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## From Hegemony to a Multi-Uniqueness Communities

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### Abstract

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A change in a renewed Kibbutz and transition from a homogeneous to a postmodern society characterized by multiple different communities is depicted in this article. The research deals with the ability of the settlement, where the study was conducted, to create a common framework that will enrich and empower every part of it, even in an environment of disagreements and conflicts.

In contrast to striving for homogeneity that characterized past hegemonic views, at Kibbutzim as well, a process of becoming heterogeneous and pluralist in patterns of life and identity is under way. The article based on narrative research conducted in a Kibbutz where the author is a member. A "renewed kibbutz" required to introduce economic and demographic changes that have changed its character. Discussion focuses Conflict, Symbolic Interactionism and Multiple-modernities theories to describe the changes linearly, from a hegemonic preserving past infrastructure, to a Kibbutz willing to engage in dialogue and reach agreements with new populations to recognizing the existence of a wide community with unique communities within.

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**Keywords:** Conflict Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, Multiple-Modernities, Renewed Kibbutz, Community, Hegemony.

### 1. Introduction

Since this study deals with the construction of a new collective identity in a Kibbutz has undergone numerous changes since its establishment, in the last 25 years in particular, the sequence of changes requires a discussion. Changes are reflected in the political sphere and the Kibbutzim's centrality in Israeli society, in the economic sphere and its relationship with Kibbutz values, and in ethical aspects which have constituted the essence of Kibbutz settlement as an ideology.



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To survive and develop under the new circumstances, Kibbutzim needed to respond fast and adjust their activity to the new rules of play, first and foremost in the economic area, as without a firm economic base, Kibbutzim could not survive for long. It was soon realized that there was a conflict between the conditions required for economic growth and Kibbutz basic principles.

The complexity of the entry of a new population with a different status and its relative growth led the Kibbutz movement to the decision to accept this population as part of the collective association in the circumstances that had developed after the crisis.

One of the characteristics of change in the Kibbutz Movement generally and the one in which the research was undertaken in particular, is the transition from a homogenous community with a defined ideology and clear collective identity to a pluralistic and heterogeneous society.

Two communities living side by side on the same Kibbutz, sharing public services. They enjoy the same municipal services and together carry the burden of municipal taxation, guard duty, education and cultural activities.

Residents of these community expansions are not considered Kibbutz members, they have rights of possession to their homes, and the neighbourhood is established outside the residential area of the Kibbutz. The Kibbutz continues to be managed by its traditional bodies, the general assembly and managing committee, which manages its output means and worries about members' needs.

There is no doubt, that community expansions improved the economic and demographic position of Kibbutzim. Nevertheless, the existence of two communities with different status on the same Kibbutz, creates problems on a municipal level, because community expansion residents are not able to choose the local council for themselves as do members of the Kibbutz, because according to the legal situation today, Kibbutzim still have full committee identity, and their management committees also serve as the municipal committee.

Findings of a study carried out recently and presented to Public Committee, on the topic of social implications of community expansions on Kibbutzim (Report on Kibbutzim, Public Committee for Kibbutzim, 2003) pointed out that the minute there is no separation between communities; the expanded community tends to integrate into the Kibbutz's social life. In the opinion of the Committee, this process is likely to cause Kibbutz communities to lose their independent identity. Despite this, the Committee believes that community expansion is an important tool in improving the demographic situation in some Kibbutzim, although one must ensure that identity and principles of the community of Kibbutz members are preserved (Manor, 2004).

The aim of this article is to present preliminary findings relating to understanding the transition from Kibbutz traditionally homogenous and hegemonic to a renewing kibbutz which got into populations with different backgrounds.

Three measures were selected to focus the research and information collected: qualitative paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2001; Yosifon, 2001), narrative approach (Lieblich, 2006; Josselson, 2015) and the case study strategy (Yin, 2014).

15 Kibbutz members were interviewed. The interviewees were asked to tell their personal stories of their life in the settlement.

I am a researcher living in the Kibbutz where this research was conducted since 1977, and have been a Kibbutz member since 1980. I have known the Kibbutz members for many years, as well as one knows one's family. This is an important fact, because the relationship among Kibbutz members is often like the relationship in a family or a home. It is important to note that so as to maintain transparency of research and avoid bias and mixing this knowledge with innovations emerging from the interviewees' stories.

## **2. The Importance of Research and Gap in Knowledge**

The significance of transition from a hegemonic and homogenous society, such as the traditional Kibbutz, to a multi community and unique society with new needs, such as the renewed Kibbutz, is a new phenomenon whose significance has yet to be studied. As a consequence of the economic and social crisis, Kibbutzim were required to make radical changes in their ideological perceptions. These changes include transition from a society that worries about every aspect of its individuals' lives to one in which individuals are responsible for their livelihood and families in every area. Additional changes involved opening the Kibbutz gates to unique and other populations, in order to repopulate settlements as a result of large numbers of members leaving. These changes demanded of Kibbutz members sharp transitions from clear and safe perceptions to a need to redefine their positions and rights as members of renewed Kibbutzim, alongside development their ability to deal with absorbing new populations, with different ideologies and status (residents versus members) with their own unique needs and demands.

- The researched phenomenon indeed is only taking place at a small Kibbutz in Israel, but is part of a global postmodern phenomenon of locating unique communities alongside one another. Transition from multicultural communities to multiple modernities.
- The research will highlight the transition from a hegemonic society for example the traditional Kibbutz to a multi community society with heterogeneous needs.

## **3. From a Homogenous Community to Multiple-Societies**

Community is not a place of quiet consensus, but one in which consensus is challenged and changing, sometimes gradual and sometimes revolutionary (Bellah et al., 1998). The post communitarian approach seeks to combine social unity and openness: openness enables dealing with fears that derive from closing a community geographically or biologically, which is central to the communitarian approach. In an open community with impregnable borders, there is space for individuals to choose to unite as communities of choice and relationships between group members are specific, as a means to achieve the goal that in fact united them in the first place. Relationships in this framework have an individualistic, not group, orientation, characterized by a lack of deep trust. In fact communities of circumstances are characterized by deep trust based on monolithic links between homogeneous groups in their social characteristics. In an open community there is a balance between trust through thick and thin (Smith, 2004).

Communitarism theory disqualifies ranking or hierarchy of more or less important cultures. The assumption is that every culture has a different etiology of what is right and wrong as explained by different historic contexts, this therefore calls for an agreed social routine, adjusted to the needs of the different communities and cultures.

A community is a melting pot of identities, not only through its recognition of the identity of an individual as anchored in the community, but because of the communal sensitivity in building it while considering the needs of society as a whole and the needs of the different factions in it. (Barzilai, 2001).

This socio-cultural reality is characterized by an increased number of groups who highlight their uniqueness be it their religion, religiosity, or life values (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997).

A comparative historical look shows that the gap between the homogeneous image of society and the changing thematic repertoire of identities' systems existed even before nation states' hegemony. Different identities - primordial ethnicities and acquired civic identities, were much more complex and neither consolidated nor arranged hierarchically. This is also the case with regard to different historical societies or civilizations (Eisenstadt, 2013).

According to Oved (2007), secular communities shaking off dominant ideologies raised in them a pluralist approach according to which people can form associations to live communal lives, and in so doing found a common background that leads participants to compromise and agree whilst maintaining their personal beliefs.

A dynamic picture of identities and identifications in the postmodern era is illustrated by Zygmunt Bauman's (2007) liquid image. According to him, active modernity has strong "melting powers" over the solid structures of society – institutional and social frameworks, rights and obligations, loyalties and reciprocal relations – so that these changed from a solid to liquid state, turned into a type of liquid, struggling to preserve their existing state over a period of time. Another of Bauman's images was a kaleidoscope that he used to illustrate society's dynamism and present it as a system whose components change constantly (Ram, 2002).

Kibbutzim's transformation, from settlements made up of homogenous populations with a single ideological background, which constituted Kibbutz hegemony, were also forced to change as a result of entry of populations groups with other ethical and cultural shades.

These changes, to a large extent, are in line with those that have taken place in other modern societies. That is because their roots are in worldwide processes, mainly globalization processes and deep changes to nation states, the primary example of a modern state that has ruled the roost for a long time, at least in the western world.

These changes force most societies in the world to consolidate new patterns of modernity, a process that is often accompanied by internal crises (Eisenstadt, 2013).

The post-colonial approach contributed to multiculturalism in clarifying that explanations that ethnic hierarchies existing today are rooted in the western world's ethnocentric perceptions that defined themselves as modern, rational and homogeneous and "others", "the East", "the third world", "the native", "the ethnic", as passive and irrational. The multicultural standpoint was thus born as an alternative to ethnocentricity and one hegemonic and oppressive culture's arrogance (Dahan, 2007).

Polycentric multiculturalism emphasizes the need to fundamentally change balances of power between dominant and non-dominant groups. It strives to cancel the equation that differentiates between center and periphery by turning Eurocentric society into a polycentric one - a society with many centers (Dahan, 2007).

The social center, which has for many years been relatively homogenous, closed and conservative, is becoming heterogeneous and global, losing its intransigence. Old, but lower status social groups as well as new social groups demonstrate attempts at social mobility and undermining social centers through renewed interpretations of existing social categories and arrangements. Sometimes groups bring claims to redefine the collective itself. At the same time, processes of segregation, seclusion and attempts to strengthen group boundaries take place in order to protect collective identities or cultural and economic standpoints (Shavit, 2013).

Lerner (2012) spoke about a meeting of societies, one absorbs and the other emigrates. This encounter is known as cultural colonialism. The two faces of colonialism are: narcissism and inferiority complexes. One of the consequences of reciprocal colonialism is internal colonization. Following a colonization process, colonial objects internalize their peripheral status and match their core to values of the colonial subject (the absorbing, dominant culture).

Weber (1963, 1968) emphasized that a dominant culture is not necessarily a reflection of the strongest group in society, but pretends to express history, values and symbols that link present day socio-cultural reality with past narrative.

According to Gershenson (2012), colonial dialogue recruits and activates people, and as such provides conditions and contexts for creation of colonial subjectivity. In this way, colonialism, both when it is directed inwards and outwards, causes its subjects to move and wander between narcissism and feelings of inferiority and creates an antagonistic hierarchical space (Lerner, 2012).

According to Tamir (1998), the difference between two societies does not refer to the extent of their commitment to preserving their culture or willingness to make use of state frameworks to advance their cultural interests, but the level of cultural threat that they feel.

#### **4. Everything Depends on the Absorbing Community**

The most important factor with regard to Kibbutz members' level of identification with its collective identity is the dominant cultural approach in society. This culture is likely to encourage or block the growth and strengthening of particular collective identities. If referring to the poles of possibilities, the dominant culture is likely, on the one hand, to encourage socio-cultural pluralism, and on the other, to demand that everyone will accept identical patterns and samples and will see themselves as one entity (Van den Berghe, 1978; Hoetinck, 1972; Tabory & Lazerwitz, 1983).

The more pluralistic a dominant culture, the more it encourages particular groups to preserve their unique character and continue to identify with its collective identity. In contrast, the more a dominant culture tends to emphasize uniformity and cancels particularism, the more it contributes to the weakening of a particular collective identification (Ben-Rafael, 2006).

Encounters between minority and ruling groups are two dimensional: one is the extent of direct contact between people who belong to both groups and hence, too, the level of their reciprocal involvement and the other is the extent each of the groups guards its unique cultural identity (Berry, 1990; 2001).

On this basis, Berry argued that results of these encounters depend on the one hand on different groups' members' willingness to establish connections outside their group framework, and on the other, the strength of their desire to preserve their unique heritage or cultural identity. These conditions are important to both absorbing and absorbed groups and their integration creates mutual assimilation (or rejection) scenarios.

It appears that Berry's perspective suits the settlement where the research was conducted. The ability of the groups living there to define their uniqueness and on the other hand, the ability of each group to be open to other groups is the conditions to create a common infrastructure for assimilation and good neighbourly living.

## 5. Point of View or Reference of the Absorbing or Ruling Society

A minority group's integration into ruling society is possible only if the society is open to receiving the other and ready to include a variety of different cultures within it and fits its institutions to a multicultural system. In contrast, if an absorbing society is inclined towards discrimination against strangers or those who are different, the absorbed group is likely to prefer separation over any other scenario, or in the absence of any ability to preserve its identity to find itself alienated and pushed aside to society's margins. The intersection of the two aforementioned conditions points to four possible absorbing society's approaches to an absorbed or minority group within:

- **Openness to multiculturalism** which enables those absorbed from different cultures to integrate into society and adopt its fundamental values as well as preserving their heritage and unique identity. In these situations those from minority groups can consolidate their own dual identity - pan social (or civic) and unique, connected to their cultural or ethnic heritage.
- **Melting pot:** Meaning forcing a majority's culture on minorities. The goal here is to assimilate absorbed groups into the absorbing society.
- **Segregation:** This approach encourages minority groups' separation.
- **Exclusion:** This approach pushes minorities to society's margins (Glass, 2008).

## 6. Possible Scenarios from the Perspective of Minority Groups in Society

Taylor's (2003) approach pointed to multiculturalism as the ideal mechanism for existence of heterogeneous societies. He believed that co-existence of a number of alternative identities does not signify the breakdown of society, but the opposite, a successful means of survival. At the base of Taylor's model is the determination that identity is determined in part by recognition or non-recognition that others give to it. Therefore, every group requires reactions from other groups in order to consolidate their identity and authenticity, this need is likely to enrich encounters between and shared

lives of different cultures, and will not necessarily lead to competition, hostility and envy (Huntington, 2004; Glass, 2008).

According to the approaches presented above, one can conclude that a ruling hegemony's character determines a community's character in general. Will a community be built according to a ruling hegemony's values or a community in which it is legitimate to define different identities? This approach will enable existence of shared local identity constructed from unique groups whose social and cultural center is polycentric.

In contrast to striving for homogeneity that characterized past hegemonic views, at Kibbutzim too, a process of becoming heterogeneous and pluralist in patterns of life and identity is under way. This heterogeneity does not necessarily express a desire to be separate, in as much as many social tensions are not rooted in a desire for separation, and not because everyone is glued to his/her tradition; these tensions are a result of the many ways in which different groups try to process their patterns of life and identities in society (Eisenstadt, 2013).

## 7. Findings

Belonging to a traditional Kibbutz is part of a belonging to a national unique ethos, expressed by Kibbutz members' narrative. In addition the Kibbutz is perceived as holistic-total societies whose existence was due to the reciprocal obligation between the Kibbutz and its members and members and the Kibbutz.

The traditional Kibbutz constituted both an idea and a place. Conducts was according to an idea and its evident values. Its members viewed their membership of traditional Kibbutz as an integral, meaningful and influential part of the place to the same extent that the place influenced them.

Belonging to a traditional Kibbutz gave its members a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves: *"The central experience I think was what they did, this wilderness, the rocks, this adherence to this work that characterized ....., the old-timers, all the Palmachnikim<sup>1</sup> that were here, it was something very big"*.

The experience of belonging to a place that was established in impossible conditions, *'this wilderness'*, the stubbornness of its founders to overcome nature *'adherence to this work'*, and admiration for founders, caused the interviewee to describe her initial experience of the place as a central experience that lefts its mark. *'It was something big'* defines the interviewee's affinity and belonging to the place and founders' undertaking. Belonging to a place that has a type of past events gives members a sense that they belong to a place with ethos, with a splendid past that created something out of nothing, in an almost impossible place, from the point of view of location and conditions. The Kibbutz underwent different crisis periods. Those who remained during times of crisis, such as the founders, also dealt with survival tasks. Therefore, the middle generation and younger people also feel the size of the task they undertook. The large crisis the place went through, which brought it to the brink of breaking up, in fact constituted a type triumphing over the place again and the

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<sup>1</sup> Palmachnikim – members of Palmach, a strike force that operated in the land of Israel during ther British mandate of the State of Israel

success that accompanies this, providing its members with a sense of belonging, ownership and continued pride in the founders' deeds.

It was clear to Kibbutz members that the needs of the Kibbutz outweighed the personal needs of its members. For role-holders in traditional Kibbutz it was clear what could be demanded of members. The Kibbutz's needs took precedence over members' personal desires, as testified by one of the interviewees: *"And they called on me to support something again ... member of a movement, member....member of a Kibbutz called upon to support it, so I returned"* and another Kibbutz member: *"As I say about myself, everything has been done and heard "*. Being a Kibbutz member, in their eyes was a social and ideological mission, and not just to live and work there. And if the Kibbutz needed something, members stepped up to the task.

Since it was in a remote place, the Kibbutz constituted a society that met all the needs of members: education, health, work, food, laundry and social life. Social life and internal culture constituted members' primary social and cultural framework. *"The concern of the cultural life that we established which weren't magnificent. But it provided a framework of activity, of culture, of Friday evenings, a framework of festivals... of groups that we tried to do, such as a "learning Kibbutz" (The kibbutz was a learning organization). There is no substitute for that"*. The traditional Kibbutz constituted an overall framework of life for members, all their social needs were met there.

After the change and transition to a renewed Kibbutz, members' common interests were not defined. The efforts to change and get out of the crisis, led people to assemble on a personal or familial basis and to a reorganization, which was expressed by individualism and individuals' personal concern for their livelihood and families. *"Kibbutz members, we are one community in the sense that we don't design meeting points for ourselves. When there is no dining room, no members club, in fact meeting points are very, very rare"*.

During the period of change, there was a general recruitment and despite the difficulties there was a dialogue about how to cope with the crisis and changes, and after its success, a vacuum remained between what had been - the partnership and daily coping with things together to the new life: private lives, individuals, and everyone for him/herself. *"For 16, 17 years since we approved the change model, there has been no activity here to examine what members want. What, what, what is our common denominator?"*.

*"I think that because the change was so substantial, both socially and perceptually of what is a renewed Kibbutz, the population (Kibbutz members) have not made this change, so it is very difficult for them to accept the new, and because of this, it progresses very slowly. It's not, it's not build as expected or as the theory says it should be...this transition to.... to a new way of life. Because we, the old Kibbutz members still want to experience the Kibbutz in its old form, and the new residents want to experience the Kibbutz in their own way, and it doesn't work, it doesn't manage to work"*.

The renewed Kibbutz, that has not redefined its shared communal infrastructure, encounters a new society, that has come from outside the Kibbutz with its own agenda: *"Our situation as a community (Kibbutz members) to unite is growing and growing, because of the arrival of a counter community. And there has to be a different counter, and it cannot be by individuals, it must be as a group. So you*

return, as if, to unite with the original group". There is an agenda that opposes the consolidated ecological group that arrived about a decade ago.

The absence of a collective identity among Kibbutz members derives according to their narrative, from an absence of common interests, for which one expression is generation gap. If in traditional Kibbutz, there was no distinction between members' needs and different age categories and their observation of Kibbutz and their needs, this is where individuals' needs, their age and the stage of life are highlighted. *"Every generation and its observation of the Kibbutz, according to his interests and perceptions"*. Here there is already a distinction between needs within a Kibbutz members' community. The change highlighted the gap between generations: each generation's differing agenda and putting the needs of individuals at the centre of members' personal agenda.

Acknowledging the advantage of the entry of a consolidate group into the settlement and its influence on the Kibbutz's way of life, is one of understanding of the significance of the entry of a new, younger power to the settlement: *"And I think that the arrival of the ecological nucleus is our only change of returning to a certain level of community. That means that they can make more community than suited them, and we can only do part of it together with them, but their arrival is the only change to it will go back to being a certain sense of community. Without them it would not have happened"*. *"Because they are searching for exactly the same things, and are capable of creating them. And in fact today the situation is that we will have to join them, for there to be community life here. But if they were not here, it wouldn't happen at all. Because we Kibbutz members are not capable of starting such a thing. That is to say we did it in the past, but it's over."*

Identifying a common interest framework at a communal level brought Kibbutz members around to recognizing the importance of opening its gates to new populations to refresh the settlement.

From interviews with Kibbutz members it emerged that belonging to the Kibbutz where the research took place is belonging and local narrative link characterized by a national ethos and social mission and not just belonging to a place or community of people. Opening the Kibbutz to new populations, allows entry to new people, who do not recognize the local historical narrative and maybe do not know or cherish local history because of an absence of knowledge. Kibbutz members saw themselves as belonging to something greater than themselves.

The traditional Kibbutz constituted an overall framework of life for its members, all their needs were fulfilled there. Members were obligated to the place and idea, and on the other hand the place and idea took care of all their individual needs. The transition to a renewed Kibbutz, which was accompanied by large economic and social crises, left Kibbutz members without a collective identity because of an absence of common interests. After the change, there was not clear ideological renewal. According to interviewed Kibbutz members, there is an agenda that opposed the consolidated ecological society that arrived about a decade ago. Changes in the Kibbutz highlighted not only dealing with the new community that joined but also internal Kibbutz generation gaps: differing agenda of each generation and putting the needs of individuals centre stage in members' personal agenda.

## 8. Conclusion

The transition of Kibbutz, from valued and leading entities in Israeli society, to entities that have lost their uniqueness, forces them to redefine and rebuild a new collective identity, of a group of members, and in parallel, construct a new collective identity together with populations of different backgrounds that have, in recent years, joined these settlements.

As Taylor (2003) argued, every group needs other groups' reactions in order to consolidate their identity and authenticity, this need is likely to enrich the encounter between and share life of different cultures, and not necessarily to lead to competition and hostility. Self-determination and the need to belong and consolidate one's environment are important to constructing personal identity.

In the settlement where the research was conducted, indeed there is a feeling of mutual arrogance and admiration and on the other hand, threat. Kibbutz members feel that the settlement has been taken from them. Decision making processes that until now were solely in the hands of Kibbutz members, but new residents have demanded to be partners in every aspect of the settlement.

Both newcomers and old timers relate to each another with arrogance and admiration at the same time. Because of these ambivalent cultural approaches, both sides adopt stances of colonial objects and colonial subjects. Thus colonial dynamics is turned outwards, in relation to the other, and inwards. The social colonial model enables understanding relations between newcomers and an established community as a multidimensional and two-way process. It exposes ambivalent relations between two types of cultural dialogue that contradict one another, but also complement each other in the same subjective framework (Lerner, 2012).

On the other hand, new settlers, predominantly members of the ecological group, initiate social and cultural activities for the whole settlement. They are highly active in all social and business areas. They have established businesses, factories, educational systems supported by the Kibbutz management, when the group was made up of about 15 families (today there are about 45).

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