Doing the Just City: Social Impact Assessment and the Planning of Beersheba, Israel

Oren Yiftachel & Rani Mandelbaum

To cite this article: Oren Yiftachel & Rani Mandelbaum (2017) Doing the Just City: Social Impact Assessment and the Planning of Beersheba, Israel, Planning Theory & Practice, 18:4, 525-548, DOI: 10.1080/14649357.2017.1381758

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2017.1381758

Published online: 15 Nov 2017.
Doing the Just City: Social Impact Assessment and the Planning of Beersheba, Israel

Oren Yiftachel and Rani Mandelbaum

Department of Geography and Environmental Development, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beersheba, Israel; Planning Department, Beersheba City Council, Beersheba, Israel

ABSTRACT

This article documents the making of a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for Beersheba, Israel, using a modified version of Susan Fainstein’s ‘just city’ vision. Four key dimensions are analyzed: equality, built environment, diversity and democracy. The SIA reveals that the new plan offers positive steps towards narrowing spatial inequalities. However, it overlooks threats of social dislocation as a result of massive development planned for the city. It also ignores the needs of minorities and creates a democratic deficit. SIA is shown to be needed if planning is to face the challenge of the twenty-first century – doing the just city.

Introduction

This article seeks to provide a planning answer to the demands for social justice arising from recent waves of social protest in cities across the globe. Such protest engulfed all major Israeli cities in the summer of 2011 and parts of 2012. While the center of Israeli protest was in Tel-Aviv, one of the largest and most active ‘occupy’ sites (encampments) was established in the southern city of Beersheba, on which this article focuses. The tent-city quickly attracted scores of social activists, students from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) and other inhabitants of the Beersheba metropolitan region. For more than two months, the tent dwellers and visitors held discussions, protest marches and demonstrations, as well as cultural activities to promote social justice in the city and the surrounding Negev region. This activism culminated in mid-August in the largest demonstration ever held in Beersheba, with over 30,000 protesters marching under the slogan “The South demands social justice”.

With the disappearance of the tent-cities and large demonstrations, several groups and institutions, including Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, took the task of ‘translating’ the main calls of the protest – “the people demand social justice” into concrete policy proposals. This article presents such a ‘translation’ in the realm of urban planning. It reports on a preparation in ‘real time’ of a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) using the ‘just city’ approach.

The project took place in parallel to the drafting of a major new outline plan known as ‘Beersheba 2030’ – the new ‘city plan’. This plan marks a major shift in the planning of the capital of the Negev, by focusing on massive urban renewal and consolidation. The plan places great emphasis on massively populating the inner city by adding 20,000 dwelling units in both high-rise and low-rise development,
while concurrently upgrading the physical infrastructure, social services and employment options in those neighborhoods. At the same time the plan aims to slow down considerably the development in the outlying low density neighborhoods.

However, the professional team hired by the state government, and the city council, spent little time or effort in assessing the likely social impact of the plan. The SIA report summarized here was prepared by a team of graduate planning students during the year 2013–2014. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time such a project has been carried out in Israel.

The project was confined to the municipal boundaries of the city of Beersheba. It is acknowledged that in the wider Beersheba metropolitan area, social inequalities and discrimination, particularly of the Bedouin Arab populations are severe and require urgent planning attention (Yiftachel, 2011). However, this paper focuses on the central and mainly Jewish city of Beersheba, for which the plan in question has been prepared.

The paper begins with a brief conceptual discussion, followed by a ‘baseline’ mapping of four main social dimensions of the city. It then moves to analyze the content and impact of the new city plan on each of the four dimensions, thereby presenting an assessment of the social impact of this major plan.

The article’s central conclusion is that the SIA tool developed here is a feasible option to introduce into the making of every major urban and regional plan. This lesson appears to be exportable to other cities and regions with the appropriate contextual adjustments.

**Popular Protest and Social Impact Assessments**

How do the recent popular protests relate to urban planning? The connection is indeed quite direct: many of the demands raised throughout the protest period had to do with spatial justice issues, such as land and housing prices (which were the initial trigger), the provision and maintenance of affordable and public housing, accessibility to public transport and facilities, urban services, and redistribution of general societal resources.

In response to the social voices reverberating throughout Israel, the protest leaders and their supporters prepared a series of documents demanding that social issues – above all housing affordability and a just redistribution of resources – should be included in the discussion over any new plan.

During and following the occupation of Israeli urban spaces and mass demonstrations, a group of some 110 experts supported the protestors. A special team focused on land, planning, transport and housing. They collaborated with the protest movement in demanding a SIA for every significant urban plan, strategy or major development project (Yonah & Spivak, 2012, 149). Such a document would serve, it was argued, as a relevant complement to the environmental impact assessment which is now mandatory in Israel as well as in many other countries (Yonah & Spivak, 2012, p. 150).

**Social Impact Assessment – From a Concept to a Professional Tool**

Let us make a short detour to explore the SIA paradigm. Its origins can be traced to the social upheaval of the 1960s in Europe and the USA. The period produced new socially oriented thinking which introduced philosophical, critical and political-economic elements to urban and planning theories and practice, with a growing emphasis on social and urban justice (Campbell & Marshall, 2006; Forester, 1988; Hall, 1988; Harvey, 1973).

However, the use of, and research on SIA in urban and regional planning has remained sporadic. This stands in contrast to fields such as environmental, welfare and public policy studies, in which SIA developed a rich tradition. Scholarly attempts to formulate a method of assessing the impact of
development began decades ago, but without sufficient coherence. Early attempts included the work of Armour (1990) who ‘imported’ impact assessment tools into urban analysis, and Yiftachel and Hedgcock (1993) who coined the concept of ‘urban social sustainability’ in order to account conceptually and empirically for the long-term social effect of urban development. This was taken further by Lane, Ross, and Dale (1997), who explored the roots of two paradigms of SIA – the political and the technical, and devised strategies to combine the two paradigms during the cause of a joint environmental and indigenous struggle over mining sites in northern Australia.

In parallel to sporadic work in planning, a most notable influence over the making of SIAs was exerted by the work of Frank Vanclay. In a series of publications, Vanclay developed the conceptual foundations of the current dominant integrative paradigm of SIA (Vanclay, 1999, 2002). The main effort then was to reorganize the social impact field, which suffered from confusion and contradictions (Taylor, Bryan, & Goodrich, 1995), into a systematic and coherent endeavor, as a platform to translate abstract principles into practical steps. Vanclay’s works (2002, 2003) claims that SIA researchers and practitioners increasingly share a consensus about SIA preparation, which should be participatory, supporting affected peoples with emphasis on the disadvantaged, mitigating the negative, and enhancing the positive impact of development, and equipping communities to respond to impending change. The review also identifies several shortcomings, most notably the relative lack of explicit and open reference in most SIA procedures to culture, identity, gender, power relations and issues of human rights and social justice. Our investigation later in the paper aims to contribute to these under-studied issues.

A major challenge, however, remains the ‘translation’ of the major work conducted on SIAs to the field of urban and regional planning. Several steps have been taken in the new millennium, focusing on assessment of the social impact of urban renewal and development programs, for example in the cities of Jyvaskyla, Finland (Sairinen, 2004); Beijing, or Sao Paolo (Rolnik & Klintowitz, 2011). Parallel advancement was made through a renewed application of the concept of ‘urban social sustainability’ which includes strong emphasis on planning and development strategies (Jalaludin et al., 2012; Ghahramanpour et al., 2013, 2015).

Our work below contributes to the ‘translation’ effort by using a SIA to assess a major long-term urban plan for the city of Beersheba. It also addresses some of the shortcomings identified by Esteves et al. (2012) by combining the SIA with the vision of the ‘just city’. In so doing, it addresses issues of cultural identity, human rights and equitable distribution of resources, often overlooked by past SIA practices.

Dissemination
As noted, the formal and legal dissemination of SIA within urban and regional planning has been rather slow, lagging seriously behind the environmental and welfare fields. It appears to have been first introduced by the US and Canadian federal authorities, at times as a subset of the environment impact assessment (EIA). In both countries, the SIA was applied mainly to federally funded projects, which occasionally require the preparation of such statements. Because most plans and projects in urban Canada and the USA are administered by state-based and urban-based authorities (and not federal), the impact of this tool has remained marginal in urban and regional planning (Alexander, 2015; Vanclay, 2014; Vanclay & Esteves, 2011).

The European Union has also adopted several policy statements that encourage, and at times demand, the preparation of SIA, the commitment to which has strengthened over time (IAIA, 2015). However, similarly to the North American case, most plans are prepared on non-EU policy scales, and the degree of SIA preparation varies greatly. Some states, such as Austria, Belgium and France, often require its preparation; in several other states, such as Finland and Ireland, it is required for specific plans only; while in Greece, Cyprus, and most Eastern European states, SIAs are usually neither required nor applied (Alexander, 2015).
Israel belongs to the developed group of states whose social planning instruments are poorly developed, in legislation, regulation, discourse or practice. To date, Israeli planning has largely ignored social considerations or aspirations for a just city (for important exceptions see Carmon, 2001; Churchman & Silverman, 2012; Fenster, 2014; Yiftachel & Mandelbaum, 2015; Yiftachel & Tzfadia, 2014). The recent social protest movement has clearly and vigorously exposed the heavy price paid by Israeli society in general, and the young urban generation in particular, for the long-term neglect of social issues (Ben-Chitrit, 2015; Yonah & Spivak, 2012).

The historical disregard for social justice issues has been blatant in Israeli planning and has resulted in repeated social and ethnic crises and conflicts. Most notable is the significant erosion in the right to land and housing, discrimination against minorities (particularly Palestinian Arabs, but notably also other immigrant groups and women), and effective exclusion of large sections of the population from the right to dignified living in the city. A notable exception is the absorption of the ‘Russian’ (post-Soviet) immigrants, which illustrates the ability of planning to successfully accommodate a large wave of poor migrants holding a distinct minority identity (Alterman, 1995; Yiftachel et al., 2013).

The consistent oversight of social needs has brought about the development of an active NGO sector, which often researches and comments on the social aspects of planning and housing and at times provides alternative planning (for reviews see Churchman & Silverman, 2012; Fenster, 2014; Yacobi, 2007). In addition, several parliamentary lobbies and serious proposals for amending Israeli planning, land and development regulations have been prepared by renowned scholars and leaders who call for social justice and redistribution in the cities (Churchman & Silverman, 2012; Hananel, 2016; Kedar & Yiftachel, 2006) and greater public participation (Kallus & Shevah, 2015). However, these efforts have not as yet influenced the structure and institution of the planning process and system, which remain glaringly devoid of serious tools to assess and critique the social impact of plans and projects.

Against this background the current project took a different approach to past efforts at introducing SIA. Rather than analyzing the need for SIA, which is obvious to our eyes, and backed up by most literature (Esteves et al., 2012; IAIA, 2015), or comparing the Israeli system to other states (Alterman, 1990, 2013; Carmon & Fainstein, 2013), we chose to ‘do the just city’. That is, develop a practical tool, or approach, and apply it in ‘real time’ to a major city for which a new plan is being prepared, such as the city of Beersheba.

Subsequently, a special workshop of the Program of Urban and Regional Planning at Ben-Gurion University (in 2013–2014) was devoted to this very task. In the following sections we present an abridged version of the planning SIA produced for Beersheba 2030. It focuses on mapping the social-spatial settings in various city neighborhoods and on analyzing the likely impacts of the new outline plan.2

**Concepts and Methods**

After reviewing various models of the just city, the team adopted a modified version of Susan Fainstein’s (2011) conceptual approach, and ‘translated it’ to practical analytical and planning tools. Fainstein emphasizes three main dimensions of the just city:

- **Equity**: promoting fair redistribution of resources across urban groups and spaces
- **Diversity**: recognizing group identities as a central part of urban society
- **Democracy**: cultivating democratic procedures and institutions in the process of urban governance

In order to fit Fainstein’s model into the Beersheba planning context we expanded the framework into four key dimensions of the just city by splitting ‘equity’ into two sub-categories. Given the centrality
of these issues to social justice, it was decided to focus on two aspects: material (physical) and socioeco-
onomic inequality. Hence, the tools we developed rely on four dimensions of the just city, as follows.

- The state of the built environment: assessing and comparing the physical condition of the city’s
neighborhoods according to an ‘upkeep–neglect index’ (UNI) we devised. In addition, we analyzed
the spatial patterns of municipal investment as reflected in the city budget.
- Socioeconomic spatial gaps: analyzing population characteristics and socioeconomic gaps
between the neighborhoods.
- Cultural identity and diversity: mapping the identity of communities and the degree to which the
city’s planning meets their needs.
- Democracy in planning and public opinions: analyzing a comprehensive survey we conducted
on public participation and attitudes towards the city’s planning in general, and the new city
plan in particular.

The analysis of the data collected in these four dimensions led us to identify a series of problems
and opportunities in promoting the just city in Beersheba. These, in turn, formed the ‘baseline’ against
which the new plan was assessed and probes the following questions: does it progress or impede the
attainment of social justice? Does it promote or retard equity, diversity and democracy? On this
basis we formulated recommendations for modifications in the current plan and the urban planning
system (Figure 1).

The workshop began with a series of field excursions to each of the city’s neighborhoods. This was
followed by hearing presentations from key social activists of the 2011–2012 movement who presented
their doctrines and views about the desirable urban planning of a just city. Workshop participants then
met with city officials, planning officers from the district and local authorities, neighborhood leaders
and several experts.3
The Just City? ‘Baseline’ Assessment of Beersheba

Comprehensive datasets were collected for each of the four dimensions. In this article, we present the ‘highlights’ of these findings, while the full report is available on request.

**Built Environment: Between Upkeep and Neglect**

Public spatial planning is a key factor in the distribution of public resources such as nature, status and the upkeep of the built environment. To this end we devised the UNI based on six parameters as key elements of urban quality of life:

- Urban public space – streets and square
- Public buildings
- Public infrastructure and transport (accessibility and frequency)
- Open public space
- Quality of housing upkeep
- The level of integration of the urban fabric

Neighborhood information was collected in detailed surveys as well as from aerial photograph analyses, official internet sites, and local interviews. Raw data was standardized and fitted to a common scale. The index was then processed using statistical software and mapped using GIS. The UNI measured the physical state of the following components:

**Urban public space:** We examined levels of walkability, existence and condition of the sidewalks, levels of cleanliness, standards of sanitary and engineering infrastructure, amount and standards of street furniture, shading, lighting and signing, and the reported general feeling of the space. The spatial analysis revealed a polarized distribution across the city. Beersheba’s core neighborhoods are characterized by sub-standard and neglected public spaces, while the new outlying neighborhoods enjoy pleasant, well maintained and more inviting public spaces (Figure 2).

**Public buildings:** Beersheba has no shortage of public buildings and they are relatively evenly distributed. However, after weighing up all the characteristics affecting the quality and nature of usage of those public buildings, it seems that despite their uniformity, the degree to which they match the population’s needs, their actual use, maintenance and accessibility, are significantly unequal across the city’s neighborhoods. The distress is most evident in the oldest and often neglected core neighborhoods which host a large number of non-functioning and abandoned public buildings. This disparity between the inner and outer neighborhoods, according to the SIA, is consistent across many aspects of Beersheba’s socio-spatial fabric.

**Public open spaces (POS):** We thoroughly examined public space usability, the sense of security (day and night), quality of gardening, shading, recreational facilities and other furniture. Here, too, the findings indicated considerable gaps between the generally neglected open areas in the core neighborhoods and the reasonably maintained, more inviting and secure POSs in the newer neighborhoods. There are a few exceptions, however – some well-kept parks in core neighborhoods (mainly the Beit neighborhood) and some neglected POSs in outer neighborhoods. Yet, the overall findings are clear and polarized.

**Public transport:** Examination of the distribution of bus stations around the city indicates uniform and adequate distribution. However, major differences were found in frequency and accessibility levels (especially for the elderly). The inner–outer pattern here was more complex with certain core neighborhoods enjoying adequate accessibility to public transport, while others are relatively inaccessible.
There are also differences among the new outer suburbs, with some enjoying efficient and high-quality transport, while others suffer from conspicuous isolation.

**Housing:** The housing variable was divided into two: (1) The quality of maintenance; and (2) integration within the urban fabric. Here we assessed the spatial integration of housing and compatible uses, such as commerce, employment, and education. In this case as well, the combination of data painted a complex picture showing how some core neighborhoods suffer from low residential standards but have high accessibility to other services. This is in contrast to outlying neighborhoods in which the residential space is well maintained but residents lack satisfactory access to services.

A final UNI score was given to each neighborhood by standardizing and integrating the six variables, as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

The findings on the UNI have clearly shown a threefold pattern: (1) The core inner neighborhoods, mainly Alef, Gimel and Dalet, suffer from severe neglect both in public and private spaces. Inner neighborhood Beit, on the other hand, is experiencing an urban revival and enjoys higher and greater upkeep and investment, (2) the older neighborhoods in the second ring – the intermediate neighborhoods – mainly Hey and Yod-Alef neighborhoods, receive average values in all indicators. These neighborhoods do not suffer from severe neglect, but we believe they too are not adequately maintained, (3) The new outer neighborhoods, mainly Ramot, Neot Lon, Neve Ze’ev and Neve Noy, enjoy both public and private physical spaces that are well maintained, but suffer from inaccessibility. In this group, the positive exception is Neve Ze’ev which, despite being a relatively peripheral neighborhood, appears not to suffer from lack of accessibility or urbanity, due to successful planning. The negative exception in this group is the southern Nahal Beka neighborhood (previously a temporary immigrant camp), which suffers from neglect, isolation and inaccessibility.

An additional aspect investigated in this project was the city budget, where we tested the match between public spending on space and principles of social justice. Here we faced a technical problem:
the official budget is divided by generic expense categories without any spatial specifications. This problem – common to many other city budgets – was reiterated in an interview with the municipality’s budget director. A complex analysis of the expense reports by projects (which have specific locations) enabled an indirect assessment of social-spatial investment. Thus we discovered that less than 10% of the 2014 municipal budget is allocated directly to the social and spatial needs of neighborhood residents. This meagre ratio points to questionable spatial management in terms of social justice. We believe that in a city such as Beersheba, characterized by a relatively high percentage of disadvantaged populations and neglected public spaces, the budget must target specific under-developed and needy locations.

To conclude, the manner in which public planning and development resources are allocated among the various neighborhoods in Beersheba is conspicuously unjust. In the main, the newer outer and more affluent neighborhoods receive better infrastructure, open space and building maintenance as well as higher budgets, while the reverse applies to the older inner areas.

**Socio-Spatial Gaps**

To assess Beersheba’s spatial socioeconomic structure, we examined the geography of four key components: housing, income, education and ethnicity. We used time-series data taken from population censuses of the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) for 1995 and 2008. The combined data were digitized and analyzed using ‘Arc’ GIS software.

We used two analytical axes: (1) horizontal – analyzing spatial differences in a single point in time, and (2) vertical – analyzing changes over time in the same area between 1995 and 2008. This allowed mapping and identifying spatial and temporal trends as a basis for understanding patterns of urban inequality.
**Housing:** Horizontal assessment of the percentage of home ownership shows conspicuous gaps between city neighborhoods. The lowest ownership ratios were observed in the inner city area and the highest in the outlying suburbs (Figure 4). Vertical examination produced an even more disturbing finding: the gap is widening over time. The percentage of housing ownership in the core is declining, while rising in the outer neighborhoods. A partial explanation for this trend is the entry of university renting students into some of the core neighborhoods around the city campuses, although this trend had begun well before 1995, and was only intensified in later years. It may be apt to mention that the consequences of studentification in Beersheba were discussed in detail by another BGU report, highlighting a regressive process of increasing alienation and urban segregation between veteran urban residents and newly arriving students (Alfasi et al., 2012).

**Income:** Horizontal examination of monthly income indicated a similar trend to that indicated by the housing variable. Here, too, we witness significant gaps between the core low income neighborhoods and the more affluent outer suburbs. Vertical examination did not yield any significant trend, showing that income inequality has remained stable.

**Education:** Horizontal examination of the ratio of matriculation certificate (*Bagrut*) holders paints a slightly different picture. Although there is a certain correlation between income and education levels, the gaps are nevertheless significantly narrower compared to the previous indicators, and more exceptions are noticeable. This is likely to be caused by the influx of university students to inner neighborhoods, having low income and high education levels. This disrupts the familiar association between income and education. Vertical examination did not yield any significant change over time.

**Religion:** This parameter was measured by the percentage of Jews in each neighborhood. Horizontal analysis suggests that the higher the status of the neighborhood, the higher the percentage of Jews.

---

**Figure 4.** Disparities in housing ownership (%). Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Census Data and Annual Surveys (2008–2015).
Hence, most non-Jews congregate in Beersheba’s inner impoverished neighborhoods. Vertical examination shows that the percentage of Jews in Beersheba is slightly declining in time due to the significant entry of non-Jews into various neighborhoods both affluent and poor. Most of these changes may be attributed to immigration from the former Soviet Union by people not recognized as Jews by Israel’s religious establishment, as well as the entry of Arabs into core neighborhoods, especially Gimel and Dalet.

Overall, socio-spatial analysis draws a relatively clear picture: Beersheba is spatially layered and quite polarized. The older core neighborhoods are weakening, whereas the outlying and relatively new neighborhoods are strengthening, with the intermediate neighborhoods in the second ring remaining relatively unchanged. These trends suggest that without planning intervention the core neighborhood will continue to decline and ‘drag’ behind some of the middle ring neighborhoods, spelling serious trouble for the city in future generations.

An analysis of the city’s socioeconomic structure demonstrates a long-term unequal and unfair spatial distribution of resources, with clear association to past planning policies. Importantly, the new city plan does not address the equality. It makes only scant and passing reference to the need to create greater equality. However, as shown later, the plan’s spatial recommendations are in accord with the socioeconomic needs of the city with a promise to progress toward a more just urban society.

**Cultural Identity Diversity**

Let us remember that the just city model, requires that authorities recognize group identities by representing and cultivating their cultures in urban representations, policies, spaces and activities. For this purpose we have mapped the major communities in Beersheba and interviewed their representatives to gain a firsthand impression of their sentiments and suggestions. The interviewees were holders of formal positions in their community organizations, chiefly those organizing cultural activities. The city plan omitted this step, as it neither mapped the communities, nor interviewed their leaders, nor addressed their identity and cultural needs.

Beersheba is an immigrant multicultural city with ethnic communities of various sizes and strengths (Dahan, 2011; Yiftachel et al., 2013). After consulting with social experts, in-depth interviews were conducted with key representatives of the following groups deemed most important for shaping the city’s future: immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU), Arabs, middle-class Ashkenazi (Jews of European descent), Ethiopian Jews, students, Religious-Zionist Jews, mothers, and the LGBT community. Semi-structured interviews lasted about an hour, with the use of a common basic questionnaire that focused on the social implications of urban development and the needs of the particular community.

Notably, the methods employed here complemented the quantitative analysis of the other dimensions examined earlier in two main respects. First, the analysis is qualitative – tracing attitudes, sentiments, aspirations, frustrations and visions to which the other methods are relatively blind. Second, the information was gathered from city-wide identity communities rather than by neighborhood, thereby exploring an additional dimension of urban society. Interviews were complemented by information gleaned from public and social media. The following is a brief summary of the views expressed.
Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union

This community, estimated at 35–40,000 people known as ‘the Russians’, shows reasonable levels of satisfaction with life in Beersheba, particularly considering their recent immigration. The group, whose absorption into the city was described elsewhere as the light side of planning (Yiftachel et al., 2013), generally feels ‘at home’, as it is provided with adequate housing, cultural and linguistic facilities and services. Complaints were voiced with regard to relatively minor issues such as the high cost of cultural events and afterschool activities for children. A general complaint about the cost of living was not unique to this group, although many of its members (particularly the elderly) have low incomes. The community representative criticized the relatively low representation of ‘Russians’ at the institutions of higher education, and the lack of affordable housing and employment in Israel’s peripheral areas in general. In her view, these aspects influence the Russian-speaking community more than others.

Regarding the new city plan, the interviewee and her helpers in the immigrant organization heard about it for the first time during the interview. Beyond the lack of participation, her impression of the plan was positive, given the high concentration of Russian speakers in the core neighborhoods earmarked for investment and renewal. The massive addition of new housing units to the inner city could, in her eyes, serve the needs of this relatively aging community, which would benefit from a central location. However, she also remarked that such massive redevelopment can also hurt the elderly who may be displaced, and that the lack of participation of Russian speakers in the planning process should be improved.

Arabs:
The community of Palestinian Arabs numbers around 5,000 residents, and is composed of a mixture of Negev Bedouins and Palestinian Arabs who migrated to the city from northern regions. Information from all sources voiced intense disquiet and protest against the lack of Arab public spaces and facilities in the city. This neglect is stark when considering the location of the city in a space that had been Arab (Bedouin) for generations, and still serves a metropolitan Arab population of over 200,000. The planning background to the policy is the government strategy (often opposed by the indigenous Bedouins) of luring them into satellite modern towns around Beersheba, designed entirely for the Bedouins, and not into the city of Beersheba itself.

The community feels discriminated against in terms of municipal services such as education, religious institutions, cemeteries, children and youth activities, as well as Arab cultural institutions. There were also complaints about the municipality preventing the use of the main historical Beersheba mosque as a place of Muslim worship, and its recent reopening as a museum to prevent Muslim prayers. Similarly, the community representative complained about the “criminal and abusive” neglect of the old Muslim cemetery in the heart of the city, which is not only religiously offensive but is also an eyesore for the entire city.

The Arab representative claimed that the new city plan makes absolutely no reference to the unique needs of the Arab community and effectively excludes its identity from urban space. He recommends a public participation process that will include permanent Arab community members and promote several steps to help them feel that they belong to the city, such as Arabic signs, Arab educational and cultural institutions, giving Arab names to various streets, as well as recognition of the Arab character of the Old City and its function as a center for very large Bedouin communities residing in the surrounding metropolitan area.

Middle-class Ashkenazi (Jews of European descent):
This group is estimated as several thousands – small but powerful. According to the interviewee, Beersheba’s somewhat low status relates to housing which is affordable to all. He believed that standards had to be raised in order to prevent the city’s affluent population from moving to suburban satellite communities such as Omer, Lehavim, Meitar,
and recently to suburban expansions of nearby Kibbutz settlements. The main criticism of this community has to do with the lack of cultural offerings able to compete with the Tel Aviv area. There was also criticism of the current urban design of the city, which does not resemble the urban planning evident in the most successful cities in Europe or the Middle East.

This interviewee was also unaware of the new outline plan but was positive about its main principles. Creating an urban street and greater accessibility through public transport would contribute significantly to the city in general, and its lower-income inhabitants in particular, he believed. He added that the planning in general (including this plan) lacked reference to children and youth, and said little about the elderly. Finally he recommended that the plan should maintain and enhance the Beersheba experience by preserving the city’s unique desert landscape through climate compatible construction and design, and by introducing measures to increase its attractiveness through high quality housing, cultural life and employment. The recent development of a cyber-city near the university, he claimed, will attract strong middle-class populations to the city, which should be one of the major goals of any future city plan.

The Ethiopian Jewish community: This community numbers around 5,000 immigrants who arrived during the last two decades. In general the community feels marginalized and frustrated in the city. Severe criticism was voiced against the lack of synagogues for the community and the lack of access to municipal facilities. The community suffers from high levels of under/unemployment, with many working on a temporary basis for contractors, without social rights and on low salaries and benefits. There are also shortages in affordable afternoon activities for children: those offered in community centers are too expensive for the low-income community. The community also reports serious spatial segregation. Due to the existence of three main ‘absorption’ centers in the city, many community members live either in or around these in sub-standard housing conditions. Due to their average low income, this separation creates clusters of disadvantaged populations which precipitate urban deterioration and racism towards this community. In addition, the concentration and lack of appropriate housing assistance makes it more difficult to integrate the community into the urban society. Finally, there is dissatisfaction with the urban public transport system which is extremely important for this low-income community.

The interviewee had never heard of the new city plan before the interview. When viewing the documents he responded quite favorably, and was happy to hear of the planned investment in core neighborhoods. Nevertheless, he claimed that the plan did not deal directly with the multiple difficulties experienced by his community, and called for adjustments designed to turn the city into a true home for the Ethiopian Jewish community and other marginal minorities.

Students: This population numbers around 20–25,000 temporary residents mostly concentrated in the ‘student bubble’ in the city’s northern core neighborhoods. These areas provide cheap but low-standard housing, immediate access to education facilities and a variety of cultural activities, entertainment venues and services, with the support of the university and municipality (Alfasi et al., 2012). The interview revealed that ‘the bubble’ serves the students well culturally and spatially, although not without some tensions with the city’s permanent residents. Complaints were made about the service level of urban public transport and lack of cycling facilities. The most difficult problem perceived by university graduates (and other youngsters in Beersheba) is the shortage of subsequent local employment, which prevents many from making Beersheba their permanent residence.

The interviewee was aware of the new city plan and saw it as highly problematic. He argued that massive renewal planned for the urban core would not contribute to Beersheba, and that the city must offer spacious suburban neighborhoods for younger professional couples. This is because it cannot
compete with the other big cities in terms of cultural offering. In addition, he was concerned by the rising rental prices and increased traffic volumes along the city's main arteries which cut through its core neighborhoods. The main emphasis for students and young adults, he maintained, is that the new plan increases the availability of housing, entertainment and cultural facilities (which are particularly lacking) and future employment. The plan's emphasis on 'urbanity' he argued, is an unnecessary luxury.

**LGBT:** The chair of the pride house interviewed for the project, claimed that the community comprises “more than a thousand” active members, although “thousands more are still in the closet” and quietly support the community. Urban policy in Beersheba was defined as “badly lacking”. Although in general he claimed that Beersheba is “quite tolerant” of gay people, the city mainly ignores the community and misses great opportunities to leverage its cultural and economic power. For example, the community's repeated requests to receive a community center from the council have been consistently rejected, and the community has never been recognized or appeared in the City's publications about the social makeup of Beersheba.6 There is no fixed yearly budget for gay activities, although in recent years, in a less official way, the City has supported some events and services needed by the LGBT community. In a major setback, the city cancelled the 2016 pride parade which was previously approved, due to threats from religious elements. This event was mentioned several times in subsequent interviews as exposing the homophobia which still exists among policy makers.

The interviewee was well aware of the new city plan and thought its strategy correct. The renewal and redevelopment of the inner core is in the interest of the community and will bring greater urban life, entertainment and housing opportunities for gay people. Yet, the community representative claimed that the mayor’s repeated declarations of Beersheba being a ‘multicultural’ city will remain empty until he includes the LGBT community as equal to the other city communities supported by the council.

**National-Religious:** This community numbers around 20,000 Orthodox Jews, both Ashkenazi and Sephardi. “The city is good for the community”, argued the interviewee, and our members “feel at home” in most neighborhoods. Most of its basic religious needs are adequately met – schools, kindergartens, yeshivas, synagogues and kosher restaurants and stores. No particular complaints were voiced apart from a specific shortage of religious kindergartens for certain sections of the community and the lack of synagogues for Ashkenazim (Jews of European descent) in specific locations. There are some notable tensions between sub-communities, especially over education between Ashkenazi and Sephardic (Eastern) groups. In addition there are small new communities which are less tolerant and wish to have entire streets closed on the Sabbath and to impose regulations on clothing in their surrounding neighborhood. Yet these tensions rarely surface in discussions about the role of planning in the lives of this community.

Two group representatives interviewed had never heard of the new city plan and were quite concerned when exposed to its details. The main concern was the influence of high-rise buildings and the destruction of the warm and friendly neighborhood fabric, particularly for youth. The community is not opposed to building residential towers in open areas, but is concerned with the transformed character of existing streets. The best planning move, the representative commented, would be to upgrade the old areas without affecting their traditional character, adding new suburban areas at the outer rings, and maintaining the city's distinct Jewish identity, which may be under threat with the immigration of Arabs and foreigners to the city.

To conclude this part, Beersheba's diverse communities express very different positions regarding past and future planning. The ‘Russian’ and national-religious groups appear to be most satisfied, and are indeed endowed with solid educational, access and urban facilities. The Arabs, Ethiopians and LGBT communities, on the other hand, express frustration at their treatment by the city, which they claim
ignores their legitimate needs and aspirations. The new plan says little about the cultural future of
the city. Hence, several key problems that impact on different communities are not treated, let alone
resolved, by the new city plan. These include segregation, the housing crisis, lack of recognition, the
nature of the city's landscape and cultural icons and the allocation of budgets to minority culture and
events. Thus, the new plan for Beersheba's future fails to adequately address the city's cultural diversity.

Planning Democracy – Public Opinion

The just city is democratic; that is, it is governed 'by the people and for the people'. The democratic city
promotes public participation in shaping the city's future as it balances the majority's wishes and the
minority's rights, as well as the positions of the professional and political stakeholders. As part of the
basic democratic ethos that seeks to know the people's perception, opinions and visions for their city,
we conducted a comprehensive attitude survey in seven of the city's neighborhoods.

The survey was conducted in all four core neighborhoods – Alef, Beit, Gimel and Dalet. A parallel
survey was conducted in three outlying neighborhoods – Ramot, Neve Ze'evel and Neve Menahem
(Figure 5). The survey was administered by students in urban public spaces surrounding seven shopping
areas – one in each neighborhood. A total of 284 responses were received, 142 from inner and 146 from
outlying neighborhoods. The questionnaires were administered in person, with a random selection
technique of surveying every fifth person entering at the same time in all shopping areas. This yielded
a representative sample in terms of age, gender and identity structure. The multiple choice question-
naire sought to document and assess (1) the public's opinions, visions and fears about the city and its
future, (2) its past and future process of planning, and (3) suggestions for the city's future planning.

Our analysis revealed significant divergence in the attitudes of residents from inner and outer
neighborhoods. In the outer areas, for example, 89.3% of respondents expressed agreement with the
statement "My neighborhood is pretty and well-kept", as opposed to only 35.6% in the core neighbor-
hoods. This was further highlighted by the responses to "the municipality invests adequately in my
neighborhood" (84.4% vs. 32.9%, respectively; \( p \) value < 0.00; see Figures 6 and 7).

The findings on satisfaction levels from the city further reinforce this problematic trend. Clearly,
the residents of Beersheba's outer neighborhoods were significantly more satisfied with life in their
neighborhood compared to the inner city inhabitants. The biggest gap was documented between Neve
Ze'ev, with an 83.9% satisfaction rate, and Gimel neighborhood, with a less than 15% satisfaction rate.

Almost two-thirds (63.7%) of respondents were completely unaware of the major new city plan,
while 25.7% where somewhat aware. However, further examination revealed that they actually thought
more about local plans. It is therefore safe to say that nine out of ten Beersheba residents are not aware
of the plan that is likely to drastically reshape their urban space in the coming decade.

To be fair to the planners, they did organize two large public meetings during 2012 and 2013 to
expose the plan to the public. However, these meetings, attended by close to 300 people did not
include any structured discussion or systematic and recorded feedback of the concerns raised by the
public. Neither was there any follow-up by the planners in revisions to the plan or at least a public
airing of community concerns. According to interviews conducted with the council's planning staff,
these meetings did not leave a notable mark on the plan's final recommendations.

The survey delved deeper into people's attitudes regarding the future built environment for
Beersheba. It surveyed attitudes on issues central to the plan such as densification, high-rise building,
urbanity, open space and maintenance of the built environment. On density we discovered surprisingly
that in all of the selected neighborhoods, whether inner or outer, opinions were evenly split on the
Figure 5. Locations of inner and outlying neighborhoods. (a) Typical outer area medium density development, New Ramot neighborhood. (b) Typical outer area cty single residential development, Ramot neighborhood. (c) Dalet core neighborhood – typical public housing. (d) Gimel core neighborhood – typical housing. (e) Typical core redevelopment on the edge of Gimel and Beit neighborhoods. Source: photographed by Oren Yitachel.

Figure 6. Responses to the statement “My neighborhood is pretty and well-kept” (by neighborhoods). Source: project surveys.
desired population density, with the exception of Neve Ze'ev where 90% of respondents supported high densities, typifying their own successful living environment.

On the densification of inner neighborhoods, most respondents from the outer neighborhoods, unsurprisingly, supported a plan that would increase densification in the inner areas. Given that densification is often seen as a problem, this attitude amounts to typical NIMBYism. Respondents from the core neighborhoods, however, were more ambivalent. A series of responses revealed hope that densification would bring investment and new development to their stagnant locations, alongside concerns of uncontrolled influx of new populations, disruption and dislocation.

The new plan for Beersheba also entails ‘consolidation’ of several inner areas - this is a milder form of densification, in which two storeys are added to existing apartment buildings. This idea was supported by 40–60% in all surveyed neighborhoods, with slightly higher support in the inner neighborhoods. This is important as most of the consolidation is likely to occur in these neighborhoods, and it appears as if there is reasonable support for this move.

When the survey defined the proposed development as ‘towers’, opposition doubled in all inner neighborhoods, although support was still reasonable (45–50%). One salient finding was that the longtime residents of inner neighborhood Beit rejected the towering idea at a 20% higher rate than the average among other inner neighborhoods. This may be due to the problematic exposure of Beit residents to dozens of high-rise buildings constructed in their neighborhood over the past two decades.

Over half of all respondents expressed satisfaction with the planned development of new open spaces. However, somewhat surprisingly, notable opposition was registered in the inner neighborhoods, where open space is often lacking. The reason may be due to the neglect (and often dangerous aspect) of many open spaces to date, as shown above by the ‘upkeep-neglect index’ and community opinions. It may be assumed here that if new public open spaces are well maintained, broad support will exist for this welcome planning move.

The survey also revealed that satisfaction levels from public transport are low, with less than half expressing positive attitudes. This was the only planning issue that received exclusively negative reference in all neighborhoods. Harsh complaints were voiced particularly by residents of the outer and affluent Ramot suburb where public transport is indeed weaker than other neighborhoods.

The survey reflected overwhelmingly positive attitudes by the majority of the people to the suggested urban lifestyle with a “vibrant city center and highly accessible services” (Figure 8). This finding...
reinforces the plan’s intention of encouraging more intensive urbanity within the core neighborhoods. Note that the most enthusiastic neighborhood in this regard was Neve Ze’ev, which boasts a dynamic center including a wide range of services within walking distance. In all areas the attitudinal difference between car owners and others was significant: nearly all non-car owners expressed a desire for an accessible urban center while only half of the car owners felt the same. Furthermore, longtime residents living for more than 10 years in the city’s neighborhoods expressed a stronger interest in increasing the level of urbanism, compared to new residents living in the city for three years or less. Interestingly, most people still expressed support for a dream of living in a suburban detached house, despite their support of greater urbanism (Figure 9). This exposes a certain confusion and lack of planning participation and education in Beersheba.

Overall, there are considerable ‘democratic deficits’ exposed in the planning of Beersheba: (1) the public is generally uninformed, while on the other hand (2) its attitudes and preferences are generally not recorded and/or are ignored. The low awareness of the new city plan exposed here and the lack

![Figure 8](image1.png)

**Figure 8.** Responses to the statement “I would like to live in a vibrant city center with all services within walking distance.” Source: project surveys.

![Figure 9](image2.png)

**Figure 9.** Responses to the statement “My dream is to live in a villa.” Source: project surveys.
of public discussion over its future social-spatial impact is an obvious cause for concern as stressed by the SIA. It raises questions regarding the level and quality of public participation and substantive democracy in the city of Beersheba. It is clear that key components of urban democracy such as public participation, representation and deliberation, and fair distribution of resources and power among the residents are still largely absent in the city.

In this way the social survey – an integral part of this SIA – functions as an effective channel between people and urban government and should become a permanent feature of every SIA and a cornerstone of urban planning democracy. The need for such a tool is well demonstrated by the Beersheba example.

The New City Plan and Social Conditions in Beersheba

The above sections established the ‘baseline’ analysis of the four dimensions of the just city – built environment, socioeconomic status, diversity and democracy. It is of course impossible to separate neatly the ‘baseline’ from the planning process, which has shaped both the environment and public attitudes about the city.

However, in terms of the SIA tool we are developing, the baseline – complex as it is – is important as a foundation for assessing the impact of the new plan. The next step thus involves mapping and analyzing the impact of the Beersheba 2030 proposal on each of the four dimensions. Does the plan promote a just city? Or does it move in a regressive direction and thus compromise social justice? And if so, how can it be improved to promote the just city and prevent social damage?

As noted, the main strategy of the Beersheba 2030 outline plan is to strengthen the entire city by enhancing its urbanism. Out of several strategic planning alternatives, the professional planning team headed by Planner-Architect Ami Shinar, selected the ‘Core Alternative’ for steering the city’s development. This alternative places great emphasis on upgrading and massively populating the inner city, while considerably slowing development in the outer low density neighborhoods. (Figure 5(a–e); Figure 10).

This ‘Core Alternative’ adopts many of the measures advocated by ‘new urbanism’ and ‘compact city’ models. The strategy is spelt out in the plan to “focus on the city core areas with significant renewal, consolidation and densification of both housing and employment, together with an upgrade of the public spaces, streetscapes, and stronger public transport links between urban centers” (Shinar & the professional team, 2013, p. 7, 9).

The plan seeks to increase construction density and the redevelopment of extensive sections of the older core neighborhoods by adding 20,000 dwelling units, while concurrently upgrading the physical infrastructure and social services in those neighborhoods. It also recommends changing roads into streets in terms of usability and walkability, while adding commercial fronts along the city streets. The plan advocates additional employment and tower development along adjacent transport routes (up to 30 stories high) and in the civic center (up to 36 stories high), as well as providing guidelines for preserving Ottoman and early modern architecture and developing the Old City as a tourism and recreation center. On the whole, the plan emphasizes multiple physical issues related to urban design, aesthetics, transport and sustainability. Yet, it hardly deals with the social aspects of urban planning such as the four dimensions detailed above.

As the purpose of this article is to present a general SIA model, with Beersheba as a representative case, we shall not discuss the plan’s impact in detail. For brevity we have limited ourselves to several broad comments on the social impact of the plan’s strategy, which can of course be detailed if need
be. A more in-depth analysis is available in the full workshop report. Here are some of the most conspicuous impacts.

First, and positively, we found that the proposed spatial development strategy largely responds to the social-spatial requirements arising from the baseline analysis. The plan seeks to redirect considerable resources to the neglected core neighborhoods, to upgrade their infrastructure, housing and level of built environment upkeep, and add new residential and commercial premises, and employment into these blighted areas.

In addition, the plan advocates the strengthening of public transport services and the reinjection of public funds to public open space. The plan gives a distinct preference to infrastructure development and investment in the deprived inner areas at the expense of investment in the well-developed outlying suburbs.

In terms of the first two dimensions that deal with spatial development and gaps, the SIA shows that the plan is heading in the right direction. For the first time in the city’s history, and one of the first times in Israel’s planning history, the plan is consistent with the just city approach. The implementation of its spatial development strategy is likely to create a more just and equal Beersheba. This has to be qualified with the requirement that such implementation is conducted in cooperation with local communities and with due respect to the rights of existing residents. As we have seen above, this is currently not the case.

Figure 10. Proposed Beersheba 2030 Plan: urban renewal and mixed use areas. Source: Beersheba 2030 Plan (Shinar & the professional team 2013).
However, the SIA is more critical with regard to the plan’s other dimensions. Despite the correct spatial strategy, the plan contains almost no reference to the socioeconomic gaps between the neighborhoods and accordingly devotes scant attention to the social impact the new strategy will cause, particularly with reference to the insertion of massive numbers of housing units in the older neighborhoods. Specifically, the plan does not refer to the low-income populations which could be adversely affected by this massive development and the inevitable rise of land, housing and living costs. Importantly, the new plan does not advocate any construction of affordable housing to cater for Beersheba existing residents whose income lies below the national average. While the plan helps the city to upgrade residential and public space in the core areas, it may impede the living standards of many of the city’s existing population with possible displacement and hardship.

Furthermore, the plan ignores the city’s communities and identity groups, and certainly does not address their cultural difficulties and aspirations. As has been shown above, quite a few minority groups feel alienated from the city as their identities are marginalized or concealed by the existing urban fabric and practices of urban planning. Needless to say, a just city could and should express all cultures, as much as possible, and create a sense of belonging to the widest diversity of groups. The proposed plan does not only ignore the needs of the various identity groups such as Ethiopians, Arabs and LGBTs, it also fails to use the city’s cultural diversity to make it a more interesting, unique and attractive urban setting. Further, although the new plan provides sufficient space for public buildings, it borrows its standards for education, welfare and culture, from national standards. Hence, it fails to consider, let alone answer, the present and future needs of local communities.

The SIA also found planning democracy in the city to be seriously lacking. Although two large public meetings were held, this participatory exercise was discontinued instead of becoming institutionalized. No inclusive decision-making process was set in place, and the vast majority of residents were completely unaware of the radical new plan. This includes key community representatives interviewed for this study who reside in inner areas that are likely to experience major changes. The plan-making process was lacking in terms of openness, transparency and inclusion, and hence did not fulfill the requirement of the just city approach. This lack of transparency is exacerbated by the municipality’s published budget which is ambiguous regarding the distribution of public spending in the various neighborhoods. These aspects exhibit serious shortcomings in the levels of planning democracy which are likely to cause further alienation and conflict if not amended in the future management of the plan’s implementation.

As a final step, the SIA we produced also developed a range of policy actions for each of the four dimensions. These refer to immediate steps that appear in the full report and include a range of policies addressing directly and consciously the social ills highlighted above. The steps focus on reducing built environment and socioeconomic inequalities through development and investment programs, giving genuine recognition to the city’s minorities through housing, cultural and landscape initiatives, and significantly increasing the level of democracy through greater transparency, consultation and representation of the public in the city’s planning debates and decisions.

**Final Word: From Writing to Doing the Just City**

The project outlined here bears implications for planning theory, methodology and practice. On a theoretical and methodological level, it demonstrates the power of ‘translating’ philosophical principles, such as the just city vision into a concrete approach. The ‘translation’ of a modified version of Fainstein’s theoretical approach enabled the use of the theory in a tangible case of planning intervention in a
complex city. As such, the philosophical foundations of social justice have become an analytical ‘baseline’ for understanding the ‘state of justice’ in various aspects of urban governance and society. These principles have formed a framework for understanding the power of past urban plans and policies, as well as a foundation for assessing the direction of urban trends, and pinpointing areas for desired, justice oriented, planning intervention. The Beersheba case highlights in new ways the power of planning to shape social relations, thus contributing to a lively and enduring debate among planning theorists (Campbell, 2012; Fainstein, 2011; Friedmann, 2002; Purcell, 2016; Yiftachel et al., 2001).

Further, the ‘translation’ of theories and concepts into concrete analysis and policy recommendations has for decades been noted as a lamentable gap between theory and practice. Hence, the project also highlights the possibility for planning theorists to provide engaged theories as a guide for the management of urban societies. Such theories would not only explain the nexus between public policies, spatial change and social relations, but also open up opportunities for planning action which relies on their conceptual tenets. The project thus reinforces anew the importance of ‘praxis’ – theoretically informed practice – for urban and regional planning (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Yiftachel, 2016).

In terms of planning practice, the project clearly demonstrates the credibility of the demand made by social movements for introducing a mandatory SIA. The SIA performed here showed vividly that Beersheba 2030 – a typical major urban plan – lacks almost any reference, let alone response, to the major social impact it is likely to exert over the city. Such omission is emblematic of many plans and planning systems in Israel and abroad. The analysis shows that Fainstein’s (2011) just city framework can thus be ‘translated’ effectively to produce a systematic professional analysis and policy recommendations as a way of ‘doing the just city’.

The demand for the mandatory addition of a SIA to all major plans is urgent as cities are undergoing a wave of significant redevelopment, often without sufficient social consideration or evaluation. As Israel and other countries have experienced during past waves of rapid urban development, ignoring social justice considerations may cause serious long-term damage to social relations, including deprivation of basic rights, alienation, crime and conflict.

The foregoing ‘grounding’ of the just city model into a professional document provides the planners in Israel – and elsewhere – with a roadmap for future preparation and implementation of SIA. The project adds an important method to the social planning toolkit which should fathom, engage and respond to a major challenge of the twenty-first century: directing the development process to promote a more just and sustainable city for future generations.

On a more conceptual level, let us remember that urban planning is a powerful force in structuring the character of urban societies and reshaping urban citizenship and group relations. The historical neglect of social aspects has seriously compromised its potential social benefits, giving rise to continuous conflicts over land, planning and housing, and to pervasive forms of deprivation, oppression and dispossession, performed in the name of ‘planning reasons’ (Fenster & Shlomo, 2014; Yiftachel et al., 2013). This article shows that in order to combat the all too familiar tendency of planning to exercise oppression or neglect in the name of powerful interests, it is appropriate, urgent and feasible to introduce a mandatory SIA as a statutory requirement of every major urban plan. The Beersheba example described above shows that it is high time to move from writing to doing the just city!

Notes
1. The first author of this article was a member of the expert group and participated in writing the final book (Yonah & Spivak, 2012).
2. The full Hebrew report, including theoretical and international comparative sections, as well as the complete detailed findings of the various preparatory studies in the city neighborhoods is freely available here www.geog.bgu.ac.il/FastSite/coursesFiles/report.pdf.
3. These activists included public figures who led the 2011 protests, such as Yossi Yona, Emily Silverman, Gil Gan-Mor and local social activists such as Yehuda Aloush, Haim Bar-Yaakov and Adar Stern. In addition, the team also held professional discussions with planners Ami Shinar, Merav Morad and Esther Levinson.

4. Personal communication with the Municipality budget director, 6 April, 2014.

5. The interviewees included the following positions: a member of the BGU student guild, a retired professor representing middle-class Western Jews, a member of women's international Zionist organization (WIZO) (a large women's organization) representing women in the city, the director of the Beersheba federation of Soviet immigrants, the head of the Arab NGO Adalah in the Negev, the manager of an immigrant absorption center representing Ethiopian Jews, and the chair of the Beersheba Pride House representing the LGBT community. Respecting their wishes, we kept the interviewees anonymous. Their names are kept with the authors.

6. In spring 2017 the city council finally agreed to provide a community center for the LGBT community in the old city. During the summer of 2017, after a struggle, a pride parade marched for the first time in Beersheba.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful for Ben-Gurion University MA planning students who participated the project. Their labor, wisdom and technical ability has enabled us to complete the preparation of the SIA. They are (in alphabetical order): Hagar Ben-Shlomo, Anat Dor, Doron Efrati, Dalia Fruman, Amit Kadmiel, Heley Marko, Rotem Nissan, Dani Rodman, Tzlil Shildkroit, Amitai Shnizik, Ohad Solomon, Erez Stein, Adi Steinberg, Nitza Tzafrir-Cohen, Ehud Israeli, Inbal Zamir, and Rotem Zarihan.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Oren Yiftachel holds the Lloyd Hurst Family Chair for Urban Studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He is a co-author of the forthcoming book Emptied Lands: a Legal Geography of Bedouin Rights in the Negev (Stanford).

Rani Mandelbaum is a planner at the Planning Department of the Beersheba City Council. Her recent MA thesis examined the functioning of public spaces in new high-rise suburbia.

References


