

## **CitizenTent: Empowering Bedouin Community with Digital Citizenship**

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### **Project Objective**

Empower the young members of the Bedouin community of the greater Beersheba/Bir Al Saba metropolitan area with an understanding of digital citizenship and co-design citizen-led digital projects that can address community issues.

### **Context and Significance**

The Bedouin community is among the most impoverished in Israel facing severe levels of poverty. The consequences of this poverty include a growing digital divide: Bedouins typically lack digital infrastructure support and internet access, digital literacy is low, and there is little use of the internet and other digital tools to reap social/economic/political benefits. As it stands, only approximately 34% of Bedouins are **connected** to the internet or **use** the internet and over 50% of Bedouin children do not have access to the internet. In a society that has afflicted with historical injustices, a growing digital divide only exacerbates these inequalities and hinders their ability to have a voice. Studies by on-the-ground organisations, like the Appleseeds Academy, have shown a more digitally included Bedouin population has correlated with a greater feeling of being part of the wider community and greater feeling of being more integrated with the local society. Therefore, projects like this that support the digital citizenship of Bedouins are also projects of democratic citizenship bringing participants closer to realizing their rights through digital tools.

The internet has become an essential means of accessing information and tools for building communities, keeping families connected, seeking economic opportunities and helping shape the spaces as well as the social and political spheres that people live in. The city of Beersheba is implementing a project called "Smart7", which seeks to make it a digital city. A project like this will be unique, in Beersheba, in its aims to take a bottom-up approach to developing a digital city and digital citizenship. There is now the opportunity for the Bedouin community to be digital co-collaborators with their neighbors in the city.

Currently, there are around 200,000-250,000 Bedouins living in the greater Beersheba metropolitan area in townships, recognized villages and unrecognised villages. With rapid digitization, periphery communities like these are often left behind, lacking the resources to leverage digital tools to fulfil their potential and tackle social challenges. Bedouins have become essentially a 'digital underclass' within Beersheba, with the lack of digital infrastructure compounding historic lack of integration into other key infrastructure.

We hope to develop a co-design lab where we work with a group of local Bedouin participants in understanding the "smart/digital city" and digital citizenship and exposing the community to digital tools and skills. Ultimately, bringing a greater understanding of the impact of digitization, future and present, on their respective communities. In this process we aim to cultivate digital citizenship projects that can address specific Bedouin issues in the new age of digital cities. To the best of our understanding this is the first project that focuses on "digital citizenship and digital cities" with the Bedouin community in the Negev/AI Naqab. Hopefully it will help bring recognition to the digital challenges they face and new conversations.

### **Project Description**

The project will be a collaboration with the BGUrban Lab. The Lab and its affiliates are deeply embedded in issues facing the Bedouin community and involve urban planners as well as social scientist that have spent decades working on equity and rights issues in the Negev. Their work is helping advance equity and inclusion of all communities in the region and it will be an honor to continue working with them.

Together, we will work with the Bedouin community in delivering the "CitizenTent" project. This has been inspired by workshops in the UK using the "Bristol Approach" which aimed at a citizen-led "smart city" workshop to cultivate projects that are formulated by the residents. In designing this CitizenTent we will work with BGUrban Lab affiliates and Bedouin community leaders who we already have relationships with in creating an effective project. The course will involve multi-week programming where participants are

able to learn about digital citizenship/digital cities and how these concepts relate to their communities and have an opportunity to develop projects.

### **Digital Empowerment and Education Goals:**

- Provide an overview of digital tools in society, “digital city” concepts and “right to the city”
- Understand theories of citizenship and digital citizenship
- Participants analyze and understand the degrees of digital divide (first, second, third) in their own lives and in the technologies they use everyday
- Explore case studies of how others are ‘realising’ their digital citizenship
- Understand digital citizenship in the context of the participants’ local areas
- Develop digital citizenship projects that address community challenges with participants

### **Digital Workshop Goals:**

- Expose participants to tools they may have not been familiar with
- Give participants confidence in using these tools independently for their own purposes
- Allow for the practice of those skills in a team-based project

### **Examples:**

- Using micro-controllers for sensing e.g. air quality data, sunlight measurements for adjusting solar panels etc.
- Build a simple HTML website and host it on github
- Learn to use excel for analysis of big datasets
- Create a video for your “digital city proposal”

We are planning two sessions a week for the participants for at least 6 weeks, held in the evening to accommodate work schedules. I will use the first weeks of June in Beersheba to meet with affiliates of BGRban Lab to finalize the implementation plan. I will also use this time to ensure the supplies needed are in stock and that logistical and personal accommodations of participants are taken care of.

### Pre-arrival:

1. Co-develop syllabus of CitizenTent with BGRban Lab and community affiliates
2. Conduct CitizenTent’ participant survey to understand our cohort and their specific needs. This will help with budgeting and tailoring curriculum
3. Purchase all required components and tools for the tent.

### June-August:

1. Ensure all personal accommodations, room bookings and transportations are taken care of.
2. Strengthen ties with community leaders that we are currently engaged with and new members that we have not met with in-person.
3. Launch the “CitizenTent” and run six weeks of programming
4. Collect feedback of participants
5. Develop final project plans with participants
6. Launch projects from CitizenTent and produce “mini reports” from teams
7. Collect feedback of participants and organizers

### **Expected Outcomes and Prospects for Future Impact**

The digitization of Beersheba is happening at pace and the effect of digital inequality is felt by the community every day. This project will help give participants a greater grasp of how their city is changing and the confidence to leverage their digital citizenship for good. The aim is for participants to foster this knowledge and bring it back to their wider communities. In the CitizenTent participants will learn about digital inequality, digital divides, digital citizenship and develop key technical skills to create citizen-led digital projects. These are lifelong skills and help illuminate the impacts of technology on their lives.

**Name: Mohamed Mohamed**  
**Project Name: CitizenTent**  
**School: MIT**

Note: all funds in US dollars.

**TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING:**  
 \$ -

Projects for Peace grant: \$ 10,000.00  
 Additional Funding, if any:  
**Total funding available: \$ 10,000.00**

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES:**  
 \$ 10,000.00

Student Expenses					Project Expenses				
Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food (Biweekly)	Miscellaneous	and Lodging	and Supplies	Event Support	Staffing Costs	Miscellaneous
700	1300	48	166.25	20	500	500			600
			166.25			5000			
			166.25			500			
			166.25						
			167						
<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
\$ 700.00	\$ 1,300.00	\$ 48.00	\$ 832.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 600.00

**Total Student Expenses: \$ 2,900.00**

**Total Project Expenses: \$ 7,100.00**

## Budget Explanation for CitizenTent

- **Participants Transportation ~ \$500**
  - The goal is to unburden participants from transportation to BUrban Lab
- **Providing internet connection hub(cellular internet) subsidy ~ \$500**
  - Some participants may lack high speed internet at home or any connection. This will help offer a subsidy to provide cellular hubs at home for the internet.
- **Crafts and tools for anyone in the project to draw, map and design projects ~ \$500**
  - Drawing and art tools
  - Boards to use for "science" fair like events
  - Funds for printing material and print shop
  - Soldering Kits and Material
- **Budget for participants \$300 per person ~ 15-20 participants will be \$4500-\$6000. I will estimate for \$5000.**
  - Arduino Starter kits vary \$60-100 per person
  - Peripheries like cameras can cost \$20-30 each
  - Purchasing various electronics will cost
  - We hope every participant can keep their material and that groups can combine funds for projects. We will work on a reimbursement style system and require teams to submit receipts.
- **Flights of Mohamed ~ \$700**
- **Housing of Mohamed ~ \$1300**
- **Communication of Mohamed ~ \$48**
- **Food for Mohamed ~ \$832**
- **Miscellaneous for Mohamed (e.g. Wires and cables) ~ \$20**
- **Food and Miscellaneous to Participants ~ \$600**

**Total: \$10,000**

### Safety and cultural impact

We aim to run workshops in Beersheba, which is the main city of the Negev, at Ben-Gurion University. The BGUrban lab at Ben-Gurion University will be there to support me in any circumstance. I have spent a semester at BGU in Fall 2022 and they have always been a reliable partner. In addition, I am a native Arabic speaker which served me in bridging linguistic barriers with the community.

I have spent the fall of 2022 in Beersheba at Ben-Gurion University working on the digital divide facing the Bedouin community as part of MIT MISTI-Israel. During this time I have developed relationships with various community leaders and teachers which will provide me with great support in making this project successful. I have also discussed this project with them and they have been supportive of it highlighting the need for such projects at this time. We will predominantly be working in the BGUrban lab which is on the campus of Ben Gurion University. The main safety issues with working in Israel and the Middle East are erupting conflicts, but as I am working with the university and will be in the main city of Beersheba these risks will be mitigated with my community partners should issues arise. I will also contact MISTI-Israel to develop any safety plan that is required.

In terms of the project, it is to work with young members of the community in identifying the digital divides in their community and producing projects that help alleviate issues facing their localities. The city of Beersheba is rapidly developing its smart city plan, and this can empower these youth in contributing and forming the city's plan making it a more inclusive city. We don't foresee risks this project poses for community members. Given the "gender inequality" facing women in this community I hope to collaborate with BGUrban lab to provide a feminist approach to the program and encourage the participation of young women in the community.