

ES Seminar

"The unrecognized Bedouins settlements in southern Israel, environmental situation in selected issues – Shuket area: unrecognized settlements Um-Batin and El-Syide"

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"Maybe things would have looked different if issues of employment were displayed, the housing condition, the tin sheds lived in at 40 degrees Celsius...It is a difficult situation and you find it hard to believe that such a thing is happening in the state of Israel. Sometimes I think that people do not understand that the Bedouins in the Negev have stopped being nomads. They must be connected to water, sewage, electricity and communication, we need to connect them to the state." (Commander Mordechai Nachmani, Chief of the Negev District police in an interview held on 08.09.2000).

"The inhabitants of the unrecognized villages are at the center of the land issue in the Negev. The lack of local planning in the area leads to building without permits, to demolition warrants, and to the destruction of homes. According to all the data in the report of the center for research of the Knesset, approximately 1,500 buildings without permits are built every year within the unrecognized villages. The inhabitants of those villages do not want to leave their current living areas and demand that those buildings which they attribute to the 35 villages will receive recognition and full development from the state." (Isaak Ritter, 2012).

The basic assumption of the state regarding the unrecognized Bedouin settlements is that they have a negative influence on their surroundings. This is stated in the 2005 strategic plan for the development of the Negev. The aim of this research is to examine this assumption.

The research examines selected environmental conditions and impacts of the unrecognized Bedouin settlements upon their surroundings. It focuses on an area of 27 sq.km between Route 31 to the north, Route 60 to the west, Tel-Sheva to the south and Chur and Yatir wadis to the east, in the vicinity of Shoket junction.

The research clearly shows that the unrecognized Bedouin settlements in the Negev have both negative as well as positive influences upon the surroundings. Furthermore, the research also shows, directly as well as indirectly, that the surrounding environment has a strong impact on life within the unrecognized settlements.

This research is the first examination of environmental issues in the context of these settlements. It allows us to see the actual reciprocal relations between man and his living surroundings - upon which he depends for his survival. These relationships are even more pronounced in their impacts due to the lack of connection to the national and regional infrastructure. The inhabitants' way of life is conditioned by these relationships and the customs and social norms of their traditional way of life.

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