# Crisis and Transformation: The Kibbutz at the Turn of the Century

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## 1. Change and Identity

The kibbutz has long considered itself, in Martin Buber's words (see Near, 1986), a realization of a "better society." Ever since the mid-1980's, however, it is at the peak of a transformation; seventy years after the first kibbutz was established, all efforts to create flourishing Utopian communities seem disappointing. By studying this transformation, this paper will explore the significance of the kibbutz experience for the feasibility of Utopia.

Our discussion will draw from some of the works that comprise the project entitled "The Kibbutz at the Turn of the Century" (referred to here as the Project). The work on this project took place during 1991-1994, in the largest federation of kibbutzim, the Takam, under the initiative of the Yad Tabenkin Research Center. Although it was a multidisciplinary undertaking, the sociological significance of the various studies can be extracted and integrated into a general perspective by adhering to the conceptual framework offered by the sociological perspective on social change.""

Following the dimensions of the sociological analysis of change, we focus on four levels of discussion: (a) the context of the transformation; (b) the nature of change; (c) its agents; and (d) the features of the new social order.

(a) The discussion of the context of crisis and change is strongly emphasized by the Marxists (Marx, 1978), who relate crises of social

systems to societal structural aspects. The more refined social move-
ment theory (Touraine, 1985) looks at the circumstances in which actors
become aware of their difficulties in society. Such movements, accord-
ing to Tiryakian (1991), become determining forces when they happen
to constitute clusters of factors emerging in diverse settings. From a
different perspective, Habermas (1973) speaks of situations character-
ized by "unresolved steering problems," where people are urged to opt
for changes that threaten their identity. Turner's (1969) notion of
liminality is, then, also relevant, as it focuses on life experiences in
which individuals confuse social categories. Our general description of
the background of the kibbutz crisis in the mid-1980's will consider
these various hypotheses, though our own empirical interest lies
primarily in the later phases of the analysis.

(b) As for the nature of the changes, Simmel (1966) distinguishes
between changes within the system, which involve only normative-
organizational aspects, and changes of the system, which imply values
and identity, as well. Weber (1977), however, views any revolution as
widely accounted for by aspects of the existing culture itself. This
approach leads to cultural structuralism (see Levi-Strauss, 1958; Du-
mont, 1966; 1977), which categorizes change according to the extent to
which it reflects principles of action—i.e., deep structures—or only
organizational arrangements—i.e., surface structures. Deep structures
have a direct import on identity, which, according to Weber's (1977)
approach to the comparison of historical cultures, focuses on (1) the
individuals' perceptions of the nature of the collective as a discrete
entity, (2) their understanding of the collective activity, and (3) their
relationship to the environment.

From a structuralist perspective, we may view each of these aspects
as given to a dilemma pertaining to a binary contradiction (Levi-
Strauss, 1961). Accordingly, the identity of the collective consists of a set
of contradictions, rather than of plain assertions, and the diversity of
the possible configurations of intra- and inter-binary interactions
reflects the range of variance of the collective identity.

We learn from the literature that this scheme may be applied to the
kibbutz: its identity can be seen as consisting of three facets, each
marked by its own binary contradiction. We refer here to the kib-
butzniks[1] self-perception as a community, an enterprise, and an elite.

(i) Application of the notion of community (Hillery, 1968; Coleman,
1957) to the kibbutz is substantiated by a sharing-egalitarian orienta-

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1. Plural of kibbutznik or member of a kibbutz.

tion in major spheres of life[2] Until recently, outstanding features of the kibbutz community have included a direct-democracy regime controlled by a general assembly, a money-less system of allocation of services and goods, a collective dining room as the center of public life, and a collective education system consisting of peer-group houses from infancy to the regional kibbutz high-school.

Individualism, however, is no less fundamental in the shaping of the community, and it constitutes the binary counterpart of sharing egalitarianism. Over the years, the collectivism of the kibbutz has diminished in favor of an ever-increasing emphasis on individual autonomy (Talmon-Garber, 1972; Cohen, 1983; Spiro, 1983). Familism has become overwhelmingly important in kibbutz life, education, housing allocation, consumption, as well as public decision making. One major example is the move of the children in most kibbutzim, in the 1970's and early 1980's, from the peer-group house to their parents' home for the night.

(ii) The kibbutz is also an enterprise. Indeed, it controls its own resources in terms of both human capital and material means.[3] Though it belongs to the privileged within the general population, it fails to attract outsiders in significant numbers and it represents less than 3% of the national population. As a modern enterprise, the kibbutz strives to amplify its economic power and to achieve high standards of living and of quality of life. Organizationally, until recently the enterprise consisted of autonomous teams in charge of the different work branches, headed by managers and senior workers. Regional economic cooperation of kibbutzim has also brought about the multiplication of enterprises owned by a group of neighboring settlements. Hence, the kibbutz is definitely an instance of capitalistic entrepreneurship (Weber, 1930).

On the other hand, this enterprise is also a partnership of members grounded in solidarity and, as such, it requires forms of non-formal communication and cooperation. This aspect is the opposite pole of entrepreneurship and a source of tension. This was already shown in the late 1950's in Rosenfeld's (1951) research on the relations of rank-and-file and bosses and Etzioni's (1959) investigation of elites. Later works are Kressel's (1974) study of cliques, Shapira's (1987) work

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2. A kibbutz may number from a few dozen to 1000 members (on average 220 adult members and 450 people, when including children and non-member residents).

3. In 1991, there were 270 kibbutzim, with 127,000 inhabitants, that is a quarter of the rural population (Yad Tabenkin, 1992). They controlled one-third of the cultivated land, supplied 40% of the national agricultural production, and produced 10% of the national industrial production. Hired labor made up 16% of their total work force.

about oligarchic tendencies, and Ben-Rafael's (1988) investigation of power and prestige.

(iii) The examination of elitism (see Albertoni, 1987) on kibbutz focuses on how kibbutzniks see their basic relation to the society, determined as they are to convey a message of general social meaning through the example of their lifestyle. This self-image is bound to social mobilization and a sensitivity to the kibbutz's status in society (see also Welsh, 1979; Field, Lowell and Higley, 1980). It is on this basis that the kibbutz-bound youth movement attempts to recruit middle-class youth to the kibbutzim (Peres, 1963; see also Ben-David, 1964) and that kibbutzniks develop political ambitions. Two major kibbutz federations long served as the backbone of their respective national political parties (one of them still is).[4] The kibbutz's involvement in society has brought it close to the political center—emissaries were "dispatched" to a variety of elite positions in parliament, government, and the civil service. As a result, however, the kibbutz movement inevitably confronted the temptation of using its political power for its own particular goals—lobbying for cuts in tax rates, higher water quotas, or more educational resources. Such typical action of a plain interest group amounts to no less than a self-denial of elitism and of the kibbutz's basis for preeminence on the public scene. Hence, this facet, is also marked by an inner contradiction: elitism versus collective egoism.

(c) Another aspect of the change process concerns its agents. We know from structuration theory (Giddens, 1980) that collectives are structured by the action and identification of individuals. Following conflict theory according to Marx (1975) or Dahrendorf (1959), one expects structuration mainly among deprived groups aspiring to change the status quo. On the other hand, Pareto (1966) and Ben-David (1955) focus on elites, contending that the strongest groups may well be the ones who are willing and able to go for change in order to strengthen their position and extract more privileges from society. As far as the kibbutz is concerned, by either approach, one would hardly expect the emergence of economic social classes where there is no private-individual ownership of means of production. Hence, the interesting question concerning the agents of the contemporary transformation of the kibbutz is the extent to which one discerns a special import of elites and, if so, the extent to which this import counters the pressures eventually exerted by the non-elite.

4. One of these parties, the Achdut Avada-Poalei Zion, which depended on the kibbutz federation, unified with the mass Labor parry. A decade later, the Kibbutz Hameuchad also unified with the Ichud Hakwutzot Vehakibbutzim kibbutz federation, to constitute the Takam, which as a whole is affiliated with the Labor party.

(d) As for the characterization of the new social order, we wish finally to examine in what measure the transformation of the kibbutzniks and their kibbutzim continue to evolve as a fairly uniform whole, or on the contrary, disperse into a discontinuous plurality marked by contrasting directions and divisions. The latter possibility would considerably restrict the social significance of the kibbutz experience but would no less considerably increase its relevance to the question of the feasibility of Utopian theory.

**The context of change**

A traditional component of the left-of-the-center political spectrum, the kibbutz movement suffered a painful setback with the rise to power of the right-of-the-center Likud party in the 1977 elections—the very first time that a non-socialist party had won the national elections in Israel. The following fourteen uninterrupted years of rightist rule (four of them in coalition with the Labor) witnessed the decline of the kibbutz's political influence. The movement was dislodged from many long-standing political strongholds that had been of help more than once in difficult circumstances. The 1991 elections brought Labor back to power, but the political situation remained unstable. This conjuncture did not give an edge to the kibbutz movement, which had always been identified with the left, and could hardly play "referee" between the major contenders of the political scene. It is in these circumstances of weakness that the kibbutz movement received the economic blow of the mid-1980's crisis (see Pavin, 1992). The country's unprecedented inflation of the early 1980's had caused a drastic anti-inflationary government policy which took the kibbutzim by surprise (Netzer, 1993). It multiplied their debts to the banks—from three billion shekels in 1984 to over seven billion in 1988—causing the bankruptcy of factories and financial institutions that relied on or handled kibbutz money. In the background there were less conjunctural factors like the chronic agricultural crisis of the former decade, and the too-fast industrialization of the kibbutzim in the 1970's (Krol, Rosenthal *et al.,* 1989). Many kibbutzim, to make things worse, had recently invested in the extension of their members' apartments (Ben-Rafael, Avrahami, eds., 1994), to allow the children to sleep at home rather than in the peer houses. A gloomy expression of the difficulties is the decline in the kibbutz population by three percent between 1986 and 1990. Until the mid-1980's, about 400 young kibbutzniks were leaving the kibbutz movement every year, but between 1985 and 1989, this number rose to more than 1,000 (Maron, 1993, 1994).

The 1987 Beit Oren affair, moreover, put an end to all doubts about

the gravity of the circumstances. En masse departures of members of this middle-aged kibbutz on Mount Carmel, against the background of acute financial difficulties, led the remaining population to decide to dissolve the community. A group of former kibbutz members from other settlements, which was then in the process of organizing independently, proposed to take over Beit Oren, provided that the Takam would give them total freedom regarding the model of kibbutz life that they intended to implement. After many deliberations, the Takam accepted to take care of the veterans who expressed a wish to leave Beit Oren for another kibbutz or for city-based homes for the elderly, and to let the new group mold the settlement according to its own vision. The affair resounded throughout the kibbutz movement and became a point of reference in any further discussion of the general crisis of the kibbutz. Voices rose demanding a radical reconsideration of the essence of the kibbutz *(The Kibbutz* 24 January 1991).

From numerous testimonies (see Ben-Rafael, Avrahami, eds., 1994), we know that kibbutzniks did not participate in the debates that now multiplied in kibbutzim with joy and enthusiasm. The general atmosphere was of demoralization and a loss of resolve in the kibbutz. The feeling of crisis cast doubt on the justification of past sacrifice. The sense of failure also went together with self-blame for implied past errors. Elder members felt insecure, while families encouraged their own children not to commit themselves to kibbutz life but to look for alternatives.

The kibbutzniks now started a huge debate about the kibbutz, its norms, and forms of organization. This might be viewed in a Marxist or Tourainian perspective if we consider the kibbutzniks as a kind of social class. Even then, however, this approach cannot explain why the kibbutzniks reacted to the crisis, not by mobilizing against "adversaries" but by turning toward themselves, in a posture of self-criticism, with the aspiration to change themselves rather than society. This, undoubtedly, is accounted for by their control of their own human, economic, and organizational resources, which gave them the feeling that they had played a major part in their own difficulties, and thus should also play the major part in their "salvation."

Illustrating Tiryakian's clusters-of-movements syndrome, the contemporary kibbutz crisis took the form of countless discussions of reforms throughout the kibbutz movement, as reactions of members to the situation of their particular kibbutz. It is the composite of these discussions that would now transform the kibbutz reality as a whole. In each kibbutz, the discussions were about the kibbutz system as such; they addressed the most fundamental aspects of what Habermas calls "unresolved steering problems."

Table 1.
*Selected changes on the kibbutzim's agenda*

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| • Paying meals in the dining room | • Wider authority of public committees |
| • Closing down the collective dining-room | • More autonomy for work teams |
| • Electricity on individual budgets | • Business-like orientations in the work area |
| • Financial rewarding for extra work | • Separating the economy from community |
| • Financial incentives for public jobs | • Cooperating with private entrepreneurs |
| • Allowing members to find work outside | • Enlarging the regional kibbutz enterprises |
| • Children clothing from family budget | • Inclusive family budget |
| • Opening kibbutz services to outside clients | • Restricting non-profit services |
| • Including cultural budget in family budget | • Abolishing rotation of senior jobs |
| • Education under the family responsibility | • General differential financial rewards |
| • Replacing General Assembly by Council | • Allowing private cars |

*Source:* Pavin, 1991.

## The nature of the changes

The items on the public agenda now piled up rapidly, indeed leaving no important aspect of kibbutz life immune to questioning (see Table 1), delegitimizing everything that had been held sacred. To evaluate the nature of these changes, we examine the surface normative-organizational innovations to unveil what they mean for the kib-butzniks' deep-structure identity codes and for the binary contradic-tions that they imply.

*(a) The community facet*

We started the investigation of the kibbutz with a study of alienation (Stray, 1994).[5] Alienation was found to be more characteristic

5. The research took place in 9 kibbutzim; all were founded between 1943 and 1950, in the south of the country, and belong to the Takam. The number of their members varied from 120 to 500. The sample included 256 subjects, 44% of whom were men and 82% married. The alienation questionnaire used (see Maddi, Kobasa and Hoover, 1979) was translated into Hebrew and adapted to the specific population investigated; it included 48 items focusing on the subjects' self-perceptions in the community, at work, in interaction with others, in the family and vis-a-vis the kibtutz ideology.

of some categories of people, like lower status, second generation, and younger members, than of others, such as higher status individuals, old-timers, or the adult population. It was especially high among members who perceived their kibbutz to be struggling with economic and social difficulties. This finding is particularly important because, on the other hand, it was also found that this kind of perception correlates with greater eagerness for innovation—even though it should also be emphasized that when implemented, changes do not necessarily mitigate the level of alienation among members.

It is thus in an alienated context that the community is undergoing transformation. This is best illustrated by what is happening to kibbutz direct democracy. The General Assembly, the prime site of this kind of regime, has for long been a major symbol of the kibbutz endeavor itself. Over time, it has tended to produce leaders of public opinion who achieved status by their rhetoric and who often tended to monopolize the discussion time of the assembly. However, the development of the kibbutz, which made the setting increasingly complex, also gave rise to a layer of technocrats, the genuine experts of the enterprise. They too came to play a preeminent role, as experts, in the public debates. Furthermore, the processes of stratification in the kibbutz which created gaps of prestige and power contributed to the fact that more attention was paid to the voices of some members than others. Last but not least, individualism and the familization of the kibbutz decreased the interest of many a member in public matters, relative to the interest in personal matters. All these factors together explain why in many kibbutzim one finds but five percent to ten percent of the membership who attend the General Assembly. This, to be sure, diminishes the legitimacy of the institution. As a result, and mainly after the mid-1980's crisis which set loose the desire of members to set down new norms, a council of representatives was created in many kibbutzim to replace the General Assembly. This council is a restricted elected body including the public functionaries. In addition, a system for referendum is also being introduced. This pattern recognizes that the majority of the members no longer participate in the assembly and it safeguards the principle of direct democracy by allowing the participation of all, at least in making the most important decisions. This mitigated form of decollectivization is also exemplified by the process of privatization that is taking place in the realm of consumption. Since the mid-1980's, there has been a tendency to replace the traditional "comprehensive budget" with an "inclusive budget." The former included in one sum a wide range of items of consumption—clothing, furniture, vacation, pocket money, etc.—but left basic expenses—like food, domestic electricity, health, or education—under the direct control of the commu-

nity responsibility, covered by the general kibbutz budget. The inclusive budget tends to take on these items and integrate them in one sum, which thus more and more resembles a family salary, bringing the kibbutz very close, in this respect, to the cooperative enterprise (Ravid, 1992).

This development is significant with respect to a related issue of crucial meaning, that is, the use of members' private resources. Over the years, members may eventually accumulate private resources by inheritance, presents from relatives, even money earned privately outside the kibbutz . These resources are, in theory, anathema to the kibbutz ethos and its formal regulations. However, few members transfer these resources to the kibbutz treasury, where they are not entitled to touch it unless they or their children leave the kibbutz. In the past, members tended to use this money mainly on vacation or for buying goods that deviated from the kibbutz's general standard of living. Now that members receive substantial sums of money to be spent entirely at their own discretion, in the form of the inclusive budget, they are, in fact, authorized to bring in most expensive articles, and therefore to use their private resources quite freely, as well. As a result, private cars are making their appearance in the kibbutz, and families may even invest privately in enlarging their apartments, which in theory, is the kibbutz's exclusive property, this is nothing less than a de facto transfer of collective rights to the individual member.

This normalization of private resources creates significant gaps of living standard among members of a same kibbutz, and this in turn creates a context where the differential rewarding of members by the kibbutz becomes less and less inconceivable.

This topic, in fact, is now appearing on the agenda of more and more kibbutzim—in the mid-1990's two kibbutzim had already endorsed this innovation and implemented it by creating three or four levels of financial rewarding.

In parallel, other developments in diverse spheres contribute to the strengthening of individualism, to the detriment of sharing egalitarianism. In the realm of education, in particular, we are witness to the weakening of the kibbutz's non-selective, exclusionary education system, which was long an expression of both the kibbutz's sharing egalitarianism and its elitism. Over time, it is true, the kibbutzim revised their ideas, especially regarding higher education, hitherto considered as "bourgeois," and which became more and more legitimate. Ever since the mid-1980's, pressures have multiplied to push kibbutz education closer to conventional middle-class education.

One of the studies conducted as part of the Project probed the attitude of parents toward kibbutz education in these above respects

(Avrahami, Getz, 1994).[6] A major finding was that many of the parents are far from satisfied with the school orientation (50%). Most (52%) want the kibbutz to emphasize excellence and scholarly achievements. A good third (34%) favor accepting outside students on a selective basis, and over a quarter (27%) support the idea of a kibbutz school open to all children of the area, kibbutzniks as well as non-kibbutzniks. Over 70% also do not object—or at least not too vehemently—to sending their own children to non-kibbutz schools. Actually, the overwhelming majority of the parents (76%) expect their children to excel in their studies, and many (60%) hope that they will acquire an academic profession. Hence, it is not surprising that a majority (58%) want the kibbutz school to prepare their children to be able to live either within or outside the kibbutz. The parents wish for their children to enjoy a kibbutz education insofar as it offers quality education, and by no means as a way to isolate them from the outside world.

As a matter of fact, the youngsters themselves want the very same thing. A Project study carried out in 1991-1992 (Almog, 1993)[7] about the young's cultural consumption showed that kibbutz and non-kibbutz youngsters like watching TV in quite the same measure, with an edge for the kibbutzniks over the city dwellers (80% versus 54% watch TV daily for at least two hours). Both categories like "yuppie" programs, that is, programs with middle-class heroes, best. Kibbutzniks, it is interesting to note, are the most captivated by these social-mobility dramas. On the other hand, when it comes to musical preferences, middle-class urban youth like rock music more and the kibbutzniks pop music. With regard to jokes, the two preferred targets are for both groups sex and ethnic relations, ignoring politics, despite the tradi-

6. Parents, only one per couple, of pupils in two kibbutz regional schools were requested to answer the closed-ended questionnaire. Out of 250 questionnaires distributed 202 or 80% were returned (46% filled out by fathers). This was sufficient to consider the sample as widely representative of the general population of parents in those kibbutzim. About two-thirds of the respondents were in the 35-55 age bracket; about 40% had themselves been educated in the kibbutz. Moreover, 30% were members of elected kibbutz committees, 25% headed work branches or public committees, and about 15% held major functions inside and outside the kibbutz. More than half (54%) completed college education.

7. The sample (n=71) included students of three classes (11th and 12th grades) in three regional kibbutz high schools. A control group (n=69) consisted of young people of the same age (16-18) from three high schools in middle-class neighborhoods of a major metropolitan area. Data were collected by means of a comprehensive questionnaire, filled out individually by the subjects, in their classrooms. It included both open and closed questions, and inquired about patterns of cultural consumption, preferences for TV broadcasting, radio programs, and newspapers. The questionnaire also asked about linguistic markers—nicknames, forms of greetings, leave-taking formulae, popular jokes and slang expressions.

tional interest in this topic in the kibbutzim. In the same vein, the research found few differences in the area of linguistic markers; in this respect, typical all-middle-class youth culture dominates both the kibbutz and the urban samples.

In brief, the Project found a drastic shrinkage of community life and a general tendency to see freedom as detrimental to collectivism, with a definitive preference for the former. Having said this, however, the rights of membership are still quite inclusive when compared to any non-kibbutz setting—they comprise most forms of health care, schooling, lodging, and board, and the absolute right to work. This shows that the stronger individualistic orientation has fallen short of erasing all remnants of sharing egalitarianism which, in actual fact, still survives. What the changes have brought is a reversal of importance of the poles of the binary contradiction: individualism is now clearly predominant, compared to sharing egalitarianism.

### (b) The collective enterprise

The kibbutz is also an enterprise that on the one hand is moved by the "spirit of capitalism" and, on the other hand, represents a form of partnership of members. As an entrepreneur, the kibbutz's work force is employed in a wide range of areas—agriculture, industry, as well as services,[8] where the rules of efficiency, hierarchical organization, and instrumental-rational orientations apply. It is from these perspectives that a technocracy of individuals who have the necessary knowledge and experience to manage the increasingly complex apparatus of the kibbutz economy has emerged. As a form of partnership, the kibbutz demands, in fact, an emphasis on personal dedication, collective solidarity, and direct and informal communication among members as a whole. From this angle, the notion of "bosses," including its inevitable oligarchic tendencies, clique networking and co-optation practices, is a topic of general criticism and a focus of tensions.

Shimoni's work (see Shimoni and Shefer, n.d.) in the frame of the Project shows that long before the mid-1980's crisis, most kibbutz factories witnessed a restricted participation of the rank-and-file in decision-making. It was assumed that "the bosses act on behalf of the common interest." When crisis broke out, managers further strength-

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8. One-fourth of the total work force of the kibbutz movement is employed in agriculture; about one-third in industry, quarries, construction, tourism, and commerce; the other third in community and personal services (Meron, 1994). Blue-collar workers are 62% while professionals and managers are 24%. The educational profile of the population is, however, typically middle-class: 85% have 11 years of schooling or more, 35% have acquired a higher education.

ened their authority by demanding greater autonomy from the community institutions, to be allowed to employ the personnel that they wanted (among members of the kibbutz as well as hired labor), to acquire the services of expensive consultants, and to include non-members on the board of directors. Anticipating the resistance that such measures might arouse among kibbutzniks, they often called in external change specialists to lead organizational surveys and make suggestions, based of their prestige as "experts" (Pavin, 1994). Members finally endorse changes when they are justified by the "common interest" in increased productivity. They may even agree, then, to implementing differential rewards for members, according to their professional qualifications and specific jobs.

Since the mid-1980's, the kibbutzniks have also transformed one of their previously most central ideological notions, i.e., the "work ethic." Ever since the inception of the first kibbutz, work was defined in Tolstoyan terms as the synonym of ethical redemption and, thus, a purpose in its own. In practice, it is true, the kibbutzniks also always knew that their work power was one their principal economic resources, and they understood, as entrepreneurs, that the optimal use of this work power is by using it in the exploitation of their other economic resources, that is their land, factories, and services. Hence, members were expected to find jobs appropriate to their skills in the frame of the common enterprise. In light of the crisis, however, it became evident that one of the ways to increase the kibbutz's income was to spare the utilization of its economic resources, including its work force.

Hence, kibbutzniks came to envisage the possibility that members who find jobs outside the kibbutz may bring in additional income, economizing on work days in the internal circle of work. Kibbutzim were now also more willing to hire outside workers when necessary, abandoning their reticence about "exploiting" such labor. Hence, while kibbutzniks could now look for jobs outside the kibbutz, and unskilled workers from neighboring towns were more freely employed inside the kibbutz without restrictions, in fields, the factory, the children's house, the collective kitchen, or the dining room. With hired workers becoming a permanent and legitimate part of the work force, however, the kibbutz now has to provide them job security, accept collective negotiations and labor conflicts, and open the paths of mobility in kibbutz structures to "outsiders." Another development in the same vein has been the commercialization of kibbutz services for the outside public. Children houses may now look for clients from the neighboring town or village; the kibbutzim may rent out unoccupied rooms, whether for the night or on a longer basis; the kibbutz's swimming

pool, the dining room or the club may, in a same way, become "centers of profit'. In several kibbutzim, there has even been discussion of converting agricultural land to build neighborhoods of apartments for rent. By bringing in outsiders in significant numbers, these developments will certainly revolutionize the atmosphere of the community.

On the other hand, while the kibbutz is trying to increase its income, it also aspires to reduce its expenditure (see Netzer, 1993, in the frame of the Project). The poorer kibbutzim, in particular, which tended to model their standards on the wealthier, now have to cut down drastically on their living expenses (see also Hellman, 1994). Interestingly enough, the cut in living expenses has often been accompanied—one may even say, compensated—by their privatization, that is by endowing individual members with greater freedom of consumption. As discussed the above, items that were once a part of the collective accountancy are now being integrated to the family budget. A way of privatizing food has, for instance, been to transform the kibbutz's kitchen and dining room into a cafeteria service, run by an outside entrepreneur.

The Project (Netzer, 1993) has shown that a major result of the recovery measures taken in response to the 1980's crisis has been a greater disparity among kibbutzim, which is accounted for by the fact that the weaker kibbutzim have had to make the greater sacrifices. However, this adaptation to the economic reality is still partial; by the early 1990's, quite a few kibbutzim were still consuming more than they could afford. This reflects the strength of the kibbutzim's middle-class orientation: in the image of any entrepreneur, the kibbutz can only see itself as a privileged part of society, and does not easily accept an unprivileged condition.

*(c) The relation to society*

The kibbutzniks have always seen themselves as an elite because of the general values that they attach to their life style. This elitism implies a sensitivity to the kibbutz's status in society and a desire to be represented in the center. It is embodied most prominently in the kibbutz federations which establish the kibbutz's public presence.[9] The leadership—the secretary-general and the heads of the major departments of the federation—is regularly elected by the kibbutzim and they function as the representatives of the kibbutzim as a whole vis-a-vis the

9. The federations are complex organizations which number several hundred employees. They are involved in the kibbutzim's economic, financial, educational, cultural, and political activity. Their centers are located in Tel Aviv and are staffed by kibbutzniks drafted for limited periods from the kibbutzim.

political center. The federations' proximity to the corridors of power offers the opportunity of using connections to the advantage of the kibbutzim, as plain pressure groups. This, in turn, inevitably harms the kibbutzim's elitist aspirations and pretense. The kibbutzim are accused of talking of equality while running exclusionary educational frameworks; they define themselves as "socialists" but employ hired workers; they pride themselves as a rural population but they cultivate primarily privileged relations with the political center and look down upon their immediate nonkibbutz neighbors. All these contentions have been harmful to the kibbutz's prestige and the mid-1980s crisis only made things worse by discrediting its economic viability.

Yet, despite the vicissitudes of the kibbutz's elitism, the federations continue to invest efforts in maintaining their presence in the center, by sending emissaries to political, administrative, or economic elite positions. The investigation of this activity by the Project (Avrahami, 1992),[10] showed that what was really at stake in this context was the membership in the national elite per se, not the possibility of promoting a general social vision nor even the practical interests of the kibbutzim (the federations themselves directly fulfill the lobbying role). Elitism, it thus appears, has become a goal in itself.

On the other hand, the same research also shows that the federation's authority over the affiliated kibbutzim has been in sharp decline ever since the mid-1980's. As a result (and this holds at least for the Takam, that is, two-thirds of the kibbutz movement), the federation is unable to assume any genuine role in the process of change which the kibbutzim undergo. Actually, one of the major aspects of the contemporary process of transformation in the kibbutz movement is the marginalization of the role of the federation in leadership and guidance for the kibbutzim in general. An important element in this picture is the economic crisis of the federation itself. In 1982, the Takam announced its intention to invest tens of millions of shekels in the creation of new kibbutzim in order to assert the pioneering calling of the movement, but a few years later, in the mid-1980's, such statements lost all sense (see Avrahami, 1993). The crisis of the kibbutzim, inevitably, became the crisis of the federation that draws from them its essential resources. Hence, the Takam had no other choice than to transfer an important part of its activities (educational counseling; organizational expertise, etc.) to external frameworks, which now provide services in return for payment.

In the background, there is another, more positive development:

10. In-depth interviews were conducted with 36 subjects, 26 of whom held prominent positions in Parliament or other major political frameworks, and 10 of whom held prominent positions in the Takam.

the increased interest of the kibbutzim in the regions where they are located. Since the crisis, in fact, new developments have taken place in the respective areas of the kibbutzim, where they are an important demographic factor. New services, occupational structures, cultural and educational frameworks have been created or encouraged. This kind of cooperation, which is commonly found between kibbutzim of different federations, is now emerging, for the first time, between kibbutzniks and non-kibbutzniks. This development, according to the Project (see Fogiel-Bijaoui, 1994), may be seen as an aspect of the new orientation of the kibbutzim vis-a-vis their environment, an orientation which sets elitism on a secondary plane, and places more importance on the direct instrumental concerns of the kibbutzim themselves.

*(d) Summary: A non-total change*

In brief, the investigation of the nature of the changes experienced by the kibbutz shows both continuity and discontinuity, regarding all three identity facets. Personal interests have become the community's principal reference, though this has not necessarily meant dropping the sharing egalitarianism altogether. Kibbutzniks are often alienated from their collective, and the changes that they implement do not eliminate this feeling. Increased privatization and familization of life in the community is simply a response to these feelings. Similarly, the abolition of the General Assembly does not resolve the members' feeling that they are not equal participants in the decision-making process; it confirms it and sets down new patterns that make decision-making more legitimate by recognizing the limits of direct democracy. At the same time, the family is expanding its interests beyond the kibbutz's boundaries and is exerting pressure on other institutions—especially the education system—to focus on wider horizons. The assimilation of the young to non-kibbutz culture is another indication of the transformation.

Nevertheless, in numerous respects, the collective orientation has not faded away. Some of the basic aspects of kibbutz education, the restrictions regarding differential monetary rewarding, forms of decision-making that include the whole community and other traditional features are still maintained. In this sense, the binarism of sharing egalitarianism and individualism continues to characterize the kibbutz endeavor. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the other two identity facets.

We found that the mid-1980's economic crisis, which cast doubt on the very viability of the kibbutz economy, has strengthened rather than weakened the hold of the technocrats on the enterprise, even though

the crisis itself indicates a major failure of the economic leadership. The rank-and-file are not happy with this development but are ready to adjust to it. As partners they are not only worried about their say in decision making, but also about the outcome of the efforts themselves. Actually, the crisis has increased their dependency on those who might lead them out of the crisis.

This crisis has also amplified the instrumental and purely economic orientation toward notions like work, career, hired labor, and even community services. On the other hand, despite the prominence of entrepreneurship over partnership, the latter has not completely vanished. Means of production remain collective, and the very existence of partnership is the key to understanding many of the reforms now being implemented in the kibbutz. One example, for instance, is the tendency of many kibbutzim to consider the possibility of allocating members cooperative shares, which they could sell to the kibbutz, if they themselves decide to leave, or legate to offspring who have left. Hence, with respect to the kibbutz enterprise, as well, we find a non-total revolution.

Finally, we have seen that the kibbutz's relation to the environment has also undergone a radical change, which also, however, falls short of constituting a total revolution. We found that the kibbutzniks' predominant attitude in this respect is undeniably marked by collective egoism. This finds expression in the shrinking of the kibbutz's allegiance to the federation and as well as in its stronger practical interests in its immediate environment. Yet, here too, it should be stressed that the other pole of the binary contradiction has not been extinguished. This is illustrated by the fact that despite the weakening of their commitment, the kibbutzim refrain from leaving their roof organization, and at the same time, the federations themselves still send emissaries to fill power positions in the center, to assert the elitist calling of the movement.

In sum, the kibbutzniks who were investigated tend to be individualistic, entrepreneurship-oriented and moved by collective egoism much more than preoccupied by sharing egalitarianism, partnership and elitism. However, they still are all of the latter, as well.

## The agents of change

Considering now the agents that stand behind the changes, we ask whether these changes are initiated and carried out by distinct segments within the population or by the general opinion, whether they are met with the opposition of specific groups or the approbation of all.

First, we found that most changes are supported by the majority, in

all social strata. There is no sign of either a "revolutionary" party fighting on behalf of change, or a "reactionary" party opposing change. This is not to say that factors like gender, age, ethnic origin, or generation do not correlate with relative differences of attitudes vis-a-vis changes. The Zeitgeist, however, is definitely change-oriented. This is indicated by the results of another Project study (Ben-Rafael and Geijst, 1993).11 About two-thirds of the sample support many changes
expressing individualization, in the realm of the community, innovations in the enterprise, the sense of wider autonomy of the economy from the community setting, and a general weakening in allegiance to the federation.

The more radical the change proposed, the smaller the number of respondents who favor them, although quite an extreme change, introducing differential monetary rewarding, was endorsed by no less than one-third. Furthermore, even the most radical demands were firmly rejected by only small minorities, fluctuating from 10% to 15% of the sample. The only change that aroused genuine antagonism was the proposal to close down the collective dining room—41% strongly opposed the idea, while 15% firmly supported it. In brief, the issue of change does not really divide the kibbutzniks.

In this context, the transformation of the kibbutz is popular among the kibbutzniks and personal attributes create only slight differences. A factor like gender, for instance, appears to indicate only slight differences—with the women more in favor of increasing the space of individual freedom within the collective. The older members, as expected, are more conservative than the younger, while the middle-age category emphasizes the need for privatization and a stronger autonomy of the enterprise from the community. The young generation is more supportive of radical changes than others. The differences among categories are, however, limited, and this, to be sure, contrasts with all expectations of any form of class theory, whether a la Marx or a la Touraine.

The major finding, it is true, is that the principal social attribute that correlates with change orientation is the member's social status in the kibbutz. However, it has appeared that it is the technocrats, the

11. This survey, which was carried out in 1991-1992, investigated 636 subjects in 26 kibbutzim. These kibbutzim constituted a random sample taken from the 170 Takam kibbutzim. In each of the selected kibbutzim, we randomly sampled 10% of the adult population (no more than 1 member per nuclear family). Hence, the sample was representative of the diverse catergories of kibbutzim, according to age, size, and economic or demographic condition. The sampling procedure also ensured representation of individual attributes like gender, occupational status, or education. The main research tool was a close-ended questionnaire which addressed attitudes toward kibbutz values, change, and personal involvement.

stronger stratum of the kibbutz, who are most committed to changes of all kinds. This includes value-laden changes in the community model— from the inclusive budget to differential monetary rewards—business-like management of the enterprise, and indifference vis-a-vis the federation's efforts to achieve status in society. The technocrats' support for change meets the wishes of other segments of the collective but their own involvement is overwhelming. This involvement, contrary to Giddens' structuration theory, does not take the form of organized action. However, it is they who nearly always emerge as sponsors, and later carriers, of change initiatives—as individuals, committee members, or office-holders.

The role of the more privileged as the more anti-status quo may seem a riddle. The systematic character of this finding suggests and supports generalizations that may apply to strong social layers in any egalitarian setting. One may say, indeed, that this finding supports the elitist theory (Pareto, 1966; Schumpeter, 1954; Ben-David, 1955). In light of this perspective, we suggest a "paradox of the sociology of equality":

1. In a sharing-egalitarian community, egalitarian material rewarding may arouse feelings of deprivation among those who, by taking on economic or public responsibility, at least in their own eyes, contribute more than others to the common good.
2. The basic unfairness of differentiated contributions gratified by undifferentiated rewards is presumably compensated in a sharing-egalitarian setting like the kibbutz by authority, prestige, and influence.
3. However, the resulting differentiation of status may create gaps of prestige and power among members, which weaken the social cohesion.
4. Because the value of relational gratifications like prestige or esteem is a function of the  consensus in which they are grounded, the weakening of the social cohesion depreciates that value.
5. This depreciation, in the absence of other more substantial compensation, can be expected to amplify the technocrats' relative deprivation.
6. This may drive the privileged stratum in favor a change of status quo in the direction of a stronger assertion of their special status.
7. This drive should manifest itself more vigorously in times of crisis, when liminality blurs the contours of legitimate social arrangements and the rank-and-file are more dependent than ever on the technocrats.

## Pluralization

We now address the question of the extent to which changes actually create a new kibbutz social order. Topel's (1995) research,[12] which followed Fielding's (1986) methodology, focused on the kibbutzim themselves and the configurations of changes that they implemented. The data revealed a clear tendency toward heterogenization of the kibbutz movement. By no means do the forms of re-organization and re-definition of patterns, arrangements, and norms indicate a single uniform, linear, universal, and ubiquitous development. Only very few changes were cited by all informants in all the kibbutzim.

Actually, the changes can be grouped in what we call "strings," because of their tendency to appear together, at various degrees, in the same kibbutzim. Each of these strings represents a different focus, distinguished by the central concept that it reflects. Most significantly, the three foci that were obtained empirically actually point to the different kibbutz identity facets which were defined a priori.

Thus a whole set of changes revolves around the notion of "privatization" of the kibbutz social life, and indicates the transformation of the kibbutz community. Another string is bound to the notion of management or, more accurately, "managerialism," and is, of course, associated with the enterprise aspect of the kibbutz. The third string consists of various changes, all related to the interaction of the kibbutz with its immediate environment; this string, obviously, relates to the kibbutz's attitude to society.

The different strings do not exclude each other and kibbutzim by no means concentrate on changes pertaining to only one string. However, the empirical investigation shows that the correlations between the strings are weak, while the correlations between items pertaining to a same string are statistically significant (Topel, 1995).

12. This research collected qualitative data about events and processes related to the discussion, decision-making, and implementation of changes in kibbutzim. The Takam's network of regional economic and social consultants, who operate among the kibbutzim on a geographical basis, were instrumental. Thirty-four kibbutzim were selected as particularly representative of the federation in terms of age, size, location, origins of the membership, demographic composition, and economic standing. These kibbutzim constitute about 20% of the Takam as a whole. In each kibbutz, the researcher got in touch with one or two informants who were to collaborate with him on a permanent basis. These informants were chosen from among the more central figures in their kibbutzim but, for one reason or another, were not, at the time of the research, holding a position in their kibbutz's establishment. The observations and reports obtained related to 118 issues; these were studied in detail during the different phases of the research. About 320 reports in total were received from the informants. In addition, dozens of personal interviews were conducted both in the federation and in the various kibbutzim. The data collection lasted nearly three years, starting from 1991.

More specifically, the set of changes that revolves around privatization refers mainly to the transfer of aspects of consumption that until recently were fully covered by collective budgets (such as telephone bills, domestic electricity and children's clothing budget) to individual responsibility. Privatization has also meant that the kibbutz has forfeited all means of control over the use of external private resources of members. On the other hand, numerous kibbutzim also tend to be more formal and less generous in their endorsement of special individual demands in various areas, especially in the realm of higher education. In this latter respect, for instance, in numerous kibbutzim students are required to commit themselves to work for a period equivalent to the number of years of higher education paid for them by the kibbutz.

Changes in this group that concern structural innovations—whether the suppression of kibbutz institutions or the creation of new ones—all express a desire to increase individual autonomy. Hence, in many kibbutzim children continue to live in their parents' apartment after the age of thirteen, and do not move to youth quarters (contrary to the decision taken when the young children were moved from the peer house to the parental home). Similarly, new regulations may allow purchasing private cars, building extra rooms in individual apartments with private money, or reducing the operation of the collective dining room.

The managerial string comprises items such as instituting boards of directors at the head of kibbutz factories, appointing non-kibbutzniks as director-generals, or removing economic activity from the authority of non-economic public bodies. In the aftermath of the mid- 1980's crisis, many of the kibbutzim in the sample moved rapidly toward a change of economic structure by enlarging the industrial activity and commercializing community services, while, in parallel, reducing the scope of the kibbutz's agricultural sector. In many cases, this has brought about a reorganization of the teams for different crops into one larger team, under the direction of one farm manager.

Interestingly enough, this string also includes the reforms instituted in the area of public decision making: the referendum, which is now often used as a form of collective decision making; the creation of an internal TV network to broadcast public debates prior to referenda; the appointment, when necessary, of a board of external directors to run the kibbutz; and the employment of change experts to facilitate organizational changes in the various areas of the kibbutz's activity. The empirical association of changes in the area of public and collective decision making with changes in enterprise underlines the dominance of economic activity over other issues in the area of decision making on

Table 2.
*Profiles of transformational processes in kibbutzim (N=34)*

| Profiles of kibbutzim and frequency | Privation | Mangerialism | Insertion in environment |
|---|---|---|---|
| • 8 conservative kibbutzim | | - | |
| • 2 moderately change-oriented | | + | |
| • 4 | - | - | + |
| • 2 | + | - | - |
| • 3 more change-oriented | — | + | + |
| • 5 | + | + | |
| • 3 | + | ■ | + |
| • 7 radical kibbutzim | + | + | + |

*Source:* Topel (1995). The researcher calculated an index of the import of the various strings on each kibbutz—according to the number of string-bound changes implemented. Kibbutzim were then classified according to the relative weight of each string in the processes of changes which they experienced.

the kibbutzim. This area, it appears, is now being viewed in terms of management of the kibbutz's resources, in the sense of "running a business."

The third string consists of the changes that express the kibbutzniks' readiness to "tear down the* fences," that is, to open internal services to outsiders and seek necessary facilities outside the kibbutz. Reforms such as hiring people to take care of the kibbutz's children, integrating non-kibbutz children in the kindergarten, or inviting customers to buy a meal in the collective dining room also belong here. At first glance, they may seem to belong to the managerial string, as they reflect economic interests. However, it appears that in the mind of kibbutzniks, they primarily represent an exposure of the kibbutz's most intimate life to outsiders. As such, they express, above all, a new attitude of the kibbutz toward its environment, which also applies to additional changes like renting rooms to outsiders and office space to urban companies, or marketing subscriptions to the kibbutz's swimming pool.

During 1991-1993, the 34 sampled kibbutzim decided upon no less than 629 changes, that is, an average of 19 changes per kibbutz. This indicates the intensity of the transformation in the kibbutz movement. The changes that one finds most often among the different kibbutzim do not amount, in total, to more than 50% of the changes, and they belong to all three strings. On the basis of the 118 changes reported in detail by the informants, Table 2 categorizes the 34 sampled kibbutzim according to the strings of changes that characterize them most. The results show that one can hardly speak of a dichotomy between

"revolutionary" kibbutzim and "conservative" kibbutzim; the truth is that the kibbutzim fall into numerous categories.

On the basis of the analysis, it can be concluded that no string holds predominance over the others: between the conservative and radical ends, which themselves constitute only a minority, the changes in each kibbutz tend to cover a whole range of categories.

Specific conditions contribute to the variance of the change processes in kibbutzim: kibbutzim that are economically weak are more eager than others to implement organizational changes, and in the same vein, kibbutzim that are closer than others to urban centers are more exposed to privatization changes. Yet, such factors are only partial explanations, and all indices point to the import of the particular social dynamics of each kibbutz. In most cases of change, the decision-making process may take weeks, or even months, until the implementation of an innovation. The process may start in a member's room, during a social event, or come up directly in a committee meeting, before reaching the secretariat. In many cases, a think-tank group or the relevant committee will work on the idea before it is presented for a formal decision—again to the kibbutz secretariat, and then to the council or the general assembly.

Once decided upon, moreover, the change will still have a long way to go, and it will certainly look different when it emerges from the "pipeline." A small number of members with objections are enough to delay the implementation of an innovation, forcing officials to alter the original decision so as to minimize the opposition. Moreover, the cost of the innovation might have been underestimated, so that adjustments will be required. In brief, the translation of a reform into practice leaves wide room for ad hoc decisions by the people involved. This also means that changes are often engendered by a chain of decisions taken over time, without a clear a priori vision of the goal to be achieved.

All this indicates a wide diversity of outcomes resulting from the change process in the different kibbutzim. There is a paradoxical contrast between this variance in results and the widely homogenous political context of the change process—that is, the predominant role of technocrats in this process in all change-oriented kibbutzim—as well as the wide support that these technocrats enjoy from most social strata.

This general finding may be understood, however, in light of what we know about similar situations in peasant societies. It will be recalled that Shanin (1971) showed how during the Russian Revolution, whole villages opted either for the Red or for the White, but rarely divided internally along class lines, notwithstanding the frequent deep class gaps existing in these villages. This, according to Shanin, was primarily due to the solidarity in these communities, which were a function of

typical mechanisms—such as periodic land redistribution—that created we-feelings and minimized the divisive significance of class. A similar principle seems to apply to the kibbutz. The we-assumption is a constitutional principle here, and members are also economic partners. Interpersonal communication remains, even if much less so than in the past, both intense and expressive.

In sum, against the general background of today's pro-change Zeitgeist, the discussion of change evolves in each kibbutz according to the dynamics of its singular context.

## Conclusions

It is our contention that the analysis of the kibbutz's contemporary transformation is of interest for today's post-modernist utopianism. Though much less than in the past, the kibbutz still constitutes a distinct segment of society, embodying Smart's (1992) idea of synchronic discontinuity throughout the societal space. It also exhibits a developmental model, in Toffler's (1971) terms, which concretizes a subculture and indicates social fragmentation. As Lyotard (1986) puts it, for typical post-modern processes, the kibbutz reflects an obsession with material wealth and relentless progress, but at the same time is marked by severe problems of integration. This chaotic aspect (see Young, 1991) of kibbutz reality, within the community and in its societal environment, is all but systematic. The kibbutz identity itself is inconsistent and marked by contradictions and tensions. Kibbutzniks themselves are engaged in a critical analysis of their identity, and in this sense, are the best example of the postmodern condition.

The kibbutz contributes to the discussion of Utopia because it both confirms and disproves the Utopian expectations. The kibbutz reveals the naivete of those who aspire to a Utopia beyond technocracy, as the fulfillment of equality and as the antithesis of contemporary plagues. Decentralized democratic enterprises, the kibbutz shows, do not necessarily break the rules of entrepreneurship. This kind of endeavor, which separates social welfare from economic activity, as advocated today by Frankel (1987), is no exception to the universality of power processes. The kibbutz teaches us that this separation, on the contrary, expresses and realizes the privileged status of the managing class, to the detriment of the rank-and-file. The tendency of kibbutzim to retreat from a comprehensive and all-encompassing social contract, in favor of more specific terms of social exchange, similarly casts doubt on Gorz's (1980; 1985) hope to ground cooperatives on a vaguely defined exchange of work for services, or Bahro's (1986) belief in the viability of ascetic "basic communes."

On the other hand, the kibbutz lends support to these Utopian ideas which state, in a Proudhonian manner (see Proudhon, 1962), that their models of cooperation do not preclude the retention of the market principle. Toffler (1971; 1983) and Jones (1982), for instance, speak of technological pluralism consisting of interrelated industrial cooperative plants, and Masuda (1990) suggests a multi-centered open community. Together with these outlooks, we find that while the difficulties of the kibbutz today relate primarily to its economic functioning, at the same time, the fact that it constitutes a collective entrepreneur also accounts for its vitality.

More specifically, the contemporary transformation of the kibbutz is a rich lesson in what we may call the "sociology of Utopia": The development of a community entrepreneur-elite is marked by the development of a material and cultural "middle class" and inner stratification headed by a technocracy, which loosen the social cohesion and induce members to aspire to wider individual autonomy. In conditions of deep political and economic crises, members of a Utopian setting may, as direct function of their own wishes, be brought to a self-delegitimization that endangers the very retention of their endeavor.

The kibbutzniks have illustrated a form of transformation that can be defined as a drastic shift of emphasis on given poles of the various binary contradictions, at the expense of others: the kibbutzniks have now shifted to outspoken individualism, business-like entrepreneurship, and a strong tendency to get closer to their immediate environment, to the detriment of their formerly much more emphasized sharing egalitarianism, partnership, and elitism. It is this kind of shift, which reformulates the basic identity dilemmas without getting rid of them, that we have called a non-total revolution.

This transformation is supported by the majority of the kibbutzniks of every stratum, but it is primarily sponsored and implemented by the technocrats who see in it an opportunity to strengthen their status and increase their autonomy. As elsewhere, here too these technocrats achieve control of the enterprise. However, they still feel relatively underprivileged, in light of the gap between what they receive from a setting grounded in sharing egalitarianism, and what their non-kibbutznik counterparts do.

The search for consensus is, however, also typical of a community like the kibbutz, and this widely accounts for the specific forms and configurations in each kibbutz, according to its own social dynamics. This greatly contributes, then, to the pluralization of kibbutz reality according to the degree of emphasis, in each particular settlement, of privatization, managerialism, and interaction with the environment.

In all this, it seems that the kibbutz is special mainly because it is "another manner" of confronting dilemmas and difficulties of post-modernity, and by no means a manner of avoiding them. What distinguish the "kibbutz manner" is that kibbutzniks confront post-modernity as practical contradictions, pertaining to their daily life and as objects of the subjects' own personal and collective decisions.

The contemporary changes have not, so far, disrupted the continuity between present and past kibbutz identity dilemmas, even though they caused revolutionary changes. This alone, however, does not justify the future of the kibbutz, and ever since the mid-1980s crisis, kibbutzniks have been suffering from a sense of failure and selfdisappointment. One day, people inspired by the same Utopia as the founders of the kibbutz may well start everything anew, without recognizing themselves in any of the existing kibbutzim—even if these still exist. But knowingly or unknowingly, they will, like the kibbutzniks, draw the general significance of their venture from how they challenge and adjust to the conflicts of post-modernity.

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