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On the basis of 25 years of empirical research in different areas of kibbutz life, an attempt will be made to present some major problems of kibbutz society in the framework of the theory of alienation. We define alienation on the basis of Marx's early writings, as a process in which man's products and creations appear as strange entities that subject and trap him, rather than complete and edify. The opposite to a state of alienation is therefore a situation where man controls his creative productivity and identifies with both the process and the eventual product (Rosner 1982, Rosner-Mittelberg, forthcoming). These relationships are not only between man and his material products, as sometimes Marx is misinterpreted, but between man and his various creations: spiritual, social as well as economic and material. The concept of alienation seems therefore especially suited to the analysis of the kibbutz and other types of intentional communities, such as communes, both historical and contemporary.

In such communities it is possible to explore both the process of intentional creation, through the embodiment of ideas and ideologies in social reality, and the degree of control that the founders and followers exert over their creation. The central problem of the gap between kibbutz values and reality, (between intent and its implementation) is very close to the traditional philosophical definition of self-alienation as a disparity between a person's actual condition and his essential or 'ideal' aspirations (Schracht 1976). This gap is not only between stable values and intentions and a changing social, economic or political reality. Rather, it is a dialectical interrelationship where changes in the social and economic structure simultaneously have an impact on social consciousness, on member's attitudes and on values.

This formulation of the problem is related to the 2 principal theoretical conceptions of alienation:

a. the objectivist conception, based mainly on the marxist tradition, but also on theories stressing the roots of alienation in technology, mass society, etc.

b. The subjectivist conception based on psychologic and socio-psychological research, conceiving alienation mainly as a state of mind, expressed through emotions, perception, expectations, etc.

Our main interest here is in the interaction and interrelation between objective processes of structural transformation, and subjective reactions reflected in the social consciousness. Marx himself was aware of a possible gap between objective processes and social consciousness, talking of 'false consciousness' when the political attitudes of members of a social class fail to reflect their objectively determined class situation.

In an analogous, but different way, we have analyzed the possibility of a gap between the objective opportunities for actualizing the human potential in a given social setting, and the importance attributed to self-actualization by the individual actors (Rosner, 1982: 208).

The Marxist assumption of a false class consciousness is that the individual level of aspiration does not fit the objective class situation, e.g. when workers are not ready to join a solidaric, liberating class struggle. The other above-stated possibility, especially relevant in communal societies, is that of an unrealistically high level of aspiration. In this case subjective feelings of alienation might prevail, even when there are no objective alienating structures or processes.

In Marxist terms the conditions for non-alienation in the kibbutz are inherent in its character as a free association of producers, sharing the ownership of their means of production. In its inception, the kibbutz also created conditions to minimize 'the servitude of subordination by the division of labour' and avoided

intentionally the use of alienating industrial technologies, such as the assembly line. The kibbutz community also tried to overcome the anonymity and loneliness of mass-society and urban agglomerations by integrating work and home, work and leisure.

The kibbutz was intentionally founded by groups of young adults, mostly socialized in youth movement, aiming toward fellowship and non-alienated human relations. In spite of these non-alienating social structures, feelings of subjective alienation have recently been expressed, both in literary works and in internal journals and publication. There have also been expressions of *powerlessness* - in spite of the formal structures of self-management and direct democracy, as well as expressions of *social isolation* - again, in spite of the comprehensive social integration of communal living.

We will try to identify several possible sources for such subjective expressions of alienation by differentiating between those that might result from objective processes of alienation and those based on incongruities between subjective reactions and objective conditions.

### *Sources of Subjective Alienation*

A first possible source, based on such incongruities, is an unrealistically high level of aspiration. Since in the kibbutz there are no wages or other forms of individual material incentives, work content and opportunities for creativity become the major predictors of attraction to different types of work. Several studies have shown that the aspirations toward self-realization in work are higher among kibbutz members, when compared with other populations (Ronen S, 1978; Rabin and Beit Hallahmi 1982; Tannenbaum A. et al 1974). On the other hand, the occupational structure of the average kibbutz, based on agriculture, industry and personal services, cannot always offer opportunities to satisfy such high levels of aspiration.

A similarly high and probably 'unrealistic' level of aspirations toward spontaneity - openness and mutual trust - based on an idealized image of the past - seems to prevail in the area of interpersonal relations.

Another important source for feelings of alienation is the cost of de-alienation. Both observers from outside the kibbutz, such as Bettelheim (1969) and writers from inside such as Amos Oz have mentioned the problem of 'overconformity' in the kibbutz. Amos Oz described ironically, but almost in sociological terms, the social function of gossip as a mechanism of social control. "Through gossip we control our instincts and become better people" (Oz, p. ). But gossip is only one, and not a pleasant form of public opinion that in the kibbutz deliberately replaces the alienating impersonal mechanisms of formal social control, such as police, law and courts.

According to the kibbutz ideal, interpersonal relations should be based on an evaluation of the 'whole personality' and not of fragmented social roles, which is necessarily the case in anonymous mass-society. But such attempts to evaluate the 'whole personality' might involve in many cases the potentially alienating cost of undue intrusion into privacy.

While the above mentioned costs are related to the 'Gemeinschaft'-type social structure of the classical kibbutz, other alienating costs are connected with its socialist, planned character. In contradiction to the idealized evaluation of the "whole personality", on many occasions a functional orientation to a fragmented social role might also occur. When dealing with allocation of work-tasks, with elections to public offices, contradictions might arise between the functional needs of the kibbutz community and its organizations, such as work-branches, on the one hand, and personal preferences on the other. In such cases the kibbutz institution might present a more functional, fragmented and specific approach referring to a person's ability to fulfill a specific role against the more total needs presented by individual members. Since the kibbutz institutions are responsible

for many functions such as communal consumption and education, usually taken care of by the family and the individual - such a 'functional' approach might be frequently present.

This functional approach has, in the past, received additional legitimization through the instrumental role fulfilled by the kibbutz communities in the nation-building process prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. The strong ideological identification with the collective national needs served also as legitimization for the prevalence of collective over individual needs in the community. The weakening of this ideological legitimization might explain the appearance of more frequent reactions of subjective alienation.

While the above mentioned sources of feelings of alienation are related to the de-alienating features of the classical kibbutz, other more frequently discussed sources are related to objective processes which might re-establish alienation in the modern, contemporary kibbutz. Two major interrelated basic processes have been analyzed:

(1) Internal processes of structural differentiation, leading to a transition from a *Gemeinschaft*-type to a *Gesellschaft*-type of social structure (Cohen, E. 1976) and to the development of managerial and professional hierarchies, especially in industry (Leviatan U. & M. Rosner 1980).

(2) Increasing integration in the capitalist market and in the cultural system of Israeli society, which is characterized by a growing cultural hegemony of capitalist-individualistic values.

These two interwoven processes might also explain the appearance of different subjective reactions of alienation. For example, *Meaninglessness* and *Cultural estrangement* might result from different sources of value-pluralism - such as contradictions between internal kibbutz values and the ideological messages

transmitted from the outside through mass-media. It could also involve a weakening of ideological commitment due to the heterogeneity of kibbutz membership; and reflects a socialization that is based more on conformity to norms of behavior, than on identification with basic values.

*Powerlessness* might also result from inequalities in authority, influence due to hierarchical organization of industry, and to the transition from direct, participatory democracy in the community to more representative forms. A growing periphery of kibbutz members, that do not take an active part in kibbutz self-management, might be both a "result" and a "cause" of powerlessness.

*Self-alienation* may occur in spite of the fact that most kibbutz factories intentionally avoid the use of alienating technologies. Nonetheless, industrial jobs are usually perceived as less intrinsically satisfying than are agricultural ones. This situation does not fulfil the previously mentioned high levels of aspiration for self-realization among kibbutz members.

To sum up: In spite of the non-alienating economic and social structure, expressions of subjective alienation occur. It is difficult to assess their prevalence in comparison with other societies. In one study (Tannenbaum, A., et al., 1974) kibbutz members working in ten industrial plants were asked questions based on Seeman's conceptualization of five types of alienation. The questions were phrased to elicit more general feelings of alienation, not especially related to the plant or kibbutz situation. In comparison with workers from four other countries: (U.S., Austria, Italy, and Yugoslavia) the kibbutz members had the lowest scores on these alienation measures.

It seems therefore, that while the degree of subjective alienation might be lower than in other societies and its sources possibly different, subjective alienation has not completely disappeared. Processes of differentiation connected to economic

and social structure might even provide a more objective basis for such feelings - albeit quite unintentionally.

In the face of these subjective expressions of alienation and objective processes of re-alienation, what has been done and what can be done?

### *Strategies of De-alienation*

Up to a certain degree, some of the processes of social differentiation, such as the weakening of Gemeinschaft-type features, might cancel out some of the costs of de-alienation. For example, the growing heterogeneity might weaken the efficiency of public opinion as a mechanism of social control, and might therefore also reduce the manifestations of over-conformity and intrusion into privacy. But apart from such unplanned developments we can mention also several *planned* strategies to counter processes of alienation, and to strengthen the de-alienating features of the kibbutz.

The implementation of such strategies is facilitated by a number of factors: the high degree of self-criticism among kibbutz members, the relatively high transparency of kibbutz social processes and the existence of a large number of specialized social agencies, that can assist the individual kibbutz in dealing with social problems and processes. The lack of social distance between kibbutz leadership, kibbutz social scientists and practitioners within the overall kibbutz membership is another facilitating factor.

Two main strategies have been directed toward closing the gap between kibbutz values and objective changes in kibbutz structures:

- a. *value-clarification* - that is, re-definition of kibbutz value priorities in the face of drastic changes in historical condition and socialization toward the identification with these values.

b. *controlled social differentiation* - that is, the implementation of planned direction and guidance of the processes toward differential social roles in various areas of kibbutz life.

Efforts toward value-clarification and re-definition of roles have had to face both the above mentioned factors (leading to value pluralism) and the fact that in the past the kibbutz was perceived not only as the realization of the social utopia of a classless, equal and just society, but also as an instrument for the implementation of national goals. With the change in historical conditions the importance of exemplifying a 'social utopia' as the legitimation of the kibbutz system increased. But on the other hand, both world-wide and Israeli crises concerning socialism, plus the above mentioned special problems of realizing utopian goals have created difficulties in clarifying the socialist values of the kibbutz, and in the socialization toward identification with these values by more recent generations (Quarter J. 1984, Rosner, M. et al., 1978).

The main effort in forestalling the redevelopment of alienation has been directed toward avoiding additional deviance of kibbutz social reality away from those values on which consensus prevails - such as equality and democracy. Most of the efforts to counter alienation have been invested in the area of industrialization; a series of achievements can be mentioned. First, while in the initial stage of industrialization many factories employed hired workers from outside the kibbutz, a steady decrease in the percentage of hired labour has occurred in the last 15 years. Second, a continued effort has been conducted to improve the quality of working life in industry through combining a socio-technical approach in the organization of work with the introduction of new technologies to avoid repetitious, mindless and alienating tasks. Finally, the hierarchical organization in the kibbutz is based mainly on the need for coordination and deployment of technical knowledge and should be limited to

these situations. Different forms of both direct and indirect democratic decision-making should prevail in the areas of general policies and work organization and conditions. There are differences between factories in the implementation of these strategies, but they definitely counter processes of the redevelopment of alienation.

There have also been efforts to counter symptoms of alienation in social and interpersonal relations by using techniques of Organizational Development, and T-groups. The use of these techniques in the kibbutz has avoided the manipulative characteristics that they might sometimes assume in other settings. However these techniques cannot change the more structural causes underlying the feelings of alienation, such as the transition from a *Gemeinschaft*-type of social structure toward a *Gesellschaft*-type. Because of this, recently suggestions have been made toward the internal restructuring of kibbutz communities. In the past the three kibbutz federations had different conceptions concerning the size of the kibbutz. Today there seems to be agreement that the optimal kibbutz community should have a population of 800, with 400-500 adult members. But even in communities of this limited size, compared to other rural communities, creative thinking and social planning are needed to reach the needs and the goals stated by M. Buber (1958). These goals, probably agreed upon by all kibbutz federations, are to create a community that satisfies

‘the need of man to feel that his own house is part of some greater, all embracing structure in which he is at home, the need to feel that others, with whom he lives and works, all acknowledge and confirm his personality...’

In the past, there was no problem of feeling at home in the ‘all embracing structure’ of the kibbutz. Today, structural changes might be needed for better integration between the ‘members’ *house*, which has become larger and more comfortable, but made it more difficult to see one’s home in the kibbutz at large.

There is general agreement that several social groups might fulfill a mediating role between the individual and the community. Such groups are the *work group*, *peer groups* with common past (such as in the youth movement or in the kibbutz educational system) *groups with common leisure-time* activities, etc. Increasing the cohesion of such groups might be one of the steps in such a restructuring effort.

### *Conclusion*

We have used the framework of alienation to analyze processes of social change in the kibbutz and to explore the dialectical relationship between the values of founders and followers and the social structures created by them. The ability of the kibbutz to maintain its social identity in spite of processes of integration in the overall society might depend on the maintenance and the development of its autonomous belief system. But the test of this belief system is the degree to which its values guide every day life and social processes.

In spite of the basic de-alienating structure, subjective manifestation of alienation have been recently expressed by kibbutz members, that can be explained both by 'costs of de-alienation' and by processes of re-alienation. The kibbutz experience shows therefore that de-alienation cannot be achieved through a unique revolutionary act, but requires permanent and always renewed efforts.

The 'transparent' micro-cosmos of the kibbutz community offers a opportunity to better understand the high level of interdependence between different aspects of alienation and the necessity for an integrated and comprehensive approach. Such an approach to the study of alienation is also a necessary basis for social planning and intervention toward de-alienation.

Today the kibbutz is still a 'deviant case' on the general social scene, yet several phenomena such as: the structural economic and social crisis in contemporary society, the opportunities offered by advanced technology, rising aspirations for self-realization and the search for community, might reveal a growing relevance of the kibbutz experience for other societies as well.

The inability of the dominant economic system to assume decent employment to tens of millions of people creates a de facto dissociation between income from work and need-satisfaction. The crisis of the bureaucratic forms of need-satisfaction through the welfare state lead to the development of different community forms of mutual help and self help and to demands for basic income dissociated from work.

The development of advanced micro-electronic technologies create possibilities for the de-centralization of industries and a revival of communities that can overcome the alienating split between home, community and work-place.

The increasing general level of education creates higher aspirations for self-realization and self-expression in work and weakens the traditional centrality of monetary incentives. In spite of the renewed rise of materialistic and individualistic orientations during the eighties a return to the more post-materialistic and community-oriented values of the seventies is an open possibility. Such values are more commitment to the common good and less competition, more participation and mutual help and less privatism and "possessive individualism".

Such a value change might also create better conditions for a more efficient use of the new technologies. The development of kibbutz-like communal forms of life depends on deeper changes of the cultural, social and political conditions and it is difficult to forecast it. But it is reasonable to assume that the kibbutz experience in more limited and specific areas such as work-place democracy,

patterns of socialization and aging, communal organization of services, etc. will have a growing relevance for developed industrialized nations. The dialectics of alienation and realiation in this unique social experience can serve as a source of inspiration in the permanent human effort toward de-alienation.

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