

The effects of globalization upon the poor would probably be best revealed by following the fortunes of the poor themselves over a relevant period of time. In a country like India, the poor would be the last two quintiles of the population. A relevant period of time—not just in India—would be between five and ten years. Transient effects may muddy the picture in periods much shorter than five years, and the real effects one wants to pinpoint will begin to be obliterated after about ten years, as people die or simply drop out of the workforce. Shurmer-Smith has not made such a study, but she has got the time scale right.

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TRANSITIONS: RUSSIANS, ETHIOPIANS AND BEDOUINS IN ISRAEL'S NEGEV DESERT edited by Richard Isralowitz and Jonathan Friedlander, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.

Richard Isralowitz, Jonathan Friedlander and photographer Ron Kelley bring together text and images in a popular social science book that offers the reader an unusual way to become familiar with the main issue that characterizes Israel's Negev Desert today. This 'photo-documentation' is not the common scholarly publication replete with recent social and spatial theories, although it is also not a common tourist souvenir, trying to glorify the image, the history and the future of the region.

The editors, both of whom have extensive experience working with and writing on marginal immigrant and indigenous groups in modern and post-modern societies, give the reader an opportunity to watch three very different groups that live together in the same peripheral region: Russian Jews, Ethiopian Jews, and Bedouin Muslims. Each of these groups represents the 'transition' of the Negev desert during the 1990s, yet they encountered a radical transition by themselves.

The Russian Jews are the most recent wave of immigration to arrive in Israel. For most of the 350,000 immigrants who arrived between 1989–1991, the transition meant moving from a metropolitan area to a low density region, from a Communist regime to a capitalist one, and from eastern Europe to the Middle East. At the same period, 40,000 Ethiopian Jews arrived in Israel. They experienced a radical change in all spheres, moving from rural to urban life, from being a black African majority to becoming a black minority and from a 'traditional' to a 'modern' social environment. In contrast, the Negev Bedouin underwent their transition without moving from the region they have lived in for generations. For them the transition in the title refers to the move from a semi-nomadic to sedentary life within seven urban localities and numerous spontaneous settlements, and to a reality of being Muslim citizens in a Jewish state.

The transition that these groups are experiencing is examined in the book via the concept of settlement. One should notice that settlement in Israel, as in other settler

societies, is part of the nation-building project, which aims to achieve a Jewish presence throughout Israel's territory, especially in peripheral regions where the non-Jews (mainly Arabs) constitute a relatively large group. Here the Jewish immigrants bear the burden of nation-building, by settling these peripheral regions. This process limits the immigrants' mobility within Israeli society, since they are drawn away from the center, where the power and wealth are located. The settlement process of the Bedouin, on the other hand, aims to block the Bedouin's expansion in the Negev while withholding them from necessary in situ sources of employment and public services.

The book contains nine chapters, written by several authors, concentrating on different issues or different disciplines. The first chapter, by Gradus and Isralowitz (a geographer and a social work specialist respectively), provides essential background on the Negev desert and its regional capital, Beer-Sheva, since the Biblical period until the end of the 20th century. It focuses on the discriminatory treatment of the Negev by Israeli governments, who did too little to promote the Negev development and economy. Haim Chertok, a professional journalist, wrote the second chapter. He describes his own experience as a resident of Yeroham, interspersed with details of the town's history. Chertok is well aware of the risk that people will abandon the town, which might conflict with his Zionist view of settlement as self-fulfillment. The third chapter was written by three geographers, David Newman, Yehuda Gradus and Esther Levinson. The three examine the impact of the 1990s wave of immigration from the Former Soviet Union ('Russian' immigrants) on the urban settlements in the Negev. They emphasize the contribution of these immigrants to the towns' development, but also the problems their arrival entailed and the problematic government response to the crisis in immigration absorption.

The fifth chapter by Richard Isralowitz brings some Russian and Ethiopian voices from the then Nahal Beka caravan absorption center, located during the 1990s on the southern edge of Beer-Sheva. These immigrants express their frustration vis-à-vis government policy and the social isolation they experience. However, these groups of immigrants are not the only ones to feel anger toward the Israeli government: Richard Isralowitz and Ismael Abu Saad describe senses of deprivation among Sepharadi Jews (Mizrahim) and Bedouins, relative to the Russians immigrants, who have received economic and social advantages from the Israeli government. This is the only chapter of the book that devotes a reasonable amount of space to the Mizrahi Jews in the Negev, although they constitute the largest group in the region. The Mizrahim were settled in the Negev since the 1950s, after immigrating to Israel from Muslim countries in Asia and North Africa. The major story of Jewish-Zionist settlement in the Negev is their story. The Israeli policy of population dispersal primarily refereed the Mizrahim and the Bedouins of the Negev.

Ester Hertzog, the only author who lives outside the Negev, dedicates the sixth chapter to the powerful and controlling dynamic between the Israeli 'custodians' and the Ethiopian residents in an immigrant absorption center in Beer-Sheva. She claims that this powerful dynamic aims to 'encourage' the immigrants to assimilate

into the Israeli society, but in fact, this paternalism isolates the immigrants from the society. Therefore, Hertzog recommends implementing a different method of absorption, settling the immigrants within the society and not in isolated absorption centers. Julie Cwikel, the author of the seventh chapter, is a professor of social work engaged in research on social health and epidemiology. In this book, Cwikel writes about changing health characteristics among Russians, Ethiopians and Bedouins, relating these transitions to the cultural responses of these groups and of the dominant Israeli authorities. The eighth chapter, again by Haim Chertok, raises one of the most delicate issues of the Negev—the settlement problem of the Bedouins. While the state of Israel has made an effort to settle the Bedouin in seven urban localities, half of the Negev Bedouin population (about 40,000 when the chapter was written) would prefer to settle in ‘authentic villages’. This issue is a source of tension between the Bedouin and the Israeli authorities and Jewish settlers in the Negev. Chertok brings some voices from one such Bedouin village and explores the despair and the frustration of an indigenous minority in settler society. The last chapter, by Ismael Abu Saad, is dedicated to the Bedouin’s educational problems. He broadens the scope of this topic by presenting the educational differences between Jews and Arabs in Israel. Justifiably, he attributes part of the blame to the state authorities, which distribute educational resources unequally, and maintain Jewish superiority.

Photographer Ron Kelly and designer Rahul Bhushman have made a major contribution to this book. Kelly tells the story of the transitions without words. The 84 photos in the book reflect the daily life of Bedouin, Russians and Ethiopians in the Israeli Negev Desert, together and separately. Kelly finds the sites where each of these groups live isolated from the other and where all meet each other. Bhushman also contributes a great deal to the visual side of this book, locating Kelly’s photos in suitable places in the book. The text acquires a different meaning accompanied by Kelly’s photos.

Finally, I would like to raise one question: where are the others? Where are the upper middle class Jews who settled recently in gated communal localities? Why has so little space been devoted to the Mizrahim who live in small-size urban towns in the Negev? Even the story of Yeroham, one of these towns, is told by a non-Mizrahi resident—Haim Chertok (he belongs to a tiny American community in Yeroham which hardly can represent these towns). A book presenting the transitions in the Negev should have showed some other sides of the story.

However, this is a spectacular book for researchers, students, teachers, even tourists, who have an interest in one of Israel’s most fascinating regions—the Negev Desert. The book finds the right balance between text and photos, between official data and voices ‘from below’, between different disciplines and between various authors who come from a range of professions. The editors, the photographer, and the authors should be congratulated for this useful piece of work.

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