part, invited Yom-Tov to assist him with the design of a community centre in the kibbutz in 1957.³³

Working on the community centre, Yom Tov became interested in the craft of building. In 1959, at the age of 45, he began auditing architecture classes at the Technion. He was unable to register as a student because the kibbutz refused to pay his tuition fees. His fellow kibbutz members were suspicious of his unconventional nature, and, in any case, they argued that he was too old to begin a new career. He therefore attended classes during the day and worked as a guard at the kibbutz at night.³⁴ After one year he left school, and began working for an architecture firm in Haifa.³⁵

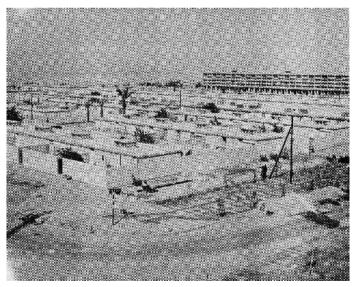
That same year Bastuni invited Yom-Tov to collaborate on the design of the Bedouin settlement.³⁶ Bastuni was aware of the fact that Yom-Tov lacked professional training. He probably also knew that Yom-Tov's eccentric character rendered him an outsider in the eyes of many Israelis. But he was fond of Yom-Tov and needed the extra hands. For Yom-Tov, it was a unique opportunity to combine his interests in architecture and Arab culture, whose absence in the new Israeli polity he regretted.³⁷ The construction of a modern Bedouin settlement offered the possibility of rectifying that absence.

Two Design Alternatives

Officials in the Development Ministry asked Bastuni and Yom-Tov to design the settlement for members of the 'Ataunah tribe. They believed that the 'Ataunah were more developed than other Bedouin tribes in the Negev, and thus 'the transition from a tent to a [modern] house would not result in a shock'.³⁸ The site selected for the construction of the settlement was located in the northeastern part of the Negev, some sixteen kilometres from Beersheba, the largest Israeli town in the Negev.³⁹ Tribe members had been forcefully moved to the site after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and they had already built a couple of permanent structures for shelter.⁴⁰ With this information at hand, ministry officials asked Bastuni and Yom-Tov to begin drafting plans for the site.

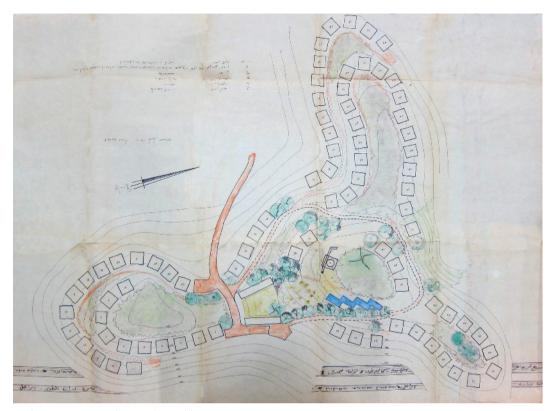
At the same time as they began working, however, the local architectural community was undergoing a shift. As the architectural historian Alona Nitzan-Shiftan has shown, it was a time when a new generation of Israeliborn architects began to question the high modernism that had reigned in Israel since the 1930s.⁴¹ Inspired by post-World War II criticism of the Modern Movement, including the work of Team 10 and the New Brutalism, these young architects contended that high modernism had failed to account to the cultural diversity of the newly absorbed immigrants or to establish a bond between them and the territory they now occupied. They therefore sought to replace high modernism with local building traditions.⁴² The architects Aryeh Sharon and Benjamin Idelson, for example, designed housing units in the Jewish town of Nazareth Illit with stone walls, while the architects Nahum Zolotov and Daniel Havkin designed low-rise units with patio spaces and shaded alleyways in Beersheba in the late 1950s and early 1960s [Figure 1].⁴³ Both were inspired by the architecture of the native Palestinians.

These new voices in the architectural scene seemed to have inspired Bastuni and Yom-Tov. In place of relying on the data they received from the ministry, the two decided to first survey the future residents and analyse their cultural practices. Their study indicated that the 'Ataunah tribe was comprised



Yehonatan Golani and Gersom Schwarze Dieter, eds, *Israel Builds* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Housing, 1970).

Figure 1: Nahum Zolotov, low-rise units with enclosed courtyards in Beersheba's Model Neighbourhood.

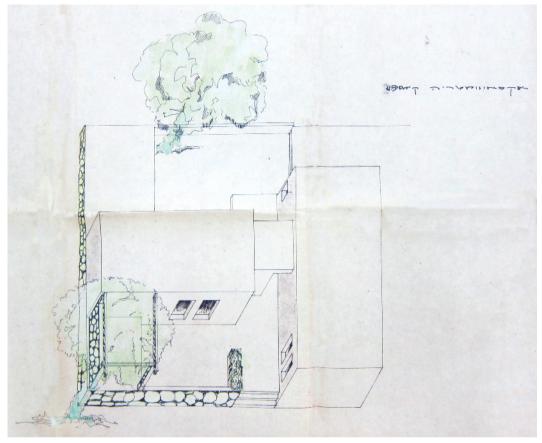


Hashomer Hatzair Archives Yad Yaari (1)15.147–95. Figure 2: Rustum Bastuni and Simha Yom-Tov, general layout, 1960.

of 75 families, with about 100–110 kids.⁴⁴ On average, each family had some seven members, making it a 500-person village.⁴⁵ They learned that the tribe was not divided into sub-tribal groups or clans, as some tribes were, but into what they called 'family groups'.⁴⁶ Bastuni and Yom-Tov met with a number of them, and even circulated a short questionnaire, asking about their property, family structure, furniture, and cultural preferences.⁴⁷ Although the residents did not immediately respond to the questionnaires, Bastuni and Yom-Tov were able to collect enough data to begin drafting plans for the settlement.⁴⁸

In just a few months, Bastuni and Yom-Tov developed two designs for the prospective settlement.⁴⁹ The first was more conventional and, according to Bastuni and Yom-Tov, followed the layout used in villages and small towns built for Jewish Israelis.⁵⁰ It consisted of rows of houses that wrapped along the sides of three adjacent hills [Figure 2]. The rows followed the topography of the land, without paying much attention to the division of the Bedouin into family groups. Only 100–120 metres separated one house from the other.⁵¹ At the centre of these rings of private dwellings was a large vehicle-free public space, where Bastuni and Yom-Tov placed a civic centre with a market, mosque, school, clinic, coffee shop, car garage, and grocery shop, as well as municipal offices.⁵²

They also designed a 48 metre square model home for the first alternative that was to be replicated across the village [Figure 3]. Bastuni and Yom-Tov accounted for some of the special needs of the Bedouin in the model home.

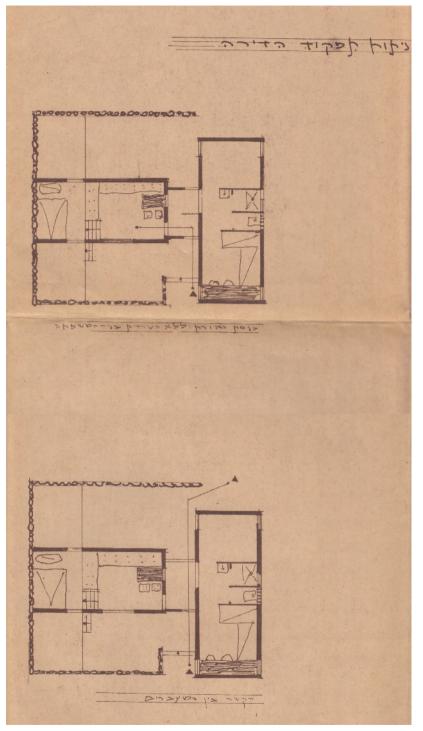


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Figure 3: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, drawing of the first model home, 1960.

To allow the family maximum privacy, they divided the home into two spaces, each of which was a separate structure: one for the parents and their guests, and the other for the children. They placed the kitchen and the shower in the latter. An outdoor corridor separated the two structures, allowing visitors to enter the parents' wing without accessing the children's area [Figure 4].⁵³ The architects capped both structures with flat roofs, so residents could make future building additions on top.⁵⁴ To bolster the family's sense of privacy, they surrounded the two wings with a wall.

Bastuni and Yom-Tov drew inspiration for the model home's interior elements from the Bedouin tent and the fellahin home. For the parents' wing, they designed a curtain made of tent fabric. They thought the curtain could be used as a partition, separating the parents' sleeping space from their guests' area.⁵⁵ Bastuni and Yom-Tov also designed a *mastaba* – an elevated platform that was common in the home of fellahin, they explained. The *mastaba* extended outwards from the parents' wing to the garden, allowing views of the street. It was conceived as a place where laundry could be dried, livestock could be fed, the family could sleep on hot summer nights, and pass the evening hours in leisure.⁵⁶



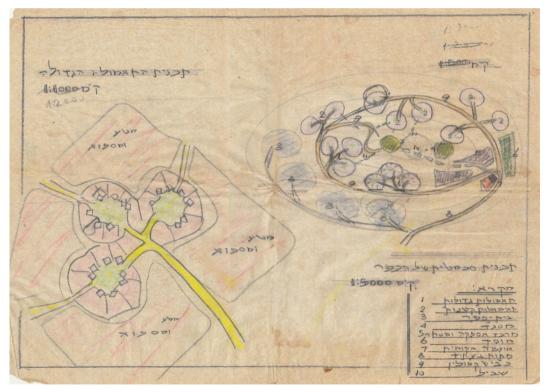
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Figure 4: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, diagrams showing how guests could reach the parents' wing without entering the children's area, 1960.

The reference to the fellahin home is perplexing. Indeed, fellahin lived among the Negev Bedouin. Many of them moved to the Negev from villages and towns in North Africa and Jordan over the course of the last two centuries. The Bedouin provided them with land and protection in return for a third or even half of their produce. The Bedouin, however, never fully assimilated the fellahin, and considered them and their lifestyles inferior to those of the 'true Bedouin'.⁵⁷ Bastuni and Yom-Tov's decision to borrow elements from the fellahin home, therefore, did not reflect the wishes of the Bedouin. A more likely source of inspiration was the particular interest Israeli architects of Bastuni and Yom-Tov's generation had taken in the figure of the fellahin. In their minds, the fellahin home and village, more than any other local building form, represented the very rootedness they sought to emulate.⁵⁸

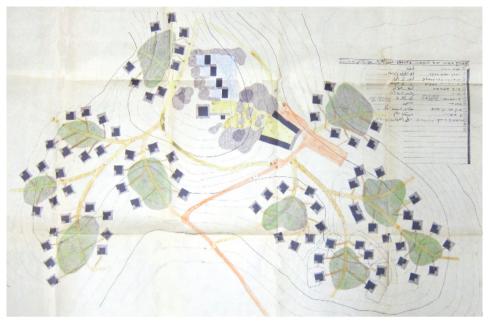
The second design alternative presented a different approach. According to Yom-Tov and Bastuni, it followed the 'anthropological stance according to which it is better not to change the everyday lives of people [...] [but to] advance them by improving the direction of [their] common customs'.⁵⁹ Yom-Tov formalized this anthropology into a principle of design that he termed 'human connections'.⁶⁰ The architecture governed by this principle, the two argued, '[would be] completely different from those common in other villages and towns [in Israel]'.⁶¹

According to this plan, the settlement would be laid out in a series of clusters, with each cluster containing six to nine private homes [Figures 5–8].⁶²



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Figure 5: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, sketches of the entire village (right) and three adjacent clusters (left), 1960. At the back of each cluster was an orchard with a feeding area for the residents and their livestock.



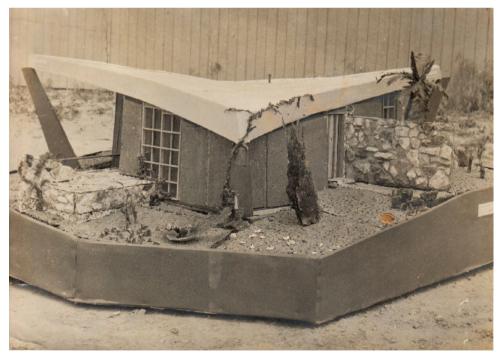
Hashomer Hatzair Archives Yad Yaari (1)15.147–95. Figure 6: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, general layout, 1960.



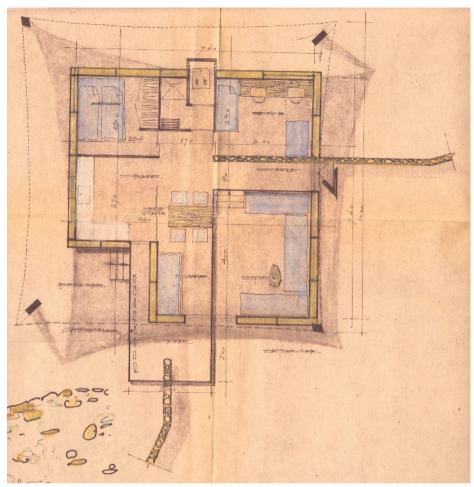
Hashomer Hatzair Archives Yad Yaari (1)15.147–95. Figure 7: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, plan drawing of a housing cluster, 1960.



Hashomer Hatzair Archives Yad Yaari (1)15.147–95. Figure 8: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, drawing of a housing cluster, 1960.

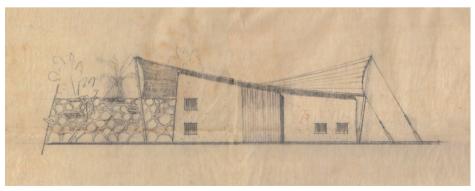


Hashomer Hatzair Archives Yad Yaari, un-catalogued.Figure 9: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, model of the second alternative's model home, 1960.

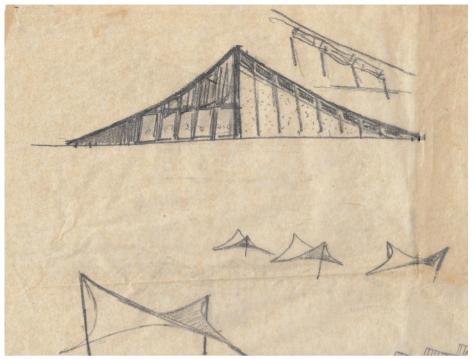


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Figure 10: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, floor plan drawing of the second model home, 1960.



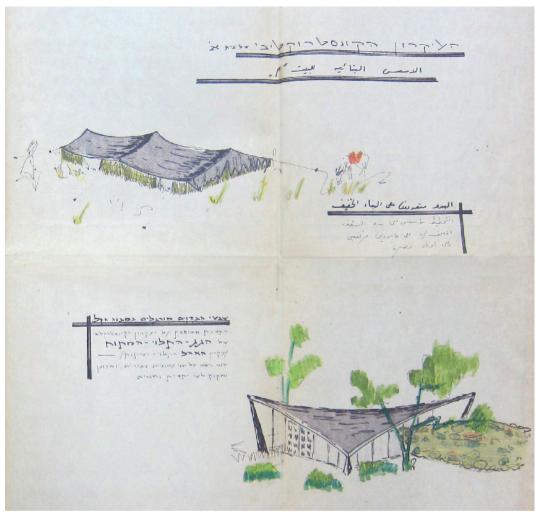
Hashomer Hatzair Archives Yad Yaari (2)15.147–95. Figure 11: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, façade drawing of the model home, 1960.



Hashomer Hatzair Archives Yad Yaari (2)15.147–95. Figure 12: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, studies for tensile roof element, 1960.



Hashomer Hatzair Archives Yad Yaari, un-catalogued. Figure 13: Yom-Tov and a community representative by a model of the tensile roof, 1960.

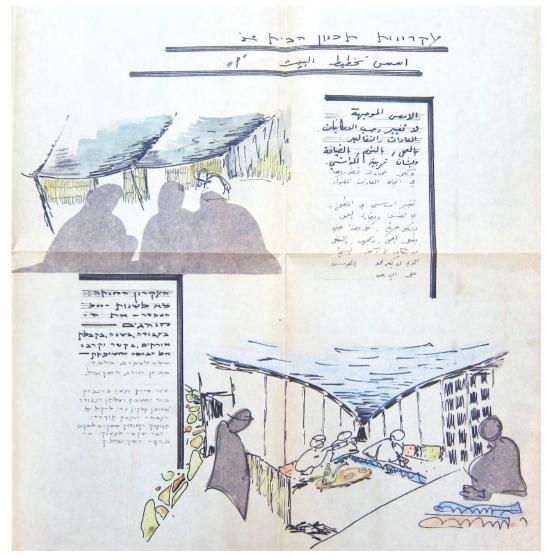


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Figure 14: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, panel, entitled 'The Structural Principle', showing the resemblance between the tensile roof and the Bedouin tent, 1960.

Each cluster would accommodate one of the family groups that made up the tribe. The houses of each cluster enclosed a shared open space, where the residents could socialize and grow vegetables and herbs. The shared space was not entirely public. Only cluster residents and their guests could use it. This arrangement, Bastuni and Yom-Tov argued, 'kept with [the Bedouins'] desires and true [social] relations'.⁶³ The Bedouin, they explained, did not like unexpected encounters with strangers, and accordingly, public spaces like an urban plaza or street were inappropriate.⁶⁴ Instead, according to Bastuni and Yom-Tov, what the Bedouin needed were shared spaces that were private.

As in the first design, the architects planned for one vehicle-free civic centre serving the entire village. The centre included stores, workshops, municipal offices, and a school, kindergarten, coffee shop, clinic, and car-



Hashomer Hatzair Archives Yad Yaari (1)15.147-95.

Figure 15: Bastuni and Yom-Tov, a panel comparing the model home's living area (bottom right) and the traditional tent's interior (top left), 1960.

garage. At the highest point they placed a mosque, which looked out over the entire village.⁶⁵

The architects dedicated most of their attention to the second alternative's model home [Figures 9–11]. They were especially invested in the model home's roof element, which they designed as a tensile structure [Figures 12–14]. Yom-Tov and Bastuni believed that the tensile roof resembled the traditional tent structure. On one of the drawings, they noted that 'in its shape, [the roof] is close [...] to the forms that the Bedouin are used to [from nomadic life]: sloping curves, lightness of wings, and a feeling of freedom'.⁶⁷

Bastuni and Yom-Tov also paid careful attention to the model home's interior spaces. They wanted to avoid structures that would disrupt the Bedouin's 'sleeping habits, their work, their hosting of guests, and relation to livestock'.⁶⁸ And so they adopted a number of building elements from the building tradition of the Palestinian population.⁶⁹ They designed the living area to resemble the *diwan* – a reception room common throughout the Levant. In place of couches and chairs, they arranged for cushions to be laid out on the floor around a small coffee table [Figure 15]. They also separated the eating area from the kitchen with a curtain, to preserve the modesty of the women.⁷⁰

In addition to integrating elements from the building tradition of the Palestinians, Bastuni and Yom-Tov specified the use of light or natural materials in the construction of the model home. In place of glass windowpanes, they called for the installation of windows made from red and green nylon fabric. The walls were to be made of cattail. More curiously, they surrounded the house with a stone wall that penetrated the house and extended into the interior, in order to blur the boundaries between indoors and outdoors as the tent traditionally did.⁷¹

Bastuni and Yom-Tov presented the two designs to Development Ministry officials in October 1960. The second design, which offered a permanent structure outfitted with Bedouin and Palestinian elements, surpassed the first. Although officials initially expressed some concerns – that the tensile roof was too rigid, that it dictated the entire design and size of the house, and that it might pose structural difficulties – the culturally specific design won the vote. During deliberations, one official praised the design, arguing that 'it is a big attraction whose novelty goes beyond Israel [...] a house that serves as a transitory stage between a tent and a permanent house. In addition to providing a solution to the nomad, the man of the desert, it is also an attraction for tourists'. The Development Ministry asked Bastuni and Yom-Tov to move ahead with developing the plan into a more elaborate set of blueprints.⁷²

Recovering Bedouin Selfhood from the Outside

Soon after, Yom-Tov and Bastuni presented the project to different audiences outside the Development Ministry. On these occasions, Yom-Tov often adopted a paternalistic tone, explaining that the Negev Bedouin were going through a crisis they themselves were not entirely aware of. For example, he decried the fact that many Bedouin changed their traditional clothes with 'more" efficient" outfits, [and] wore hand watches, and put a fountain pen in their pockets'. To his taste, the Bedouin 'looked lame in their new clothes and customs [...] [which attested to] their desire to resemble westerners'. In Yom-Tov's mind, 'a man should only take pride in his own attributes'.⁷³ The Bedouin, he thought, had forgotten their attributes.

The Bedouin were unable to recover their traditional customs by themselves, Yom-Tov claimed. 'Bedouin youth dress up in European [style] and want a European home', he wrote elsewhere. But they did so, he clarified, 'because they don't know where to look'. It was the role of the architect, he insisted, to show them the way:

The planner needs to be also a mentor and an educator in his plans by bringing them [the Bedouin] back to themselves and making them appreciate their own lifestyle, which had been devalued in their minds because of their poverty and hardship. He will show [the Bedouin] that those customs should also be preserved in the modern house, and that they are no less 'efficient' than those foreign customs they adopted. In this house the Bedouin would feel his pride was returned to him...⁷⁴

Put simply, Yom-Tov believed he – a self-taught Romanian Jewish architect – had the power to restore Bedouin culture. He thought that the Bedouin themselves could take command over their built environment and cultural affairs only at a later stage, after he would spark their imagination.

Yom-Tov was confident that the tensile structure was exactly what the Bedouin needed to restore their sense of cultural pride because it resembled the traditional tent. 'Indeed, this is nothing more than a romantic attachment, because the structure will be permanently grounded', he admitted. 'But romanticism, the yearning for nomadic life – among the most romantic of all people, the Bedouin – are a function of life [...] The permanent house that looks like a tent [...] will keep the memory of freedom.'⁷⁵ And it was this memory, Yom-Tov argued, that the Bedouin needed in order to recover their sense of selfhood.

Yom-Tov wasn't the first to take a paternalistic approach towards an occupied community. Nor was he the first to make reference to that community's tradition. Colonial regimes had often upheld what they presumed to be the locals' traditional ornaments and rituals. In Morocco, according to the architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright, French officials ordered the preservation of the medinas and built new structures using a historicist design to downplay possible resistance to colonial authority and to mitigate the disruption caused by modernization.⁷⁶ Tradition, Wright has argued, was often used to mask the power relations that characterized colonial rule.⁷⁷

Our case, however, does not fit neatly into that power equation. Yom-Tov and Bastuni held a more ambiguous position in relation to both the state and the Bedouin. They were only partially insiders to official planning institutions, and, equally important, they belonged to a generation of architects that sought to emulate Arab vernacular.⁷⁸ But unlike their peers, whose work catered almost exclusively to Jewish Israelis and who thus could turn a blind eye to the Arabs themselves, Yom-Tov and Bastuni could not ignore the disinterest of the Arabic-speaking Bedouin in their own building tradition.⁷⁹ Yom-Tov's criticism of the Bedouin, therefore, was not just a matter of paternalism. It also expressed his frustration on learning that the very people whose tradition he and his peers saw as an antidote to the sanitizing tendencies of modernization were indifferent to that tradition.

When critiquing the state's project of modernization, Yom-Tov was not interested in questioning the Israeli ethos. He believed that restoring the Bedouin's cultural identity was an important step in a broader project aimed at 'restoring the original genius' of the various Arab groups that resided in Israel. Yet, he did not want to instil either group with national ambitions. Instead, he thought that they could form a tapestry of cultures that together would constitute a new Israeli polity. 'This is the right interpretation of Israeli sovereignty', he announced.⁸⁰ In other words, Yom-Tov saw the Bedouin village as a milestone in creating a pluralistic, multi-ethnic Israeli society.

Criticism of the Plan

Even apart from Yom-Tov's rhetoric, the plans he drew with Bastuni attracted criticism from many directions. The Military Administration, the governing

body in charge of the Negev Bedouin, denounced the plans, adding that they only learned of the project when it was described in a daily newspaper. An editorial published by *Davar* suggested that the MAPAM party commissioned the plan in order to undermine another plan to house the Negev Bedouin in mixed cities commissioned by Moshe Dayan, who was then the Minister of Agriculture and a member of the ruling Mifleget Poalei Eretz Yisrael (Party of the Workers of the Land of Israel) (MAPAI).⁸¹ Dayan's plan sought to move the Bedouin to cities outside the Negev and transform them into a wage-labour force. As a first step, it proposed moving 500 Bedouin families to Ramla and Jaffa.⁸² The plan, however, drew strong opposition from the Negev Bedouin and MAPAM party, that was often more sympathetic towards the Bedouin and their cultural practices.⁸³ According to another news report, MAPAM even encouraged the Bedouin to build illegal structures to fight Dayan's plan.⁸⁴ By December, Dayan retracted the plan.⁸⁵

When government officials presented Bastuni and Yom-Tov's plans to the 'Ataunah, in October 1960, the Bedouin showed some interest in the plans but they too had some concerns of their own. The Ministry invited representatives from the tribe to recommend modifications at a follow-up meeting in Jerusalem.⁸⁶ Bastuni encountered more serious opposition from another Bedouin tribe – the Zubaydat from northern Israel – for whom he had also been designing permanent homes. The homes similarly aimed at preserving the 'essence' of Bedouin life and history but when the Zubaydat saw Bastuni's plans, they were outraged. 'These homes are good for Bedouin, but not for us', one member of the tribe told a reporter for the newspaper *Maariv*. 'We want houses like the houses of the Jews of [the neighbouring Jewish town of] Tivon'.⁸⁷

By disassociating themselves from other Bedouin, the Zubaydat reminded Bastuni that not all Bedouin were the same. A social gap stretched between the Negev Bedouin and those residing in northern Israel. The latter population lived in smaller tribal groups, and had more contact with the government already during the times of the British Mandate. In addition, they had more interaction with the nearby peasants, as well as work experience in Haifa and Nazareth. They thus had been going through spontaneous sedentarization processes since the early twentieth century, long before their counterparts in the Negev.⁸⁸

Regardless of the differences between the two, however, it seems that neither the Zubaydat nor the 'Ataunah were moved by the architects' attempts to 'preserve' their identity. Both tribes had enough exposure to modernity to not want to live in a 'traditional' house by that point.⁸⁹ They wanted to enjoy the benefits and life chances modernity entailed.

Bastuni also encountered international criticism when he presented the project at the Mediterranean Colloquium in Florence in 1960.⁹⁰ The Colloquium focused on questions of modernity in Mediterranean countries, and featured esteemed guests and speakers from around the Mediterranean, including delegates from Arab countries.⁹¹ Bastuni's presentation enraged the Egyptian delegation. The Egyptians were dismayed to hear Bastuni report on Israel's success at solving the housing problem of its Arab citizens. Other MAPAM party members at the event pressured Bastuni to apologize in front of the Egyptians. But Bastuni refused and abruptly left the Colloquium.⁹²

In November 1961, MAPAM party lost its control over the Development Ministry to MAPAI party. Under MAPAI's command, Bastuni and Yom-Tov's plans were shelved and soon forgotten.⁹³ Tensions between Bastuni and Yom-Tov emerged shortly thereafter. The Development Ministry never registered Yom-Tov as one of the village's planners, and paid the entire commission to Bastuni. Even though Bastuni transferred some of the money to Yom-Tov, the latter complained that Bastuni kept most of it for himself. Yom-Tov thus asked the Development Ministry to intervene, and to force Bastuni to pay him a greater amount.⁹⁴ Once nothing happened, Yom-Tov filed an official complaint against Bastuni at the Association of the Engineers and Architects in Israel.⁹⁵ Bastuni, however, refused to reply to Yom-Tov's demands. The relationship between the two had come to an end. A few years later, Bastuni immigrated to the United States.

Conclusion

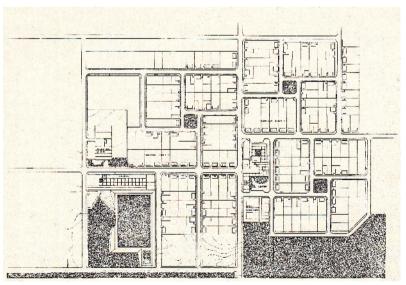
In 1969, the Israeli government inaugurated Tel Sheva, the first of seven Bedouin towns built in the Negev [Figures 16–17]. The majority of the Negev Bedouin, however, refused to move in. They feared that by settling in Tel Sheva they would lose their right to lands they claimed ownership over.⁹⁶ They also worried that the houses were too close to one another in ways that threatened the modesty of Bedouin women.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the houses were laid out on an orthogonal grid that ruled out the possibility of creating partitions between the different extended families and tribes [Figure 18].⁹⁸ In 1971, the few Bedouin who did move in concluded that Tel Sheva was 'a planning failure'.⁹⁹ Over the following years, architects at the Ministry of Housing re-planned Tel Sheva. Although they were able to make some improvements, they failed to fully address the Bedouin's concerns. Nor were they able to erase the memory of the initial failure that has haunted the relationship between the Negev Bedouin and the Israeli state.



National Photos Collection, Government Press Office, D304-099. Figure 16: Fritz Cohen, Official dedication ceremony of Tel Sheva, June 4, 1969.



National Photos Collection, Government Press Office, D304-094. Figure 17: Fritz Cohen, Bedouin in Tel Sheva, June 10, 1969.



Yehonatan Golani and Gersom Schwarze Dieter Israel, eds, *Israel Builds 1970* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Housing, 1970), 4.96.

Figure 18: Arie Peled, Tel Sheva, General Layout of stage A.

In light of Tel Sheva's failure, it is interesting to ask what would have happened had it been Yom-Tov and Bastuni's plan that had been built. Like their successors, Yom-Tov and Bastuni did not account for a number of elements the Bedouin considered essential, especially if we examine the model home they designed. The model home was too small and expensive. Its resemblance to the traditional tent was also at odds with what the Bedouin had wished for. According to the anthropologist Emanuel Marx and the geographer Avinoam Meir, by the 1960s, the Bedouin had ample exposure to urban life.¹⁰⁰ The model home thus would have seemed too rudimentary in their minds. Yom-Tov and Bastuni's model home catered to a Bedouin identity that had ceased to exist, and yet they were fully aware of that. They knew that the Negev Bedouin wanted to break with the past. But they thought the Bedouin did not know what was good for them. As a result, a large gap stretched between what they perceived to be Bedouin architecture and the actual needs of the Bedouin, rendering their efforts paradoxical.

But our story is not just a story of paternalism and a willed aversion to the preferences of the Bedouin themselves. By organizing the settlement into clusters, by modelling the floor-plan of the units on the fellahin house, and by substituting the conventional building materials of concrete and plaster with local materials of cattail and stone, Bastuni and Yom-Tov may have ignored the wishes of the Bedouin, but the point, it seems, was not just to provide housing for a historically nomadic population. All of these modifications they made were also an expression of a growing frustration among Israeli-born architects with the high modernism brought to the country by an earlier generation of immigrants from Europe.¹⁰¹ Thus the paradox of using the state's project of modernization not to replace 'tradition' but to recuperate it. The figure of the Bedouin and the tradition he was seen to represent were viewed, wishfully, as an alternative to high modernism. It was an early and rather radical instance of a movement amongst Israeli architects to draw on the vernacular building traditions of the Arabic-speaking population but perhaps at that point in time it was only possible from the margins of the profession.¹⁰²

In addition, regardless of its shortcomings, Yom-Tov and Bastuni's plan had the potential to overcome some of the impasses brought about by Tel Sheva's design. The plan allocated large land plots to the residents, allowing them to maintain their agricultural practices. It also created much-needed separations between members of different families, and safeguarded the modesty of Bedouin women. It is impossible to say with certainty whether or not these features had the power to overcome the plan's shortcomings. It is fair to assume that they did not, especially if we consider the ongoing land disputes between the Negev Bedouin and the Israeli government that the plan could not fully redress. Nevertheless, when we look back at Yom-Tov and Bastuni's plan from the present, a time when Israel has come to be known for its discriminatory planning practices against its Arabic-speaking minorities, it reminds us with force that, at least at one point, architects were eager to accommodate and house others, and that a different future was possible.

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Endnotes

- On government debates concerning the Negev Bedouin after independence, see Havatzelet Yahel and Ruth Kark, 'Land and Settlement of Israel's Negev Bedouin: Official (Ad Hoc) Steering Committees, 1948–1980', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 45.5 (2018): 716–41.
- 2. See, for examples, Falah Ghazi, 'Israeli State Policy toward Bedouin Sedentarization in the Negev', Journal of Palestine Studies 18.2 (Winter 1989): 71-91; Falah Ghazi, 'The Development of the "Planned Bedouin Settlement" in Israel 1964-1982: Evaluation and Characteristics', Geoforum 14.3 (1983): 322; Ismael Abu-Saad and Cosette Creamer, 'Socio-Political Upheaval and Current Conditions of the Nagab Bedouin Arabs', in Indigenous (In)Justice: Human Rights Law and Bedouin Arabs in the Naqab/Negev, eds Ahmad Amara, Ismael Abu-Saad, and Oren Yiftachel (Cambridge, MA: International Human Rights Clinic, Human Rights Program, Harvard Law School, 2012), 29-34; Eyal Weizman and Fazal Sheikh, The Conflict Shoreline: Colonization as Climate Change in the Negev Desert (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2015), 41. On Israel's policy regarding land expropriation, see Oren Yiftachel, "Ethnocracy": The Politics of Judaizing Israel/Palestine', Constellations 6.3 (1999): 364-90. For a different perspective on the construction of Bedouin towns, see Nurit Kliot and Arnon Medzini, 'Bedouin Settlement Policy in Israel, 1964–1982: Another Perspective', Geoforum 16.4 (1985): 428–39.
- 3. See, for examples, Emanuel Marx and Avinoam Meir, 'Land, Towns and Planning: The Negev Bedouin and the State of Israel', *Geography Research Forum* 25 (2005): 53–54; Hanina Porat, 'The Bedouin in the Negev: Confrontation and Controversy over Ownership of Land and the Establishment of Permanent Settlements, 1960–1973', *Cathedra: For the History of Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv* 126 (2007): 156; Tovi Fenster, 'Ethnicity and Citizen Identity in Planning and Development for Minority

Groups', *Political Georgraphy* 15.5 (1996): 410. Marx, Meir, and Porat explain that state planners improved the Bedouin towns over the years, especially when compared to Tel Sheva and Rahat. For a detailed analysis of Tel Sheva and Rahat, see Eliahu Stern and Yehuda Gradus, 'Socio-Cultural Considerations in Planning Towns for Nomads', *Ekistics* 46.277 (1979): 224–30.

- 4. Yahel and Kark, 'Land and Settlement', 716.
- 5. In February 2017, the government indicated that unemployment rates among the Bedouin were the highest in country. See The Authority for Development and Settlement of the Bedouin in the Negev, 'Hamemshala Ishra et Tohnit Hahomesh Lepituah Kalkali Hevrati Lahevra Habeduit Banegev', February 16, 2017, accessed January 24, 2019, https://www.gov.il/ he/Departments/Policies/5_years.
- For an excellent account of Israeli-born architects and their attempts to localize Israeli architecture, see Alona Nitzan-Shiftan, *Seizing Jerusalem: The Architectures of Unilateral Unification* (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 45–78.
- 7. On Bedouin's belief systems, see 'Bedouin Religious Practices in Sinai and the Negev', *Anthropos* 77.1–2 (1982): 65–88.
- 8. Havatzelet Yahel and Ruth Kark, 'Israel Negev Bedouin during the 1948 War: Departure and Return', *Israel Affairs* 21.1 (2015): 49.
- Joseph Ben-David and Amiram Gonen, *The Urbanization of the Bedouin* and Bedouin-Fallakhin in the Negev (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 2001), 11; Havatzelet Yahel, Ruth Kark, and Seth Frantzman, 'Negev Bedouin and Indigenous People: A Comparative Review', in Societies, Social Inequalities and Marginalization, eds Raghubir Chand, Etienne Nel, and Stanko Pelc (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 133.
- 10. Yahel, Kark, and Frantzman, 'Negev Bedouin and Indigenous People', 132.
- See Seth J. Frantzman, Noam Levin, and Ruth Kark, 'Counting Nomads: British Census Attempts and Tent Counts of the Negev Bedouin 1917 to 1948: British Census and Tent Counts of the Negev Bedouin', *Population, Space and Place* 20.6 (2014): 552–68.
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- 13. Yahel and Kark, 'Land and Settlement', 720; Yahel and Kark, 'Israel Negev Bedouin'.
- 14. In 1953, there were 11,000 Bedouin. See Emanuel Marx, *Bedouin of the Negev* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1967), 12.

- 15. Havatzelet Yahal, 'Havikuah Hakarkaei Bein Beduei Hangev Vemedinat Yisrael', Yaar 17 (2017): 56.
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- 17. Porat, 'The Bedouin in the Negev', 134.
- 18. Marx, Bedouin of the Negev, 3.
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- 21. Ibid.
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- 23. Porat, 'The Bedouin in the Negev'. According to Yahel, it was mainly the Bedouin illegal construction that prompted government action. See Yahal, 'Havikuah Hakarkaei', 56.
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- Simha Yom-Tov, 'Data Sheet', n.d., Kibbutz Dalia Archive; Simha Yom-Tov, 'Life Story', 1971, Kibbutz Dalia Archive.
- 29. Yom-Tov, 'Life Story'.
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- 31. Simha Yom-Tov to Rustum Bastuni, May 30, 1955, uncatalogued, Yad Yaari Research & Documentation Center.
- 32. Simha Yom-Tov to Rustum Bastuni, April 9, 1956, uncatalogued, Yad Yaari.
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- 34. Ada Sa'ar, 'Haroeh Ha'adrihal Vesheyodea Lir'ot', *Hashavua Bakibutz Haartzi*, May 10, 1968, 9, Kibbutz Dalia Archive.
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- 39. Rustum Bastuni and Simha Yom-Tov, 'Arav Al-'Atauna Netunim Vehearot', September 28, 1960 (1)15.147-95, Yad Yaari.
- 40. 'Protokol Miyeshiva Shnitkayma Bemisrad Hapituah, Behadro Shel Mar Galberd Beyom 25.10.60: Benose Tihnun Hakfar Habedouyi Shel Shevet Al-Atautna', October 25, 1960, 4, uncatalogued, Yad Yaari.
- 41. On Labor Zionists' embracement of high modernism, see Nitzan-Shiftan, Seizing Jerusalem, esp. 19–78. On Zionist rural settlements, see Alona Nitzan-Shiftan, Marina Epshtein-Pliouchtch, and Tal Alon-Mozes, 'Richard Kauffmann: Between Architectural and National Modernisms', DoCoMoMo 35 (2006): 48–54; Neta Feniger, 'From Nahalal to Danesfahan: The Transfer of Israeli Modern Rurality to Village Planning in Iran', The Journal of Architecture 23.3 (2018): 367–91; S. Ilan Troen, Imagining Zion: Dreams, Designs, and Realities in a Century of Jewish Settlement (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 1–82. On housing blocks and New Towns, see Rachel Kallus and Yubert Lu Yun, 'The National House and the Personal House: The Role of Public Housing in the Shaping of Space', in Merhav, Adama, Bayit, ed. Yehuda Shenhav (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, 2003), 166–93; Miriam Tuvya and Michael Boneh, eds, Binyan Haaretz: Shikunim Beshnot Hamishim (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuhad, 1999).
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- 43. On Nazareth Illit's design, see Yamit Lazimi, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Labor: The Foundation of Upper Nazareth as a National and Confrontational

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- 44. 'Protokol Miyeshiva Shnitkayma Bemisrad Hapituah', 1.
- 45. Bastuni and Yom-Tov, 'Arav Al-'Atauna Netunim Vehearot'. According to the Public Registration Office in Beersheba, the al-'Ataunah numbered 528 people in September 1960. See Marx, *Bedouin of the Negev*, 13.
- 46. 'Protokol Miyeshiva Shnitkayma Bemisrad Hapituah', 2.
- Ibid., 1. For sample questionnaire, see Rustum Bastuni and Simha Yom-Tov, 'Arab Al-Ataunah: She'elon Demography', 1960 (2)15.147-95, Yad Yaari.
- 48. 'Protokol Miyeshiva Shnitkayma Bemisrad Hapituah', 1.
- 49. In April 1961, Yom-Tov wrote that he developed the second alternative, while Bastuni worked on the first one. Since all drawings were co-signed by the two, and I was not able to find further evidence supporting Yom-Tov's claim, I treat both alternatives as the outcome of their collaborative efforts. See Yom-Tov to Mr. Bassin, April 25, 1961.
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- 51. 'Protokol Miyeshiva Shnitkayma Bemisrad Hapituah', 2.
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- 57. See Ben-David and Gonen, The Urbanization of the Bedouin, 7–16.
- 58. Nitzan-Shiftan, *Seizing Jerusalem*, 45–78. On the Arab village as an object of colonial desire in Israel, see Yacobi and Shadar, 'The Arab Village.'
- 59. Bastuni and Yom-Tov, 'Tochnit Hakfar Habedouyi', 2.
- 60. Simha Yom-Tov, 'Ikron Tichnun Hakfar', 1960 (2)15.147-95, Yad Yaari.

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- 63. Bastuni and Yom-Tov, 'Tochnit Hakfar Habedouyi', 2.
- 64. Rustum Bastuni and Simha Yom-Tov, 'Ikron Binui Hakfar Tochnit Alef', September 28, 1960 (1)15.147-95, Yad Yaari.
- 65. Bastuni and Yom-Tov, 'Tochnit Hakfar Habedouyi'.
- Rustum Bastuni and Simha Yom-Tov, 'Haikaron Hakonstruktivi', September 28, 1960 (1)15.147-95, Yad Yaari.
- 67. Occasionally, the architects would describe the entire house as a transitory form between a tent and a modern house. See, for example, 'Hushlema Tochnit Lekfar Bedouyi Rishon Sheyukam Banegev', 3.
- Rustum Bastuni and Simha Yom-Tov, 'Ikron Tichnun Habayit', 1960 (2)15.147-95, Yad Yaari.
- 69. On Palestinian building elements, see Aharon Fuchs, 'The Palestinian Arab House Reconsidered, Part A: Pre-Industrial Vernacular', *Cathedra* 89 (1988): 83–126; Aharon Fuchs, 'The Palestinian Arab House Reconsidered, Part B: The Changes of the 19th Century', *Cathedra* 90 (1998): 53–86.
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- 73. Simha Yom-Tov, 'Tochnit Yeshuv Hashevet Habedouyi 'al-Ataunah Be'ezor Beer Sheva', 1960, 2 (2)15.147-95, Yad Yaari.
- 74. Simha Yom-Tov, untitled project description, 1960, 5 (2)15.147-95, Yad Yaari. The text was unsigned. Based on the handwriting and location in the archive, it is clear that Yom-Tov wrote it. Bastuni may had seen and commented on it.

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- 76. See Gwendolyn Wright, 'Tradition in the Service of Modernity: Architecture and Urbanism in French Colonial Policy, 1900–1930', *The Journal of Modern History* 59.2 (1987): 291–316. For a more ambivalent account on the use of tradition in Morocco, see Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). On architecture in late-colonial and post-independence Morocco, see Aziza Chaouni, 'Depoliticizing Group. GAMMA: Contesting Modernism in Morocco', in *Third World Modernism: Architecture, Development and Identity*, ed. Duanfang Lu (New York: Routledge, 2010).
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- 80. Yom-Tov, untitled project description, 5.
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- 82. On Dayan's plan, see '500 Mishpahot Bedouim LeShikunei-Keva Bemerkaz HaAretz', Maariv, August 4, 1960; Porat, 'The Bedouin in the Negev', 139; Sa'id Kouzli, 'The Israeli Establishment Policy towards the Bedouin: 1948–1966' (MA thesis, University of Haifa, 2007), 71–74; Yahal, 'Havikuah Hakarkaei', 56.
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- 85. Kouzli, 'The Israeli Establishment Policy'.
- 86. 'Hushlema Tochnit Lekfar Bedouyi Rishon Sheyukam Banegev', 3.
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- See Kliot and Medzini, 'Bedouin Settlement Policy in Israel, 1964–1982: Another Perspective', 433; Falah Ghazi, 'The Processes and Patterns of Sedentarization of the Galilee Bedouin 1880–1982' (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 1982).

- According to Marx and Meir, the Negev Bedouin had enough exposure to urban life by the 1960s. See Marx and Meir, 'Land, Towns and Planning', 48. Also, see Porat, 'The Bedouin in the Negev', 146.
- 90. See a reference to Bastuni's presentation in Venice in 'Hushlema Tochnit Lekfar Bedouyi Rishon Sheyukam Banegev', 3.
- 91. 'Likrat Simposyon Firentze', Hatzofe, September 27, 1960, 2.
- 92. 'Ha'k Lesheavar Bastuni Parash Mepeilut Bemapa'm', *Maariv*, August 9, 1961.
- 93. In 1967, Yom-Tov sent some of his old plans to the Center for Rural Construction in Haifa. They did not reply. Simha Yom-Tov to Prof. A. Yelin and Uri Kaufman, November 9, 1967, (1)15.147-95, Yad Yaari.
- 94. Yom-Tov to Development Ministry's General Manager, 'Sikum Tochniyot Habeduoyim'.
- 95. See Y. Kerol (Head of the Association's Haifa Branch) to Simha Yom-Tov, 'Tvi'a Kaspit Mearch' Rustum Bastuni', February 7, 1963, uncatalogued, Yad Yaari; Y. Kerol and Rustum Bastuni, 'Michtavenu Mitaarih 8.2.1963', February 26, 1963, uncatalogued, Yad Yaari; Simha Yom-Tov to Association of the Engineers and Architect in Israel, Haifa Branch, July 4, 1963, uncatalogued, Yad Yaari.
- Sarit Gabai, 'Aval Eifo Koshrim Kan et Hagmalim', *Davar*, September 26, 1969, 29; Daham al-'Ataunah, 'Hayom - Hanokat Hakfar Habedoui Harishon BaNegev', *Al Hamishmar*, June 4, 1969, 2.
- 97. Kliot and Medzini, 'Bedouin Settlement Policy in Israel', 432.
- 98. One Bedouin explained that 'a fight between two kids from two different tribes could lead to a mass fight that would haunt the village for years', al-'Ataunah, 'Hayom'. Also see 'Tel-Sheva - Kishalon - Toanim Toshvei HaKfar HaBedoui', *Davar*, July 5, 1971, 5.
- 'Tel-Sheva Kishalon', 5. Scholars seem to agree with the residents. See, for example, Kliot and Medzini, 'Bedouin Settlement Policy in Israel', 431; Marx and Meir, 'Land, Towns and Planning', 47–48; Swirski and Hasson, *Invisible Citizens*, 22.
- 100. See Marx and Meir, 'Land, Towns and Planning', 48; Porat, 'The Bedouin in the Negev', 146.
- 101. On Israeli-born architects' frustration with high-modernism, see Nitzan-Shiftan, *Seizing Jerusalem*, esp. 45–78.
- 102. On the longer trajectory of Israeli architects' approach to Arab vernacular, see: Alona Nitzan-Shiftan, 'On Concrete and Stone: Shifts and Conflicts in Israeli Architecture', *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 21.1 (2009): 51–65.