This talk builds on the petitions poor Tunisians living at the edges of the city addressed to colonial for reparations to their damaged property. Categorizing them as nomads, municipal police attempted, for decades, to destroy their gourbis, their makeshift dwellings, and to evict them from the city. Against such assaults, these poor dwellers insisted on their right to stay put and to build homes and lives at the edges of the city. In this talk, I probe the category of nomadism and its material manifestations in the form of gourbis, shack dwellings the poor built on empty lands in the city’s peripheries. I take up the gourbi as a racialized and racializing site and excavate the various modalities of governing its existence: from destruction and removal, to its toleration in a more hygienic form, and finally to its integration into the city’s fabric. In doing so, I show that nomadism evolved from a French colonial preoccupation with people’s mobility on the territory to a planning problem that tested the capacity of the colonial administration to govern the city’s edge. In tracking the evolution of nomadism from a mobility to a planning issue, I also trace the emergence of popular neighborhoods as a problem-space and the conditions under which their presence became an unsolvable problem which carried over from the colonial to the post-independence period.