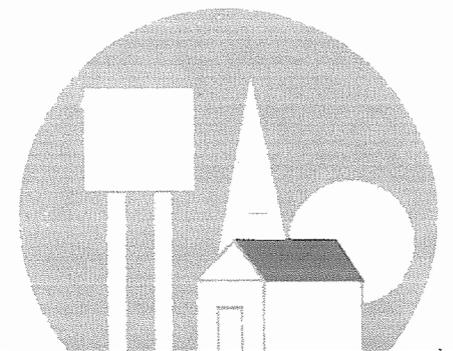


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## The Kibbutz Movement in the Eighties

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In this article we intend to outline the principal developments that occurred in the kibbutz movement in the last decade between 1977-1987. The decade is particularly significant due to a series of events all of which had unusual importance for the movement. The first event was the political upheaval, in which the Alignment, to which the decisive majority of kibbutz belong, lost control of the government, which it had held in various coalitions since the establishment of the state. The change in the political conditions had far-reaching effects in many areas of the kibbutz, yet they were felt only several years later. In an apparent paradox, the years of the Likud government, 1977-1984, were a period of rapid economic growth and development in the kibbutz movement. However, at the end of this period an economic crisis began which has social consequences within the kibbutzim themselves. According to some analyses, the sources of the present problems are to be found in the long term consequences of the economic policies carried out by the previous Likud government. The political changes also sped up the processes of change in the structure of the kibbutz movement, which culminated in the unification of the Ichud HaKibbutzim and Kibbutzim HaMeuchad movements and the formation of the United Kibbutz Movement (UKM). One of the main justifications for the unification was the necessity for the creation of a large and united Kibbutz body which would aid in renewing the labor movement and in influencing the general Israeli society.

As a basis for understanding these events, three structural developments, which had previously taken place within the kibbutzim, must be noted:

1) The kibbutzim were no longer small, rural communal farms, but were now large settlements, with a varied economic base, with several generations born and living there, plus new members from all over the world.

2) The transformation from almost complete dependence on agriculture as a source of income to a complex economic formation, integrating agriculture, industries of many kinds, educational and service systems and connections to large and powerful local and national economic and financial institutions, both in and outside of the kibbutz movement itself.

3) The noticeable rise in the standard of living in the kibbutzim, which made possible the meeting of more varied material and personal needs, even as it raised expectations in those areas.

More than in the past, this period raises the question whether and how is it possible to realize the communal and egalitarian values upheld by the kibbutz in the conditions of a large and complex society, which has become increasingly heterogeneous and more similar to the surrounding non-kibbutz society. During the last ten years there has been a relatively fast rate of growth in the kibbutz population. Between 1976 and 1986, this population grew from 98,800 to 126,700 people. This was an increase of 28.2%, which was much greater than the rate of growth during other periods after the establishment of the state (From 1950-1960 the growth was 16.4%; between 1960 and 1970, 7.7%; and from 1970 to 1976, 7.9%).

However, especially deserving of attention is the fact that the rate of growth of the kibbutz population in this period was greater than that of the rate of growth of the Israeli population as a whole (21.1%), and even more so when compared to the rate of the Jewish population (17.9%). This was a change from the pattern which had existed from after the establishment of the state, where the rate of growth of the Jewish population was much greater than that of the kibbutzim. This change was mainly a result of the large waves of immigration in the 1950's and 1960's, which caused the share of the kibbutz within the total Jewish population to fall from its height of 7.4% in 1947

to only 3.3 in 1970. The turnaround of this tendency in the last decade is reflected in the small, but significant rise in the kibbutz' share of the Jewish population to 3.6%.

The rate of growth of the kibbutz population was also much faster during this period than that of the moshavim, which grew only by 10%. The moshavim - the second major form of cooperative settlement - grew much faster than the kibbutz after the establishment of the state, because the vast majority of the mass immigrations who were sent to agricultural settlements were directed to them. The moshav has been traditionally based largely on individual agricultural holdings worked by a single family as its source of income, while maintaining some limited forms of communal, social and economic cooperation. This form of settlement was considered more suitable for absorbing the waves of immigrants who came from North Africa and the Middle East in the 1950's.

The growth of the kibbutz population has slowed in 1986, and, according to the partial figures available, this trend continued in 1987. Apparently, this slowing of growth is connected with the economic crisis that has overtaken the kibbutz movement, whose effects have been felt more in the last years.

The vast majority of the kibbutz population (more than 85%) are members of the kibbutzim and their children. In addition there are children from outside and youth groups who are being educated in the kibbutz; groups of young people receiving training prior to their joining the kibbutz or setting up a new one; students at special schools for learning Hebrew and groups of young men and women from abroad working in the kibbutz in order to learn about its way of life.

The sources for the growth in membership of the kibbutzim have changed during the different stages of development of the kibbutz movement. Before the 1960's few of the children of the kibbutz had reached the age at which they might join the kibbutz as members - this would be in their early 20's, after they would have finished their army

service. Most of the members of the kibbutzim were immigrants, mostly from Europe, and a few who were born in Israel or had come from North or South Africa or from Middle Eastern Countries. After the 1960's the proportion of kibbutz-born children has risen significantly among those joining the kibbutz. Among those coming from outside the kibbutz, since the 1970's an increase occurred in the proportion of young people who applied for membership without having gone through the traditional path of the youth groups connected to the kibbutz movements. These youth movements originally developed independently, principally in Eastern Europe, and continued with the guidance and help of the kibbutz movements, which saw in them a major source for growth.

According to figures from one kibbutz movement (Kibbutz Artzi), during the decade of 1970-1980, kibbutz-born made up 38% of those joining the kibbutz, and young people who came out of the youth movement or who were educated in the kibbutz made up 26%, while those who came from outside the kibbutz, but were not in the youth movement, were the largest source of growth comprising 44%. Statistics from the other kibbutz movements were not available. However, there is reason to believe that the situation is similar.

The proportion of the different groups among those joining the kibbutz does not accurately reflect in the weight in accounting for the growth in the kibbutz. This is because each of the groups has a different rate of leaving the kibbutz. The highest relative leaving rate is that of people coming out of the youth movement, particularly the Israeli branch. As a consequence the proportion of the three different groups in the net growth of the kibbutz in this decade was as follows: children born in the kibbutz - 43%; graduates of the youth movement - 13%; and absorbees without movement background - 44%.

The group of absorbees without movement background is not homogeneous in its make-up or motivation for joining. They join in large part through marriage to people

born in the kibbutz, and they are thereby connected indirectly with internal sources of growth of the kibbutz. (Boys and girls from the same kibbutz tend not to marry amongst each other, and the majority of the marriages are with people from outside the kibbutz movement). Another group of those without movement background are graduates of the "ulpanim" for learning Hebrew or volunteers from abroad. There are also young families from the city who have chosen the kibbutz way of life. Unlike the past, the kibbutz movements have made special efforts in the last decade to encourage absorption from among the latter element by means of advertisements in the mass media or by special programs aimed at certain communities.

Evidence of the rise in the importance of internal growth may be seen from a comparison between the natural growth and the "migration balance" (the ratio between those staying and leaving among those who came from outside the kibbutz) as factors in the increase in the total kibbutz population. During the entire period from 1950 until 1975, the natural increase was the only source of growth, while the migration balance was negative; the number of those who left was greater than those who joined the kibbutz from the general society. Of course, some of the kibbutz children left and some of the absorbees stayed on, but the latter were so few as to be unable to account for any significant part of the population growth. The relatively low percentage of absorbees staying reflects the process of selection and choice involved in joining a cooperative society whose way of life is essentially different from that on the outside.

Starting in 1975 this pattern changes, and, in most years until 1986, the number of those joining from the outside was greater than that of those leaving. However, in this period, too, (the) natural increase remained the main source of growth. This was despite the higher rate of death in these years due to the relative aging of the kibbutz population. The large share of internal sources in the growth of the kibbutz stems also from the relatively higher rate of birth in the kibbutz compared to other sectors of the Jewish-Israeli society, which will be dealt with later.

The kibbutz population had been originally younger than the general population, since it was established by homogeneous groups of young people. In this decade, in the older kibbutzim which were founded in the 1920's and 1930's, large groups of the founders have already passed the age of 70, or even of 80 and 90. In some of these kibbutzim the members over 65 make up a quarter or more of the population. However, in the total population of the kibbutzim the percent of this stratum reaches only 9.2%, and this is slightly lower than that of the Jewish population in Israel, 10.1%. The percent of the kibbutz population in the younger age groups is also greater than is found in the general Jewish population (In the age group from 0-14, it is 30.3% in the kibbutz vs. 19.9% in the city; and for the age group 15-24, it is 19.1% vs. 16%, respectively). In general, then, the kibbutz population is younger than that of surrounding Jewish society. There is, nevertheless, importance in the age distribution in the individual kibbutz. In some kibbutzim the existence of a large group of aged created problems that demand new solutions.

Already when the first members in the older kibbutzim reached the age of retirement, they came to a decision, which was later taken in all the kibbutz movements, that these older members would not stop working at this age. Later on, a decision was reached that specified a gradual reduction in the daily norm of work hours (the standard is eight hours per day), starting at the age of 50 for women and at 55 for men - down to four hours a day, at the age of 60 for women and 65 for men. Most of the oldsters work until a very old age and research findings show that there is a positive influence on their mental health from the continuing activity. The kibbutz has taken care to develop suitable places of work, appropriate for the skills and capacities of the older members, yet many continue to work in their previous work places. In general the work of the older people makes an economic contribution of real significance.

The extended family, with children and grandchildren in the same community, is an important supporting element in the process of aging, along with the development of welfare institutions and services which deal with health and rehabilitation problems

(cases of members being sent to old people's homes are very rare). These conditions lead to there being a much longer life expectancy in the kibbutz than in other societies. At the age of 50 life expectancy for men in Israel is an addition of 25.7 years, while in the kibbutz 28.3. For women in Israel 27.9 and in the kibbutz 31. In 64 other countries it was in 1980 kibbutz 23.5 for men and 27.3 for women. It seems that in addition to the social support within the family a major factor is the contribution of the communal framework. Furthermore, it has been noted that in the kibbutz there is no difference in the death-rates for married and unmarried people, while in other societies there is a higher death rate for unmarried people.

The differences existing between kibbutzim in regard to their age-structure are only one of the many differences between kibbutzim in the area of demographic characteristics. One crucial difference between kibbutzim results from the different sizes of their population, connected in many cases with when they were established.

While in 39 kibbutzim, most of them young, the number of members is less than 100, in the sixteen largest kibbutzim the number of members is over 500. However, in only four of these large kibbutzim are there more than 700 members, and in only one does the number approach 1,000. The total population, including besides members children and temporary groups varies between less than 100 and more than 1500.

Patterns of growth occurred in almost all the kibbutzim in the last decade, but the rate of growth was higher in the younger settlements than in the older kibbutzim. In the older kibbutzim the internal growth was augmented by absorbees from the outside, who did not come from a movement background. In contrast the growth of the younger kibbutzim is based more on graduates from the youth movement and to a certain degree also on young people who leave the older kibbutzim where they were born.

Since 1967 50 new kibbutzim have been set up. The kibbutzim which have been set up in these years are mostly to be found in the Galilee and Negev areas, continuing the traditional trend of settlement distant from the metropolitan center (51% of kibbutzim are concentrated in the north and 20% in the south of Israel).

As a result of government policy that encouraged settlement in the West Bank more than in other areas, the settlement activity of the kibbutz movement ran into difficulties in the last decade and had to be partly financed by the movements themselves. Some of the newer settlements have not yet reached social stability. Until now almost all the new settlements have been set up by graduates from the youth movements who went to them immediately after their army service, however, now the possibility of starting with more adult groups is being considered and experimented with.

During the period under discussion the process of strengthening of the family has continued within the social structure of the kibbutz. In addition, there were other tendencies that appeared. The beginnings of the process of enhanced importance of the family were in the 1950's-1960's, and it found expression in the kibbutz' demographic patterns: a rise in the birth rate, low rates of divorce and a low marriage age.

There were also effects in the social and institutional areas. At the social level there appeared the extended family of several generations: in the same community will be found, besides the parents of the older stratum, the families of their children, and in the senior kibbutzim, the families of their grandchildren. In the oldest kibbutz therefore, four generations of the same family may be living together in the same community. This phenomenon is in contrast to the pattern outside the kibbutz of intergenerational mobility, geographic, occupational and social.

In the institutional area, the expression of the strengthening of the family took the form of demands which arose in different kibbutzim, for a transfer of authority in both the educational and consumption fields from the kibbutz institutions to the individual

families. The most obvious example is the demand that the children spend the night in their parents' homes, and not in the children's houses as was standard in the past. This issue raised stormy arguments in many kibbutzim before the final decision was taken.

Until the early 1970's only one kibbutz movement (the former "Ichud") gave legitimacy to this change. However, during the last decade, the changeover has been completed in almost all of the kibbutzim of the United Kibbutz movement. The demand to have the children sleep in their parents' homes has also come up in the kibbutz movement which had until recently opposed this move, the Kibbutz Artzi. As a result of pressure from members/parents, approximately one quarter of this movement's kibbutzim are now in different stages of the changeover.

The process of the changeover to the children sleeping at home developed parallel with other symptoms of the strengthened status of the family mainly in the area of consumption. At the same time efforts were made to strengthen the cohesion of other groups (work groups, age groups) beside the extended family.

The growing importance of the family in the kibbutz contradicts prevailing tendencies within Western society to weaken its status. On the other hand patterns similar to the more general direction began to appear recently in some areas of the kibbutz demography.

With larger groups of kibbutz-born children reaching the stage of parenthood in the 1960's, there appeared a significant rise in the rates of birth in the kibbutzim and for the first time they surpassed the rates prevalent in the general Jewish population. During the period from 1965 to 1975, the birthrate of the kibbutzim was 26.8 per thousand, compared to 23.4 per thousand for the total Jewish population. From 1974 onwards appeared a sharp change in this pattern, and the birthrate went down from 28.6 to 22% in 1984, which is only slightly higher than that of the general Jewish population (21.6 per thousand).

A movement in the opposite direction appeared in regard to the divorce rate. From 1965 until 1975, there were lower rates of divorce in the kibbutz than in the past, and they were similar to those in the general Jewish society (less than one per cent). Since 1975 the rate went up from less than one percent to 1.4, which is greater than that prevailing in the society at large. There was also a rise in the age of marriage. While in the early 1970's many young adults married close to the end of the military service, it is now more frequent to marry after a long trip abroad or after studies.

In any event, the family continues to have today a more central role in the area of social relationships and this is despite the fact that it has no economic function and its educational authority is relatively limited, even after the children have begun to sleep at home. The family does not have a defined formal status in the kibbutz since kibbutz membership is individual. The strengthening of the family has come out of the weakening of the overall social bonds in the kibbutz, with the growth and differentiation of the population. Furthermore, the family provides a kind of personal refuge from the intense communal life. These familial tendencies also express a desire for privacy and, sometimes, individualistic tendencies. On the other hand it seems that, at the present stage, the family appears also as a framework which is bound up with obligations that might limit the freedom of the individual. This is evidently the significance of the rise in the divorce rate and the delaying of the marriage age. Nevertheless, it may be assumed the family will continue to fulfill an important function in the social structure and in the assurance of intergenerational continuity in the kibbutz.

### **Changes in the Economic and Occupational Structure**

The economy of the kibbutz went through many rapid changes during the decade from 1977-87. The process of industrialization, which began to accelerate in the 1960's continued at a fast pace, and in most of the kibbutzim, the industrial operations employed more workers than agriculture and the income from industry is greater than that from agriculture. In 1986 25.5% of the kibbutz active population worked in

agriculture versus 5.2% of Israel's active population, 22.7% versus 24.6% worked in industry.

Nevertheless, the agricultural output continued to rise during this period, but at a rate slower than the growth of the industrial output. The agricultural output of the kibbutz movement grew by 30.8% and makes up in 1986 39.7% of the Israeli total, while the industrial output grew by 73.4% and makes up 6.8% of the total Israeli product.

The relative increase in the role of the kibbutz agriculture in the overall Israeli output took place during a period in which many crises hit the agricultural sector. Besides a deterioration in the export conditions and for various agricultural products, such as cotton, flowers and citrus fruits, the changes in the government's policy had a negative effect on Israeli agriculture as a whole. In some periods the agricultural planning was drastically curtailed and surpluses were formed, which caused a fall in prices which badly hurt many farmers and certain branches of agriculture. The conditions under which credit and loans were given were made more difficult, with extremely high interest rates, far above the norm in the West, and research and development activities were limited.

The kibbutz agriculture was affected relatively less than other sectors of agriculture partly due to professional and organizational advantages which accrue to the large kibbutz farming operation and partly due to capacity to balance the damage to agricultural income by means of the income from other branches, particularly industry. The data from the agricultural census of 1981 give evidence of the more efficient use of labor and capital in the kibbutz, especially as compared to the moshav.

Kibbutz agriculture continued to concentrate on those crops which demanded less manual labor and progressed in its process of modernization by introducing computers in different areas, for example, control of the field crop's irrigation and of the nutrition of the dairy cows. Those branches in which the majority of production is in the hands

of the kibbutzim are cotton, apples and bananas, fish ponds, potatoes and the raising of cattle for meat and milk.

However, the principal economic efforts concentrated on the developments of kibbutz industry. In contrast to their dominant position in agriculture, the kibbutz enterprises make up a relatively small sector within Israeli industry: 5.8% of the workers, 4.8% of the plants and 6.8% of the production. From this it can be seen that the average number of workers per plant is greater in the kibbutz. However, about half of those employed in Israeli industry are working in plants with more than 300 workers, while in the kibbutzim, most workers are concentrated in plants with less than 100 workers.

The smaller size of kibbutz plants stems from the tendency to base the operation principally on kibbutz members alone. In the early stages of kibbutz industrialization, it was thought that, in order to succeed in the competition of the larger market, the number of workers could not be limited to just those who were available from the kibbutz workforce, and some kibbutz industries hired a relatively large number of workers from the outside. Most kibbutzim opposed this tendency and decided to avoid setting up plants which were labor intensive; they specialized in plants that were relatively capital-intensive and with a high level of modern technology. An example of this type of operation is the plastics branch of the kibbutz industries, whose production makes up 45% of the total Israeli output. Other areas in which the kibbutz sector makes up more than the average of kibbutz industries are wood and furniture (18.3%) and metal-working (10.6%). The avoidance of hired labor and the focus on industrial branches based on high technology became the general direction of kibbutz industry in the last decade, in which a relatively large number of new plants were set up (73 of the 335 total). At the same time, there has been a constant decline in the proportion of hired workers within the kibbutz industry workforce from 43% in 1975 to 28% in 1986.

In the 1980's the introduction of advanced technology became a rapid process, including the use of computerized numerical control (CNC) and the use of industrial robots. It seems that the introduction of advanced technology in kibbutz industry is significantly faster than is the case in similar industries in the general Israeli society. This is supported by the fact that 60% of all the industrial robots in Israel are to be found in kibbutz enterprises.

The capital and technological intensity of the kibbutz industries and its special organization and social structure seem able to explain the difference in the accomplishments in various areas between kibbutz industry and the other sectors of Israeli industry. For example, between 1976 and 1986 the index of exports grew in the kibbutz industries from a base of 100 to 364 in contrast to the growth of Israeli industry as a whole to an index level of 224. The index of sales per worker was 20% more for the kibbutz than in the general industrial sector, and, in the plastics branch, this index was 25% higher than in Israeli plastics industry overall. The capital investment per worker was also higher in the kibbutz industries, and, with the advent of the economic difficulties that appeared after 1983, criticisms were voiced asserting that the investments in industry were too high given their decreasing rate of return.

There were other problems in regard to the direction of the development of kibbutz industry which arose with the economic crisis. Some critics asserted that the relatively small size of the kibbutz plants limits their capacities for research and development and for proper marketing operations and that there is a lack of the necessary experts in the technological professions. One suggestion to solve this problem was to set up large plants which would be owned and operated by several kibbutzim cooperatively. Another proposal was to organize the whole kibbutz movement as a sort of corporation, which thereby limit to a large degree the autonomy of each individual plant. However, there does not seem to be any widespread support for either of these two proposals. On the contrary, the close relationship between the industrial plant and its kibbutz

community has proven itself as the source of motivation and responsibility on the part of the workers.

In addition efforts are being made to build up systems of research and development and for marketing which are shared by kibbutz industrial plants in the same production branch, and action has been taken to improve and to encourage technological education and training.

It should be noted that throughout the last decade there has been a remarkable rise in the level of education of kibbutz members, especially the younger ones. In 1972, only 20.4% of kibbutz members had post-secondary education, while in 1985, the rate had risen to 32.3% of the kibbutz members. This is considerably higher than the level of the general Jewish population in Israel, which stands at 24.4%. There is an important difference in the distribution of the level of the higher education, however. In the kibbutz there are less people with higher degrees, while the percentage of people with post-secondary training in the fields of education, technology and social services is much higher than that of the overall Jewish population of Israel. The difference in regard to holders of higher university degrees (i.e., M.A. and doctorate) stems from the fact that only in the 1970's did the kibbutz movement free itself of ideological opposition to the acquisition of university degrees and began to encourage academic studies. Now the proportion of holders of academic degrees is growing at the same time that the representation of kibbutz members on the teaching and research faculties of the institutions of higher learning has also increased.

Along with the contribution made by people with academic degrees to the economic and social capacities of the kibbutz, problems caused by the unsuitability of the kibbutz work structure, based on work in agriculture, industry and the services, to the academic qualifications of its members have arisen. Most of the jobs simply do not demand the high level of education acquired by college graduates, and this creates conflicts with their expectations and desires for professional advancement.

A labor market does not exist in the kibbutz because there are neither wages nor economic incentives or sanctions which function in the general society to direct people into the different occupations in some relation to supply and demand. This makes the coordination between the changing needs of the kibbutz society and economy and, on the other hand, the professional and academic aspirations of the members more complicated than ever before. Decisions about the economic structure are made democratically at the general assemblies and in the committees and are thereby influenced by the preferences of the members. The other side of this relationship is that the professional plans of the members are themselves influenced by the present and/or expected occupational structure, although increasing numbers of young and old members choose courses of academic studies which seem to have no direct connection to the kibbutz's expressed economic and educational needs.

The last decade has seen changes as a result of the rising level of education and of the rapid technological advances, but the economic crisis of the kibbutz movement has also had very important effects in the last period. Different factors contributed to the development of the crisis, expressed principally by the formation of a large debt accompanied by high interest payments, which weigh heavily on the ongoing economic activities. This occurred despite the successes in the fields of both industry and agriculture. The major cause of the crisis was the lack of economic stability that characterized the period under study and was most obviously reflected in the rates of hyperinflation which ran rampant from the late 1970's until the mid-1980's. From 1978 to 1984, the rate of inflation jumped from 51% a year to 445%! As a result of the government's economic program, there was a sharp decline to approximately 20% rate of inflation per year, which was accompanied by an even steeper rise in the cost of money, i.e., the interest rate.

During two years of high inflation, the kibbutz total debt went from 685,000 dollars to 1,4000 dollars, at the same time that interest rates went up from 11.8% in 1983 to 89% in 1985. Besides these outside forces, financial mistakes were made by the kibbutz

movements and by individual kibbutzim, which invested in unsuccessful business ventures, in speculative stocks or in consumption projects.

The economic crisis was especially damaging to those kibbutzim who had not been successful in their attempt to balance the decline in the profitability of agriculture with an increase in their industrial activity. This had the added effect of exacerbating the inequality among the kibbutzim. For example, in the United Kibbutz Movement, the group of nineteen kibbutzim in the most difficulties must use 38% of their yearly income just to pay the interest on their debt, while another group of 38 kibbutzim have to devote 25% of their income to interest payments; the majority of the kibbutzim, 83 in number, have to devote only 6.6% of their yearly income to interest payments.

In an attempt to overcome the crisis and to make possible the continuation of production operations, the United Kibbutz Movement asked the government for help, not for grants, but to restructure its loan repayment arrangements. This request made the issue of help to the kibbutz the focus of a political debate, where representatives of the Likud took advantage of this situation to criticise the kibbutz movement while putting pressure on the Labor party, to whom the UKM is affiliated.

The Kibbutz Artzi, which also was in need of additional sources of funding, preferred to mobilize the capital on a commercial basis, essentially without government intervention, by means of bonds issues, which avoid dependence on the political system. The requests of the UKM for aid were only approved in part, after many delays and after a public political campaign by the kibbutz and moshav movements. Even before the public aid could come, the kibbutzim strengthened their apparatus of mutual support. The kibbutzim which were economically stronger are helping the weaker ones both by giving them loans from the movement's trust funds, which are funded by means of a progressive tax on the kibbutzim and by providing guarantees for loans taken out by the weaker kibbutzim.

At the same time all the kibbutzim have decided to lower their standard of living, regardless of their economic situation. This has taken various forms, such as not giving trips abroad or kibbutz-financed vacations, lower spending on food in the communal dining room and by reducing the number of members sent to study, etc. All of these cutbacks are even more harsh in those kibbutzim in the worst shape, where even their autonomy about running expenses have been severely curtailed. Parallel to these moves, cutbacks in investment spending, particularly in the area of consumption, such as apartments and public buildings, have been made.

### **Equality and Democracy**

The curtailing of consumption budgets, including the member's personal yearly budget gave rise to demands in some kibbutzim for a larger share of the kibbutz's total budget to be given to the individual member and his/her family (such as clothing, shoes, furniture and vacation budgets). This would also entail a complementary limiting of the public budgets, such as food in the dining room, education and health, etc. For the first time suggestions were made to enable members to enlarge their budgets by working extra hours in those branches which suffer from a manpower shortage.

Coming from a similar viewpoint, a far-reaching demand was made by a new settlement group, "Si'on", which recently joined the UKM, going to Kibbutz Bet Oren, which was on the verge of dissolution after going through an extended social crisis. The group proposed that they would work five days a week in the framework of the work structure, but on the sixth day they could decide whether to work and to get an additional income which each member could use as he pleased or to use the day for leisure activities. All proposals connecting extra work with additional monetary income have been met with firm opposition by the movement's institutions, and likewise with the "Si'on" proposal: They were told that they would have to give up their plan as condition for them being accepted into the kibbutz federation. The reason for such severe opposition to these kinds of proposals is the principle of separation of the

obligation of the kibbutz to meet the needs of each member from the amount and quality of the work done by that member. It is precisely this principle which separates the kibbutz from other forms of communal living.

The absence of connection between the function that a member fulfills in work or in public activity and his/her standard of living and life opportunities for him/her and his/her family has made it possible to prevent or, at least, to limit the processes of social stratification and polarization. These processes have occurred all too often in egalitarian organizations and have caused the dissolution of cooperative communities in the past.

The simultaneous processes of industrial development, economic expansion, differentiation in the levels of education and administration and the increased importance of the family in the kibbutz social structure created conditions that would appear to encourage stratification. Various researches that have been carried out during the last ten years have shown the existence of differences among members in regard to their influence on kibbutz life and in regard to the esteem in which they are held within their community. At the material level, some of the members have access to private sources of income from outside the kibbutz, as a result of inheritances or presents from family, etc. Nevertheless, it has not been possible to point out the crystallization of groups of members who benefit from special rights or privileges in contrast to other groups who are relatively discriminated against or disadvantaged as a unit. Another important factor in minimizing stratification is the maintenance of the pattern of rotation of the leadership and managerial functions among the membership of the kibbutz and the movement as a whole. The continued functioning of the rotation is aided by the fact that, although those holding managerial positions have greater power to influence issues during their term, they do not reach a higher standard of living. In addition they must deal with many difficulties in fulfilling the responsibilities of their position, due to which they are generally unwilling to continue in their demanding jobs for a long time.

The increasing complexity of the kibbutz internal structure and the increasing heterogeneity of the population, according to age, generation, background, profession and level of education, have weighed heavily on the operation of the kibbutz direct participatory democracy, at the center of which is the kibbutz general assembly.

In addition there are the many members active on the various committees which are responsible for the organization of many areas of kibbutz life. In most kibbutzim there is a general assembly every week, although in some cases it is every two weeks. There are great differences between the kibbutzim in regards to the number of people participating in the kibbutz discussions. There seems to be more participating in those kibbutz with a higher level of social cohesion and in which democracy is given more importance. However, even in the kibbutzim where the status of the general assembly is weaker, proposals to replace it with some form of elected council were met with opposition.

In one kibbutz they actually decided to stop convening the kibbutz assembly, but after one and a half years, they decided to reinstitute its meetings. The reason for this is probably that, in a society in which so many of the crucial issues in one's private life, such as going to study, consumption budget, apartment arrangements, etc., are determined by the community's decision, the members are unwilling to surrender their right to participate in these kinds of decisions, even if they do not often make use of this right. The kibbutz assembly still has the supreme authority in determining policy in the kibbutz, even though many specific decisions are reached in the committees and only brought before the assembly for ratification and approval. Regardless the assembly has the authority to cancel any decision of a committee, and each member has the right to bring up any issue for discussion in the assembly. Some aspects of the running of the assembly have changed, and certain issues, especially regarding individuals and families, are voted upon by secret ballot, and in the larger kibbutzim, referenda are taken outside of the kibbutz assembly.

The existence of participatory democracy in all areas of life, together with the maintenance of cooperative consumption, which has made possible the separation of the provision of the needs of the member from his/her contribution at work or other activity, have prevented until now the appearance of elite social strata. Nevertheless, this has not been enough to prevent the continued existence a certain degree of sexual inequality, whose roots are in the division of labor according to gender. Most of those working in the productive branches are men, while in the services and in education mostly women work. This inequality exists despite the fact that there is complete economic equality, and membership in the kibbutz is on an individual basis, not familial, as is the case on the moshav. In the past this inequality expressed itself by the fact that the productive branches had a higher status than the service branches, which were discriminated against from the point of view of budgets and manpower. Today, the inequality takes the form of the more limited opportunities for women to choose the work that they prefer, which stems from an assumption that work in the services and in education is the main responsibility of women.

The women's lack of experience in economic management, which is usually acquired in those productive branches from which women are largely excluded, has also been a factor in their low level of representation among the economic managerial positions, such as economic manager, treasurer or industrial plant manager, all of which are positions with much authority over the running of kibbutz. In the period under discussion, the awareness of women about the existing inequality grew, although in earlier periods, inequality was also considered a deviation from the values of the kibbutz. In both Kibbutz Artzi and in the United Kibbutz Movement departments for "Sexual Equality" have been set up and have carried out activities to increase awareness of the issue, to encourage women to enter professions commonly defined as "male only", and, conversely, to encourage men to go into those areas of education and services, traditionally the domain of women. Overall, there has been some progress in the proportion of women fulfilling general public positions, like secretary of the kibbutz or heads of committees, and the number of women working in industry has risen, but there

has not been any meaningful improvement in other areas, particularly those having to do with economic management.

### Changes in Kibbutz Education

The heightened importance of the family in the kibbutz, the increased involvement in the system of higher education and the changes in technology and occupational structure have caused fundamental changes in the kibbutz educational system.

The most outstanding change, which was accompanied by arguments and controversy, has been the changeover to having the children sleep at home and no longer in the children's houses. A few kibbutzim made these changes in the 1950's and the 1960's, and it became a legitimate way of life in the former Ichud Ha-Kibbutzim movement. However, only the last decade have most of the kibbutzim of the United Kibbutz Movement (which includes the above Ichud with the former Kibbutz Ha-Meuchad) adopted the new system, while in Kibbutz Artzi it has been given only a limited and conditional legitimacy. In the past the sleeping in the children's houses was seen as an integral part of the education, where the children's house serves as an all-encompassing center for the child, while the parents' home has only a supplementary function. Gradually, awareness of the crucial role played by the parents in the educational process grew, and the proponents of the children sleeping at home saw the changeover as another step in this direction, which, first of all, expresses the desire of parents.

In contrast to this approach, those who opposed having the children sleep with their parents asserted that the change in sleeping arrangements would damage the all-embracing character of kibbutz education, which would turn the children's house into merely a "day care center" and would curtail the responsibility of the educators. Other justifications for maintaining the old system were raised: The change would exacerbate the sexual inequality because additional burdens and responsibilities would

be placed on the mothers. This would in turn have a negative effect in their fulfillment of their functions at work, damage their opportunities for further study and especially limit their participation in community activities, whether administrative or social. In the UKM almost all the kibbutzim have changed over, while in Kibbutz Artzi the children's house sleeping arrangement is still the officially approved system, although about twenty kibbutzim from this movement have decided to change, and a few have already made the move where the children sleep with their parents. There is not yet any data from reliable research to provide conclusive answers about the effects of the change.

The growing number of kibbutz-educated children applying for higher academic studies raised the issue of changing the policy of the kibbutz movements which had previously opposed the high school matriculation tests, necessary for entry into Israeli universities. The opposition to these tests was directed at the achievement and competition orientation of these tests, and, in some kibbutzim, the opposition was connected to an unwillingness to introduce graded tests. The opposing view wanted to keep the emphasis on the development of internal motivation to study, on supportive peer opinion as source of motivation and on the development of the capacity for independent study in each child.

At first an arrangement was reached with the universities in which a graduate of a kibbutz high school would have to do a preparatory course, usually about a year long, before entering the university. However, due to the difficulties involved in this arrangement, which was only designed to be a temporary solution, almost all the kibbutz schools are today preparing their students for the matriculation certificate, if they so choose. In conjunction with the change, efforts are being made to preserve the special social foundations of the kibbutz high school by means of an increased emphasis on values and socialization.

Almost all the kibbutz high schools are regional institutions, taking in students from several kibbutzim, and sometimes from moshavim and other children sent there for

various reasons. In Kibbutz Artzi the high schools are also boarding schools (several days of the week) in order to achieve an all-embracing secondary school framework. On the other hand, the primary schools were, until recently, based in each individual kibbutz, integrated into the life of the community. However, due to the relatively small size of these schools and as part of the policy of the Ministry of Education, a process has recently begun of joining together the primary schools of neighboring kibbutzim and making one area day school. The establishment of the area schools, both primary and especially secondary levels, has raised anew the question of the integration of the kibbutz schools with those of the surroundings, the development towns and the moshavim.

Despite the desire of the kibbutzim to maintain their independent framework, which is needed in their opinion in order to educate their children to their special values and way of life, some move in the direction of inter-community integration occurred. A number of schools have been set up with the participation of moshavim, arrangements for cooperation with schools in development towns have been developed, and the absorption of youth groups, often from deprived backgrounds, within the kibbutz schools, have continued and even expanded. Nevertheless, the argument has not been resolved between those who favor greater integration, which would help to break down the barriers between kibbutz children and other sectors of the population, and those who demand the maintenance of the kibbutz independent framework.

As part of the effort to strengthen the commitment to education for kibbutz and movement values of both youth and adults, the last decade has seen an energetic expansion and utilization of the kibbutz institutions for higher education, which are intended for high school students and for academic studies and research. In the first centers, Efal and Givat Haviva, the range of courses of study has been broadened, and research departments have been established. The Ruppin Institute, for the training of agricultural and industrial workers and managers, and Oranim, the school for training teachers, and the Kibbutz Seminar in Tel Aviv have reached various forms of academic recognition. At the University of Haifa, there is now the Institute for Research on the

Kibbutz and the Cooperative Idea, which also runs a large number of courses in kibbutz studies in coordination with the Sociology and Anthropology departments. In some areas, at the initiative of the kibbutzim, local colleges have been set up to provide academic level studies for the members of the surrounding kibbutzim and moshavim. These are usually connected to universities and the course credits go towards earning a college degree.

### **The Kibbutz and Israeli Society**

The question of regional cooperation and integration in the field of education is only one aspect of the complex relationships between the kibbutzim and the surrounding settlements, mainly developmental towns and moshavim. The major issue in these relations was and is their economic connections, where the kibbutz-owned regional enterprises have an important function in the area's pattern of employment. These plants whose major task is to process the agricultural produce of the local kibbutzim, employ many hired workers from among the area residents. However, most of the administrative and managerial posts are held by members of kibbutzim. In most areas the moshavim have their own separate regional enterprises. The speed of the development of the area enterprises can be seen from the growth of the number of employees from 5,000 in 1977 to 7,300 in 1982, a growth of 46%. Afterwards, the rate of growth slowed, partially because of the crisis that hit agriculture all over Israel and also due to a decline in investments, which had already begun during the first period of fast development.

In some areas, e.g. Bet She'an and Kiryat Shmoneh, the regional plants became a focus for tensions between some of the hired laborers from the development towns and the kibbutzim, which were exploited for political purposes. Particularly during the election campaigns, fierce attacks on the kibbutz movement appeared in the local and national media, which in turn caused widespread effects and responses in Israeli society. In recent years, all the sides involved have made efforts to improve their relationship.

The local residents are interested in the continued activity and development of the area enterprises as a source of employment, whose importance has increased as unemployment rose. From the point of view of the kibbutzim, steps have been taken to improve labor relations, to expand the possibilities for advancement for the hired workers and to push for their participation in profits and in management. Through the initiative of the Histadrut, a program for regional cooperation has been developed, which includes the encouragement of social and personal connections and joint cultural activities among all the residents of the area.

The relations between the kibbutz and development towns are only one part of the striking changes in the status of the kibbutz within the general Israeli society as a whole during the period under discussion. The most significant change was in the political sphere, when the Likud won the elections for the first time in 1977, and the Alignment (the Labor Party and MAPAM), to whom the kibbutz movements were tied, entered the opposition. The quantitative expression of the decline of the political status of the kibbutz movements was in the sharp fall in the number of kibbutz members who were elected to the Knesset, who usually got there via the Alignment. Their number declined from 20 in the first Knesset, to sixteen in the eighth Knesset that was elected in 1973, and down to *eight* in the elections of 1977 which brought the great change in Israeli politics. This situation did not change in the tenth Knesset, despite the improvement in the Alignment's number of seats, and in the eleventh Knesset there are nine kibbutz members, three from MAPAM, four from the Labor party, one in the Citizens' Rights Movement and one in the Tehiya (Renaissance) party on the right.

The decline in status of the kibbutz representation in the Knesset, as part of the general weakening of the workers' parties, was also reflected in the makeup of the government. Until the upheaval of 1977, there were always a number of ministers who were members of kibbutzim, some of them in central positions, like Yigal Allon and Yisrael Galili, Haim Gvati and the late Shlomo Rosen. There were no kibbutz members in the Likud governments and only one in the National Unity government. This decline

in the power and representation of the kibbutz movement is to be found also in other national frameworks. However, the proportion of kibbutz members in certain areas of national leadership, such as the higher levels of command in the army, in leadership of the Histadrut and in its Hevrat Ovdim economic operations is still much higher than their proportion of the general Jewish Israeli population.

The kibbutz movement also has an influence in various social and cultural areas beyond its numerical weight. The major youth movements, such as Hanoar Haoved Vehelamed, the Scouts, Hashomer Hatzair (the Young Guard), etc., are all connected to and supported by the kibbutz movements. There are also various cultural projects, like the "Tzavta" clubs and various publishing enterprises, which are aimed at the general public of the cities and towns.

Despite these achievements there has been a definite decline in the status and prestige of the kibbutz in the eyes of the general Israeli public and a corresponding lowered self-image on the part of kibbutz members in regard to the kibbutz' contribution and role on the national level. It seems that, in contrast to the clearly high status of the kibbutz before the establishment of the state and in the first years afterwards, a lack of consensus about the role which the kibbutz fulfills in Israeli society and the state, has arisen. In the beginning the kibbutz was seen as a pioneering body which fulfilled central tasks in the building up of the people and of the state, such as settlement and defence and organization and absorption of immigration, both legal and illegal. The first changes in this role occurred with the establishment of the state of Israel when many functions previously undertaken by the kibbutzim were transferred to the responsibility of government bodies.

In the period after the war of 1967, there seemed to be a renewed importance for the kibbutz movement's settlement role, but, after the ascendancy of the Likud, there was an increasingly tense contradiction between the Likud government's policy of almost exclusive priority on settlements in the areas of Judea and Samaria with a dense Arab

population and the policy of the kibbutz movements which preferred settlement within the Green Line of pre-1967.

Some pronouncements and actions of the Begin-led Likud governments contributed to creation of an image of the kibbutz movement as just another interest group, which merely preserves and strengthens its own economic and social positions. The right-wing of Israeli politics tried to belittle the defence, settlement and social functions which the kibbutzim continue to fulfill. This negative image was reinforced as a result of the kibbutz movement's financial speculations and failures and the economic crisis which caused the United Kibbutz Movement to apply for government aid in restructuring its debts.

In addition, within the kibbutz movement itself tendencies towards seclusion were pronounced in regard to activities and relationships with the surrounding society, at both the regional and national level. In regards to relations with the neighboring communities, this was the response to the sometimes virulent attacks made during the elections. In the face of a weakened self image as pioneering leader of society and the strengthening of the view of the kibbutz in Israeli public as an element which first and foremost takes care of its own needs and interests, a third direction began to take shape.

The new direction placed its emphasis on the continuing connection between the kibbutz and other sectors of Israeli society in order to strengthen the influence of egalitarian and cooperative principles, which the kibbutz upholds, on the general Israeli populace. Some examples are the following projects, initiated and/or supported by the kibbutz movement: the establishment of "urban kibbutzim", the plan to set up a cooperative city in the Negev, efforts to reform the producer and consumer cooperatives in the city and the attempt to support the Histadrut's program for participation of workers in the management of its industrial and commercial plants and firms. Only some of these projects have borne fruit, but they are an indication of an ongoing commitment of the kibbutz to be involved in Israeli society in ways which are

compatible and supportive of its own values. The "urban kibbutzim", in cities and development towns, are aiming at taking part in the educational and cultural activities of the residents. The first of these attempts, kibbutz "Rai'sheet" (Beginning) is to be found in the "Buchara" neighborhood of Jerusalem, and its members are active in various aspects of their community's life. There are also two more city communes, in Bet Shemesh and in Shderot.

The changes in society's view of the kibbutz and the lack of consensus about both its public and self-image are reflected in opinion polls taken during the last decade. Between 1978 and 1983 the percent of those polled who expressed a positive attitude towards the kibbutz declines from 62% to 52%. This was not matched by a rise in those who opposed the kibbutz movement, which remained stable at 8% of those polled, but it reflected a rise in those who were indifferent to it. There was a more positive view of the kibbutz among those born in Europe or America, among the more educated and those who are older. The more those polled knew about the kibbutz, the more positive were their attitudes: however, only 44% said that they were well acquainted with the kibbutz, while 40% had never visited even once in a kibbutz.

These figures demonstrate the present gap between the kibbutz and large segments of the public, which is largely based on what is said about the kibbutz in the mass media, rather than on personal, first-hand experience. In recent unpublished polls, it seems that positive attitudes towards the kibbutz are influenced more by people's attitudes towards the egalitarian and cooperative values expressed by the kibbutz than by the demographic characteristics described above. The changes in the Israeli society's attitude towards the kibbutz as well as the changes in the political system have influenced the kibbutz movement's actions and policies in this period.

## The Kibbutz Movements

From the beginning of the kibbutz movement there have been many splits and unifications in the movement's organizational forms. Before the establishment of the state, the reasons for the existence of separate movements were mainly the different ideological, social and economic positions about the desired structure of the kibbutz. With the sharpening of the political struggles over the shaping of the state's character after its establishment, the exacerbation of the political argument within the kibbutz movement caused a bitter and painful split in the largest movement at that time, Kibbutz Hameuchad. A substantial minority of members and kibbutzim split off from Kibbutz Hameuchad and formed with another movement, Ha'aver Ha'kvutsot, a new movement, Ichud Ha'kibbutzim. This split occurred in 1951, and it involved in some cases the physical splitting up into two separate kibbutzim where there had previously been one large settlement. The two separate movements also were connected to different political parties until the parties' unification and the two kibbutz movements formally became united in 1979 as the United Kibbutz Movement (UKM).

The UKM contains within it 167 kibbutzim as of 1987, with a population of 76,560. For the first time in the history of the movement there are only two large kibbutz movements, the second one being Kibbutz Ha'Artzi - Ha'shomer Ha'tzair. Kibbutz Ha'Artzi has 83 kibbutzim with a population of 41,500. The smaller religious kibbutz movement has      kibbutzim and a population of

In general the differences that separated the kibbutz movements in the past are decreasing although there is still some importance attached to traditions of the past. Despite this tendency, Kibbutz Ha'Artzi maintains its own identity and organization. This is due in part to the fact that this movement went through very few splits in the fifty years of its existence and is relatively more homogeneous. The movement's connection to its political party, the United Workers' Party (called Mapam, by its Hebrew initials) is collective, and not personal, as in the UKM. Further, Kibbutz

HaArtzi has placed more emphasis on what it sees as the preserving of the original kibbutz values and ways of life. It has more strictly opposed hired labor in the kibbutzim, resisted the transfer of various responsibilities from the kibbutz institutions to the family and upholds special educational approaches, e.g. a regional boarding school during the stage of high school education. Kibbutz HaArtzi has invested more efforts in internal and external, i.e. ideological activity, and officially supports the Peace Now extra-parliamentary movement. This movement has also maintained a tighter framework for mutual aid, through a "movement tax", among its kibbutzim and for direction of the individual kibbutz's activities by the movement. Although some of the differences weakened during the last decade, there do not seem to be any tendencies towards the surrendering of the independent existence of Kibbutz HaArtzi. This was reinforced by the breakup of the twenty year old Alignment between the Labor party and Mapam after the formation of the National Unity government, as a result of which Mapam has tried to reestablish itself as an independent party in the opposition.

The two large kibbutz movements, along with the smaller religious kibbutz movement, maintain a close cooperation in the framework of the Confederation of the Kibbutz Movements, which represents the kibbutz movement as a whole to outside authorities. There are also national and regional frameworks within which joint activities, economic and cultural, take place. This strengthening of cooperation among the kibbutz movements should have contributed to weakening the separate organizational movement frameworks. But with the onset of the economic crisis in the last few years, the influence of the national movements has been greatly strengthened because they are the connection between the external financial sources, whether private or governmental, and the individual kibbutzim. The national movements are the means by which most funds are transferred, and, even when an individual kibbutz arranges some of its own financing, it is the guarantees of the movement's financial resources that induce private factors to give these loans. Finally, it is by means of the national movements that the mutual aid policy is carried out, whereby the weaker and debt

ridden kibbutzim receive help from the better off kibbutzim or from the debt-restructuring program.

It seems that at this stage the inter-movement cooperation based more on ideological and political issues is more significant than the regional inter-movement cooperation based more on pragmatic, lower level economic and social issues.

In the last decade there has been a widespread interest in the kibbutz experiment on the part of people and institutions outside of Israel. The beginning of this interest started with the rise of new forms of cooperative and communal living and working in various countries around the world in the late 1960's and the 1970's. This interest was expressed in the convening in Israel of conferences representing cooperative communities and enterprises from around the world, the trading of delegations between the kibbutz and these different groups. There has been cooperation in doing research about egalitarian communities in Israel and abroad, as well as about cooperative, worker-owned industrial or agricultural enterprises. A special project has been established for the study of the kibbutz under the auspices of the University of Harvard in the U.S. There have been attempts to learn from the experience of the kibbutz in its response to the challenges of the technological revolution as it can be applied in smaller productive frameworks, while maintaining a priority on the quality of working life and environmental protection, along with participatory democracy.

The interest in the kibbutz experience from the viewpoint of its Jewish significance has become another focus of interest. On the one hand the kibbutz has created a value oriented Jewish way of life which is essentially non-religious, and, on the other hand it forms a bridge between the Jewish youth in the Diaspora and Israel. Research has shown that the time spent by young people in a kibbutz contributes more to their connection to Israel than their experiences in other aspects of Israeli society. Based on these findings, new forms of short term programs on kibbutzim for young Jews from abroad have been developed, in addition to existing kibbutz ulpanim for the study of

Hebrew, visits by youth groups for short periods or programs of study in kibbutz high schools for Jewish teenagers from Europe and the Americas.

### Summary

The decade between 1977 and 1987 was a period of many changes in the development of the kibbutz movement. Beginning with an accelerated growth of population and economic progress, a crisis arose in the political and economic situation facing the kibbutzim, which now find themselves in serious economic straits, which have a negative effect on many other areas of the communities' way of life.

In spite of this, the experience in building communal society and the social and economic power that have accumulated over the eighty years of the existence of this experiment have given the kibbutz the capacity to overcome this crisis in the long run.

Much depends on the direction of the development of the Israeli society and its political system, and even on changes in the Jewish people as a whole, all of which are difficult to predict. Nevertheless, the crucial factor is the will of the members of the kibbutzim, and most particularly the will and desire of the young people born there or who have joined the movement. Objectively, it may be said that the kibbutz has succeeded in integrating a high degree of concrete realization of democratic, communal and cooperative values with an acceptable level of economic and organizational efficiency, despite the weaknesses exposed in the recent economic crisis.

In spite of adverse conditions during this decade, the kibbutzim have generally shown that it is possible to implement their egalitarian and communal values not only in small and homogeneous communities but also in conditions of growing complexity and heterogeneity.

The prospects of post-industrial society present new challenges to the kibbutz, but might create also more favorable conditions for its development. The future of this special way of life depends on the continued identification of the people who are actual and potential members of the kibbutz with these humanistic values and the communal way of life.