Abstract // Civil unrest and dissident behavior are often identified in literature as strong indicators of a failing state. The relationship is observed globally, such as in the case of public strife in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The uprisings that took place throughout the Arab Spring have continued to the present day, begging the question: what conditions produced the current relationship between state and society? The following study investigates this question through the lens of state-led land reclamation policies and their impacts on fishermen communities, an indigenous faction of Bahraini civil society. As the case study suggests, while reclamation plans have ensured both economic and industrial growth for the state, they inevitably caused detrimental economic and social losses to an already disadvantaged community within society. The failure in planning, however, portrays a bleaker image of the government’s inability and unwillingness to respond to civic complaints regarding public planning projects, leading to consequences which completely transformed the fishing industry and, with that, its labor market. More importantly, the neglectful nature of state policies produced amplified mistrust within the fishermen communities, creating a vicious cycle of uncooperative behavior. Using the research as a microcosm of state planning provides a framework for understanding the reciprocal between the polity and its citizens. The failure of planning in Bahrain, from process to practice, explains the current weakening of the state. As such, the study recommends, in addition to community-based initiatives, that immediate efforts be directed towards a response to the demands and concerns of society, thereby addressing the critical relationship of state and civil society.

Keywords // state / civil society / reclamation / Bahrain / land / fishing industry / fishermen