From Society to Community: Privatizing the Israeli Kibbutz (1975-2020)

by

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KAA: Kibbutz Asif Archives (Kibbutz Asif, Israel)
KEHA: Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz Archives (Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz, Israel)
KEHSA: Kibbutz Ein HaShofet Archives (Kibbutz Ein HaShofet, Israel)

Abstract

This work is about the end of socialism. It is about how the socialist experiment of the twentieth century collapsed, and about what it means for a society to transition from socialism to capitalism. The case study is the Israeli kibbutz, a network of small-scale collectivized communes that were established in Palestine at the beginning of the twentieth century and that were privatized in the early 2000s. The study combines archival research and ethnographic fieldwork following the kibbutz from its late-socialist era of the 1970s to its post-socialist period of the 2020s.

The dissertation makes three interlocking arguments. First, is an intervention in the historiographical debate about the fall of kibbutz socialism. The existing literature attributes the fall of the kibbutz either to internal economic deficiencies or external pressure from the capitalist surroundings. This study argues that the underlying crisis of the kibbutz's non-market system was not economic but social. Counterintuitively, the elimination of the market and the creation of an egalitarian non-alienated society made interpersonal relations less, not more peaceful. Unending debates, the flourishing of envy and resentment, and a constant need for moralizing and peer pressure were some of the expressions of a chronic crisis of social mediation opened up by the elimination of the market. In the long run, these processes corroded kibbutz society and contributed to its subsequent downfall. The case of the kibbutz raises a relevant question for the current discussion on post-capitalism and direct democracy: the market is unjust and alienated

but what are some of the consequences of organizing social relations so that they are independent of the market?

This study also makes a theoretical contribution to the anthropology of ethics by analyzing some of the ethical affordances of a non-market economy. In the kibbutz, the non-market economy had an impact on local meta-ethics: it expanded the area of social reality that was given to moral evaluation. In different areas of economic activity, the non-market arrangements had the effect of highlighting the role of human moral agency in the constitution of social reality thereby "moralizing" these areas in a new way. Hence, the socialist kibbutz was "more moral" than the privatized kibbutz, not because it was more just or because its members behaved more virtuously, but simply because a greater part of its social reality was given to moral evaluation in the first place.

Finally, the dissertation also contributes to the study of postsocialism and cultural change. One of its main findings is that the transition from socialism to capitalism in the kibbutz entailed not only a change of cultural content but a more fundamental shift in the approach to culture as such. Since the old kibbutz lacked material sanction and incentive it heavily relied on adherence to shared cultural norms. This entailed a substantive approach to culture, in which society has a mandate to prescribe and police concrete cultural content. Following privatization, the introduction of market-based remuneration and legal sanctions diminished the importance of shared cultural norms. Accordingly, the kibbutz shifted to a procedural approach that emphasizes individual autonomy over the cultivation of shared cultural content. In other words, the dissertation finds a correlation between a non-market economy and a more conservative, interventionist cultural politics, a relationship with important implications for social movements focused on reducing the influence of markets on society.

Introduction

I found out what my research questions were only a few months into fieldwork. Simcha, one of the veteran members of Kibbutz Asif (pseudonym), where I was conducting my fieldwork, showed me a PowerPoint presentation that he was preparing. Simcha grew up in Los Angeles and came to the kibbutz in the early 1970s as part of a North American *gar'in* ("settlement group"). He was now preparing a presentation for the *gar'in's* reunion. His task was to explain to the members of the *gar'in*, most of whom returned to North America, about how the kibbutz had changed following privatization. Under the rubric of "social life" he wrote: "from too much to too little". This way of summarizing the impact of privatization on the kibbutz struck me as a brilliant insight. It resonated with much of what I have been seeing in the archive and the field in the previous months.

What made life in the old, collectivized kibbutz feel excessive? The answer, I knew, was not simply that people are natural individualists, and the kibbutz was too collectivist for human nature. As the historical and anthropological records show, people live intensely collective lives in many different societies around the world. There is nothing natural or universal about the individualist model of the capitalist suburb and the subject who is supposed to desire this kind of life. Therefore, what was it in *this specific form* of togetherness that felt excessive and exhausting? Why was living closely *under the specific terms* of the kibbutz experienced as too much?

Conversely, why is privatization in the kibbutz accompanied by a feeling of cultural impoverishment, of having been left with too little? Most, although not all, of the veteran

kibbutzniks that I talked to, thought that the kibbutz as a society and they as individuals were better off after privatization. The financial management of the kibbutz was significantly better, the kibbutz was prospering, and demographics were on the rise as the sons and daughters of the kibbutz were flocking back in large numbers. Individually, most of my interlocutors experienced relative economic stability and modest prosperity. Most of them also reported a sense of relief and liberation. As Merav, a veteran female member, told me: "Privatization was like opening the cap of a pressure cooker." In contrast to the common wisdom that tends to correlate social disquiet with inequality, privatization in the kibbutz actually improved and aired out the social atmosphere. So, if things are so good why this feeling of having been left with too little? Why did most of my interlocutors, in this way or the other, also express a feeling that something is missing? What was that "something" and how was it connected to privatization?

Put in broader terms, the first set of questions is about why and how the socialist experiment of the twentieth century failed, and the second set of questions is about what it means for a society to transition from socialism to capitalism at the end of the twentieth century. Pursuing these two directions of inquiry, the dissertation is focused on two different periods in the history of the kibbutz. The first part, based on intensive research in the local archives of two kibbutzim, is focused on the late-socialist kibbutz of the 1970s-1980s. The focus in this part is on the connection between the kibbutz's unique social arrangements and some of its cultural excesses as a way to tackle the question of what was "too much" about the old kibbutz. The second part of the dissertation, based on ethnographic fieldwork in Kibbutz Asif in 2018-2020, is focused on the present-day kibbutz after privatization. In this part, I explore the connection between the changes to the kibbutz's physical environment, ethical life, and ideological

discourse following privatization and the subtle feeling of cultural and moral impoverishment that accompanies it.

In order to properly introduce the project, I will start by providing some factual background on the unique social arrangements and institutions of the kibbutz and its history from the 1970s to the present moment. In the sections that come after that, I will move to discuss more concretely the arguments and the contribution of the project, its fieldsite, methodologies, and my own positionality as an ethnographer of the kibbutz.

The Institutions and Social Arrangements of the Kibbutz

The kibbutz was a unique model of a socialist commune established in Palestine at the beginning of the 20th century. There are currently 265 kibbutzim in Israel. The number of members in each kibbutz varied individually and over time, but in general, most of the kibbutzim have somewhere between 100 and 1000 members. As the vanguard of the Zionist settlement of Palestine, the kibbutz was designed as a frontier settlement able to work and hold land in severe environmental and economic conditions and amid the violent resistance of the dispossessed indigenous Palestinian population (DeMalach & Grinberg 2019). As a socialist model society, it was supposed to create in its internal social arrangements an alternative to capitalist society in all aspects of social life. The means of production, land, and all other major forms of property were owned collectively. The distribution of goods and stipends was equal and followed the model of organic equality rather than formal equality. This meant that rather than simply distributing an equal number of services, funds, and goods to each member, there was an elaborate effort to take into consideration differences in need and right in order to make equality more perfect and more tuned to people's real situation on the ground (Getz and Rosner 1996:33).

In order to promote authentic moral responsibility, material compensation was strictly divorced from one's performance at work. Members were not paid more for working longer hours or for making an extraordinary contribution to the kibbutz's economy. The few members who worked outside the kibbutz funneled their salary into the kibbutz's common pool and received the same share as any other member. Owning property or having a bank account outside the kibbutz were strictly forbidden.

The kibbutz tried to overcome not only inequality but also the alienated, individualist way of life in a capitalist society. Associated with the kibbutz was a dream of creating a society where the boundaries between individuals would collapse and the latter would be united in an authentic "communion of souls" (Katriel 2004). The idea was materialized in the practical organization of social life. The kibbutz collectivized many functions and practices that in urban capitalist societies are performed in the private household: cooking, eating, laundry, consumption, entertainment, and cultural celebrations. Furthermore, in order to eliminate the "decadent" bourgeois family as the seat of particular interest and patriarchal authority, children were raised in communal "children's homes" rather than with their parents.

The kibbutz was self-governed through a system of direct democracy. Technical daily management was done by members who were elected for office for limited terms. However, a significant part of the decision-making process was done in a direct democratic way through the weekly meetings of a general assembly of all the members. Some of the work was given to democratically elected committees focused on different aspects of kibbutz life. There was no separation of powers in the kibbutz. The general assembly was the supreme sovereign and held legislative, executive, and judicial prerogatives. The assembly legislated rules and regulations, executed policy at the everyday level, down to decisions such as buying a new tractor or moving

a member from one workplace to another, and judged in individual cases of norm breaching and dispute.

The kibbutz was not an island. It was entangled politically, economically, and culturally with the state and with Israeli society (Charney and Palgi 2013; Cohen 1983; Gan 2006; Rozolyo 1999). However, it also enjoyed significant autonomy from the state in running its internal business. Except for the rare cases of serious crime, involving the state's organs of law enforcement in internal kibbutz conflicts was taboo. Furthermore, even in the more common cases when minor internal rules and regulations were breached, the kibbutz refrained in principle from using formal material sanctions.

The Late-Socialist Kibbutz (1970s-1980s)

The institutions of the kibbutz as I described them above were not there in this specific form from the beginning. They were a product of a gradual process of institutionalization and standardization of procedures since the 1950s. What were in the 1920s and 1930s rather small, unigenerational groups of zealots where social affairs were conducted ad-hoc and informally, became by the 1950s, larger, multi-generational, institutionalized, and bureaucratized societies (Talmon 1972).

The 1970s in the kibbutz are described as a period of relative stability and prosperity coupled with a "spiritual crisis" (Cohen 1983). Following the successful industrialization of the kibbutzim in the 1960s, the standard of living rose, and a kibbutz consumerist culture emerged. This occurred in tandem with the economic boom and the development of consumerism in Israel in the aftermath of the Six Day War in 1967 and the gradual weakening of the ascetic ethos of Labor Zionism that still dominated Israeli culture in the 1960s. As we will see, access to televisions, refrigerators, air conditioners, and vacations abroad occupy a central place in the

public discourse of the period. As in other socialist societies (Fehérváry 2009; Oushakine 2014), the moral attitude of the kibbutz towards consumerism was ambivalent. On the one hand, it was legitimate as the fulfillment of socialism's promise of universalized material welfare, but on the other hand, it was also seen as a potential source of fetishism and decadence (Gan 2006; Pauker 2018; Talmon 1972). For example, in 1984, following an exceptionally long discussion about the collective purchase of color TVs in the general assembly of Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz, one of the kibbutz's more "ideological" members protested:

> I must say that this kind of discussion, I have never been so ashamed of myself that in our kibbutz we have this kind of discussion… such a distinguished forum discusses televisions… I am ashamed because I have never seen an assembly meeting that was so populated as this one, it is already 23:20 and we are still at it! ... I do not remember us exploring a subject so meticulously from all possible angles as we are doing tonight. I do not remember us ever discussing much greater investments in all technical detail with such enthusiasm as we are doing here and now.[1]

The 1970s are also considered a time of ideological indifference and cynicism when the gap between the kibbutz's formal ideological discourse and its reality surfaced. Scholars point to the strong influence of the global culture of the 60s entering the kibbutz in the aftermath of the Six Day War (1967) introducing individualism, psychologism, a "post-ideological" spirit, and youth counterculture of protest, drugs, and rock-n-roll (Elmaliah 2018; Gan 2006; Ran-Shachnai 2021).

[1] General Assembly Meeting. May 26, 1984. Box P12. KEHA.

Finally, the 1970s were the heyday of bureaucratization in the kibbutz (Cohen 1983; Gan 2006; Talmon 1972). This is the period of the proliferation of the *takanonim*, special codes of rules and regulations that gradually colonized large areas of social life in the kibbutz. Specific *takanonim* were drafted in order to regulate many different areas: the distribution of goods and services (see Chapter 3), operation of institutions, and general conduct around the kibbutz, up to the smallest things such as how dogs should be raised. In Israeli popular culture, the *takanon* became the emblem of the funny and clumsy obsession of the kibbutz with regulating everything and its desperate struggle with the period's ideological disintegration.

Crisis and Privatization (1990s-2010s)

By the second half of the 1980s, stability disappeared, and the kibbutz movement entered a severe financial crisis. The short-term cause of the crisis was the economic recession and the fall of the Israeli stock exchange in the early 1980s. But the crisis hit the kibbutz movement exceptionally hard because it combined with several other factors. Most importantly, in 1977, the right-wing Likud party won the elections for the first time in Israel's history. As long as the Labor Party was in power, the kibbutz movement enjoyed the support of the state in the form of subsidies, investments, and access to cheap credit. This was due to the fact that most of the kibbutzim settled in frontier and border areas and played an important role in Israel's national security and in the struggle over land with the Palestinians. State support was also due to the high moral status and political power held by the kibbutz movement. The kibbutz was the ideological vanguard of the Labor-Zionist, secular, Ashkenazi elite that was hegemonic in Israel until the late 1970s. It had a disproportionate representation in army elite units and high command, the political system, and state bureaucracy.

The rage over the privileges of the Ashkenazi Labor-Zionist elite and the kibbutz as its quintessential emblem were at the center of the victory of the Likud in 1977, which relied on the mobilization of Israel's Mizrahi underclass.[2] Therefore, when the financial crisis of the early 1980s hit, the kibbutz could not count anymore on the safety net provided by the state. It faced hard budget constraints and sky rocketing interest rates that drastically raised its debt almost overnight. The situation was aggravated even further due to a series of poisonous financial investments made by the kibbutz movement during the late 1970s and early 1980s in an effort to mitigate the loss of state support.

The financial crisis combined with a gradual ideological shift in the kibbutz in the 1980s away from socialism. This was influenced by the broader turn to neoliberalism in Israel and the world at large since the late 1970s that was further reinforced by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. In 1986, a camp was formed by several key figures in the kibbutz movement under the name of the "new kibbutz" (*HaKibbutz HaHadash*) that pushed to reform and privatize the kibbutz (Nadiv Forthcoming). The group held seminars, published manifestos and plans, and offered advising services to individual kibbutzim in crisis. It waged a political and intellectual struggle for privatization within the kibbutz movement and was able, by the early 1990s, to win the secretariat of the largest kibbutz movement, *HaTakam*.

At the same time, the banks and the Ministry of Finance pushed for a debt restructuring agreement with the kibbutz movement, the first part of which was signed in 1989 and the second in 1996. In a similar way to the practice of the IMF in second and third-world countries during

[2] Mizrahim are Jews of Middle Eastern, North African, and Balkan descent, most of whom made *aliyah* (immigrated) to Israel in the 1950s and 1960s. The Mizrahim were Israel's underclass, suffering from economic, political, and cultural inequality and discrimination. The victory of the Likud in 1977 is an important landmark in the Mizrahi struggle and growing political dynamism.

the same period, the banks and the state tied between the eligibility of kibbutzim for debt restructuring and their privatization (Rozolyo 1999:177-178).

By the early 1990s, Individual kibbutzim all around the kibbutz movement started to privatize. Not all kibbutzim privatized[3] and not all privatized at the same pace or to the same extent. But the road taken by Kibbutz Asif, where I conducted fieldwork, is fairly common and can be taken as an example. There were three major stations in the privatization of the kibbutz: the privatization of services, the introduction of differential salaries, and the privatization of assets (real estate and the means of production). By the late 1990s, the consumption of most of the services and basic consumer goods in Asif was privatized. This means that members started paying for things that, before, were not debited personally: food in the communal dining hall, laundry, electricity and water, usage of kibbutz cars, and more. In 2000, Asif incorporated differential salaries, meaning that members started earning salaries according to the market value of their jobs and the number of hours they worked. Many consider this step to be the watershed of privatization because it was the first to breach material equality. In the meanwhile, throughout the 2000s, most of the collective services and work branches - most importantly: the communal dining hall and the two large factories - closed down, and most of the members started working and consuming services outside the kibbutz. In 2009, the kibbutz enacted the privatization of collective assets. The residential area was parceled out and each member was assigned a home and a 500-square-meter lot as private property. 49% of the kibbutz's factories and businesses are now owned privately as shares by the members and by a growing number of inheritors who live outside the kibbutz. Membership in the kibbutz became a tradeable and inheritable private

[3] To this day, about 15% of the kibbutzim remain in the socialist model and are called the "communal kibbutzim" (*hakibbutzim hashitufiyim*).

property - a bundle consisting of a home and a share in the means of production. Consequently, since 2010, there has been a constant influx of urban newcomers who buy their membership in the free market. As we will see, this has an important impact on social and ethical life in the kibbutz.

The Theory of the Fall of Kibbutz Socialism

One of the main arguments of this dissertation is an intervention in the historiographical discussion about the causes and circumstances of the fall of kibbutz socialism. By and large, the literature on the kibbutz gives four explanations for the fall of kibbutz socialism in the 1990s. The first explanation, which was articulated most prominently by the advocates of privatization in the 1990s, is the neoliberal explanation that the kibbutz's socialist, non-market system, lacking incentive and sanctions on proper economic behavior, contradicts human nature and was therefore economically inefficient and unsustainable (Harel 1993, 2010). The severe economic crisis of the late 1980s that brought kibbutz socialism down was an inevitable outcome of this basic deficiency.

The second explanation lays the blame for the fall of kibbutz socialism on the state. It argues that indeed, the financial crisis of the 1980s was key in the downfall of kibbutz socialism, but it was not the first nor the most serious crisis in the kibbutz's history. In fact, the whole history of the kibbutz can be read as a series of cycles of crisis and rejuvenation. What was different about the crisis of the 1980s, was that this time, the state did not support the kibbutz movement (Nir 2008; Rozolyo 1999). The ability of the kibbutz in the past to recover from crises and restore growth shows that the crisis of the 1980s and its fatality did not result from systemic inefficiency but from a hostile environment. As Rozolyo shows in detail about the great crisis of

the 1950s, which in empirical terms was worse than that of the 1980s, the kibbutz had the ability to recover, but this relied on a temporary safety net from the state (1999). Entering the financial crisis of the 1980s, however, the kibbutz faced a hostile state, hard budget constraints, and skyrocketing interest rates. Scholars of this school emphasize how the greater part of the big debt amassed by the kibbutzim in the 1980s, which grew by half a billion Shekels per year during the years 1984-1988, was not a result of their financial mistakes, irresponsibility, or inefficiency but was produced artificially by the banks' skyrocketing interests rates (Elmaliah 2009:118; Nir 2008:548).[4] They also emphasize how when the state and the banks were finally willing to enter debt restructuring negotiations with the kibbutz movement, they did so on the condition that the kibbutz be privatized (Nadiv Forthcoming ; Ron 2017). In other words, the argument is that the fall of kibbutz socialism was to a large extent artificially imposed from without by neoliberal forces hostile to the kibbutz.

A third type of explanation asks to zoom out of the concrete financial crisis and look at more long-term causes. A series of cultural histories of the kibbutz published in recent years focuses on what it sees as a gradual process of ideological disintegration in the late-socialist kibbutz since the 1950s that prefigured the privatization of the 1990s. The themes that are brought up bear resemblance to those that dominate the literature on late socialism in state socialist societies: ideological fatigue and a new "domestic" focus (Pauker 2018), consumerism, individualism, and a transition from the ideological language of collective missions to the

[4] A comprehensive economic analysis made by the kibbutz movement in 1989 showed that 23% of the debt of the kibbutzim was a result of real, internal causes while 77% was a result of artificial inflation through interest rates. The report was accepted as a neutral worksheet in the negotiations with the Ministry of Finances over the kibbutz movement debt restructuring. In: Nadiv, Doron. "The Transformation in the Position of the Kibbutz Movement from Welfare to Market Society: The Struggle between the Supporters of the Communal Kibbutz and the Renewed Kibbutz 1985-2005". The Institute for the Research of the Kibbutz, University of Haifa. (Forthcoming). [in Hebrew]. p. 8.

psychological language of "self-realization" (Gan 2020), new challenges to the moral authority of the kibbutz leadership (Elmaliah 2018), and the latent disintegration of the collectivist organization of practical daily life in the kibbutz (Ran-Shachnai 2021). The general arguments is that the financial crisis of the 1980s was the straw that broke the camel's back, but it was preceded by a long process of social and cultural disintegration that prepared the way for privatization.

The literature on the kibbutz seems also to imply a fourth explanation focused on the kibbutz's ideological contradictions. This line of argumentation emphasizes a series of gaps between the kibbutz's declared ideals and its reality. Anthropologists have highlighted how the formal egalitarianism of the kibbutz was accompanied by lingering status hierarchies within the kibbutz society (Rosenfeld 1983), gender inequality (Palgi et al. 1983), and material inequality in access to resources and privileges between the local leadership and the rank-and-file (Shapira 2013). Other works focus on the contradictions implicit in the kibbutz's relations with the outside world. The relations with two of the kibbutz's immediate neighbors in Israel's rural periphery, the Mizrahi development town and the Palestinian village, were characterized by stark inequality. The kibbutz enjoyed privileged access to land and credit at the expense of its Mizrahi and Palestinian neighbors (Gigi 2018). Although in the kibbutz's socialist morality hired labor was equated with exploitation, since the 1960s, the kibbutz increasingly relied on Mizrahi and Palestinian hired laborers. Furthermore, while the kibbutz espoused a dovish position, emphasizing peace and international worker solidarity, it spearheaded Zionist colonization and played a central role in the dispossession of the Palestinians. Many kibbutzim built their socialist heavens on Palestinian land taken in the War of 1948, the memory of which had to be repressed, together with the contradiction that it highlighted between the kibbutz's universalist socialism

and its particularistic nationalism (Libman 2012; Sabbagh Khoury 2019). A similar contradiction was the ambiguous relation of the kibbutz to the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. What started in the 1930s and 1940s as an unambiguous ideological admiration for the Soviet Union as a "Second Homeland," became, by the late 1950s, a paradoxical, undefendable position, since the Soviet Union supported and armed the Arab states (Inbari 2022; Libman 2012). Although the kibbutz repressed these multiple ideological contradictions and cosmological gaps, they gradually undermined its moral cohesion and persuasive force.

The first explanation points to internal economic reasons: the inefficiency of the non-market system. The second explanation points to external political reasons: the hostility of the state, the banks, and a neoliberal Israeli society. The third explanation supposedly points to internal causes: the gradual, latent ideological disintegration of the kibbutz society. However, on a closer examination, it too points to causes that were external to kibbutz socialism: the infiltration of individualist, consumerist culture from the capitalist outside. The same holds true, in a slightly different way, for the fourth explanation. It also supposedly points to internal reasons: the ideological contradictions within the kibbutz. But it too, upon a closer look, implies that the failure of the kibbutz's socialist project lies outside of it. Kibbutz socialism failed because it was not implemented in full. The kibbutz was not really socialist or was not socialist enough.

In contrast, I do not seek the reason for the failure of kibbutz socialism in forces and influences that were external to it or that resulted from its incomplete or insincere implementation. Rather, I direct my analytical gaze to a series of problems and dead ends that were internal to the kibbutz's socialist system and that were caused by the kibbutz's great success in creating an egalitarian, non-alienated society. However, unlike the first explanation,

these internal problems were social and interpersonal rather than economic. They were expressions of a chronic crisis of social mediation opened up by the elimination of the market. We usually think of the market as having mainly economic functions. But the market also performs important social and psychological roles at the micro-level of everyday social relations. The market disciplines and orders, legitimizes the distribution of goods, explains and justifies people's miseries, and absorbs and neutralizes moral fault. In the first three chapters, I will explore how without these mediating and regulating functions, social life in the kibbutz was haunted by unending debates, the flourishing of envy and resentment, and the constant need to apply peer pressure and moralizing. My argument will be that in the long run, these drawbacks had a corrosive effect on kibbutz society and contributed to its subsequent downfall.

I am not arguing that this is the only explanation for the fall of kibbutz socialism. The fall was overdetermined by several factors, and those pointed out by the existing literature made a decisive contribution. My explanation is meant to complement the existing explanations by pointing our gaze to a cause that has been for the most part neglected by the literature. The social problems that I point to were not of the cataclysmic but of the exhausting, frustrating, and annoying kind. In fact, what I call here a "chronic crisis of social mediation" can very well be called simply the "kibbutz way of life." Sitting in long boring meetings, arguing about small things, feeling monitored, and experiencing resentment became a part of what it meant to be a kibbutznik, alongside many other wonderful advantages of living in a kibbutz. Those who liked the deal stayed, and those who did not like it left.

However, that people found ways to live with these problems does not mean that they did not take their toll. They made life in the kibbutz hard for those who stayed and unattractive to those who were supposed to join from the outside. By its own standards, the kibbutz movement

was supposed to continually grow in numbers and gradually outcompete the capitalist way of life. In effect, the opposite happened, and the number of kibbutzniks in comparison with the total population steadily decreased from 6.5% in 1948 to 1.8% in 2020 (Drori 2010:82). Negative demographics and the lack of manpower was a chronic problem for the kibbutz throughout its whole history (Nir 2008:575-578). I do not know of exact statistical data on the subject, but the number of people from among Israel's intellectual and political elites who, at some point in their lives, tried to live in a kibbutz with the best of socialist intentions and ended up leaving is remarkable. In a private communication, the historian Gadi Algazi offered me an evocative framing of the kibbutz not as a "settlement" but as a "station." For most people involved with the kibbutz, the latter was a stop on the way in their life careers and not a final destination. In my interviews with veteran kibbutzniks, both with those who stayed and with those who left, the social problems that I describe, and not material discomfort were the most common source of complaint and the main reason for leaving or for considering leaving.

The Benefits of Alienation

But what was exactly the source of these social problems in the kibbutz and how were they connected to the elimination of the market? The argument of this dissertation, paradoxically as it may sound, is that the problem of the kibbutz was a serious lack of social alienation. The kibbutz eliminated the market and the law and established direct democratic self-governance in order to eliminate the alienation that characterized capitalist society. Mediated through comradely public deliberation rather than through automatic, alienated, external mechanisms, social relations were supposed to become warm, personal, and sincere. Although getting rid of social mediators altogether is impossible by definition, the kibbutz did succeed in eliminating much of the social alienation that characterizes capitalist societies. However, this turned out to

have some unexpected negative implications. As Fehérváry notes, the elimination of market alienation and the social embedding of the economy in socialist societies should not be romanticized. In state socialist societies, people often longed for capitalism not only because of the promise of greater material comfort but also because of the promise that market alienation would relieve them from the direct, interpersonal obligations that characterized socialism's informal networks of social exchange (2013:20).

Let me give an example of the problem of non-alienation that lies in the background of much of what I describe in the following chapters: the problem of resentment. In my interviews with veteran kibbutzniks about the late-socialist kibbutz, there was a recurrent story. In almost all of the interviews, at some point, the interviewees would tell me a story about that one thing that they wanted from the kibbutz, forty years ago, and were denied. For Moti it was a larger refrigerator for his family of seven, for Eitan, it was to hold his wedding in the pool, and for Irina, it was to study education at the university. Three things come up in analyzing this recurrent story. First, members hold a grudge for forty years because of a single event of material disappointment, not always very big. Second, this grudge has a concrete address. It could be the "kibbutz," but it is more often a specific individual member who sat on this or that committee and did not give them what they wanted. Third, the interviewees usually had a theory of why that member did not give them the refrigerator, despite the fact that, by any objective standard, they were entitled to it: "He envied me"; "he was on bad terms with my father"; "when my mother was on the committee, she did not give his son what he requested and now he is taking revenge," etc.

In market capitalism, material disappointments are constructed as the result of supposedly objective processes. For Marx, this is the crux of capitalist fetishism: it conceals social and

political determination behind a facade of false objectivism. That I can't get the refrigerator that I want appears socially as an objective fact: it costs 500$ and I have only 400$. But in the kibbutz, since goods distribution is done by committees and not by the supposedly automatic mechanism of the market, my lack of a refrigerator has a concrete subjective address. Since it is now the result of someone's intentional decision, the same lack of a refrigerator becomes potentially a burning insult. My personal disappointment now has further ripples, it becomes a social problem, and it has the potential to poison social relations.

The recent literature on "ugly emotions" encourages anthropologists to interpret cultures of envy and accusation as expressions of global structures of power and inequality (Hughes et al. 2019:13-15). But the case of the kibbutz shows that sometimes the source of accusations, envy, and resentment is not inequality per se, which was almost non-existent in the kibbutz, but the ability in a non-alienated society to constantly see who does things to whom. This is why envy, resentment, and accusations are sometimes dominant in the social life of egalitarian societies exactly because they are mediated by interpersonal relations of exchange and *not* by the alienation of monetary market relations (Kirsch 2006:79-106; Munn 1986:215-266). Market relations are unjust and unequal, but they are good at concealing injustice behind the facade of a supposedly objective process and in that way, they absorb moral accusation. Conversely, very small differences can loom large when there are no social mechanisms to naturalize them. For example, an entry from the protocols of Kibbutz Asif's secretariat meeting in 1985 entitled "Bentzi's Bathtub" reads:

> Bentzi's bathtub is 10 cm shorter than that of Shaul. He demands that the kibbutz switch it to a bigger one. Moshe [the kibbutz's construction coordinator] is unwilling to deal with this. The secretariat's decision: to try to convince Bentzi and Sarah to compromise

about the bathtub, and if they are unwilling to compromise, switch the bathtub as requested because the mistake was made by the kibbutz's construction coordinator.[5]

10 cm is not a serious inequality, but it becomes one because there is a clear subjective address, a clear agent, the kibbutz's construction coordinator, who was supposed to ensure equality but made a mistake.

The crisis of global capitalism in the past two decades provokes a renewed interest in thinking about a postcapitalist, direct democratic alternative to neoliberalism. In opening up new avenues for political imagination, scholars have been studying the examples of social movements and historical societies that effectively govern themselves in an egalitarian, decentralized way without relying on the market or state bureaucracy (Graeber 2013; Graeber and Wengrow 2021; Juris 2008). This dissertation offers the kibbutz as a constructive critical case study. What are some of the consequences and shortcomings of organizing social relations so that they are independent of the market? What are some of the unexpected perils of direct democracy and the elimination of social alienation?

I am not postulating that the market is natural or universal. Many societies managed and manage their business very well without it. Furthermore, the kibbutz is only one concrete historical iteration of the socialist experiment, and it does not reveal eternal universal truths about human nature or society. Moreover, the analysis of the social role of the market at the micro level in a small-scale society does not necessarily apply to the macro level of state and global relations, although throughout the dissertation I point to some fundamental similarities between the kibbutz and the ethnography of state socialist societies. Nonetheless, I insist that

[5] "Bentzi's Bathtub". Secretariat Meeting Protocol. April 22, 1985. Box: Secretariat Meetings 1984-1985. KAA.

looking closely at the experience of the kibbutz does highlight some fundamental problems associated with the elimination of the market and the function of direct democracy that are relevant beyond the concrete case of the kibbutz and that we can expect to come up in other contexts where these projects are pursued.

The Market, Causality, and Meta-Ethics

The problem of resentment in the kibbutz points to a broader connection between the market, causality, and ethical life that I would like now to make explicit. In the literature on socialism, the elimination of the market has been traditionally analyzed in view of its economic implications in creating shortage (Kornai 1980; Feher, Heller & Markus 1986) and its social implications in creating a socially embedded economy of interpersonal networks of favor and exchange (Fehérváry 2013; Henig & Makovicky 2017; Ledeneva 1998; Verdery 1996, 2004). This dissertation analyzes how the elimination of the market transforms local notions of agency and causality and thus alters the coordinates of ethical life. In other words, it considers some of the meta-ethical implications that result from the specific way in which the economy is socially embedded in socialism (Polanyi 2001[1944]).[6]

There is a way in which Marx's basic analysis of market fetishism can be seen as an argument about a distorted notion of causality. Sieved through the market, socio-economic

[6] In this subsection and throughout the whole dissertation, I draw many comparisons between the kibbutz and state socialist societies. I find the socialist world a relevant context for the kibbutz because the kibbutz explicitly embraced socialist discourse (for example, see the discussion of *stichia* in Chapter 3) and aesthetics (the Red Flag, for example), and as I hope to show, was also shot through with socialist moral sensibilities. Furthermore, the practical function of the non-market economy in both systems produced similar social phenomena. Having said that, I also acknowledge the differences that complicate the comparison. As opposed to state socialist societies, the kibbutz was a small-scale society based on relations of face to face. In that sense, it can be compared with life in a small village or town, not necessarily in the socialist world. Furthermore, the kibbutz was not a state. While, as we will see in Chapter 2, it was very concerned with matters of enforcement, it did not have the means of violent coercion so widely in use in state socialist societies. In this aspect, the comparison to other voluntary intentional communities around the world might be more pertinent than the comparison to state socialism. However, as I hope to show through the chapters, the comparison to state socialism is not only warranted but also productive in understanding better the logic of ethical life in the kibbutz.

reality, which is a human-made thing appears as the result of a supposedly objective economic process that has a life of its own. A false objective causality substitutes for real subjective causality. In Marx's famous formulation: in the market, social relations appear as "relations between things" (Marx 1867[1990]:163-177). It follows that the elimination of the market and the constitution of a command economy in socialism should "re-subjectivize" local notions of causality as the objective processes of the market are substituted by the intentional political decisions of the state and its functionaries. Groys argues that the style of informal political discourse in the Soviet Union betrayed an ultra-subjectivist experience of causality in which everything was traced back to the intentional decisions of the state: "Everything in communist existence was the way it was because someone had said that it should be thus and not otherwise" (2010:XXI). Bauman sees the same experience of causality as the main point of vulnerability of state socialist regimes: "To assert the state's right to command and control is also to assume responsibility for the effects. The doorstep on which to lay the blame is publicly known and clearly marked, and for each and every grievance it is the *same* doorstep. The state cannot help but cumulate and condense social dissent…" (1991:40). Fehérváry shows how the same notion of causality was built into the experience of materiality in late-socialist Hungary. Since the state produced everything, houses, infrastructures, and consumer goods came to index in a clearer, more emphasized way the state's moral agency (2013:16). Life in the kibbutz afforded a similar experience. Yanay, a veteran kibbutznik, who grew up in Tel Aviv summed it up nicely for me:

> My parents [in the city], most of the things that they wanted, they did not get. Simply because there were strong economic constraints. And this is how it is with most people - they don't get what they want… but in the kibbutz, if you want to be a teacher or study art or I don't know what, and they don't let you, then you say: 'the kibbutz is at fault'. If

> you live in the city, and you want to study art and you don't have rich parents, then you say: I want this, but I can't have it. I have to work in this or that and make a living. You have no one to blame. In that sense, the kibbutz is a wonderful solution: you always have someone to blame.

In the kibbutz, the subjectification of causality was even stronger. Because of the small scale of the society the general subjective figure of the "state" or the "kibbutz" tended to turn into a specific person.

What I try to show in this dissertation is how this particular transformation of causality resulting from the elimination of the market had an impact on local meta-ethics. While the study of ethics examines the concrete values and norms in a given society, the study of meta-ethics explores how each society constructs differently what counts as an object of moral evaluation in the first place (Abend 2014:16-17). Before an action or an outcome can become either good or bad, it needs first to be constituted as relevant for moral evaluation (Keane 2016:25). Therefore, the question for the comparative study of meta-ethics is: in a given society, which areas of social life are "moralized," and which are deemed irrelevant for moral evaluation?

Local notions of causality have a crucial impact on meta-ethics because a field of social action becomes "moralized" when we can trace it back to the work of subjective, intentional moral agents (Evans-Pritchard 1937; Laidlaw 2010). Since the elimination of the market paints a larger portion of social reality as constituted by subjective moral agency, a greater area of social life becomes "moralized," that is, a greater area becomes relevant for moral evaluation. As we will see, some of the exhausting, annoying aspects of social life in the kibbutz had their roots in this excess "moralization" of social reality.

With this direction of analysis, I hope to contribute to the current discussion in the anthropology of ethics. Comparative meta-ethics has been at the center of the recent ethical turn in Anthropology. Specifically, scholars have been focusing on a critical analysis of the meta-ethics that underlies Western modernity. They have shown how in comparison with other cultures, western morality is predicated on a shrinking of the area of social life that is given to moral cultivation and evaluation. This meta-ethical difference is attributed to a set of background assumptions immanent in the "moral narrative of modernity" (Keane 2007:4), such as an anthropocentric view of agency (Cadena 2015; Gell 1998; Kohn 2013; Latour 1993), individualist emphasis on autonomy and resistance to tradition (Keane 2007; MacIntyre 1981; Mahmood 2004; Taylor 1989), focus on action in sporadic "moral dilemmas" rather than on the lifelong cultivation of virtue (Abend 2014; Keane 2016:7), and a taste for social and natural determinisms (Laidlaw 2014; Lukes 1985). Most of these discussions have been focused on the superstructure. They have explored meta-ethical differences as a function of culture, religion, and ideology. This makes sense in a discussion about ethics that necessitates a minimal account of agency and freedom and therefore also a pushback against material and natural determinisms (Laidlaw 2014:1-4). The contribution of the dissertation to this literature is in exploring meta-ethical difference as a function of economic structure. Furthermore, it looks at the meta-ethical difference between two traditions within Western modernity - socialist and capitalist modernity - rather than between the West and non-western societies.

The focus on economic structure does not mean material determinism. The argument is not that the kibbutz's economic structure determined the nature of its ethical life. As we will see throughout the dissertation, the ethical life of the kibbutz was the result of the interaction and interpenetration between the "spontaneous" effects of the non-market economy and the kibbutz's

ideology articulated in discourses, practices, and attitudes. I find Keane's term "ethical affordance" helpful as a non-deterministic framework to speak about the structural conditions that underlie ethical life (2016:27-32). In Keane's example, a chair, in its material structure, affords or invites one to sit on it but it does not absolutely determine that one will do so. One can always choose to use the chair in a different way: to block a door or to throw it on someone. Therefore, the final outcome depends on both the material structure of the chair and the (culturally mediated) projects of the person using it. Similarly, the non-market economic arrangements of the kibbutz afforded meta-ethical expansion, but this depended on the active cooperation of ideological and cultural forces. Moreover, the kibbutz's economy was planned from the beginning to have the "spontaneous" effects that it had, and so ideological intention was already built into the economic structure in a way that makes it hard to clearly distinguish between materiality and ideas or claim a clear unidirectional line of causality from one to the other. Nonetheless, the fact that the economic structure was able to materialize ideological intention and that it had, to some extent, "spontaneous" effects contributes to the study of how socialism was able to reproduce itself during the late socialist era even as ideological zeal had waned (see Yurchak 2006).

Postsocialist Transformation and Culture

Taken together, the analyses presented thus far coalesce into a broader argument about the meaning of the transition from socialism to capitalism. Postsocialist transformation is described in a large part of the literature as a process of cultural change. The transition to capitalism entails a change in cultural meanings and attitudes in many different areas of social life, including religion (Wanner 2011), nation (Oushakine 2009), money and profit (Mandel & Humphrey 2002), gender and sexuality (Zigon 2010), kinship (Chelcea 2003), even the

perception of space and time (Verdery 2003:173-179; 1996:39-58), to name just a few. One of the arguments of this dissertation is that the transition from socialism to capitalism in the kibbutz involved not only a change in cultural content but a deeper, "meta-cultural" shift from one model of culture to another. What changes is not only cultural meaning but the meaning of culture.

Before privatization, the kibbutz heavily relied on adherence to shared cultural norms for ensuring socially desirable behavior because it lacked market-based remuneration and formal-legal sanction. This gave the cultivation of a shared substantive culture an essential role in the reproduction of social order. However, after privatization, the introduction of market regulation and legal mediation diminishes the social role of shared cultural norms. This comes with a shift to an ethical approach that highlights individual autonomy over the production and policing of shared cultural content.

Trying to conceptualize the shift in more rigorous theoretical terms, I borrow Charles Taylor's distinction between a "substantive" and "procedural" model of culture (1989:85). The substantive model has a "thick" understanding of what it means to share the same culture. The idea of what it is good to do and to be is associated with a specific, concrete cultural way of life and its conventions, roles, practices, styles, and symbolism. Society has a mandate to directly and explicitly prescribe concrete cultural beliefs, practices, and tastes, and exclude others as contradicting the collective tradition. For example, when urban newcomers in Kibbutz Asif demanded to establish a synagogue in the kibbutz, and the ultra-atheist veteran kibbutzniks vehemently rejected the request on the grounds that "a kibbutz is an atheist settlement and there is no place for a synagogue in it," they were practicing a substantive cultural approach. The kibbutz has a single substantive atheist cultural identity, and it excludes expressions of religion from the public sphere. If the newcomers want, they can pray in their homes, but establishing a

synagogue in the kibbutz's public space is blasphemous. It is like eating pork in the middle of a synagogue. As Uriel, one of the advocates of the veterans' objection, told me: "I am an 'orthodox-atheist'. For me, atheism is not simply being non-religious; it is a positive faith, a 'profession'… I think that religion in the 21st Century is a bad thing, and I don't want to support it or collaborate with it in any way."

The turn to procedural ethics that Taylor associates with the emergence of Western modernity, shifts the emphasis from reproducing the correct socio-cosmic order to ensuring the autonomy of the individual moral agent. Western modernity is associated with a new moral concern - anxiety even - about the purity of individual autonomy. This moral emphasis involves a new suspicion of shared substantive cultures and traditions since these are seen as potentially contaminating the individual's autonomy. Of course, procedural ethics does have a moral prescription that is tied to a concrete vision of the good, otherwise, it could not function as an ethics in the first place. However, its emphasis on autonomous deliberation involves what Taylor calls an "ethics of inarticulacy" (1989:53-90), a problem with explicitly prescribing a concrete, culturally thick image of the morally good life. This correlates with a "thin" model of shared culture as supposedly being only a set of procedures of proper conduct, a framework, a transparent container in which a diversity of autonomous individual cultural identities co-exists.

This was the position of the urban newcomers in the struggle over the synagogue. Gideon, one of the newcomers, told me that he is not religious, but he wants to take his daughters to a synagogue on Yom Kippur. The veterans are ignoring the cultural needs of many kibbutz members today who are traditionalists (*masorti*). Why do they object so strongly? Establishing a synagogue is not imposing anything on anyone. Those who would want to go will have a place to pray, those who don't don't have to come. Interestingly, in this debate, the supposedly

"traditionalist" camp was liberal, and the supposedly "atheist" camp was orthodox and argued in the name of an atheist tradition.

My argument is that the transition from socialism to capitalism in the kibbutz brings with it a shift from a substantive to a procedural model of culture. This is a result of changes in the practical and material organization of the kibbutz, and also of changes in its ethics and ideology. The first three chapters analyze the conditions that afforded the cultivation of a shared, substantive culture in the socialist kibbutz. The last three chapters describe the gradual demise of a shared substantive kibbutz culture - as a reality and as an ethical goal - after privatization.

Arguing that the socialist tradition is an example of a substantive ethical approach is a problematic claim. The transition from substantive to procedural ethics is usually attributed to the rise of Western modernity and this includes socialism (Keane 2007; MacIntyre 1981; Mahmood 2004; Taylor 1989). Taylor himself specifically places socialism within the modern procedural turn (Taylor 1977:537-571). The socialist tradition indeed shares some of the concerns of procedural ethics. It had a revolutionary, anti-traditionalist ideological component (Slezkine 2017:211). It also shared a Calvinist-like anxiety about the authenticity of belief, expressed in repeated cycles of purge (Halfin 2003; Hellbeck 2009). As we will clearly see throughout this dissertation, socialism also had a strong emphasis on de-fetishization and suspicion of social mediation that is usually attributed to procedural ethics.

Nonetheless, socialism also had strong elements of substantive ethics. Ya'akov Talmon (1970) argues that the moral tradition of the modern revolutionary Left combined elements of both procedural and substantive ethics. On the one hand, a strong emphasis on expressivism and the authentic will of the people embodied in the revolutionary regimes' reliance on the constant mobilization of the populace. On the other hand, a substantive, non-negotiable, universally

objective image of how society should look. In simple terms: a strong emphasis on authentic choice and an equally strong idea of what that choice must be, which is why Talmon insists on the unique contradictory term: "Totalitarian Democracy." State socialist regimes were directly involved in the production and control of shared cultural content through propaganda and censorship much more than their liberal capitalist counterparts (Verdery 1991:428-432). Consolidating the whole polity behind a single ideological interpretation of reality was the constitutive logic of Soviet political practice (Halfin 2007). Even in the ideologically cynical era of late socialism, the thick texture of state rituals, speeches, and ceremonies was meticulously reproduced to maintain a unified socialist cosmology intact (Yurchak 2006). The demise of socialism in 1989 and the transition to capitalism did not bring about a moral "meta-language" of the same scope (Oushakine 2000).

Because socialism was so strongly grounded in an all-encompassing doctrine that had the status of an objective universal truth, it is many times described in religious terms as an "atheist orthodoxy" (Halfin 2000; Slezkine 2017). Here is how Alasdair MacIntyre, Taylor's fellow critic of modern procedural ethics, describes it:

> Marxism does not stand to Christianity in any relationship of straightforward antagonism, but rather, just because it is a transformation of Hegel's secularized version of Christian theology, has many of the characteristics of a Christian heresy rather than of non-Christian unbelief. Marxism is in consequence a doctrine with the same metaphysical and moral scope as Christianity and it is the only secular post Enlightenment doctrine to have such a scope. It proposes a mode of understanding nature and human nature, an account of the direction and meaning of history and of the standards by which right action is to be judged, and an explanation of error and of evil, each of these integrated into an overall

> worldview, a worldview that can only be made fully intelligible by understanding it as a transformation of Christianity (2006:145-146).

In fact, there is a way to look at socialism as a "counter revolutionary" project, the most consistent effort in modern politics to impose the stabilizing authority of a tradition on the destructive flux of market capitalism (Arendt 1961[1954]; Groys 2010:XV-XXIV). In this line of argumentation, the real revolutionary force is actually capitalism which, according to Marx and Engels in *The Manifesto*, relies on "the constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation…All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, and all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned…" (1978[1848]). For Marx and Engels, the destructive force of capitalism had a progressive role in history because it ruined the *ancien regime* and paved the way for the communist revolution. However, what the current fascination of the Left with protest and subversion often obscures is that the goal of socialism was not only to destroy the old order but also to build a new order in its place. The spontaneous, blind, undirected flow of the market was supposed to be substituted by the conscious direction of society in the light of a shared, substantive image of the higher good. The end of socialism is also the end of that effort.

The Fieldsite: Kibbutz Asif

For this research, I conducted two years of ethnographic fieldwork in Kibbutz Asif (the pseudonym I have chosen to use in this dissertation) in 2018-2020. Asif was founded in the Galilee in 1948 by holocaust survivors from Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. Throughout the period between the 1950s and 1980s, it was supplemented by additional

"settlement groups" (*gar'inim*) and "youth groups" (*hevrot no'ar*) from South America, North America, and Israel. The kibbutz had a furniture factory that was established in the 1960s and a textile factory that was established in the early 1980s. Besides these, it had a dairy farm, chicken farm, fruit orchards, and a field crops branch (*anaf*), or division, alongside many collective service and maintenance branches.

The image of Asif in the kibbutz movement and among its members was of a mediocre kibbutz. It was not exceptionally successful economically or demographically. It had a rich collective cultural life but was not known as particularly outstanding in that area either. The kibbutz was part of the HaShomer *HaTza'ir* movement. Out of the four kibbutz movements, *HaShomer HaTza'ir* is usually considered to have been the most radical and strict. However, by the movement's standards, Asif was considered a less-ideological kibbutz and did not occupy a particularly high place in the movement's moral status hierarchy. Similarly, it had a reputation for being more moderate, warm, and familial.

The kibbutz and its social atmosphere were heavily influenced by the background of its founders as holocaust survivors. This came up again and again in my conversations with veteran Asif members. They connected the holocaust to the kibbutz's non-ideological attitude, non-pretentious, survivalist, and even conformist mentality, and to a special sense of warmth and solidarity that characterized a collective of people who had lost their whole families in the holocaust and were now each other's only family.[7]

[7] For example, Amiad, a member of the North American "settlement group" told me how warmly the American newcomers were received in the 1970s by the founders. He pointed out how the founders had a special sensitivity for issues of family, which was a rare thing in the kibbutz movement at the time as it was instructed by a general anti-familial ideological attitude. Amiad told me that in contrast to the more ideological kibbutzim, the founders in Asif were usually sympathetic to the American's requests for trips abroad to see their families, a sympathy that, Amiad explained, emanated from the founders' warmth and non-ideological human solidarity and from their being uprooted immigrants themselves whose entire families were murdered in the holocaust.

During the time of my fieldwork, the now-privatized kibbutz had about 230 members and about 60 non-member residents (renters). Including children, the whole population was about 650 people. The member population has three major social groups worth briefly characterizing. About 50% were "veterans" (*vatikim*) between the ages of 60 and 90. Since they lived much of their work lives under the socialist kibbutz and could not have saved towards their retirement, some of them enjoy the support of a kibbutz-paid retirement pension. Their moral and cultural identity as kibbutzniks is ambiguous. On the one hand, they lived as adults in the "old" kibbutz before privatization and were socialized into its ideology, customs, and habitus. In the conflicts in the privatized kibbutz, they tend to embody and defend the parts of the kibbutz morality that survived privatization. On the other hand, they were also the generation that dismantled kibbutz socialism and introduced privatization, so they are also informed by a liberal, postsocialist morality and are critical of many aspects of the morality of the old kibbutz.

Another 30% of Asif's population are kibbutz-born returnees (*bney kibbutz*). They are aged 30-50 and most of them have young families. Most of the returnees came back to the kibbutz after privatization and after having spent some time outside. Entering the kibbutz, they enjoy a priority on the waitlist and a discount in buying a home and membership share. Since real estate prices in Israel have skyrocketed in the past twenty years, there is an influx of kibbutz-born returnees into the kibbutz. The returnees spent part of their childhood, adolescence, or adulthood in the old kibbutz. They tend to identify with the kibbutz's culture and values, but this identification is a bit weaker and more abstract than that of the veterans. However, between the two groups, there are strong ties and obligations of kinship, and they find themselves, many times, on the same side of debates and struggles against the urban newcomers. Although, as we

will see, this is not always true, and in the cases that we will consider, they tended to be generationally aligned with the urban newcomers on many issues.

Finally, about 20% of the population are urban newcomers (*hadashim*). They enter the kibbutz by buying a membership share and a house either in the new neighborhoods that the kibbutz builds for the kibbutz-born returnees (if there is a place left in the waitlist) or from a private inheritor of a house in the old part of the kibbutz (which is significantly more expensive but does not involve a waitlist). Most of the newcomers come from a non-kibbutz cultural background. Many of them, although certainly not all, are of a Mizrahi ethnic identity (Jews of Middle Eastern and North African descent), have a more positive attitude towards religion, are politically non-leftist, and have a neoliberal striver morality. While most come from a modest economic background, most are part of an upscaling middle or even middle-upper class. They are engineers, accountants, judges, lawyers, doctors, CEOs, and high-tech workers. Since newcomers enter through a purchase in the free market and do not pass through the kibbutz's traditional mechanisms of cultural gate-keeping, their encounter with the veteran kibbutzniks sparks a series of cultural conflicts.

My archival research included work in another kibbutz: Ein HaMifratz. The materials from Ein HaMifratz are the basis for Chapters 2 and 3. Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz was also established in the Galilee and was also part of *Hashomer Hatza'ir* movement, but it is different from Asif in some of its essential characteristics. It was established during the "heroic" pre-state period and the height of ideological zeal in the 1930s by youth movement groups from Galicia, Poland, and Germany. In the 1970s and 1980s, the period from which the archival materials for this research came, Ein HaMifratz was demographically larger, more established, economically

stronger, and ideologically stricter than Asif. It had the reputation of being one of the central, well-organized, and ideologically "serious" kibbutzim in the movement and the area.

Methodology

In the historical part of the work, in reconstructing daily life in the kibbutz of the 1970s and 1980s, I relied mainly on two types of primary sources. One was local kibbutz newspapers. Each kibbutz had its own local newspaper. The rank and file were both its authors and its intended readers. The newspapers' publication times were irregular, usually about once every two or three weeks. Their design was informal, and texts would be accompanied, many times, by hand drawings. Their subjects were eclectic, expressing the holistic nature of the kibbutz society and its "fuzzy" boundaries between private and public: a report about the performance of a new machine in the factory, an interview for Passover with the children of the kindergarten, an opinion piece on the upcoming national elections, and an angry announcement about members who jam the dining hall lobby with their wet umbrellas. At times, prolonged debates would develop with responses and counter-responses carried over from week to week.

The second type of source that I use is the protocols of the kibbutz's general assembly meetings. General assembly meetings would take place every Saturday evening, and in them, the daily management of affairs in the kibbutz was discussed and decided in a direct democratic way. Like in the newspapers, the array of subjects discussed in the assembly was vast. Those included general issues together with very personal requests and disputes: a debate over the introduction of exams to the kibbutz's high school, the need for the field crops branch to buy a new tractor, or an individual member's request to fly abroad to take care of a sick parent. I started working with the protocols of meetings from Kibbutz Asif. Those were rich but were handwritten and therefore abbreviated. This is why I turned to work with the protocols from Ein

HaMifratz, where, from 1975 on, all weekly meetings were tape-recorded and then transcribed on a typing machine by the archivist. This meant the whole conversation was available, making these sources extremely rich. Once I found them, I knew I had a project at hand.

During my ethnographic fieldwork, I lived in Kibbutz Asif with my family. Two days a week, I worked at the kibbutz's central gardening crew. My wife Noa worked as a teacher in the local high school. Our son, Itamar, went to the kibbutz kindergarten. Working in the gardening crew gave me first-hand experience of what it means to work on the kibbutz, a glimpse into the function of a work branch, some of the spatial dimensions of privatization, and plenty of opportunities for casual interactions with people on the pathways. Besides working, I also joined the regular evening meetings of the kibbutz's Education Committee, Planning and Building Committee, and General Assembly. In addition, during the fieldwork period, I conducted 37 life-history interviews with kibbutz members: founders, veterans, ex-office holders, newcomers, and young kibbutz-born returnees.

Three of my six chapters focused on specific "extended cases" (Gluckman 1961; Handelman 2005). These were discrete events or episodes but ones that unfolded and morphed over an extended period, sometimes years. Some of them were particular sequences in the "normal" functioning of kibbutz institutions, such as the case of the distribution of vacations discussed in Chapter 3. Others, like the Antennas Affair and the Cameras Affair, were "social dramas" (Turner 1988), where established norms were challenged, and ethical fissures surfaced. I benefited greatly from working with these cases. They grounded my research and allowed me to see the kibbutz's ethical life in action, dynamically interacting with specific social and material situations and constraints on the ground. In other chapters, my analysis takes a broader perspective and explores recurring themes across various cases and texts. This was important in

identifying tendencies beyond the single case. It was especially helpful in understanding which ethical principles were particularly important and foundational in the kibbutz.

Positionality

For me, this is a history and an ethnography of the close and the familiar. I was born in the city of Haifa, and my family moved to Kibbutz Asif in 1984, when I was three years old, following my mother, who became the kibbutz's medical doctor. For ten years, we lived in the kibbutz as non-members before joining as full members in 1994. Our status as non-members was rare back then, and we were the only family in that status in the kibbutz. Although, as a family, we were absorbed into the kibbutz quickly, made good friends, and felt very much at home, we were also different in significant ways: we had things like a color TV, VCR, air conditioner, and a drawer full of candy before everyone else. My parents worked outside of the kibbutz and returned late. We did not have extended family in the kibbutz and did not belong to one of the established "lineages." In other words, growing up in the kibbutz, the insider/outsider position of the anthropologist was somewhat built into my experience as the son of a bourgeois family inside a socialist collectivized kibbutz.

In high school, I was interpellated into the kibbutz idea through my teachers Doron Nadiv, Edna Goldschmidt, and Hayuta Poem, who, aside from being great educators, were also staunch socialists. It was the 1990s, and the debate over privatization in the kibbutz movement was hot. With other friends from high school, I joined an ideological group in the kibbutz youth movement *HaShomer HaTza'ir* that set the goal of fighting off privatization and rejuvenating socialism in the kibbutz and Israeli society. I lived with this group for several years as part of a commune guiding younger groups, reading Marx, Buber, and the Frankfurt School, and joining political struggles. As frequently happens in leftist ideological groups, our commune was

dismantled after a series of ideological schisms and purges, as well as exhausting debates about how to conduct our collective daily life. After my army service, disappointed by the drawbacks of impassioned dogmatism, I joined a new small kibbutz in the Galilee, Peleh, that tried to create a new, post-dogmatic model for the kibbutz. It was inspired by a federative model in which, instead of imposing equal standards on everyone, the kibbutz granted autonomy to smaller groups within it to form different levels of collectivism and equality.

After five years of living in Peleh, I left for Tel Aviv to study at the university. A few years later, I returned to Kibbutz Asif, joined the kibbutz as a member, and moved there with my family. My return to the now-privatized Asif was not out of ideological reasons, but because I felt at home in the kibbutz and out of standard bourgeois considerations of family, economy, work, and community. Upon moving, I decided to turn the privatization of the kibbutz into my research project and chose Asif as the historical and anthropological fieldsite. Doing ethnography in my own kibbutz had implications on my research. Many of my interlocutors were my childhood friends, parents or siblings of friends, my past teachers or the coordinators of work branches where I worked in the past. Almost all were fellow members in a small, tightly-knit society connected by multiple and interlocking ties of kinship, politics, economy, and history.

As an insider, I enjoyed good and relatively easy access to people, events, gossip, and social situations. The downside was a feeling of strangeness that I and, I think, also my interlocutors felt amid my ambiguous status. Although I am not sure, I also think that there are things that people did not tell me because I was so clearly identified and involved, things that they would maybe tell an ethnographer who was more of an outsider. Since I had intimate knowledge of the community for thirty years, I had a good grasp of the personal and interpersonal context of the things I saw and the stories I heard. I also felt that through my

experience as a kibbutznik, I could recognize pretty well the ideological and moral context in which the debates were waged and the background of which the positions and sensibilities of my interlocutors made sense. On the other hand, this very intimacy may also have been a disadvantage in my analysis as it may have tempted me to recognize things as familiar too fast.

My dissertation ended up being quite critical of the kibbutz, albeit of the kibbutz as a system, not Asif or Ein HaMifratz in particular. Before I move to the critique in the work's body, I must say what the critique does *not* do. First, because I was interested in the kibbutz as a case study for the socialist experiment, I focused solely on the social relations within the kibbutz. As the recent critique in Israeli public discourse and academic literature argues, the relations of the kibbutz with two of its immediate neighbors in Israel's rural periphery: the Mizrahi development town and the Palestinian village, were marked by stark inequality and injustice (Gigi 2018; Sabbagh Khoury 2019). I find this critique historically and morally valid and relevant. In fact, I would like to make the discrepancy between the egalitarian cosmology of the kibbutz and its unequal relationship with its Mizrahi and Palestinian neighbors the focus of my next research project. However, for the present study, these relations are left outside the scope of the analysis.

Regarding my critique of the internal functioning of the kibbutz, my analysis is structural. This means that I think the problems were inherent to the system and not a result of the kibbutzniks' poor choices or insincere intentions. Furthermore, these problems were the other side of the coin of many positive achievements of the kibbutz in creating an egalitarian, non-alienated, solidary society. There is much to be said about these positive aspects that is not developed in this dissertation. This is, in part, because I wanted to take the kibbutz as a constructive critical case study and was therefore focusing on its problems and excesses. Thirdly, in no way does my critique of the annoying aspects of the kibbutz, even when it is ironic, stem

from contempt or a lack of respect for the historical actors implicated in them. Quite the contrary: it made me respect them even more for devoting so much of their time and energy to the painstaking tasks of what they believed was entailed in building a just society. It would not necessarily hurt our age, so fascinated with the negative catharsis of protest, to embrace some of this patient, stubborn focus on building and preserving.

Structure of the Dissertation

The first three chapters of the dissertation focus on the late-socialist kibbutz of the 1970s and 1980s and the connection between its non-market economy and its ethical life. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 are part of the same sequence. They show how the proliferation of moral surveillance and correction, a common complaint about the moral harshness of the socialist kibbutz, actually emanated from the kibbutz's fundamental systemic softness or vulnerability. Chapter 1 shows one dimension of this softness: the absence of material sanction and remuneration in a non-market economy. Analyzing moral complaint articles from local kibbutz newspapers, it shows how in different areas of economic activity in the kibbutz, the material sanctions prevalent in market societies (fines, bonuses, prices) were substituted by moral sanctions (rituals of public critique, complaint, and praise). Chapter 2 shows another dimension of the systemic softness or weakness of the kibbutz: its lack of legal sanctions and punishment. Focusing on one case study of norm violation that unfolded over several years in Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz in the 1970s and 1980s, the chapter shows the systemic vulnerability of the kibbutz due to its reluctance to enact sanctions amid a growing number of norm violations in the late-socialist period. Chapter 3 explores the connection of the non-market economy to another central characteristic of the kibbutz culture: the proliferation of talk and endless debates. Focusing on the long process of drafting, debating, and overturning the arrangement for distributing vacations in Kibbutz Ein

HaMifratz in the early 1980s, the chapter shows how the proliferation of talk in the kibbutz was afforded by its system of non-market, planned distribution of goods.

The last three chapters of the dissertation are focused on the contemporary privatized kibbutz and different aspects of the demise of a shared substantive culture. Chapter 4 discusses the demise of the physical means of production of a common culture in the kibbutz. It starts by showing how the cultivation and policing of shared cultural content in the old kibbutz were made possible through high levels of daily social interaction and the spatiotemporal synchronization of the collective. It then shows how privatization processes diminish social interaction, de-familiarize space, and throw the kibbutz community out of sync. Chapter 5 shows the dissolution of shared culture in the kibbutz in the strongest, most straightforward way. It demonstrates the demise of the ethical means of production of a shared substantive culture. It focuses on two public debates that unfolded simultaneously in Kibbutz Asif in 2020: a debate over introducing security cameras to kindergartens and a debate over the publication of political content on the kibbutz's communal phone app. Through the analysis of the debates, the chapter shows how some of the basic ethical attitudes, gestures, and institutions that enabled a shared culture in the kibbutz are today questioned and delegitimized by a new generation of kibbutzniks. Chapter 6 nuances the argument about the demise of shared culture. It shows that the privatized kibbutz has a new shared culture and ethical language alternative to its prior socialist one centered on the notion of community (*kehila*). However, the chapter also shows how in some of its basic characteristics, the discourse of community indexes the loss of a clearly articulated, shared moral and cultural substance.

Chapter 1 The Non-Market Economy and the Visibility of Moral Discipline

In my interviews with veteran kibbutz members about their experiences of the late-socialist kibbutz of the 1970s and 1980s, I noticed a curious inconsistency. On the one hand, they present the socialist kibbutz as having been too strong, while on the other hand, as having been too weak. On the one hand, the kibbutz is portrayed as a collectivist and dogmatic society that heavily constrained the individual member. The individual in the kibbutz experienced a constant sense of informal social surveillance, was under heavy moral pressure to conform to socially sanctioned beliefs and had to defer to authoritative figures in an informal yet rigid status hierarchy. In the kibbutz, it is claimed, the collective was too harsh on the individual member. At the same time, and sometimes by the same interviewees, the kibbutz is portrayed as a society where the individual member abused the collective, not the other way around. Members were lazy at work, took many breaks, and regularly went out on errands during work time. In their consumption habits, they were wasteful and greedy and took much more than they actually needed. They treated collective property and public spaces with wasteful neglect. In other words, the problem with the kibbutz was not that it was too harsh, but that it was not harsh enough. It was a soft, naive sucker constantly duped by its individual members. What explains this paradoxical characterization? How can a system be experienced as both too strong and too weak, too harsh and too soft?

In their narratives, my interlocutors echoed two broader contemporary discourses on socialism. In their critique of the harshness of the kibbutz, they echoed a liberal critical discourse

on socialism's ideological dogmatism and authoritarianism. In Israel, in the past two decades, this has taken the form of a series of popular autobiographical novels, films, and tv series produced by former kibbutz members and focused on the trauma of growing up in a dogmatic, collectivist, intolerant society.[8] Despite their differences, these works share a common meta-narrative: the fragile individual crushed under the pressing demands of a dogmatic socialist collective.[9]

Conversely, in their critique of the softness of the kibbutz, my interlocutors were echoing an equally widespread neoliberal discourse on the economic deficiencies of the socialist system focusing on the lack of incentive, the problem of "free-riders," soft budget constraints, and collective ownership.[10] Even when fused in the text of a single interviewee, these two discourses appear separate, each running on a different plain, and each pertaining to a separate area of social life: culture, on the one hand, and economy, on the other. This is not necessarily a problem that calls for analysis. As Robbins (2004) has shown, contradictory moral attitudes can co-exist in

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[8] Some of the most popular novels in this genre are *Mourning* by Avraham Balaban (2000), *We Were the Future* by Yael Neeman (2016), and *Four Hours a Day* by Orian Chaplin (2020). Films and TV series include *Children of the Sun* (2008), *Sweet Mud* (2006), and *Barefoot* (2011), among others. In an MA Thesis written in the University of Haifa, Ofer Prag checked the main 50 films made about the kibbutz in Israeli cinema from 1960 to 2010 and argues that almost all of them portray the kibbutz in a negative way (2017:IV-VI).

[9] The autobiographical novel *Mourning* (2000), for example, starts with a scene in which the author is a toddler in the communal children's house trying to walk over or crawl toward his mother who works as a nurse in the neighboring children's house but is "forcefully picked up and lifted up in the air" by the "strong hands" of his nurse, who "surprised me on my way to my mom even when I thought that no one was looking." (2000:12). The recurrent meta-narrative of the genre is encapsulated in this short scene: the radical imbalance of power between the collective and the individual-toddler, the suppression of warm, natural family sentiment by cold ideological prohibitions, the restrained violence of asceticism embodied in the teacher's firm grip, and the omnipresence of social surveillance. For a good critical analysis of the recent moral critique of the kibbutz's communal education see Halfin (2017).

[10] In kibbutz discourse, this line of argumentation was especially prevalent since the late 1980s and through the 1990s when the battles for privatization were fought between the privatizers and those loyal to kibbutz socialism. One of the main advocators of this discourse in the kibbutz movement was Yehuda Har'el, a politician and thinker from Kibbutz Merom Golan who stood at the forefront of the ideological struggle against kibbutz socialism (Har'el 1993, 2010).

different spheres within the same society.[11] However, in this chapter, I argue that the kibbutz's moral harshness and its economic softness did not only co-exist but also complemented each other. The kibbutz was morally harsh not despite its economic softness but because of it.

Recent cultural histories of the late socialist kibbutz attribute different aspects of what I call here "moral harshness" to its dogmatic, conservative ideological approach (Gan 2006; Pauker 2018), the individual competition for privilege and prestige within the kibbutz society (Shapira 2013), and the trappings of power in what Irving Goffman called a "total institution" (Halfin 2019; Ran-Shachnai 2019). In this chapter, I suggest that at least some of the kibbutz's moral harshness was a result of its non-market political economy. A certain level of conservatism, social surveillance, and intrusion was crucial in maintaining discipline in a socialist system that did not have other significant forms of material sanction and incentive.

In my argument, I rely on a general conceptualization offered by Kathrine Verdery (1991). Theorizing the mode of domination specific to state socialist societies, Verdery argued that normative means, meant to encourage socially desirable behavior through "value-laden exhortations" (1991:428), had a privileged role. Since the use of remunerative means on a mass scale was limited due to the absence of a market, and since directly coercive means were alienating and costly, socialist regimes relied heavily on recruiting "voluntary" moral discipline through symbolic production and ideological education. Socialist regimes were directly and overtly invested in the production and control of cultural and ideological meaning through propaganda, censorship, and the inculcation of Stakhanovite morality.[12]

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[11] For a modification of Robbin's theory of moral spheres, see Zigon (2009).

[12] On the cultivation of Stakhanovite moralism top-down and bottom-up see: Kotkin (1995:198-237).

Of course, the use of normative means is not unique to socialist societies. In fact, some of the most foundational studies of ideology, discipline, and capillary power were done on capitalist societies (Althusser 1971; Foucault 1977; Thompson 1967). However, the difference in socialism is not in the presence of normative means per se but in their greater social visibility. In socialist societies, moral disciplining played a more direct, explicit role in the relations between the state and its citizens because it lacked the supposedly spontaneous and morally neutral disciplining mechanisms of the market that serve capitalist regimes. What Verdery's framework allows us to see is how the harshness of socialist regimes - their need to enact direct, explicit power, either through moralizing or through violence - was an index of a fundamental weakness: a problem in ensuring socially desirable behavior that was opened up by the elimination of the market. The economist Ran Abramitzky had recently offered a similar thesis on the kibbutz (2020). Abramitzky argued that the kibbutz's developed mechanisms of moral monitoring, peer pressure, and informal excommunication were the kibbutz's way, successful in his view, of dealing with the economic problem of "free riders" and shirkers (2020:87-104).

Through the lenses offered by Verdery, I will analyze articles taken from the local newspaper of Kibbutz Asif from the 1970s and 1980s. I zoom in on a specific genre of articles, common in kibbutz newspapers, that focuses on moral complaints about members' behavior in different fields of economic activity. The first task will be to establish the connection between the moral harshness of the kibbutz and its non-market economy. We will see how in the areas of work, consumption, and the use of collective property, market-based material sanctions (prices, fines, salaries, and bonuses) were substituted by moral sanctions (surveillance, criticism, and complaint).

However, as the chapter progresses, I will push Verdery's argument a step further. I show how the proliferation of moral surveillance and critique in the kibbutz was only one expression of a broader phenomenon afforded by the non-market economy: the "moralization" of areas of social life that in capitalism remain outside the field of ethics. I start by looking closely at the process of "moral expansion" in one area of economic activity in the kibbutz: the service giver - customer relationship. I then move to show how this process of moralization was associated with the unique way in which the elimination of market fetish in the kibbutz highlighted the role of human agency in the constitution of social reality. Lastly, I show how this increased visibility of human moral agency in the kibbutz was responsible for the proliferation of *both* moral complaints *and* warm moral recognition. What all this will show us is how the elimination of the market had an impact on what Abend called the "Moral Background" (2014:28-70). It expands the portion of social reality given to moral cultivation and evaluation by transforming local notions of agency and causality (Evans-Pritchard 1937; Laidlaw 2010).

Cultural historians of the kibbutz have analyzed sources like the moral complaint articles, and the stories of norm violation that they tell, as indicators of the latent ideological disintegration of the kibbutz in the ideologically cynical late-socialist period (Gan 2006; Pauker 2018; Ran Shachnai 2021). However, in this chapter, I am not interested in the articles as windows to the cultural history of the kibbutz in the late socialist period. My emphasis is not on the question of whether kibbutzniks in this period indeed shirked more at work, consumed more lavishly, or treated collective property more carelessly, but on the meta-ethical fact that so much of social life in the kibbutz was given to moral evaluation in the first place.

The chapter contributes to the two main arguments of this dissertation. First, by discussing the dialectics of freedom in the kibbutz, it highlights one of the main unexpected

consequences of organizing social relations outside the market. The kibbutz liberated its members from the yoke of what it saw as the market's degrading system of sticks and carrots. As we will see in the next chapter, it liberated them even further by eliminating legal sanctions and violent coercion. But paradoxically, exactly because it relied so heavily on "voluntary" participation, it had to constantly awaken the latter through moral monitoring and correction. The need to discipline overtly and directly made discipline more visible and therefore also more present and burdensome in experience. Second, the chapter demonstrates the strong presence of a shared substantive culture in the old kibbutz seen here through the cultivation and policing of shared cultural norms by moral surveillance and correction. The chapter shows how some of this shared cultural substance was afforded by the practical functioning of the kibbutz's non-market economy.

Moral Sanctions

In establishing the connection between normative means and the lack of remunerative means in the kibbutz, I bring examples from three fields of economic activity: consumption, use of collective property, and work.

Consumption**:** in organizing consumption, the kibbutz practiced "organic" equality, on the basis of the principle "to each according to her needs," rather than "mechanical" equality, in which each member gets an equal fixed sum (Getz and Rosner 1996). This meant that many elementary items were distributed for the members to take as much as they needed without paying. In the 1970s, these were utilities such as electricity and water, basic food items, cooked food from the dining hall, cleaning materials, and more. For items of consumption that were "extra," such as chocolate and ice cream, members received a set equal stipend that was debited according to what they consumed.

That elementary consumption was not debited personally, made it a subject of public moral concern: were members really taking only as much as they needed and not more? The wasteful consumption of electricity and water was a recurrent example. “When you walk in the morning through the Southern living quarter,” one of the moral complaint articles says, “the sun already shines but on members’ porches the electric lights are still on. This happens especially in the dorms of the highschoolers, where lights are on until late at noon.”[13] Following a nationwide drought in the summer of 1979, Kibbutz Asif instructed its members to refrain from irrigating their small private gardens in order to omit the high fine that the kibbutz would receive for going beyond the quota. Nonetheless, an ad in the local newspaper complains that ″despite the clear announcement that all members should stop watering their gardens, the day after, one could see members’ gardens flooded with irrigation. If members somehow missed the announcement in the general meeting, they could have read it on the bulletin board in the dining hall. Someone had suggested establishing a ‘drought squad’ that would spot and call out those who breach the decision.In the kibbutz, there were no electricity or water meters attached to individual [14]″ members’ homes. As the articles demonstrate, the absence of material accounting and debiting returned in the form of a subculture of moral “accounting” and “debiting.” Note how the kibbutz’s mechanism of daily moral surveillance is indexed in the two articles. In both, the source of moral criticism starts from an observation of others’ behavior in the midst of the every day. In the first article: “When you walk in the morning through the Southern living quarter” you notice that: “the lights are still on,“ and in the second: “the day after, one could see members’ gardens flooded with irrigation.”

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[13] “And the Electrician Said: Let There Be Light!”. *Our Lives*. December 8, 1978. Box: Newspapers. KAA.
[14] “Announcement”. *Our Lives*, November 30, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

The excessive consumption of free goods at the grocery shop was another common object of moralizing and complaint. In 1980, the newspaper of Kibbutz Asif announced a new column called "The Frugality Column" that "will bring information about the prices of things and ideas for saving."[15] The column explicitly draws the connection between normative means and the absence of remunerative means. It distinguishes between things like "chocolate or cookies, which the member pays for, knows the exact price, and does not go over his budget" and the more problematic items in free distribution, which do not have price tags and are, therefore, the object of this educational column. The article then lists the prices of these different items in order to raise members' awareness of frugal consumption: toothpaste, detergents, light bulbs, hand mops, candles, soap: "and these are the least expensive things, of which members take in big quantities." But what about the expensive things, such as brooms ("which cost 65 Liras"), welcome rugs ("85 Liras"), buckets ("36 Liras"), and razors ("40.5 Liras a pack!")? The author gives some practical suggestions/demands on how to reduce wear on freely distributed equipment: "Razors should be used to the maximum, and not changed every 4-5 shaves… brooms should be hung rather than put standing on the ground, because this breaks their fibers, rubber mops should not touch oil because it ruins them… rags should be hung up to dry after use because humidity increases their wear." Note the connection between the kibbutz's non-market economy and the allegedly intrusive character of its ethical life. Lacking a system of personal debit, the kibbutz relies on the members' responsible use of equipment. This brings the kibbutz's moral monitoring deep into members' private apartments. The kibbutz has a stake and needs to discipline members in how to shave, hang their brooms, and treat their rags.

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[15] "The Frugality Column". *Our Lives*, January 25, 1980. Box: Newspapers KAA.

Collective Property**:** In the kibbutz, all significant property was owned collectively. As in other socialist societies (Creed 1997; Kotkin 1995; Verdery 2003) guarding collective property from abuse and "theft" was a constant concern. Unprotected by private property rights, it was always potentially exposed to the "tragedy of the commons" (Hardin 1968). Since in the kibbutz, abusing collective property never entailed a fine, responsible use was up to the members' moral behavior, a responsibility of which they had to be reminded. For example, the coordinator of the kibbutz's collective car fleet writes: "I admit that ice cream is a good and tasty thing, so are sunflower seeds and cigarettes, but I don't understand why all the leftovers have to stay in the car, rather than in the central garbage cart?"[16] He goes on to criticize drivers, who cause damage to cars by not following the instructions of kibbutz's auto mechanics, and work-branch coordinators, who let "highschoolers who work in their branches, and who still do not have their driver's license, drive kibbutz cars… Last week, a youngster without a license caused damage of a few hundred Liras to one of the kibbutz's cars." Since the youngster and the work branch coordinator were not fined materially for those few hundred Liras, they are "fined" morally through a public condemnation. While the article does not mention names, it is very likely that most people in the small community of the kibbutz know about the incident and its authors. Another article reproaches the members of the Culture Committee, who have left the kibbutz's sound equipment unattended outside by the poolside for four days, after a cultural event, which caused the loss of one of the recorders. The author concludes: "I was probably naive in believing that in my 32 years in the kibbutz, I have already seen and heard everything. Well, comrades, I

[16] "Something I Wanted to Tell You". *Our Lives*, July 27, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA

must admit that this time I was surprised by the lack of responsibility of the members in charge of this expensive equipment."[17]

A related recurrent complaint was the "uncivilized" behavior of members in shared communal spaces. The communal dining hall is a main example. An article that otherwise celebrates the inauguration of the new dining hall in the kibbutz adds that the "uplifted spirit was tainted by a series of indecent behaviors, such as throwing cigarette boxes, cigarette buds, and sunflower seed shells all over the central square outside."[18] Other articles complain that members jam the lobby of the dining hall with their wet umbrellas on rainy days,[19] and that they fail to control the "uncivilized" behavior of their children: "Do the parents not understand," one author asks, "that behaving properly in the communal dining hall is something which children should be educated about? Must the children shove their hands into the common food carts?"[20] A bitter and sarcastic article, entitled "Fun Games in the Dining Hall," gives a peek into some of the behaviors of children which caused irritation to some members.[21] It has a list of recommended games to play with one's children, for example: "hand paint (develops the child's artistic creativity): take cream cheese, yogurt, strawberry jam, and margarine and let your child freely mix and spread it all over the table." or: "chair tag (develops your child's fitness): this is a wild tag game, in which you can use the whole space of the dining hall, hop over or crawl under chairs and tables… screaming your lungs out, expressing your complete enjoyment."

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17 "It Bothers Me". *Our Lives*, September 7, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA.
18 "With the Inauguration of Our New Dining Hall" *Our Lives*, November 16, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA.
19 "Umbrellas Like Mushrooms After the Rain". *Our Lives*, January 13, 1978. Box: Newspapers. KAA.
20 "From the Point of View of a Dining Hall Worker". *Our Lives*, January 13, 1978. Box: Newspapers. KAA.
21 "Fun Games in the Dining Hall". *Our Lives*, February 19, 1977. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

Work: In state socialist societies, work was one of the most "moralized" areas of social life. As Kotkin (1997:198-237) shows, even in the context of Stalinist forced labor in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, where severe coercive means were employed, there was a remarkable investment in normative means of encouraging hard labor: both top-down through formal Stakhanovite work competitions and prizes, and bottom-up through the cultivation of moral personhood as Shock Worker. Normative means were even more crucial in the kibbutz's work regime where there was no violent coercion and where even small differences in material remuneration were strictly forbidden. Members were obliged to work a certain number of hours a day. However, all members received the same stipend and services regardless of where they worked, how hard or well they worked, and how many extra hours they gave. There were no bonuses, on the one hand, and no layoffs, on the other. This gave birth to a constant suspicion that (other) members were slacking, and therefore to a whole subculture of mutual moral surveillance of work ethic. This structural affordance combined with and reinforced a strong moral emphasis on work in kibbutz culture that had its origin in the high moral status of the proletarian in socialist culture, Labor Zionism's emphasis on the virtue of working the land (Neumann 2011), and perhaps also the specific moral investment in work that Lampland (1991) describes in Hungarian rural society, from where many founders of the kibbutz hailed.

Complaints about those who contemporaries called "parasites" (*parazitim*) were central to the kibbutz discourse of the period. Long breaks and repeated absences from work were common sources of complaint. An article tells the story of a hypothetical female member and her extended morning break. She "goes at 7:30 am to breakfast, eats, goes to visit her children in the children's house, picks up clean clothes at the laundry center, passes by her home to fix

something, and only then comes back to work at 9 am."[22] It is not accidental that the shirker in the story is a woman. Women, usually occupying the least prestigious jobs in the kibbutz's moral hierarchy of work and also seen more generally as caring more about domestic issues rather than the ideological goals of the collective, were common objects of suspicion (Halfin 2019). Another article says that "work ethic is not an empty phrase. No one wants to say that we have lazy workers or shirkers… but the many absences from work… turn our collective work arrangement on its head… in a proper work ethic, members think twice before being absent from work."[23]

Shirking from collective work duties was another source of moral complaint. An article entitled "It Makes Me Angry That…" has a list of moral complaints, two of which are "that out of a duty roster of 30 lifeguards in the pool in June, only 3 showed up," and "that members, who are assigned clean up duty after kibbutz parties on Friday nights, simply disappear, and two or three 'suckers' are left alone to clean after everyone."[24] A sarcastic article, written by a high school science teacher, says that:

> For some time now, I have been looking for a model to demonstrate to my pupils the process in which radioactive matter gradually disintegrates with time. A few weeks ago, I found a suitable model: At the end of one of the happy parties in the dining hall, twenty members were supposed to perform their clean-up duty. Everyone started to work enthusiastically, but after ten minutes, one of the members decided that "there are enough people," and if one person were to be absent, it would not be so terrible. So he took his coat and went to be "radioactive" near the radio in his home. After ten more minutes, two

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22 "A Funny Wood Chip" *Our Lives,* December 22, 1978. Box: Newspapers. KAA.
23 "On Work and on Workers". *Our Lives,* January 19, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA.
24 "It Makes Me Angry That…". *Our Lives*, July 4, 1980. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

> other members did the same, simply dressed up and left. And a few minutes later, four more members went, leaving the others to run around, pick up chairs, and arrange the tables. The completion of the task was left in the hands of a small bunch of committed members, and the work time was, of course, extended, due to the said radioactive decay. The latter returned home late - tired but not happy at all. On the other hand, I finally got a good example with which to demonstrate radioactive decay - and that is not such a minor achievement after all![25]

In some articles, the disciplining gaze regarding work is indexed in workers' public apologetics. In an article from 1979, a worker in the sewing workshop defends herself and her fellow seamstresses, after a general kibbutz meeting that discussed the "problem of work in the sewing workshop," emphasizing again the gendered coordinates of work-related suspicion:

> The female members in the sewing workshop hardly work a full week, because we are constantly taken to help in the kitchen, children's homes, etc… The female members also have their personal problems, and this causes absences from the workplace… so, I ask you, how can we give good service in these conditions?... you always blame the seamstresses. I want to know if all those youngsters, who study all kinds of smart things in the university, would be willing, after they finish, to work in all the essential workplaces of the kibbutz?"[26]

[25] "A Radioactive Wood Chip". *Our Lives*. March 14, 1980. Box: Newspapers. KAA

[26] "Reactions from the Last Kibbutz Meeting". *Our Lives*, January 19, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

In another article, a member who worked in the Institute for the Research of the Kibbutz at the University of Haifa writes apologetics explaining what it is exactly that he does in his work.[27] He starts the apology with: "I still belong to the generation (or a type) of those kibbutzniks who believe they have to 'justify themselves' when they are not seen walking around with their blue work clothes on the kibbutz's pathways and in the dining hall." In Chapter 4, we will focus on the role of social interaction and visibility that were built into the kibbutz's spatiotemporal organization of daily life in cultivating moral discipline. The position of the few members who worked outside the kibbutz was considered problematic because they were not seen walking around in their "blue work clothes" on a daily basis. This sensibility is indexed quite clearly in many general assembly protocols, where we see the kibbutz trying to limit the number of members who work outside and the length of their tenure.

The common thread that runs through these different examples is the substitution of market-based economic regulation with normative regulation. Prices, fines, and salaries are substituted by moral surveillance, critique, and discipline. I now move to show how this was only a part of a broader meta-ethical phenomenon afforded by the elimination of the market: the "moralization" of areas of economic activity that in capitalism remain outside the legitimate sphere of moral discourse. In the following section, I analyze closely how the process of "moralization" happened in one specific area of life in the kibbutz: service.

Deconstructing the Customer

One of the striking characteristics of the moral complaint articles is the direction of their moral critique. In many articles, moral critique flies from the side of service givers to the side of the

[27] "Any Time, Any Place". *Our Lives*, January 13, 1978. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

customers. The latter are blamed for their irresponsible, egoistic behavior that causes the workers extra labor. An article written by one of the dining hall workers, titled "From the Point of View of a Dining Hall Worker" reproaches the customers of the dining hall:

> Do the members know that when a worker needs to return 100 chairs to their place after breakfast it is both hard and time-consuming?... Any plate and cup left on the table causes the worker an unnecessary burden… Is it not clear to the field-crops branch workers that they should wash the mud off their boots before entering the dining hall? Do these members know that washing the legs of tables and chairs is a big and unnecessary labor?[28]

A sarcastic article titled "Seven Ways to Drive the Grocery Shop Worker Crazy," describes from the point of view of the worker all kinds of obnoxious behaviors by shop customers such as groping, trying out and breaking items, dirtying the shop, and complaining about the quality of the merchandise.[29] He gives a few examples of how customers make his work harder and more annoying:

> ...you have reached the cashier. God forbid, don't bother to take out the groceries from the basket. Say: 'I will tell you' and start naming all the items in the basket. After the worker has already concluded the bill, ask for more soap and batteries, and also tell him that actually, the little one has also taken two marbles... Afterward, it will also be

[28] "From the Point of View of a Dining Hall Worker". *Our Lives*, April 27, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA.
[29] "Seven Ways to Drive the Grocery Shop Crazy". *Our Lives*, November 2, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

revealed that the older one holds an ice cream in his hand (another correction to the bill) and you yourself have forgotten two or three things…

In yet another article, the member in charge of the swimming pool tells the public that he has "been waiting for years for this opportunity to be in charge of the pool, which I like so much," and then goes on to list a long line of behaviors by customers that spoil the pool and his experience of managing it: "cigarette butts are scattered across the lawn… the cups are not washed and returned to their place after having been used… members enter the pool without first washing their feet."[30] There are reports from other socialist societies about a similar grumpy, critical attitude of service givers that express the same change of direction of moral criticism from service givers to customers. Feher, Heller, & Markus give the example of an interaction in a shop in socialist Hungary, where: "If you ask for a less stale loaf of bread from a shop assistant… you may receive instead of bread a rambling lecture about responsible consumer behavior and decent demeanor, or even about your clothing" (1986:124).

The direction of critique is striking because it is very different from how the customer-service-giver relationship functions in capitalist societies, where it is usually service-givers who are under the moral criticism of customer reviews. It is hard to imagine McDonald's or Holiday Inn publishing articles in the newspaper, reproaching their customers' behavior in their branches. In back rooms, service personnel may very well make fun of customers or complain about their obnoxious behavior (Goffman 1959:66-86). But this critique cannot be socially objectified, that is, it cannot be expressed publicly as a legitimate part of the relationship with customers. In public discourse in capitalist societies, the position of the customer is insulated and exempted

[30] "Come Enjoy the Swimming Pool". *Our Lives*, June 22, 1979. Box: Newspapers KAA.

from moral criticism. It is “demoralized.” The customer can be selfish and obnoxious, but he is nonetheless “always right.” Conversely, the fact that in the kibbutz, moral complaints are directed toward customers means that the position of the customer was “moralized.” It was a position that came with moral obligations. One could be morally judged for being a good or a bad customer.

Verdery (1996) attributed this cultural difference between socialist and capitalist societies to economic structure. The main problem of capitalist economies is on the demand side: how to find markets for all the stuff that is being produced. Therefore, sellers have to court buyers and tend to adopt a smiley, flattering demeanor. The main problem of socialist economies is on the supply side: how to get consumer goods and services. Buyers have to court sellers, and the latter, freed from market pressures to attract buyers, can adopt a grumpy, critical attitude (1996:22). To this economic explanation one should add an ideological one. In socialist morality, the “worker” enjoyed a favorable moral status, while consumerism was treated with ambivalence, on the one hand, as a legitimate part of “proletarian welfare” (Fehérváry 2009) but on the other, as one that can always slip into “fetishizing” consumer goods (Oushakine 2014). The kibbutz's morality was shot through with a similar ambivalence (Talmon Graeber 1972).

But in the kibbutz, the “moralization” of the position of the customer took another form. The moral responsibility of the customer was expanded to also include what goes on behind the counter. In market capitalism, social relations take the form of the exchange between two owners of commodities. The unique characteristic of this kind of social relation is that it excludes the process of production of commodities as being strictly the private business of each side (Marx 1867[1990]:163:177). Accordingly, the dramatic setting of the customer-service-giver interaction is predicated on a distinction between a shining “front” region where service is performed and a

repressed, concealed "back" region where the "dirty" process of production happens (Goffman 1959: 66-86). Put in moral terms, the customer in a market exchange has the mandate to ignore the hardships invested in the production of the service she consumes. The customer's only obligation is to pay the agreed price, and once he pays, his moral dues are annulled. As Peebles (2011:71-3) shows in his analysis of everyday economic morality in Sweden, the Swedish word for "receipt," *kvitto*, has the same origin as the English "quit," meaning that the moral obligation of the buyer is complete and annulled at the moment of payment.

In the kibbutz, this alienated, limited interpretation of social relations as market relations was rejected, which was also expressed in the elimination of monetary payment. The customer was supposed to care about the hardships and labor invested in the service that she consumed. Her moral responsibility was expanded to also include what goes on behind the counter. In the moral complaint articles we find a recurrent demand from members to see beyond the narrow horizon of the "customer." The critiques highlight the shared responsibility of customers and service givers in making things work in the kibbutz's service centers. In concluding his article, the dining hall worker writes that "minding these few simple rules, would make the functioning of the dining hall smoother, and this in order to improve the conditions in which we eat."[31] Note the "we" which includes both customers and service workers of the dining hall. The grocery shop worker in his article criticizes members who see things from the narrow point of view of the customer. One of the ways to "drive the worker crazy" that he describes is "be sure to throw, as you enter the shop: 'ough, they did not bring juice again' or 'how do they expect me to wipe with

[31] "From the Point of View of a Dining Hall Worker". *Our Lives*, April 27, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

a pink toilet paper?!'"[32] The customer's obnoxious, egoistic behavior is condensed in his use of "they" that indexes the limits of his narrow perspective as a customer.

The Fragile Collective

As we start to see through the example of service, the negative proliferation of moral criticism in the kibbutz was actually a result of a positive thing: the expansion of moral responsibility due to the elimination of the market. I now want to push further in this direction by showing how moral harshness was the result of another positive impact of the elimination of the market: a sense of the privileged role of human moral agency in the constitution of social reality.

There is a recurring image that accompanies the moral complaint articles. Figures 1-3 are taken from articles about the neglectful behavior of members in the communal swimming pool (Figure 1, the pool in Kibbutz Asif is shaped like a fish), the abuse of cars from the collective car fleet (Figure 2), and the general egoistic, irresponsible attitude of the members towards the kibbutz as a whole (Figure 3). In the drawings we see the member portrayed as an Atlas holding in his hands a miniature of the specific area of kibbutz life that the article is talking about: the pool, the kibbutz's cars, and the kibbutz as a whole.

[32] "Seven Ways to Drive the Grocery Shop Crazy". *Our Lives*, November 2, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

Figure 1 The kibbutz's swimming pool is in the hands of the member. Our Lives, July 21, 1978. Box: Newspapers. KAA

Figure 2 The kibbutz's cars are in the hands of the member. Our Lives, April 24, 1978. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

Figure 3 The Kibbutz is in the hands of the member. Our Lives, January 22, 1983. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

The texts of the moral complaint articles tell the story of a strong, demanding, and intrusive collective. But the recurring image that accompanies some of them tells the opposite story of a fragile collective project, the fate of which lies entirely in the hands of the individual. This is a visual expression of the same oscillation in my interlocutors' narratives between the depiction of the kibbutz as having been too strong or harsh and having been too weak or soft. It also explains the connection between harshness and softness: the individual needs to be constantly disciplined exactly because everything depends on her voluntary moral behavior. As the images vividly show, the fate of the kibbutz is in the individual member's hands and exactly because of this, the hands need to be constantly disciplined.

In other words, the supposedly "totalitarian" sides of the kibbutz culture emanated not from some innate authoritarian tendencies, but exactly the opposite: a sense of the privileged role of human moral agency in the constitution of social reality. This receives a stark visual expression in the inflated image of the individual member. The relationship between human agency and social reality is iconically represented in the distorted proportions between the member and the kibbutz. The member, who is supposed to be a small figure inside the kibbutz subjected to the power of society (that is, of "structure") is presented as an all-mighty Atlas delicately holding the kibbutz from the outside.

Moral Recognition

I would like now to take another final step in showing how the negative aspects of moral surveillance and criticism were inherently connected to some of the most positive meta-ethical effects of the elimination of the market in the kibbutz. The same meta-ethical conditions of possibility that made moral criticism so prevalent, also enabled moral appreciation. The construction of a greater part of social life as a field of moral action and evaluation also meant that there was more space for the cultivation of moral character. Authoritative moral traditions do not only burden individuals with more demands, they also offer more substantive avenues for the cultivation of virtue (MacIntyre 1981; Mahmood 2004; Taylor 1989).

Indeed, among the moral complaint articles, we also find articles that praise the behavior and deeds of individual members, albeit in a smaller number. These are mostly in the area of work. The praise articles have a recurring structure that indexes the heightened visibility of human labor in the kibbutz. Articles start by showing things from the perspective of the consumer. They stress the efficiency with which a specific service in the kibbutz is provided, and

"our" pleasure in using and consuming it. Here are three examples of this same kind of introduction: (a), (b), and (c):

> (a) Stoves - In the big rainstorm three weeks ago, everyone suddenly remembered the Fireside stove and took it down from the garret.
> If one finds that the stove is dysfunctional, one hangs on it a note with a name and brings it down to the auto shop. After a day or two, you get it back renovated, cleaned, painted, and shining - a pleasure to the eyes.[33]
>
> (b) Laundry - Shosh told me last week that one of her greatest pleasures here is to look at the huge amounts of clean laundry in the communal laundry house and to think about how her laundry is also taken care of in that big pile, and all that is left for her to do is take it home. Newcomers to the kibbutz often see in a clearer way what we are already used to and do not pay attention to: that the communal way of life that we have invented for ourselves has, alongside its hardships, also great pleasures. And this pleasure which Shosh mentioned, is also my pleasure, and it is one of the good things I am reminded of every week.[34]
>
> (c) Children's Animal Farm - If you continue on your journey, you will arrive at another place on the kibbutz that is well nurtured: the children's animal farm. At the center: a fresh lawn… all around are the animal cages, concrete pathways, a decorated fence with

[33] "A Warm Woodchip". *Our Lives*, November 18, 1977. Box: Newspapers. KAA.
[34] "A Fig Leaf". *Our Lives*, March 10, 1978. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

drawings, and nice shrubs. Besides its aesthetics, this corner has an educational value: this is the place where children are educated in practical farm work.[35]

Then the articles take the second step of exposing the labor invested in making this happen:

(a) Stoves - This is not a miracle - these are the diligent hands of Aba Keilis, who takes care of repairing all the stoves in the kibbutz. He has a small space in the auto shop reserved for his craft and you will always hear from him: "Just bring the stove over - it will be alright."

(b) Laundry - That same joy that I mentioned above is enabled through the work of a number of members, usually women, in the communal laundry house. The women working in the laundry house are the ones in charge of organizing the work and making sure that the great number of kilos of clean laundry would be handheld properly and would make it safely to the members' closets.

(c) Children's Animal Farm - This corner also was not built by "elves in the night." It is the result of years of devotion, of care during the summer and the winter, day and night, opening and closing the irrigation, of bringing vegetable leftovers to the animals or a bottle of warm milk to an orphaned lamb, and of giving children a personal moral example in caring for and guarding assets, in devotion and perseverance.

This recurring structure reveals the same meta-ethical affordance of the non-market economy that I have discussed above: the improved visibility of human agency. They enact a

[35] "A Live Woodchip". *Our Lives*, September 24, 1980. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

classic gesture of socialist ethics: the unveiling of the human labor invested in and hidden behind the shining facade of the commodity. Note the language of de-fetishization of the commodity: The renovated stoves are "not a miracle" but are the product of the "diligent hands of Aba Keilis," the joy of clean laundry is "enabled through the work" of the women in the laundry house, and the children's animal farm was not built by "elves in the night." In this non-market society, commodities and services are traced back to their producer who becomes visible as a moral agent. In other words, the kibbutz's tendency for harsh moral criticism and its tendency for warm moral recognition both stem from the same meta-ethical impact of the elimination of the market: the highlighting of the central role of human moral agency in the constitution of social reality. Both were expressions of the successful elimination of alienation. As workers and consumers, people in the kibbutz were seen as moral agents - for good and for bad.

Scholars of the communitarian school in the study of ethics argue for a distinction between morality and ethics (Taylor 1989:79-85; Williams 1985). Morality is a set of rules and norms pertaining to an individual's proper behavior and proper conduct with others. It stresses action, obligation, prohibition, and the fair, responsible treatment of others. For the scholars of the communitarian school, this approach is an ascetic, impoverished version of ethics. Ethics, on the other hand, is a more holistic approach that stresses the cultivation of virtue above and beyond obligation and proper behavior. Ethics is about how one should be, what character one should cultivate, what is beautiful and true and what should solicit one's active allegiance and love even when one is not obliged. While morality tends to focus on rule governed behavior in specific situations of moral dilemma and clash of interests, ethics stresses the lifelong cultivation of virtue. As Keane noted, while this distinction is analytically helpful, there are ethnographic

cases in which it is impossible to distinguish between morality and ethics, between social obligation to act properly and the lifelong cultivation of virtue and character (2016:19).

Many of the moral complaints presented in this chapter can be seen as examples of an impoverished morality focused as they were on obligation, complaint, and proper, considerate behavior. What we start seeing here is that the same meta-ethical conditions of possibility, the construction of work as a moral obligation to the collective, in this case, also sustain an ethics, they create meaningful avenues for the life-long cultivation of virtue. In the kibbutz's proletarian ethics and aesthetics, being a good worker, even in simple manual labors, was one of the central ways to cultivate a virtuous self and gain a moral standing.

The following is an example from the moral praise articles of such character building through work. The article from 1977 is about Tzafi, a young member who develops a new department in the kibbutz's auto shop.[36] I present rather long excerpts because I want to show how Tzafi's virtuous character is gradually built as the article progresses starting from the description of his good working habits and ending in a crescendo of praise to the essence of his personality:

> A Man and his Work
>
> Three years ago, the "Tzafia" ["Tzafia" = the auto shop named after Tzafi] was established in order to give good, orderly treatment to the tractor fleet. As time passed, this workplace developed and became a service branch that saves the kibbutz a lot of money.

[36] "A Man and His Work". *Our Lives*, June 23, 1978. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

Every morning, Tzafi gets up at 4 am and prepares the tractors and cars for the workday. Today, Tzafi gives full treatment to the kibbutz's twenty-eight tractors and fourteen cars. Every morning he checks oil, water, air, gasoline and makes sure that the work branches receive properly functioning equipment…

Around the auto shop, many tractors park. Each tractor has a number and an allotted place in the shop's yard. The condition of each tractor is meticulously tracked in a report that is sent regularly to the kibbutz accountant's office. The good order in the lot, in which every tractor and tool has its own place, is the result of Tzafi's work.

Lately, 15 highschoolers from *Vered* and *Oren* [names of high school age-groups in Asif] passed the tractor driver's license exams. In which driving school did they learn? Who prepared them for the exam? Tzafi and Avi are authorized instructors after taking a special course in Rupin College. Tzafi gave tractor driver's licenses to some thirty of the region's highschoolers. When did he have time to prepare all these youngsters for their exams? Simply - he volunteered to do so for two hours after each workday.

The good organization and practice of the "Tzafia" drew the attention of the National Field Crops Worker's Organization and the latter organized a visit of honorable kibbutzim such as Gan Shmuel and Yagur to our kibbutz. These visitors were impressed with the level of treatment given to mechanical equipment in our kibbutz. During the visit of the people from Yagur, they came across the car known as the "Mobile Tzafia." The people of Yagur said that it was a shame they do not have in their kibbutz a mobile service vehicle such as the "Mobile Tzafia" that can give treatment to tractors when they are out in the field. Then, Tzafi told them the anecdote that this car was once owned by…

> Kibbutz Yagur. They got rid of it, and after several incarnations it made it to Tzafi's hands who fixed it and made it into a mobile auto shop…
>
> Up to here - what I heard. From here on - what I think. The responsibility for the next several lines is on me only, and Tzafi does not have to read them if he does not want to.
>
> A while ago, we devoted an issue of Our Lives [Asif's newspaper] to the youngsters in the kibbutz, and in one of the columns there, I argued that today "youngsters don't talk, they do." I think to myself that Tzafi is an honest representative of this character of a youngster, his main hobby being to initiate, organize, do.
>
> Who organizes and coordinates the Independence Day Celebrations? Who makes sure that the Independence Day Celebrations crew's more than twenty members do their job properly? Who took upon himself the organization of the Children Day in the kibbutz 30th Anniversary Celebration? Who initiated the reconstruction of the Children's Farm? Who organizes the planting of lawns all around the Children's Homes area?
> And many more plans and ideas run around in Tzafi's head.
> You think he won't fulfill them?
> You will see that he will. Because this is just who he is.

The same public "moralization" of work that subjected members to an ongoing public moral judgment as potential shirkers also turns work into a publicly recognizable space for the cultivation of a virtuous self. Tzafi cultivates his virtuous character by answering to the moral demand and obligation of the collective to work. Note how in this idealized description of Tzafi's character, the dichotomies of morality and ethics - that is of socially-imposed moral

obligation and agentive cultivation of virtue - dissolve. The achievements of the auto shop are constructed as the index of Tzafi's unique agency, creativity, and initiative, which is symbolically expressed in the fact that it bears his name: The Tzafia. Tzafi's work and contribution to the kibbutz is presented as play, as his "hobby to initiate, organize, do." The article goes from enumerating Tzafi's (over)fulfillment of his work obligations to the praise of his unique, essential qualities as a person: "this is just who he is." In other words, work is not only an imposed obligation, it also offers members a meaningful avenue to fashion a moral character, to achieve moral standing in the kibbutz, and to act as a role model for other members.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to place the contemporary liberal critique of what I called the "moral harshness" of the kibbutz in its relevant context: the vulnerability of its non-market economic system. Following Verdery, I tried to show how the proliferation of normative means in the kibbutz was directly connected to the limits on the use of remunerative means in a socialist system. In the next chapter, we will see that the kibbutz's vulnerability was even deeper as it lacked not only the market's remunerative means but also any significant form of legal sanction and violent coercion.

The absence of this context of the kibbutz's systemic vulnerability in recent cultural critiques of the kibbutz paints a simplistic picture that manages to be at once both uncharitable and utopian in its memory of socialism. Uncharitable because it ignores the structural circumstances in which the kibbutz enacted its harshness, and utopian because it implies that the kibbutz could have eliminated market remuneration and legal sanction *and also* the complementary mechanisms of moral discipline that made this project possible in the first place. Conversely, I tried to show how a certain level of moral harshness was immanent in the project

of the elimination of the market. As a way to stress this immanence, I tried to demonstrate how the proliferation of moral criticism in the kibbutz stemmed from the same conditions of possibility as its coziest expressions of moral recognition, namely, the way in which a non-market economy highlights the role of human moral agency in the constitution of socio-economic reality.

The findings of the chapter also have broader implications for the current discussion on the possibility of a postcapitalist, direct democratic alternative to neoliberalism. In opening up new avenues for political imagination, scholars have been studying the examples of social movements and historical societies that effectively govern themselves in an egalitarian, decentralized way without relying on the market or state bureaucracy (Graeber 2013; Graeber and Wengrow 2021; Juris 2008). The kibbutz is an ideal case study because it ran its internal business without recourse to market mechanisms, nor to any form of state violence or legal sanction. It had a direct democratic system of self-governance, and it was a small, ideologically and culturally cohesive community that was supposed to be easy to govern.

Nonetheless, the primary sources show that governing the kibbutz came at the price of a social atmosphere suffused with mutual surveillance and moralizing that many members feel today to have been intrusive, limiting, and exhausting. The historical case study of the kibbutz provides a constructive critical lesson. It does not suggest that there is no alternative to the market or that the market is somehow natural. However, it does mean that in a future post capitalist society, the elimination of the market is likely to bring up the question of daily social regulation which would need to be answered one way or the other. What new forms of discipline will have to be invented in place of the incentives and sanctions of the market and state bureaucracy? Can these take a truly democratic, non-oppressive form?

Chapter 2 Compel Without Violence, Persuade Without Convincing: The Question of Sanctions in the Kibbutz

Since, then, the legislator cannot employ either force or reasoning, he must have recourse to an authority of a different order, which can compel without violence and persuade without convincing. It is this which in all ages has constrained the fathers of nations to resort to the intervention of heaven, and to give the gods the credit for their own wisdom, in order that the nations, subjected to the laws of the State as to those of nature, and recognizing the same power in the creation of man and in that of the State, might obey willingly, and bear submissively the yoke of the public welfare.

Jean Jacques Rousseau[37]

In chapter 1, I showed how the specific nature and mood of ethical life in the kibbutz was related to its political economy. The point was to highlight a missing component in the contemporary retrospective liberal critique of the moral harshness of the kibbutz: how this expression of the kibbutz's power over the individual actually stemmed from a deep systemic vulnerability of the kibbutz as a non-market society. This contributed to the overarching argument of this dissertation by showing the structural conditions which gave the cultivation of a shared substantive culture - epitomized here in the constant stream of corrective moralizing - an important systemic role. In later chapters, we will see how after privatization, this privileged role of shared culture is significantly diminished.

The present chapter further develops this argument by adding another aspect to the description of the kibbutz's systemic vulnerability. In ensuring individuals' socially desirable behavior, the kibbutz lacked not only the regulating functions of the market but also

[37] Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. "The Social Contract." In *The Social Contract and The First and Second Discourses*, edited by Suzan Dunn, 148–256. New Haven, CT and London, UK: Yale University Press, 2002. p. 182-183.

those of the law. Notwithstanding the rare cases of serious criminal behavior, involving the state's organs of law enforcement in internal kibbutz matters was taboo.[38] Furthermore, in cases of the violation of internal rules, the kibbutz refrained in principle from using formal material sanctions such as fines or budget freezes. In radical cases, where members violated one of the kibbutz's core norms, for example, if a member worked outside the kibbutz and refused to pass to the kibbutz the whole of her salary, that member could be removed from the kibbutz. But these cases were rare. In the more common, minor violations, for example, the unauthorized introduction of a private color TV or an air conditioner that hindered equality, violators were expected to concede by accepting the moral verdict of the community, not as a result of formal material sanctions by kibbutz institutions.

The tools that the kibbutz utilized in these cases were of the normative, rather than the formal-legal type: a personal conversation/condemnation in the Secretariat (*berur* - see Chapter 3 for a comprehensive discussion of this key term in kibbutz discourse), a formal public condemnation in the assembly or the newspaper, and informal peer pressure turned, in radical cases, into partial ex-communication. These were supposed to enforce what was called in the kibbutz *da'at hakahal hakibbutzit* ("the kibbutz's public opinion"). As we will see throughout this chapter, *da'at hakahal* was a key term in the discourse of the late-socialist kibbutz, meaning the kibbutz's collective moral consensus on a specific issue.[39] We see here another way in which

[38] Legal procedure was legitimate only in the dealing of the kibbutz with the outside authorities or with members who had left the kibbutz.

[39] We will see several uses of the term *da'at hakahal* in our case study in the following pages. In the meantime, here is an example of a more formal-didactic use by Shmuel Golan, one of the central pedagogues of the *HaShomer HaTza'ir* movement. Note how Golan defines the authority of *da'at hakahal* in the kibbutz as the substitute for a system of sanctions and punishments: "The assembly embodies the moral authority of the kibbutz society. The social conscience in all its purity is revealed in the assembly discussion, and the public opinion (*da'at hakahal*) is formed in it. Their impact on fashioning kibbutz life is decisive. The discussion and the decisions of the assembly are the almost only source of authority that determines… the members' obligations…In the lack of sanctions and punishments…". In: Golan, Shmuel. "The Roles of the Assembly". *Hedim* 107 (March 1978): 112.

the kibbutz structurally relied on the cultivation of shared moral and cultural substance that is embodied, in this case, in the notion of *da'at hakahal* as a shared moral consensus.

In this chapter, we will see a concrete example of the systemic vulnerability of the kibbutz's no-sanction policy in a single historical case study. In Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz at the end of the 1970s, members constructed private antennas on their apartments in order to improve the reception of TV broadcasts, violating the centralized urban plan of the kibbutz. Other members introduced private refrigerators that were larger than the standard accepted in the kibbutz violating the principle of equality. These minor violations turned into a public scandal that lasted for several years, as some of the violators refused to concede despite the repeated condemnations and formal decisions by the kibbutz. The failure to enforce the decisions on antennas and refrigerators sparked a reflective debate in the general assembly about the use of sanctions in the kibbutz. In other words, before us is an ethnographically rich case study that demonstrates both the practice of the kibbutz's no-sanction policy and its reflective moral justification.

Before I go on to describe the structure of the chapter and move to the case itself, there are two qualifications that are worth mentioning. First, there is another kernel that runs in the background of this case that is not directly related to the question of sanctions but that nonetheless impacts both its dynamic and mood. It is striking that the most emotionally charged discussions on norm violation in the kibbutz during this period were about the unauthorized introduction of modern appliances such as TVs, refrigerators, stereo systems, and air conditioners. These were violations of equality and collective planning, but it seems that there was something more about them that made them especially troubling or enraging. These were

improvements that enabled modern comfort and enjoyment in the member's private home. The kibbutz had a long-standing concern with the gradual corrosion of collective life due to the gradual transfer of functions to the private home (Pauker 2018; Ran Shachnai 2019). A radio or an electric kettle that was introduced to the members' private apartment meant that this member would probably come less frequently to drink tea or listen to the radio together with other members in the club. There was also the issue of comfort and enjoyment itself. On the one hand, the kibbutz's socialist emphasis on social welfare legitimized comfort and enjoyment as long as these were distributed equitably, and if possible, consumed collectively. However, the morality of the kibbutz also had an ascetic dimension focused on the virtue of a simple, humble, proletarian lifestyle that regarded material comfort and enjoyment as suspect - especially when practiced privately - and potentially decadent. Moreover, the kibbutz was worried about the disintegration of its unique, alternative moral order through the infiltration of "philistine" bourgeois culture (Gan 2006:346-349). Television especially, with its seductive capabilities, the new ways in which it allowed popular culture to infiltrate domestic space, and the new forms of hypnotic passivity that it allowed, was seen by some as a potential agent of moral disintegration. Therefore, our case can be understood also as part of the effort of the kibbutz to negotiate and mitigate the dangers of the infiltration of late-modern consumerist culture.

The second qualification is a clarification about what I mean by "weakness" or "vulnerability" of the kibbutz. I don't mean something like a blind spot, defect, or failure. The vulnerabilities of the kind that we will see shortly were the result of a principled ethical choice by the kibbutz to run things in this way and not the other. In this chapter especially, we will see how this vulnerability resulted from and was defended through a consciously articulated moral ideal of the member's authentic participation in the kibbutz. In other words, to say that the

kibbutz's reluctance to enact sanctions was a "weakness" is similar to saying that the fact that a religious Jew has to pray three times a day, eat only kosher, and keep Shabbat is a "weakness" because it takes time and energy and prevents her from doing many things. However, as we will see, that this weakness was self-inflicted, does not mean that it did not come at a price for the system. From a moral standpoint, it is even more impressive that the elders of the kibbutz held onto the reluctance to use sanctions even though it clearly limited the kibbutz's power and made a headache out of something that a modest use of force would have easily solved.

The materials for this chapter come mostly from the protocols of Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz's general assembly meetings between 1975 and 1986. The chapter has four main parts. The first describes the unfolding of the antennas and refrigerators case in its first five years, in which the kibbutz tries to deal with the violations to no avail. In the second part, I zoom out and analyze several aspects of the kibbutz's weakness in enforcing norms as they are expressed in the sequence of events described thus far. In the third part, I return to the case where I had left it in 1980 and reconstruct in detail the debate about sanctions that broke out identifying three positions/camps on the question of using sanctions in the kibbutz. Finally, in the fourth part, I return to discuss the conclusion of the antennas and refrigerators case at the beginning of the 1980s. I will argue that the way in which the case was concluded points to a broader gradual shift in the kibbutz's attitude towards enforcement, a shift that was a way to negotiate its newly surfaced weakness in the 1970s and 1980s. The new strategy of selective enforcement of rules somewhat resembles the suspended reading of socialist ideals that characterized the late Soviet era, according to Alexei Yurchak (2006).

The Emergence of a Scandal

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, kibbutz Ein HaMifratz dealt with two ongoing violations of kibbutz decisions. One was the private construction of antennas, and the other was the unauthorized possession of private refrigerators. In 1975, several members in Ein HaMifratz set up private antennas on the rooftops of their apartments in order to improve the reception of tv broadcasts. In a general assembly meeting in 1975, the Secretary of the kibbutz reads out an announcement, asking those members to take the antennas down:

> Concerning the issue of private antennas: the phenomenon is more common than we had originally thought. We need to ask more assertively of members to take them down. In each home, there is a TV set. The cost of an antenna is low, and if each member would set up his own, we will have a forest of antennas. We will not allow marring the landscape. We are thinking of setting up a central antenna, but in the meanwhile, I strongly request to stop damaging the landscape.[40]

The request to take down the antennas apparently did not bear fruit, as in an assembly meeting in May 1976, half a year later, the Secretary brings up the problem again: "Although there are three active assembly decisions on the subject," he says, "there are members who do not care about decisions."[41] They did not only set up new antennas ignoring kibbutz decisions but also constructed them out of expensive iron pipes, which they unauthorizedly took from the kibbutz's collective property. The issue comes before the assembly as "there is no police in the kibbutz, and the question is what to do with this violation of assembly decisions?"

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[40] General Assembly Meeting. September 27, 1975. Box P9. KEHA.
[41] General Assembly Meeting, May 22, 1976. Box P9. KEHA.

The Secretariat proposes to the assembly to debit the violators' personal budget for the materials taken. This proposal to use a fine is unusual and a debate ensues. Tzafrir opposes the proposal and explains the alternative steps that need to be taken according to a proper kibbutz-like procedure in such cases: First, he says, "we should call the violators to a disciplinary talk (*berur*) in the Secretariat." If the personal *berur* does not bear fruit, "bring them to the assembly." The public discussion of the case in the assembly and the release of a formal condemnation was meant to bring up pressure on stubborn violators, signaling to them that the kibbutz saw the violation as serious business and putting the kibbutz's honor and their own at stake.

At this early stage of our case, there are some speakers who support the introduction of sanctions, but the mainstream seems to feel that things can still be resolved in the traditional kibbutz way through persuasion. Barak reminds those who support sanctions that "until now, it was not our custom that the Secretariat acts as a police force, and we trusted the member to be considerate and abide by kibbutz decisions, especially after the issue has been brought up in the assembly." Tzafrir adds that "I am not sure that all the accepted ways have been exhausted…let us not turn the Secretariat into police officers. We shall do it in the accepted ways in a personal conversation or a kibbutz conversation, and we hope that they will accept the verdict." Accordingly, the assembly decides to instruct the Secretariat to hold personal *berurim* (plural of *berur*) with the violators.

Escalation

Four months later, in September 1976, we learn that these *berurim* did not bear fruit, as the issue came before the assembly again.[42] The Secretary informed the assembly that "there are 20 members with antennas" and that "with most of them we held personal conversations." We also learn that the kibbutz accepted the request of violators to "postpone the implementation of the decision to take down the antennas until after the Olympic games." Although the Olympic Games have passed, and although "decisions on the subject have been already reached in two assembly meetings," the Secretary continues, members still did not take down the antennas.

At this point, the issue starts taking the form of a more urgent and enraged debate. The pre-circulated agenda for the meeting that frames the discussion declares that "the issue already far exceeds the mere question of antennas, and it has actually become a test for the collective discipline of the kibbutz."[43] The tension rises because of the open and consistent defiance of kibbutz decisions. An article that appears in Ein HaMifratz's internal newspaper the same week, attests to the fact that the issue has become a hot topic of public discussion:

> … It was decided in the assembly that the antennas should be taken down? nonsense… Weeks have passed, months have passed, another announcement in the newspaper and another one in the assembly meeting, and a personal request and a formal demand ('I don't give a damn' and 'it does not concern me' - familiar…)... Personal liberty and independence from public opinion (*da'at kahal*) also have their limits… How to navigate

[42] General Assembly Meeting, September 11, 1976. Box P9. KEHA.
[43] Assembly Meeting Agenda. September 10, 1976. Box P9. KEHA.

in a society that is based on morality, consideration, and mutuality, when an individual or a group refuses to yield?"[44]

In the meeting itself, the speakers express anger at their defiant peers, who take advantage of the kibbutz's no-sanction policy. "No citizen in the state would dare breach state laws," says Barak, "but ignoring a kibbutz decision - that is no problem. After all, we would not bring the police. I turn to the members and say: let us sustain our collective life through our decisions without sanctions." Aharon says that he "feels that people here do not take our decisions seriously," and Naaman admits that "the antenna itself does not bother me…What does bother me is that the kibbutz is unable to implement its decision on such a minor subject."

There are three proposals for retaliation on the table: (1) The kibbutz would refrain from paying the fees owed to the state for these members' TVs. This is a heavy sanction because it means that the state may confiscate the TVs; (2) The Secretariat would physically take down the antennas; and (3) To leave the situation in its current state but decide that when in the future the kibbutz would install a central antenna, the violators will not be connected. A debate ensues. Although the assembly is divided on the question, the consensus seems to be gradually moving toward the authorization of sanctions. However, the assembly decides to give the violators another week before reconvening to discuss the issue again. It does not authorize sanctions yet. It only issues a formal declaration that the antennas should be taken down and agrees to reconvene in a week's time. The hope is, as Barak sums it up: "that the public opinion (*da'at hakahal*) that was heard tonight would carry its effect."

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[44] "The Antennas". Yediot HaShavua. September 17, 1976. KEHA

Three weeks later, the Secretary opens the assembly meeting with a festive tone: "I am encouraged: after a collective *berur* with all violators, most of them took the antennas down. Today, there are 4-5 members who are still unwilling to take them down. We ask the assembly to authorize the Secretariat to take down these antennas!"[45] In the short discussion that ensues, two of the antenna violators speak. Reuven says he is one of those who took down the antennas this week, and the only reason he did so is because the kibbutz decided not to enact sanctions. Had the kibbutz decided positively on sanctions, he would not have taken them down as a matter of principle. Haim, on the other hand, declares in the assembly that he is one of those 4-5 members who insist on not taking down the antennas. He does so on principle grounds in order to provoke the kibbutz to start using sanctions, an approach for which he has been pushing for some time: "I am glad that my approach in favor of sanctions is finally considered… I am sorry that it is on such a minor issue… but if after they take down the antennas, they would also take down those private pergolas and sheds… and finally deal with the chronic nuisance of unleashed dogs…" After a short discussion, the assembly decides to authorize the Secretariat to physically take down the remaining antennas.

At this point, it seems as if the issue of antennas is nearing its conclusion. Only 4-5 antennas are left, and the Secretariat is finally authorized by the kibbutz to physically take them down. However, assembly meeting protocols from the next couple of years indicate that the issue was not resolved. Two years later, in 1978, we find an announcement by the secretariat in the general assembly saying: "At the time of the World Cup, several new antennas were added, with

[45] General Assembly Meeting, October 2, 1976. Box P9. KEHA.

an explicit promise to take them down once the games are over. We request that everyone take down their antennas."[46]

After two more years, in the fall of 1980, we find a long debate, spread out across three general assembly meetings, over the question of private antennas all over again. In his opening remarks, the Secretary indicates that the issue of antennas is a direct continuation of, what we now learn, is the unresolved saga from 1976: "The issue of antennas was discussed several times, and there were at least two assembly decisions to take down the antennas - decisions that were not implemented."[47]

This time, it is combined with another violation of kibbutz rules: several members received from family outside of the kibbutz refrigerators that were larger than the accepted standard. This was a violation of the effective material equality practiced on the kibbutz. The kibbutz centrally supplied all appliances in order to make sure that all members had the same. The new refrigerators created inequality, and also potentially opened the way to the introduction of more "deviant" items. In this specific case, the issue of refrigerators was more of the gray-area type than the antennas. A few years before, an individual member asked the Members' Committee (the committee responsible, among other things, for the equipment in members' homes) if he could keep a refrigerator that he got as a gift, and the committee agreed. With time, and following the precedent that was set, there were other members who also introduced private refrigerators. At some point, the Secretariat, probably following complaints from below, felt obliged to tackle the issue. It held *berurim* with the violators, but the latter refused to renounce

[46] General Assembly Meeting, July 8, 1978. Box P11. KEHA.
[47] General Assembly Meeting, September 6, 1980. Box P11. KEHA.

their refrigerators, and the Secretariat had to bring the issue before the assembly asking for approval to use sanctions against both the refrigerator and the antenna violators.

The Systemic Weakness of the Kibbutz

Before I move on to describe and analyze the long debate of 1980 and the further unfolding of the case, I zoom out for a moment in order to point out how the case already demonstrates the structural vulnerability of the kibbutz establishment in its dealing with the individual member. For five years, the kibbutz tries to enforce its decision on antennas and fails to do so. As we will shortly see, five years will turn to eleven before the issue is finally resolved. The assembly repeatedly discusses the issue, ratifies existing decrees, conducts *berurim*, decides on sanctions, and issues declarations - but the antennas stay.

We can also already see one obvious reason for this institutional weakness: the unwillingness or inability of the kibbutz to effectively use sanctions in cases of minor violations. When members refused to yield to the moral appeal of the assembly, the kibbutz was rather powerless in making them conform. In the city, fines and other forms of sanctions are important tools in dealing with minor violations. The private antennas, for example, are a classic example of illegal construction which in the city is handled through municipal fines. The kibbutz, on the other hand, was deprived of these tools.

However, our case demonstrates yet another reason why the kibbutz was institutionally weak. In comparison with the capitalist city, the kibbutz was not only deprived of sanctions in regulating its internal business, but it also had a greater area of social life to regulate. This has a direct connection to the socialist organization of the economy and to the specific brand of socialism practiced in the kibbutz. Since the kibbutz was committed to effective material equality, it had to make sure that members had the same appliances, furniture, and consumer

goods, and of the same quality. This brought the kibbutz's jurisdiction deep into the members' living rooms and kitchens, in a way that we do not see in capitalist regimes, including in today's privatized kibbutz. This involvement is seen by many today as a "totalitarian" aspect of kibbutz socialism that infringed on the liberty and privacy of the individual. But seen from the perspective of the system, this is actually an acute point of vulnerability and weakness. Since the basic mandate and source of legitimacy of the kibbutz establishment was to ensure effective material equality, it was burdened, indeed haunted, by an almost impossible task to regulate a very large area of social life. This was rendered especially hard as the kibbutz was an open system, not an isolated commune (Charney and Palgi 2013), and members were constantly offered consumer goods from family and friends outside. Indeed, the issue of unauthorized stereos, TVs, air conditioners, etc. was central in the scandals that populate so many kibbutz meeting protocols from the 1970s and 1980s.

But things were even worse because weakness had the potential to grow exponentially. The fact that at any given time there was a large number of small violations that the kibbutz effectively tolerated turned into an argument against dealing with new violations. A common line of defense of violators was the cry of discrimination: why does the kibbutz persecute them in this small issue of an antenna or refrigerator, when it does not deal with all these other cases? In our case, we see again and again the argument that the antennas or refrigerators are not important in comparison with other similar and more irritating violations. Aliza is "also very concerned about ecological issues… and an electric pole which stands near my house worries me much more than the antennas. I think we should drop the antenna thing."[48] Aharon points out that "there are in the

[48] General Assembly Meeting, September 6, 1980. Box P11. KEHA.

kibbutz dilapidated gardens near members' houses that bother me a lot more than the antennas."[49] Ester implores the assembly to be "realistic - why should we cause members a bad mood? If this was the only unauthorized item - ok. But there are other unauthorized items in members' possession that are much more irritating, and the kibbutz does not do anything about them."[50]

Here is a telling example from another case in Ein HaMifratz in 1980 that demonstrates nicely how this kind of argument substantially weakened the kibbutz's position in trying to crack down on a specific violation. Aran spent several years in the United States and brought back with him a color TV that deviates from the accepted standard of the kibbutz. The kibbutz demands its removal and Aran defends himself in the assembly:

> I was in the kibbutz many years before we moved abroad and I saw our *shlihim* [delegates of the kibbutz movement abroad] coming back from their time abroad with new stereo systems, and no one said a word to them. It's not clear to me why the kibbutz did not do anything at the time… While I was abroad, I knew exactly what was going on here … with the privately funded trips abroad and everything… the Secretariat can choose to cling arbitrarily to the issue of TVs, but what about the problem with parasites who don't work? This is also a form of inequality… There are those who have a car at their disposal... The matters of communality are close to my heart, and I told the Secretariat: if I would have seen that steps are taken here to solve these problems, I would have been the first one to take the TV and put it aside. But I see that nothing is

[49] Ibid.
[50] General Assembly Meeting, June 6, 1981. Box P11. KEHA.

> done in this area… I publicly declare here in the assembly that if during, say, the following year, serious steps are taken in confronting inequality I will give away the TV a year from now.[51]

Note how the kibbutz's weakness breeds more weakness. Aran uses the inability of the kibbutz to enforce its decisions in other minor violations (stereos, private trips, 'parasites' at work, and 'private' cars) in order to legitimize his new violation. In turn, the kibbutz's concession in Aran's case, which is indeed what happens at the end, will give ammunition to future violators and further weaken the position of the kibbutz.

A Debate about Sanctions

We will now return to our case where we had left it: the debate about sanctions in the general assembly of Ein HaMifratz in 1980. In 1980, Haim (the "principled violator" from 1976) became the Secretary. He leads in the Secretariat a new, more resolute line of cracking down on violators with sanctions. In retaliation for the violations of antennas and refrigerators, the Secretariat proposes to "freeze the budgets of members who did not abide by the kibbutz decision," a move that they call "giving teeth to the decision." Haim acknowledges "the unusualness of this proposal, but we cannot see any other way but to take some operative steps in cases where decisions are not respected."

This unusual proposal provoked the debate before us. In the debate, I recognize three positions/camps. I will start by describing the original principled no-sanction position articulated by the more ideologically devoted elders. I will then turn to the other two positions that make

[51] General Assembly Meeting, May 31, 1980. Box P11. KEHA.

their appearance in the 1970s and that challenge the traditional no-sanction policy. My argument will be that these new positions express, each in its own way, the deepening and surfacing of the structural weakness of the kibbutz in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Principled No-Sanction Camp

The first position that I identify in the debate I call the "principled no-sanction" view. This is the original position of the kibbutz. In our debate, it is expressed by a few of the more ideologically committed elder founders of the kibbutz. Two basic premises underlie this position: first, that the ideals of equality in the kibbutz should be strictly guarded and implemented, and second, that their implementation cannot rely on the use of material or legal sanctions. Here is Shalom: "I am opposed to the notion of giving kibbutz decisions 'economic teeth', as the Secretariat suggests. In my opinion, this contradicts all of our customs and norms. It is inconceivable to freeze the budget of a kibbutz member when he does not abide by the kibbutz's decisions."[52] For Menahem, "in the kibbutz there is no place for sanctions, there is no place for punishing members! These are two things that contradict each other."[53]

The rejection of legal and material sanctions does not mean that pressure cannot be applied on violators to concede. However, this pressure has to be of the normative type, and not the coercive or the remunerative type. For example, right after he rejects the use of "economic teeth," Shalom advocates for the use of another kind of teeth: "The only acceptable 'teeth' on the kibbutz are those of the public opinion (*da'at hakahal*) and the authority of the kibbutz - there can be no other 'teeth.'"[54] Menachem offers the use of a specific normative tool: a formal

[52] General Assembly Meeting, October 18, 1980. Box 11. KEHA.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

symbolic declaration by the assembly: "There is only one thing we can decide tonight for the third, fourth, etc. time: that members should take down the antennas during the coming week… We should now go to sleep, and let those members decide what is more valuable in their eyes: the antennas or our elementary sense of collective discipline, without which there is no reason for the existence of the kibbutz."[55]

It is important to note that the reluctance to use sanctions does not stem from a lenient attitude towards the implementation of kibbutz ideological tenets. The members who promote it are among the most "ideological" and are the fiercest critics of the violator's selfish and irresponsible behavior. They see the violations as serious threats to the kibbutz and argue for a serious and thorough treatment of them. Menahem makes clear that "in rejecting sanctions we have not relieved ourselves of facing the problem." When a technical compromise in the case of refrigerators was proposed (the purchase of bigger refrigerators for everyone), he severely reproached this solution as a cowardly bypassing of real treatment of the problem: "I think that what is going on here is something really dishonorable. The Secretariat brought here a proposal on how to deal with members who violate kibbutz rules. Instead of seriously discussing and deciding, they offer us technical proposals like purchasing used refrigerators. This is called sweeping the dirt under the rug and I do not accept it."

Furthermore, neither does the reluctance to use sanctions emanate from a liberal instinct to defend the individual from the violence of social sanctions. Interestingly, while the adherents of this position reject the use of minor sanctions, they are willing to consider a much heavier sanction for the same violation: throwing the violators from the kibbutz:

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[55] General Assembly Meeting, September 11, 1976. Box P9. KEHA.

> I think there is only one way: it has to be clear to every kibbutz member that if after continuous and consistent *berurim,* done with extraordinary patience, if after all this, a member finds it ok to disobey kibbutz decisions, then, in my opinion, he has no place on the kibbutz. I say a simple thing: if a member cares more about his own narrow particularistic interest than about guarding the honor of the kibbutz, then I do not know if he has a place on the kibbutz.[56]

For Shalom, another supporter of the no-sanction camp, "it is very probable, and it is possible to remove a member from the kibbutz, that they will tell him: 'you do not abide by decisions, you can't live among us'. But economic sanctions - that is absurd and unacceptable."[57]

There is something curious here: Menahem and Shimon oppose the minor sanction of a fine but are willing to consider a much harsher sanction of removing a member from the kibbutz for the same violation. The moral rationale behind this supposedly paradoxical position is, I think, that removing a member from the kibbutz marks the end of the relationship between the kibbutz and the said member while enacting a minor sanction like giving a fine, inserts material sanctions into the very fabric of the kibbutz-member relationship. In other words, removing a member from the kibbutz does not change the nature of the polity, only withdraws one member from it, while giving a fine leaves all members in the kibbutz but qualitatively changes the nature of their relations to the kibbutz.

Why do the "ideological" elders of the kibbutz reject so vehemently the use of minor sanctions? Their objection seems irrational: they are the ones who are the most worried about the

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[56] General Assembly Meeting, October 18, 1980. Box P11. KEHA.
[57] Ibid.

strict implementation of equality and collective discipline, so why do they shoot themselves in the foot and deprive the kibbutz of the tools to enforce them? This is an example where cynical, instrumental explanations centering on power and interest simply do not work, and we have to turn to a discussion of ethics. For the elders, it is crucial not only that violators concede, but that they do so "voluntarily" out of a moral commitment to the kibbutz and not as a result of "external" motivation such as fear of punishment or expectation of gain. Of course, at this point in the affair, everybody in the room knows that if violators concede now, it will be a result of heavy social pressure and not of a purely voluntary decision. However, when the kibbutz refrains from using formal material sanctions and uses only normative pressure, the act of concession can still be publicly registered as a voluntary act of moral commitment.

In the background is an idea of citizenship as an authentic-moral, rather than a legal-contractual relationship. As opposed to the cold, sad social contract in the capitalist city, based on egoistic material incentive and fear of punishment, the social bond in the kibbutz is supposed to be based on an internally motivated, warm moral commitment to the collective and to one's fellow members. This emphasis is central to the kibbutz's morality, and it cuts through many areas of social life in the kibbutz. For example, the economy. In 1981, the assembly in Ein HaMifratz discusses several proposals to combat slacking in work, one of which is to introduce a sanction of sorts: hanging a list on the bulletin board that would shame individual members who do not come to *giyusim* (seasonal collective works), and another is to introduce material remuneration: giving modest bonuses to members who work overtime. Yohanan, one of the elders, rejects the offers off-hand as being "un-kibbutz-like" on account of the "artificial" motivation they encourage:

> I do not think that publishing members' names on a list would give the motivation to participate in a *giyus*, and if it does, we have a serious problem and we cannot accept it. I do not think that the method of giving a high grade to a member who excels at work and publicly reproaching a member when he does not perform his duty is the way we should take. Rather, we should consider such methods as improving the team spirit in work branches, ideological guidance, and the democratization of branches so that members feel they have a part in the collective responsibility for the work branch. These are proposals that go in the spirit of the kibbutz. But when we see clauses like material remuneration and reproaching of members… clauses that tell the member: 'you are not behaving properly, you are not responsible, we will teach you a lesson and give you external motivation'…the basic approach is one of distrust in our ability to rely on the sense of commonality, willingness, and consciousness.[58]

We find the same emphasis in a different area of kibbutz life: education, which was run, until the 1980s, without sanctions and external incentives in the form of punishments, grades, exams, and diplomas. When in 1981, some parents pushed for the introduction of exams and grades into Kibbutz Asif's high school, the kibbutz's most prominent teacher, Kalish, reacts with an editorial in the newspaper:

> There are parents and teachers who claim that formal exams, grades, and diplomas would motivate children to do better at school… However… in our non-selective education, this is simply impossible. The positive motivating factors, on which our education should be

[58] General Assembly Meeting, April 11, 1981. Box P11. KEHA.

> based are the personality of the teacher, her ability to awaken the pupil's curiosity, the age group's "public opinion" (*da'at kahal*), and first and foremost, the personal conscience of each pupil. These positive factors are much more effective than the formal "whips" of grades and diplomas.[59]

When I was a student in Kibbutz Asif's regional high school in the mid-1990s, Wednesdays were workdays. I worked together with several friends of mine in the school's gardening crew under the supervision of Hayuta, the school's senior gardener and a devoted kibbutz member. Once, we decided to play a trick: we did not return to work after the break, continuing to sit in the shade on the lawn telling jokes and being manifestly lazy. Hayuta's reaction was remarkable: she simply got up and resumed working in silence in front of where we were sitting. Meaning, she refused to threaten us with sanctions and gain our merely coerced, externally motivated participation. Rather, using the (surprisingly effective) normative pressure of personal example working in front of us while we were slacking, she demanded that our participation be voluntary and authentic, that we would join her out of a moral commitment to her and to our shared work obligation.

When I presented this chapter in 2022 in the Forum for the Researchers of the Kibbutz in Israel, I framed it as a discussion on the problem of the enforcement of norms in the kibbutz (*ahifat normot bakibbutz*). In the audience sat Elisha Shapira, a veteran kibbutz member and a well-known public figure in the kibbutz movement. Elisha served many years as the Secretary of his kibbutz, as well as the General Secretary of *HaKibbutz Ha'artzi HaShomer HaTza'ir* kibbutz movement. In the questions-and-answers session, Elisha challenged my very framing of the

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[59] "On Grades in Our School". *Our LIves*. June 5, 1981.

question centered on "enforcement" (*ahifa*) and did so on ethical grounds: "I must tell you, in all my years as the Secretary of my kibbutz, and as the General Secretary of the movement, I never 'enforced' anything on anybody (*me'olam lo ahafti shum davar*)." The saying was striking because everybody in the room knew very well that as a kibbutz and a kibbutz movement Secretary in the 1980s and 1990s, Elisha had to deal with many violations of norms.

The rationale that runs through all of these examples is the following: genuine, internal motivation is harder to cultivate than external, coerced motivation. It is much easier to get cooperation through direct sanctions and material incentives. However, the idea is that this method is both morally inferior and practically less durable. From a moral perspective, motivating members through crude material stimuli degrades their humanity. Yohanan criticizes the attitude of "teaching the member a lesson," which degrades her to the level of a child, and Kalish argues against the use of the "whips" of grades and exams, which treat the member as if she was an animal. From the practical perspective, the reliance on sanctions and incentives was seen as creating only a weak social bond. According to this logic, in the long term, only a social order based on a genuine identification and commitment of the individual to the collective is durable. Self-interest comes and goes. Today it is aligned with the collective interest, and tomorrow it is not. A genuine identification, which recruits one's soul, potentially lasts forever.

On the face of it, the reluctance to use sanctions sets kibbutz socialism apart from state socialist societies, where violent coercion was in extensive use. However, the kibbutz's no-sanction policy stems from an idea of society as an authentic union, which is a central kernel in the Marxist tradition. This is a vision of the future society held together neither by force nor by utilitarian calculations of individual interest, but rather by a more whole-hearted, authentic immersion of individuals in a collective. As Steven Lukes shows, Marxist thought was shot

through with the critique of the bourgeois morality of fairness and compromise that bases society on the grounds of calculated self-interest (Lukes 1985). In this society, Marx argues, individuals come together but each one remains fundamentally "withdrawn into himself, into the confines of his private interests and private caprice and separated from the community… the sole bond holding them [the individuals] together is natural necessity, need, and private interest, the preservation of their property and their egoistic selves" (Lukes 1985:28). Alternatively, Marx imagined a future communist society, where the walls of selfishness collapse and "the contradiction between the separate individual or the individual family and the common interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another has been abolished" (Lukes 1985:29). Therefore, in a communist society, a moral bond will supplant the legal-contractual relation of bourgeois society. As Lukacs put it: "the ultimate objective of communism is the construction of a society in which freedom of morality will take the place of the constraints of *Recht* in the regulation of all behavior" (Lukes 1985:35). As Igal Halfin shows, even at the height of the Stalinist Great Purge of 1937, when convicts were simply made to accept formulaic ready-made accusations as their personal confessions, interrogators nonetheless insisted on a specific style and wording of the confession that would demonstrate that it was written "authentically" by the convict (2009:121-123). In other words, even in its most brutally coercive moment, revolutionary violence had to legitimize itself by being orchestrated as a "dialogue" of sorts that depends, if only minimally and ritualistically, on the "authentic" participation of the convict (2009:113).

The Surfacing of the Weakness of the Kibbutz in the 1970s and 1980s

In the debate before us, the traditional no-sanction ethics that I have just described at length, was already a minority, promoted by only a handful of ideologically devoted elders. We

see the emergence of two new positions on sanctions, which express, each in its own way, the deepening and surfacing of the kibbutz's weakness in the 1970s and 1980s. Enforcing norms without recourse to sanctions heavily relied on collective discipline. But the strict collective discipline that characterized the kibbutz in its first decades, when it was a small, tightly knit, unigenerational group of zealots, was significantly weakened by the 1970s. The sociological literature on the kibbutz associated this process with the transformation of the kibbutz into a multi-generational society, the decline in ideological zeal, and the emergence of a more individualistic mindset as part of the influence of 1960s culture(Gan 2006; Cohen 1983; Nir 2008). Similarly, the primary sources from the period are full of melancholic complaints about the moral decline of the kibbutz and the disintegration of collective discipline and authority. For example, an opinion article written in 1980 in the newspaper of Kibbutz Asif says:

> If I had to define our current social situation I would say: a lack of reaction and a loss of sensitivity. On the one hand, a lack of reaction on the side of the public to phenomena that are unbecoming, damaging, and that create a bad atmosphere. On the other hand, a lack of sensitivity on the side of the individual member to the public opinion (*da'at hakahal*) and to criticism. These are two sides of the same coin: if there is no reaction by the public, the individual sees himself free to act according to his wishes knowing that 'no one will say anything'... Maybe sensitivity is the merit of people when they are still young and skinny. With time, when fat builds up around the waists, the sensitivity declines and the public opinion's arrows of criticism (*hetzei habikoret shel da'at hakahal)* do not penetrate anymore."[60]

[60] "The Year that Past". *Our Lives*. September 3, 1980. KAA.

One of the expressions of this emerging crisis of authority was the public "scandals" that populate so much of the kibbutz's agenda in those years. Like our "scandal" surrounding antennas and refrigerators, I have found similar cases involving the unauthorized introduction of color TVs and air conditioners, and the reluctance of members to pass to the kibbutz their pensions, *rentas*[61], and inheritances. What seems to be new in the "scandals" of the 1970s and 1980s is not the incongruence between formal norms and social reality, that is, not the mere fact that the rules of equality were breached in particular cases (we find such breaches throughout the whole history of the kibbutz), but that formal kibbutz decisions were openly and repeatedly defied. In other words, that the traditional normative tools were losing their power.

Deviation (1): The "Pro-Sanction" Camp

The decline in collective discipline prompted two new deviant positions on sanctions. The first was a new pro-sanctions camp. The pro-sanctions camp argued that since the kibbutz's moral authority was in decline, it should be substituted by more tangible material sanctions. The traditional tool of the *berur*, was to be substituted by material fines and punishments. Haim, the militant Secretary elected in 1980, explains the rationale:

> The issue of the lack of teeth in implementing decisions comes up from time to time. When someone does not want to comply, they hold a *berur* and another *berur*. The time of this kind of procedure has passed, and we have to give the Secretariat some other tools beyond the *berur*… these can be punishments attached to specific violations, as it is good

[61] *Rentas* are monthly compensation payments that holocaust survivors receive from Germany.

> to do in any case… We have become a large, multigenerational society and we simply cannot go on working only with *berurim*.[62]

The sentiment that accompanies this position is one of solving the moral crisis of the kibbutz through swift, decisive, forceful action. Sociologically, this more militant, activist position comes from the young, second-generation kibbutz members. At the heart of the youngsters' demand for stronger sanctions is a feeling of the political impotence of the kibbutz. The kibbutz has lost its effective control over social reality because the assembly's decisions are not respected. For Nahman "the problem is not the antenna. Had we not decided against it, the antennas would not disturb me. What does disturb me is that the kibbutz is unable to carry out a decision on such a minor topic. What will we do when more important issues are on the line?"[63] Or Amiel:

> It seems to me that the deviants (*harigim*) with whom we don't deal, and not the kibbutz institutions, are the ones who dictate the tempo of life on the kibbutz. The deviant who puts up an antenna, and then we get 30 more deviants, and it becomes too big of a problem to deal with, and we say: "let's leave it alone…" I don't care, let there be refrigerators, cars, but I do care that things we decide on will be implemented, and I will not hear that an assembly is not an assembly. We have recently established a new committee to bring the members back into active participation in the assembly… And

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62 General Assembly Meeting, September 6, 1980. Box P11. KEHA.
63 General Assembly Meeting, September 11, 1976. Box P9. KEHA.

> there is a common argument heard that there is no reason to come to the assembly because things that are decided in it are not implemented.[64]

Note how the call for decisive action already enfolds a sense of the deep weakness, indeed impotence, of the kibbutz. This is highlighted by a recurring image in the texts of the pro-sanction camp: that of the deviant member making fun of the kibbutz. The terms related to mockery, laughter, and insult are common. They betray a feeling that the kibbutz is a "sucker," who is being duped by its deviant members. Here is Levi:

> I stand 100% behind the Secretariat's proposal (to enact sanctions) and want to present a personal story. As the chair of the Planning Committee we passed a decision that tenants would act according to decisions and plans only, would refrain from building private antennas, dog houses, etc., and the central urban plan would be respected. The proposal was approved by the assembly, but afterward started all the debates: "This is my territory" and all the known stories. And we all know who I am referring to here. Following that assembly meeting, and the failure to implement the decision, I did not show up to general assembly meetings for three years. Two months ago, someone from Aharon's family came to ask me to come back to the meetings. I told my story, but they convinced me. The day after that someone from Aharon's family came, an antenna was erected on Aharon's rooftop. So what should I say? First of all, this is a personal insult to me and to several others. Despite the fact that you now laugh, Aharon. Today, I sit in the

[64] General Assembly Meeting, September 6, 1980. Box P11. KEHA.

> assembly and again I feel bad. Why do I have to keep on fighting over decisions that the assembly had already made?
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> By the way, one of the members planted several trees near his house without authorization and I asked him why he did not go through proper procedure and brought the matter to the assembly, answered: "why should I care about what you all decide? I don't care."… So, first of all, we have to implement decisions and not insult the Secretariat, as they are now doing.[65]

Aharon erects his antenna - a middle finger of sorts - while "laughing" at Levi and the other law-abiding members; the tree-planter shows presumptuous open defiance ("why should I care") by hinting that he is not under the jurisdiction of the moral authority of the collective (he separates himself from the "you all" who "decide" on things over there in the assembly); and the public is called not to "insult" the Secretariat. The exposure of the weakness of the kibbutz through the scandals of the 1970s and 1980s brings to public discourse in the kibbutz a new subject position: that of the law-abiding member who identifies with the collective's helplessness and humiliation. It is hard to miss the fantasmatic fixation on the deviant member who enjoys and laughs at us, while we are all constrained by the law.

In several other speeches, members of the assembly are asked by adherents of the pro-sanction camp "not to make fools of ourselves." In others, the word *metzaftzef* ("honks") repeats itself:

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[65] General Assembly Meeting, September 6, 1980. Box P11. KEHA.

> I saw that already at the end of the Olympic games members constructed for themselves antennas and *tziftzefu* ("honked") on kibbutz decisions. No citizen in the state would dare to violate a state rule. But kibbutz decisions are ok to violate… if they appeal to the assembly - all right, but not to say a word in the assembly and *letzaftzef* ('to honk") like that - this is unacceptable.[66]

The literal meaning of the term l*etzaftzef,* commonly used in Hebrew to denote defying a rule, is to "honk." It gives the violation of rules an added value of mockery, by describing it as a clownish, provocative gesture of "honking" at the authorities. Its four-syllable mirror root (tzaf-tzef = צפ-צפ) also carries connotations of a playful, clownish, mocking defiance of social norms.

In other words, in this new pro-sanctions position, we find the newly surfaced weakness of the kibbutz expressed in an identification with the kibbutz's insult and in the desire for a strong, decisive action that will put an end to the kibbutz's moral disintegration and humiliation, once and for all.

Deviation (2): The "Pragmatic No-Sanction" Camp

The second new position that we see in our debate I call the "pragmatic no-sanction" camp. Like the adherents of the first, principled no-sanction camp it rejected the use of sanctions, but this was out of pragmatic reasons not principled ones. We have seen that the principled no-sanction view of the elders did not give away an inch in the demand to observe kibbutz ideals and decisions, only demanded that they be obeyed authentically. Conversely, the new pragmatic

[66] General Assembly Meeting, September 11, 1976. Box P9. KEHA.

no-sanction camp opposes sanctions out of a more lenient attitude toward the implementation of kibbutz ideals. Note, for example, Nitzan's position:

> I don't believe this can be solved in the way the Secretariat suggests. This is the way of the Stalin years, using force. It won't work and would cause the opposite of what we want. The conflict with the said members and the energy that would have to be invested will not benefit us, only harm us. It may seem as if I am proposing a retreat, but it is not a retreat… The debate would not do us any good, it would only taint the atmosphere. We should finish this debate. Those who have bigger refrigerators - let them have it. Like others who have other extra things.[67]

The kibbutz should refrain from using sanctions not because it promotes an alienated, externally motivated relationship between the member and the kibbutz, but because it "won't work" and would only "taint the atmosphere." While the adherents of the principled no-sanction camp insisted on the strict implementation of equality to the letter and saw the private refrigerators as a distortion that had to be fixed, the adherents of the pragmatic no-sanction camp suggest tolerating inequality in minor cases. Note how for them, just like for Aran and his color TV, the kibbutz's prior inability to deal with violations legitimizes tolerating the new violation. Eli supports Nitzan's position:

> I join Nitzan's opinion, and not out of a feeling that we are retreating, but out of a feeling that in kibbutz's *stichia* ("spontaneous social processes" - see chapter 3) there is also wisdom that is hard for us to see when we sit and decide on things. There is a reason why

[67] General Assembly Meeting, September 6, 1980. Box P11. KEHA.

> past Secretariats were not able to take out the refrigerators… because the kibbutz - the kibbutz members - were not willing...There would always be decisions we would implement and those we wouldn't. I know for sure that here does not lie the boundary that upon crossing it our lives in the kibbutz would be ruined…[68]

Boris Groys has argued that 20th-century socialism was instructed by a demiurgic pretension (2011). Its ambitious revolutionary projects of modernization and collectivization relied on a view of society as malleable raw material to be molded by a revolutionary vanguard according to moral and scientific principles. In this third position in the debate before us we can identify the gradual postmodern (or late socialist) exhaustion of this demiurgic belief. Kibbutz ideals should conform to social reality, not the other way around. The kibbutz was not able to enforce equality because the "kibbutz members were not willing." Eli's use of *stichia* is indicative here. In Chapter 3, we will see that *stichia* was a central negative term in kibbutz discourse and in socialist discourse more broadly. *stichia* is the spontaneous chaotic flow of social process which has to be tamed and directed by scientific revolutionary consciousness. For Eli, the kibbutz should not try to tame *stichia* but should rather conform to its "wisdom." The practical implications are not to change the rules and decisions in the kibbutz, only to adopt a selective reading of them: "There would always be decisions that we implement and those we won't." The existing decisions and norms are to remain intact, they should only be taken with a grain of salt.

In the pro-sanction position, we have seen one reaction to the revealed weakness of the kibbutz in its post-ideological, late-socialist period in the 1970s. In this third, pragmatic no-sanction position, we find a second reaction: compromise and cynicism. The kibbutz should

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[68] Ibid.

tacitly accept its inability to enforce its norms in full and tolerate a growing number of minor violations. Instead of trying to close the gap between ideals and reality through stricter enforcement of norms, it should informally accept the gap by adopting selective enforcement of decisions and rules. Yurchak described the social reality in the late Soviet era as ruled by "cynical reason" (1997). The dominant subject position at this time was neither that of the dissident or the "crypto-dissident," nor that of the soul-searching subject of Stalinism, but that of *vnye*, an emic term that denoted a new cynical distance from official discourse. Those who were *vnye* participated in all the public rituals of Soviet public life but took the official discourse with a grain of salt, suspending its constative meanings (Yurchak 2006:128). The pragmatic no-sanction position can be seen as the kibbutz version of the late socialist *vnye*, adopting a cynical, suspended, selective reading of kibbutz ideals and admitting to a new fissure between official discourse and social reality.

The Debate Concluded (1980-1986)

By the 1980s, the cynical reason of the pragmatic no sanction camp became the unofficial policy of the kibbutz. In our case, it clearly won the day. After three meetings in 1980, the assembly made a telling, paradoxical decision.[69] On the one hand, it ratified the existing decisions on refrigerators and antennas in two resolutions: "(1) The antennas contradict our quality of life and should be taken down," and "(2) Members will hold only one refrigerator, and only the one supplied by the kibbutz." On the other hand, the assembly also voted against the two clauses of sanctions suggested by the Secretariat in order to enforce these prior decisions. So, the existing decisions were ratified but no further sanctions were authorized to back them.

[69] General Assembly Meeting, October 18, 1980. Box P11. KEHA.

Instead, the assembly instructs the Secretariat to hold further *berurim* with the violators, a step which was already tried and failed, its failure triggering the whole debate in the first place.

More than half a year later, in June 1981, the Secretariat returns to the assembly with the issue once again.[70] The Secretary explains that "a few months ago, the issue of big private refrigerators was presented here before the assembly, the Secretariat suggested enacting sanctions, but the kibbutz rejected the suggestion. However, it also instructed the Secretariat to continue dealing with the case in other ways. It was agreed to try to convince the members." At this point, this instruction was seen by the Secretariat as futile: "Only a few of the members in the Secretariat were actually willing to take on the task of individually talking with the members." And indeed "After this round of *berurim*, none of the members (besides one member) was willing to give up the refrigerator." Since this was the case, the Secretariat asks "to be relieved from the duty to further deal with the subject." The kibbutz settles the issue of refrigerators by leaving the formal decision against refrigerators intact but agreeing not to enforce it.

The antennas, on the other hand, make another appearance in the protocols, three years later. On Aug. 11, 1984, nine years after the violation first came up, the Secretary opens the assembly meeting with the following announcement:

> In light of the new forest of antennas that grew on the rooftops of members' apartments, the Secretariat sat down and thought about what to do with the existing kibbutz decision that does not authorize antennas and obliges the Secretariat to disallow their construction. Although, until today, we could see this decision as a parody, today we cannot continue

[70] General Assembly Meeting, June 6, 1981. Box P11. KEHA.

> to ignore it. Therefore, we ask the assembly to relieve us of the impossible task of going to all these members' apartments and asking them to take down the antennas. However, we are not proposing to **cancel** the decision, I am not disputing it, and therefore this is an open declaration and not a proposal for discussion and vote. [emphasis in the original][71]

The Secretary follows this request with a call on the kibbutz to solve the problem by building a central antenna that would make the private ones redundant. In other words, nine years after the issue was first brought up, the Secretariat practically admits its failure to enforce the kibbutz decision on the subject. It bypasses the problem of enforcement and turns to a technical (and, at the time, expensive) solution of constructing a central antenna. The "defeatist" announcement by the Secretariat irritates some of the members in the assembly. Arnon says that "the Secretariat's announcement was embarrassing." Tal protests and boldly claims that "everyone has to take down their antennas tomorrow!" Despite this dissatisfaction of some members, the debate that develops this time in the assembly is not about how to enforce the decision to take down the antennas, but about how quickly to build the central antenna that would bypass it. Some members argue for the urgent need to build the central antenna so as to solve the scandal once and for all, while others remind that the project is very costly and would mean giving up on much more urgent items in the annual investment plan. Indeed, the issue of antennas would be resolved only in 1986, eleven years after the kibbutz first tried to solve it, as the central antenna would be finally installed.

Conclusion: A New Social Contract for the Late-Socialist Kibbutz

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[71] General Assembly Meeting, August 11, 1981. Box P11. KEHA.

In the 1970s, a new weakness in the kibbutz's ability to enforce its norms was revealed. On the one hand, in this postmodern, late-socialist period the moral authority of the "public opinion" (*da'at hakahal*) in the kibbutz was in decline, yet, on the other hand, the kibbutz did not adopt an alternative system of legal sanction that might substitute for the decline in moral authority. The case before us can be seen as the gradual coming to terms of the kibbutz with this new challenge of the 1970s. In the first stages of the crisis in 1976, the reaction was *conservative*: the kibbutz tries to go the traditional way - through *berurim* and formal condemnations in the assembly. This does not bear fruit and it gradually becomes evident that something new is happening and the old ways do not work anymore. In this second phase, in 1980, the kibbutz seems to take a *reformist* approach. It tries to fix the decline in moral authority by introducing sanctions and cracking down on violators. But this move does not materialize. It is either blocked by the assembly, not implemented by the Secretariat, or is proven useless on the ground through the persistence of the violation for years. Finally, the kibbutz moves to a policy of *compromise* and *containment*. It partially accepts its new weakness and practically gives up on enforcing its decisions on antennas and refrigerators. The kibbutz does not question its basic norms of equality and central planning but seems to have adopted a new suspended, selective reading of them. As we have seen, for many contemporaries, this was frustrating and disappointing. However, it also allowed the kibbutz to contain its newly surfaced weakness. By turning a blind eye to a growing number of minor violations, it minimized the public exposure of its inability to enforce decisions - dangerous to any social order - and was able to stabilize social order without questioning the basic values of the kibbutz. At least for the time being.

Chapter 3 Things to Talk About: The Distribution of Goods and the Proliferation of Talk

When we see among the happiest people in the world, groups of peasants directing affairs of state under an oak, and always acting wisely, can we help but despise the refinements of those nations which render themselves illustrious and miserable by so much art and mystery?

J.J. Rousseau[72]

Going through the protocols of kibbutz general meetings from the 1970s and 1980s, one is struck by a remarkable characteristic: the length and seriousness with which the smallest things are discussed. Pages and pages are devoted to arduous Talmudic debates about the distribution of TVs, air conditioners, refrigerators, antennas, furniture, pergolas, bathtubs, vacations and more. Despite the prosaic nature of their objects, discussions are remarkably long, detailed and principled. The smallest disparities in distribution are discussed at length as important matters of principle and as serious threats to the kibbutz way of life. A meeting's agenda, from these decades, naturally combines sections devoted to such lofty ideological topics as "Our Position on the Political Alliance with the Labor Party" or "How can Yom Kippur be Given a Relevant Atheist Content in our Kibbutz," and right after them sections devoted to "The Issue of Tor's Vacation" or "The Dispute about the Cupboard in Living Quarter B." Remarkably, no substantial change in tone is detected in the transition from the former to the latter. The protocols carry a particular comic effect which lies in their specific mixture of high and low, important and unimportant; in the gap between their form: a principled, legalistic debate with

[72] Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. "The Social Contract." In *The Social Contract and The First and Second Discourses*, edited by Suzan Dunn, 148–256. New Haven, CT and London, UK: Yale University Press, 2002. p. 227.

long speeches, ideological clashes and formal decrees - and their content: the number of cities and restaurants one visits on one's vacation, or the length of one's bathtub.

The kibbutz appears through the protocols as a society saturated with talk. A society where everything needs in principle to be discussed, and where everything, down to the smallest thing, can become an object of a long debate. What explains the proliferation of talk in the kibbutz? What can it tell us about the kibbutz system?

The literature on socialism has noted the privileged place of language in state socialist societies. This is usually explained as a function of an ideological emphasis on consciousness, logos, and dogma in a socialist regime that legitimized itself through a rigorous "scientific" theory articulated in a well-defined corpus of Marxist-Leninist texts (Halfin 2009; Kotkin 1995; Yurchak 2006; Oushakine 2000). To a certain degree, this line of explanation also works for talk in the kibbutz. Indeed, in the first part of this chapter, we will see how the proliferation of talk emanated from an ideological commitment to public deliberation and the conscious self-fashioning of society.

But this chapter aims to show how the proliferation of talk in the kibbutz also emanated from the practical organization of its socialist system. More specifically, the chapter will explore the proliferation of talk as a function of the kibbutz's non-market economy and direct democratic procedures. Focusing on one case study from Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz in the beginning of the 1980s, the chapter will show how the daily function of the kibbutz's non-market system of goods distribution bred endless talk and dragging social conflict. Through the analysis of the case, we will see three structural reasons for the proliferation of talk. First, a just distribution of goods done "manually" without the use of the "automatic" distributive mechanisms of the market turned out to be a complex task that necessitated a lot of deliberation. Second, since the

distribution of goods in the kibbutz was the result of a conscious political decision, rather than of a supposedly "objective" market process, it was much more prone to political contestation, which meant more talk and debate. Finally, debates were prolonged even more because the decisions that were supposed to conclude them were constantly overturned. Therefore, the proliferation of talk resulted also from the fact that decisions in the kibbutz underwent only weak canonization.

Very broadly, the argument of this chapter is that the proliferation of talk in the kibbutz was a symptom of a society without fetish. More specifically, it was the result of the elimination, or at least the effort to eliminate, the two forms of fetish that bothered socialists the most: market fetishism and the fetishism inherent in the rule of law. The notion of fetish is a specifically modern problem born through the colonial encounter between Europeans and West Africans in the sixteenth century (Pietz 1985:5-6). From the perspective of the morality of Western modernity, with its new emphasis on the interiority, immateriality, and autonomy of agency, fetishism was the name given to the "false" attribution of agency to "external" objects (Keane 2007). The one who fetishizes invests external bodies (objects, texts, persons) with agency and authority and then misrecognizes his own invested agency as residing in the external body itself.

Socialist modernity had its own particular interpretation of fetish derived from Marx's analysis of the fetishism of the commodity. The commodity, and more broadly the market, are human-made, socially produced things, but in capitalist society, they are treated as if they were natural. Bourgeois society puts its political fate in the hands of the spontaneous fluctuations of the market as if they were an unchangeable *force majeure* like the weather or a natural disaster. That the bourgeoisie misrecognizes (or disavows) its own agency has a moral implication: it shirks from its moral responsibility to address material misery and inequality because these are

constructed as the products of quasi-natural economic processes. This is why the elimination of the market is the first step in a socialist revolution. Before equality can be administered, society needs to reclaim control over the economy, divesting the market from agency and taking it back to itself (Groys 2010:XV-XXIV). That in the kibbutz, the distribution of goods demanded so much talk was because the kibbutz insisted that goods distribution be done in a conscious agentive manner. It should not be delegated to the market, nor to other external, automatic mechanisms.

But socialists were worried about another form of fetish in bourgeois society: that of the liberal rule of law. The socialist critique of legal fetish, already found in Marx, was further developed in the 1920s by the Soviet legal theorist Evgeni Pashukhanis. Like the market, laws are also human-made things. But in the liberal rule of law, with its obsession for legality, laws are treated as if they were a natural, objective barrier that constrains political agency from "without." Pashukhanis argued that fetishizing a rigid, transcendent system of laws was necessary in capitalism because the latter was based on the antagonism of private interests. But in a socialist society, where political power is in the hands of the interest-less "universal class," the proletariat, working for the common good, there is no reason for the law to cripple politics. In simple terms, since politics is now "good," since it is now only "us," the former "have-nots" in the room, after having chased away all the oppressors and exploiters, administering our business equitably, the law can and should become not a rigid constraint on politics but a flexible administrative tool in the service of politics (Pashukhanis 1924:134-188; Kamenka and Tay 1971). The constant dispute and overturning of decisions that prolonged the debates about goods distribution was the product of the commitment of the kibbutz to de-fetishize its own laws. In

administering distributive justice, the assembly's agency was supposed to be completely free of any artificial external constraints, including its own decisions from the previous week.

This chapter contributes to the two overarching arguments of this dissertation. First, it shows how the elimination of the market in the socialist kibbutz entailed the reproduction of a shared substantive culture. It does that by showing how distributing goods without the automatic mechanisms of the market engaged kibbutzniks in a constant process of deliberation in an attempt to reach shared agreements and understandings. But the chapter also shows how this substitution of market mechanisms with conscious deliberation was problematic. The proliferation of talk in the kibbutz was also the expression of unending debates and dragging social conflicts. As we will shortly see, the process of public deliberation was experienced by many members as excessive and exhausting. In other words, the chapter also contributes to the description of what I call the chronic crisis of social mediation that resulted from the elimination of the market in the kibbutz. Institutionalization is the main paradigm of the research on the late socialist kibbutz (Talmon Graeber 1972; Cohen 1983; Gan 2006) and late socialism in general (Yurchak 2006). But if institutionalization necessarily entails "fetishizing" existing arrangements, how does a society that is ideologically committed to the elimination of social fetish institutionalize? This chapter argues that the problem of the kibbutz was not that it froze and was bureaucratized, but on the contrary: its problem was one of failed institutionalization.

The chapter has three parts. It starts by shortly discussing the central place of talk in kibbutz ideology. It then moves to consider the place of talk in the experience of daily life in the kibbutz, showing how sitting in long boring meetings became a significant part of the experience of being a kibbutznik. Finally, it shows the proliferation of talk as practice by closely analyzing one case study: a debate about the distribution of vacations in Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz in the early

1980s. In this part, we will see in detail how the proliferation of talk on the kibbutz was afforded by its non-market economic system and its "de-fetishized" law.

Talk as Ideology: *stichia, Berur, siha*

The centrality of talk in the kibbutz was associated with the privileged role of consciousness and collective agency. Kibbutz ideology was instructed by a notion that social life cannot be left to run its own course but should be constantly reflected upon and corrected in order for it to conform to the right ideals. A negatively charged term that returns in many newspapers and meeting protocols from the kibbutz of the period was *stichia*. In Greek, *stichia* denotes the "forces of nature." It seeped into the Russian revolutionary discourse of the turn of the century, and was baptized in Lenin's "What is to be done?" (2013[1902]). In this context, *stichia* (translated as "spontaneity" in English) came to mean the undirected objective flow of social processes. Lenin critiqued rival socialists for relying on *stichia*, being in this context the spontaneous revolutionary outbursts of the masses, instead of the conscious direction of the revolution by the Party (see also: Clark 2000). In the kibbutz, it was used to denounce situations in which daily social life went undiscussed and all sorts of injustices and threats to the kibbutz way of life developed unattended.

A positive counter concept, equally widespread, was *berur* (literally: "sorting out" or "figuring out," plural: *berurim*). *Berur* meant thoroughly discussing a subject in order to exhaust it and consciously decide how to act upon it. Here is an example of a classic emic use of *stichia* and *berur*. In 1979, a member in Ein HaMifratz suggested to the assembly that the kibbutz carry out a series of communal discussions (*berurim*) about the pressing problem of the corrosion of real equality in the kibbutz:

> I am almost sure that many sitting here today remember the tradition in our kibbutz to hold collective *berurim* - an attempt to be on top of things rather than drifting along with the *stichia*. This is what we tried to do for many years as a society that plans its collective life. We had the name of a kibbutz that observes principles… In the last couple of years, this tradition has withered away. We are dragged by different developments, not necessarily negative, but we have ceased to hold our hands on the wheel… I do not remember when was the last time we had a quiet and thorough *berur* on kibbutz principles.[73]

Note that the problem is not that the recent developments, by which "we are dragged," are negative, but merely that they are spontaneous, that social reality drags us, instead of us directing it.

In order to counter *stichia*, kibbutz set up a system in which all spheres of social life would be directed through conscious collective discussion. Issues of principle were brought in front of the general assembly. But the work of the assembly was complemented by a robust structure of special committees (*va'adot*) made of rank-and-file members. In an entry from the newspaper of Kibbutz Asif, published in 1977, a full list of active committees in the kibbutz is provided:

> Secretariat, Economic Committee, Finances Committee, Technical Committee, Security Committee, Safety Committee , Social Committee, Education Committee, High School Committee, Health Committee , Rehabilitation Committee, Youngsters Committee,

[73] General Assembly Meeting. May 26, 1979. Box P11. KEHA.

> Admissions Committee, Soldiers Committee, Volunteers Committee , Culture Committee, Shabbat Committee, Political Committee, Sports Committee, Movies Committee, Technical Crew, Newspaper Committee, Club Committee, Library Committee, Archive, Kibbutz 30th Anniversary Celebrations Committee, Manpower Committee, Work Committee, Studies and Professional Education Committee, Appointing Committee, Consumption Committee, Members Committee, Footwear Committee, Vehicles Committee, Audit Committee.[74]

The total number of committees is 35, and this is for a community of no more than 250 members! The ratio is 1 committee per 7 people. Regardless of this astounding ratio, kibbutz Ein HaMifratz had a long debate in 1979 surrounding a proposal to establish a new committee: Kibbutz Committee.[75] The proposed assignment of the Kibbutz Committee was to take care of all the things that were apparently left unattended by all other committees.

Finally, the importance of talk in kibbutz was reflected in one more small detail. In the kibbutzim of the *HaShomer HaTza'ir* movement like Ein HaMifratz and Asif, the general assembly was called *sihat hakibbutz* ("kibbutz conversation") or simply *hasiha* ("the conversation"). This choice is abnormal in Hebrew, which would regularly prefer *asefa* ("assembly") or *mo'atza* ("council") and is endemic to this movement's discourse. So you get sentences like the following that sound strange in Hebrew just as they do in English: *hasiha hehlita lesarev labakasha* - "the conversation decided to decline the request."

Talk as Experience: Boredom, Fatigue, and Disorientation

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[74] "From the Appointing Committee". December 18, 1977. *Our Lives*. KAA.
[75] General Assembly Meeting. November 17, 1979. Box P9. KEHA.

One cannot understand what it means to be a kibbutznik without reconstructing the experience of sitting in long boring meetings. Every member was expected to participate regularly in general kibbutz meetings and the work of the committees. As many things in the kibbutz, there was no formal sanction to do so but plenty of informal pressure was applied. Not attending general meetings was considered an act of self-centeredness, indifference and lack of responsibility. In a system that perceived itself as relying purely on the voluntary participation of its members, the constant decline in numbers of participants in weekly meetings, since the 1960s, was seen as a dangerous sign of ideological disintegration. In the 1970s and 1980s, the "status of the assembly" was a frequent topic of concern throughout the kibbutz movement. It is constantly mentioned in complaints about the crisis of the kibbutz. In 1978, the kibbutz movement's quarterly journal devoted a whole issue to the status of the assembly.[76] Authors in that issue regarded the assembly as a "mirror of kibbutz society" and as "the oxygen that allows the functioning of the kibbutz body." The decline in participation was decried as "a serious problem" and a "hard and dangerous ailment.".

All across the kibbutz movement, general kibbutz meetings were held every Saturday night from 21:00 to 23:00. However, many times, meetings would continue past that hour, and we have plenty of evidence to that in the protocols. One example we have already seen in the critical speech about televisions in the introduction chapter, in which the speaker says that it is "already 23:20 and we are still at it." Another example: in 1976, the secretariat of Ein HaMifratz brings up an urgent issue of a member who refuses to come back to work in the kibbutz after completing 3 years of work outside and argues that it is "important to discuss it tonight although

[76] *Hedim* 107 (March 1978).

it is already 23:45."[77] Sunday was a workday in the kibbutz, and according to a predominantly agricultural timetable workdays started typically at 6:00 am. So the race to finish the many issues for discussion on the agenda before members got too tired or even started walking out spontaneously was a constant problem for kibbutz institutions. In 1976, the protocol of a general assembly in Ein HaMifratz notes that discussion and vote on the issue of "the private construction of antennas" was postponed to the following week due to "mass abandonment" (*netisha hamonit*) of the meeting.[78] At the end of another assembly meeting in 1983, the chair gives the statistics of members' presence in the meeting, apparently as an amusing comment: " in the meeting's beginning: 77, at 22:00: 128, at 22:15: 158, after the distribution of popsicles: 50."[79]

There is evidence that from time-to-time meetings would get interesting and amusing. This would happen especially when sensitive personal matters, heated public controversies or scandals were discussed (Inbari 2009; Halfin 2019). In these occasions, general meetings would become a site of communal entertainment. But for the most part, meetings were boring. In the special issue of the kibbutz movement quarterly about the status of the assembly, two articles mentioned "members' boredom" as one of the assembly's main problems.[80] There was a recurring joke in my interviews with veteran kibbutzniks. When I asked how long exactly kibbutz meetings were in the 1970s and 1980s, many replied humorously with some version of the answer: "very long!", "too long!" etc. Hannah tells me: "it was frustrating, you had these people like Yanek, who could never shut up. They liked giving long, long speeches. They always

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[77] General Assembly Meeting. October 2, 1976. Box P9. KEHA.
[78] General Assembly Meeting. September 4, 1976. Box P9. KEHA
[79] General Assembly Meeting. July 2, 1983. Box P12. KEHA.
[80] Beeri, Yeshayahu. "There is no Alternative to the Kibbutz Assembly". *Hedim* 107 (March 1978). 116-117.

had something to say, even if the issue was very small. They liked talking so much that they did not care that it was late, and we were all so damn tired. And they did not say smart things, just talked and talked. And you had to listen to them because they had a right to talk." Although the floor was open for everyone to talk, it was usually a limited number of speakers who would repeatedly do so (Argaman 1997). In the protocols we see the same names repeat from week to week, while most of the public remains a passive spectator.

It is telling to look at photos of general kibbutz meetings. Figures 4, 5, and 6 are taken from a photo album by Peter Merom, the most famous photographer of the kibbutz, published in 1968. Figure 7 is a photo of an assembly meeting hung on the wall in Kibbutz Asif's archives. The photos give off an atmosphere of fatigue, boredom, gloom and aimlessness. I would like to direct the gaze of the reader to several details. First, to time killing practices - smoking and knitting - both of which were very common in kibbutz meetings. Following the gendered attribution of political indifference to women, that we have already seen in Chapter 1, the image of women knitting became a sign of the rank and file's indifference towards the assembly conversations. Second, note the recurring physical posture of leaning: standing and leaning on the wall or on one foot, sitting and leaning on one's arm. The need to support the body's regular upright posture with an arm, chair or table tells of a physical or psychological fatigue developed during a long meeting. Third, is a recurring facial expression, unmistakably endemic to a member in a kibbutz meeting - a very particular mixture of fatigue, boredom, daydreaming, and melancholy. It is this delicate, touching gloom on the faces of members that, I think, attracted Merom to zoom in on their faces. Note also that people's gazes are turned in all directions, not necessarily that of the speaker, which together with a dazed look in the eyes, indicate daydreaming and non-presence.

Figure 4 Merom, Peter. *Kibbutz Profiles*. Tel Aviv, Israel: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1968

Figure 5 Merom, Peter. *Kibbutz Profiles*. Tel Aviv, Israel: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1968

Figure 6 Merom, Peter. *Kibbutz Profiles*. Tel Aviv, Israel: Hakibbutz Hameuchad. 1968

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Figure 7 Photo of an assembly meeting in Asif, hung on the wall of the kibbutz's archives, unspecified date. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Talk as Practice: The Vacations *Takanon*

I move now to show how the proliferation of talk was afforded by the kibbutz's system of goods distribution. From now on, my discussion will follow a single case study: a debate about the distribution of vacations in Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz, in the early 1980s. As other goods, vacations abroad were centrally distributed by the kibbutz according to principles of equality. Following the rise in living standards in the 1970s, there was a sharp increase and diversification of travel abroad. Therefore, in the early 1980s, Ein HaMifratz set out to draft a new *takanon* that would regulate this new field. *Takanon* (plural: *takanonim*) was an important instrument in regulating social life in the kibbutz. It was an internal document of rules and regulations. The

takanon is usually seen as the main tool and symbol of the bureaucratization of the kibbutz in late socialism. One of the central roles of the *takanonim* was the regulation of goods distribution. Our case deals with the drafting, approving, and disputing of a new vacation *takanon* in Ein HaMifratz in the years 1982-1984. The primary sources are the protocols of the meetings of Ein HaMifratz's general assembly.

Vacations *Takanon* - Phase 1: Drafting

Drafting the new vacations *takanon* was a concerted effort of two different committees, as well as the secretariat, and the general assembly. In September 1983, a draft of the new *takanon* was presented to the general assembly by David, the chair of the joint drafting committee.[81] The *takanon* is extremely detailed and complex, and I will try to summarize it in as concise a fashion as possible. Determining who is entitled for a vacation was done through a point system. Each member would get 10 annual points and 4 annual days-off. A member was eligible for a kibbutz-funded trip once she has accumulated a certain number of points and days. On this basic formula, a great number of special clauses and qualifications were added. These included, among others, special provisions for youngsters and the elderly, different caps on days and points that one can accumulate, a distinction between domestic vacations and vacations abroad, and many more.

The most important part of the *takanon* was the distinction between different forms of travel abroad. I will present it in some detail because it is important in appreciating the level of complexity and meticulousness of the discussion. In the 1970s, a growing number of members were able to travel abroad for a variety of reasons other than vacation. This presented a serious

[81] General Assembly Meeting. September 17, 1983. Box P12. KEHA.

problem for equality because some members traveled abroad, while others did not. The vacation *takanon* tried to compensate for this inequality by penalizing these trips in vacation points. In order to do so, it had to carefully distinguish between the different kinds of trips abroad: **Work-related trips** were defined as business trips requested and sponsored by one of the kibbutz work branches, usually the factory. David says this is a "simple and precise definition," and these trips, of course, are mostly work and therefore do not cost members their vacation points. **Study-related trips and professional trips** were "a problem," according to David:

> In the last couple of years, especially in studies-related trips, we realized that the trip's plan consists of a small recreation and vacation component. We could not decide exactly how big that component is, and because this clause refers to a rather small group of people in the kibbutz with whom we can talk and find out exactly what that component was, we decided to sort it out (*levatze'a berur*) personally with each member and deduct points accordingly.

Sports and culture-related trips were also" problematic," according to David: "It has been a controversial issue for many years" But since the members who engage in these activities "take part in groups that are not subjected to the decisions of Ein HaMifratz... we did not think it right to… deduct points, within a certain limit." The *takanon* determines that below 3 weeks, these kinds of trips would not count as a vacation, and above 3 weeks each case would be sorted out and judged specifically. The committee was not able to solve in this *takanon* the controversy over whether the kibbutz should provide pocket money for members on these trips. **Visiting relatives abroad** was a complex issue since it was both intimate, expensive, and involved "private money," that is, help from family abroad to fund tickets. A complex set of calculations

and regulations was applied here with the intent that private money help the kibbutz fund these sensitive trips, while at the same time limiting it as a potential source of privilege and inequality. The most controversial kind of trip in this discussion, as we will soon see**,** was **political activity abroad (*shlihut*).** David says that there was a "heated argument" about this issue. Members who spent a period of time abroad on behalf of the kibbutz movement, called *shlihim* (singular: *shaliah*), were deducted 40 vacation points (on the account that *shlihut* counts as "40% vacation").

In the very abbreviated excerpts above of what in reality is a much more complex and detailed document, we can start to appreciate the amount of text - written and spoken - that went into the distribution of just this one consumer good. The minutes also give some clues as to the *takanon's* long process of production before reaching this first discussion in the assembly. The *takanon* was prepared over several months by a joint forum of three committees. The forum had, David reveals, "14-16 meetings", in which committee members put "very intensive work… Every word was examined…" Throughout his explanation he highlights the numerous "heated disputes" that erupted over several clauses. At the end of the explanation, we learn that an open meeting in the club will be held so that all members could come and ask questions about the *takanon*. We also learn that at least one or two additional full-length meetings of the general assembly were planned before approval. As we will see shortly, this process was prolonged even more as a heated dispute broke out over the status of *shlihim*, those who spent time abroad for political activity.

We can already see the first connection between talk and the non-market political economy in the kibbutz. The distribution of goods necessitates a lot of talk because it is based on an ongoing process of accounting. In a market system, the value of things and who is entitled to

them is determined through the price mechanism, that is, through the "automatic" calculative mechanism of the market. In the kibbutz, the market was annulled, and the same operations had to be done "manually." In order to ensure distributive justice, accounting was taken from the hands of the market and put in the hands of society. Therefore, there was a pressing need to determine the value of goods and the keys to their distribution. This process proved to be very complex: Should political activity abroad be classified together with work-related trips? Will it be 40 or 50 points deducted for political activity abroad? Is a member above 70 entitled to 25 or 20 annual vacation points? All these questions needed, in principle, to be thought about and discussed.

Accounting was especially complicated in the kibbutz because it practiced "real" rather than "formal" equality. The Kibbutz distributive system was based on the principle "to each according to his needs" ("real" equality) and not on the mechanical distribution of an equal sum to each ("formal" equality) (Getz and Rosner 1996). As Getz and Rosner argue (1996:33), in "formal" equality, figuring out how much each member should get is quite easy, as it relies on a set formula: the sum allocated for distribution divided by the number of people. The "needs" in "to each according to his needs" is an undetermined, open-ended, and always relative term. It is not clear what exactly counts as a need, and how to choose between conflicting needs. It necessitates, therefore, a much more intensive, intimate, and nuanced discussion. Note how committed the kibbutz to having that discussion as a way to get at real, accurate equality. For example, in the vacations *takanon* before us, when the committee was unable to determine how large exactly the recreation component in "studies related trips" was, it decided to talk personally with each member of this category in order to sort out how large the component actually was in

each specific case and deduct points accordingly, instead of "mechanically" imposing a universal penalty on all of them.

Vacations *takanon* - Phase 2: Debating

From the protocol of a general meeting held in January 1984, four months after the vacations *takanon* was first presented to the assembly, we learn that it has not been approved yet.[82] A dispute had broken out over the status of the *shlihim*. In the proposed *takanon*, *shlihut* was penalized 40 vacation points out of a 100 because on the one hand, *shlihim* got to spend time abroad, while on the other hand, *shlihut* was not a full-blown vacation. Several families of *shlihim* disputed this arrangement claiming that it is unjust and brought the discussion before the general assembly. A debate broke out about whether *shlihut* should be deducted 40 points, a different sum of points, or not be deducted at all.

In the opening remarks, we can recognize the two basic positions in such debates in the kibbutz: the moral commitment to an exhaustive discussion, on the one hand, and the exhaustion from discussion, on the other. Yoel, who presents the case on behalf of the *shlihim*, opens the discussion with a criticism of the drafting committee for failing to properly discuss the matter with the *shlihim*:

> It is hard to be satisfied with how things turned out… I asked to appear before the committee… I was told that no, there is no time to hear me, because the committee's coordinator [David] already brought the issue before the assembly. I asked that the committee hear me. I want to make it clear: I am not going to argue about zero, a hundred

[82] General Assembly Meeting. January 4, 1984. Box P12. KEHA.

> or fifty points, I am arguing about the principle that I will be heard... It is unacceptable that a kibbutz member asks to speak before a committee, and even if the committee does not accept his opinion, he asks to be heard. No, they do not let him speak!
>
> After I saw that the process is becoming more and more rigid, I turned to kibbutz secretary and told him that it is impossible - there are several families who live here, and of whom kibbutz demands to work and to put in their efforts for the collective good - and officials are unwilling to listen to them….
>
> What I am asking today is to return the whole issue to the committee, that the committee will hear the families of *shlihim*… What is important for me is the principle that I be heard. Tomorrow some other member would turn to a kibbutz official, and the official would answer him: "I do not have to discuss this with you, go speak to the assembly." This is a basic principle of democracy, and they wave before me all the time with "democratic procedures..." In the youth movement, I spoke about Martin Buber and the "divine spark" and about the intimate relations between members - and all of this in the totality of kibbutz life - and I come here to what? There is none of that! None of that is fulfilled (Chair: Buber was never in Ein HaMifratz…)... I ask to bring this back to the committee, this time with the willingness to listen to the families, not to all of them together but to each couple separately…

Yoel evokes the kibbutz's moral commitment to exhaustive deliberation. In the answer of David, the drafting committee's chair, we see the other side of the coin: the frustration and exhaustion from a long process of discussion:

> The whole debate that Yoel sees fit to open all over again is redundant and does not advance anything… My only request is to vote. I would like a preliminary vote that would determine that <u>any majority</u> is enough, and that the proposal would either be accepted or denied today, whatever happens. For all I care, the kibbutz can distribute a hundred, two hundred, or any number of points it wants, I simply do not care! I want to finish with this! [emphasis and enlargement of text in the original].
>
> And to the issue of the big dictator - i.e., myself - who did not want to hear those who wanted to appear before the committee - woe is me! ... I see that not everyone understands the work process. The work process was long and exhausting. Four drafts were composed… At the time when I was asked by the *shlihim* to come and speak to the committee - and I saw before my eyes not one or two, but fifteen *shlihim* - we had already sat in endless meetings without advancing much because we wanted to check everything. I thought innocently that at this time no, they can't come and speak to the committee and open everything again.
>
> The thing that broke me with the case of the *shlihim* was that there were already three different proposals on the table that covered all possible solutions to the case… so what is there more to talk about?

This time, David's position was defeated, and the matter was opened for discussion again. The debate about the *shlihim* revolved around an ontological question: is *shlihut* more like a work-related trip, and therefore should not be penalized in vacation points, or is it more like a vacation and therefore should be penalized? I reproduce this debate in some detail so that the reader can appreciate how in its very daily practice, the non-market system of goods distribution prompted

kibbutzniks to debate about and create agreements on philosophical and ethical issues - that is, to create a shared, substantive culture.

Yoram argues that the distinction that the *takanon* makes between *shlihut* and work-related trips is incorrect and unjust. He offers an alternative categorization:

> … the *shlihim* were put in a distinct category, while I do not see them as such. In the proposals that I offered to the committee, I spoke of "trips on duty" and "trips not on duty," "trips approved by the kibbutz" and "trips unapproved by the kibbutz." I argued that the same criterion for all trips on duty would be applied in the case of the *shlihim*. My offer was declined… No other kind of trip abroad was penalized, only the *shlihut*. This does not seem right to me….

He then moves to provide an historical-legal proof for his ontological claim by showing that in the past, kibbutz law did not think about *shlihut* and work-related trips as two distinct categories:

> I have found the kibbutz vacation *takanon* from 1963. It says: *members who spent time abroad in the last couple of years would not be taken into consideration for a trip abroad at this time, including shlihim, visitors of relatives, and business trips*. So in 1963, the kibbutz did not distinguish between *shlihut* and other trips on duty.

Whether *shlihut* is closer to work or to vacation depends on whether, and how much the *shlihim* enjoyed themselves on the trip. Yoram argues that the *shlihim* did not enjoy themselves:

> There are many members who have seen much more of the world than I did, why are they not deducting points from them? … I remember that it was customary back then that two weeks before his return from abroad, the *shaliah* would be released from work duties and would not get any money or any proper conditions - and this was his famous "vacation" abroad… I was not miserable but presenting me as someone who has seen the world is not correct and is dishonorable.

On the other hand, Arad, the *shlihim's* main opponent, argues that they did have fun:

> In comparison with the absolute majority of the kibbutz members, the *shlihim* population is not deprived at all. Many of them have traveled and have seen much more of the world than other members of their own age and seniority… In those years when the *shlihim* got to go abroad, most of the members did not even dream of going abroad, and of course not in the same conditions that the *shlihim* had. I do not accept the argument that the *shlihim* lived badly and were starving for bread. At least those that I saw were not!

Uzi angrily rejects Arad's assertion, pointing out that *shlihut* was a cumbersome ideological mission, not a fun trip:

> Arad's words made me mad. I would expect him to check things more thoroughly before he speaks, because the level that he talked about was 20 or 50 times more than what the *shlihim* actually got. We are not talking here about amazing trips or a wonderful standard of living… The *shlihim*, paid a high price for being away from home. No one from the *shlihim* went to do his job abroad just in order to live abroad. This was an

educational/personal challenge of the first degree, that we have wrestled with when we were abroad, in the Diaspora.

In proving that the *shlihut* was an ethical mission, not a fun trip, Uzi uses tropes of ideological struggle: the *shlihut* was an "educational challenge that we wrestled with" - a common trope from youth movement discourse which signals the hardships experienced in the long climb towards fulfilling the ideological mission.[83] Second, he uses the term "in the Diaspora" (*bagola*) instead of "abroad" (*behul*) to designate the place of the *shlihut*. In this cultural context, "abroad" (*hul*) is where vacations or other regular trips take place, "Diaspora" (*gola*), on the other hand, is the site of ideological-political work, the "low" place from which Jews should be convinced to make *aliyah*.

In this second phase of the discussion about vacations, we see another connection between the proliferation of talk in the kibbutz and its socialist political economy. Discussions about the distribution of goods on the kibbutz are prolonged even more because they tend to escalate into long ethical and philosophical debates. The reason is that unlike in market societies, the distribution of goods in the kibbutz is clearly framed as a moral and political issue. Rather than letting the market distribute goods automatically or "accidentally," the kibbutz distributes things consciously and intentionally in order to sustain social justice. Since distributive decisions are intentional and since they are supposed to serve a moral and political goal: to ensure equality, they also become more readily an object of dispute. In other words, like the prevalence of moral

[83] Feher et al. show how this semantic field of "struggle" was central to communist formal discourse: "Everyone is on the 'front'. There is the 'cultural front', a 'work front' an 'economic front' - and in all fronts one has to 'fight'....one has to 'fight' for the realization of the five-year plans, the production of coal is the 'battle for coal'... (1983:197)

complaints, the proliferation of talk is another index of the specific way in which the non-market economy "moralized" socio-economic reality by highlighting its source in intentional moral decisions. As Groys puts it:

> In the Soviet Union, it was in theory just as possible to protest against the shoes or eggs or sausage then available in the stores as it was to protest against the official doctrines of historical materialism. They could be criticized in the same terms because these doctrines had the same original source as the shoes, eggs, and sausage - namely, the relevant decisions of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU. Everything in communist existence was the way it was because someone had said that it should be thus and not otherwise. And everything that is decided in language can be criticized linguistically as well (Groys 2010:xxI).

Vacations *takanon* - Phase 3: Reopening the Debate

At the end of the assembly meeting that I described in phase 2, the kibbutz voted to decline the appeal of the *shlihim*. The proposed arrangement made originally by the committee that the *shlihim* would receive 60 out of the 100 points was confirmed. Although this vote in January was supposed to settle the issue, we find another long debate about it in July of the same year.[84] This time it is a private dispute by a member named Tor requesting to get the full 100 retroactive points although he was on *shlihut* back in the 1960s and should receive only 60 points. Tor's argument was that his *shlihut* was 25 years ago when conditions were very harsh. For example, he claimed, when he lived abroad, he did not have his own apartment but slept in

[84] General Assembly Meeting. May 8, 1984. Box P12. KEHA.

the movement's branch, and when he headed back to Israel, he had to hitchhike part of the way. Therefore, his *shlihut* should not be counted as a "semi-vacation" like that of later *shlihim*, should not cost him the 40 points, and he should be eligible for a trip this year. The Members Committee, in charge of approving trips, is undecided about whether he should be granted the trip or not, so it brings the issue before the assembly. Another long and heated dispute spread out over five densely typed pages ensues.

We can see here a third reason for the proliferation of talk in the kibbutz: the constant overturning of decisions. Decisions are supposed to conclude debates and end talk, but if they are constantly revisited, talk continues. Even after the long process of drafting the *takanon* by the committee ("14-16 meetings"), the first group appeal by the *shlihim*, the bitter debates in at least two general meetings, several inconclusive votes, and finally the formal approval of the assembly, the whole issue of the *shlihim* is reopened for a third discussion following Tor's special case.

The overturning of recently approved decisions was a common occurrence in the kibbutz and a common source of complaint.[85] Decisions were frequently overturned because they underwent only weak canonization. If their content was proven retroactively to hinder rather than secure real equality, even just a little, as was the case with Tor, there was a lot of pressure to change them. Their form as laws, i.e., the fact that they underwent a formal procedure of

[85] In the 1978 special issue of the kibbutz quarterly on the status of the assembly, Yuzhek Limon writes: "The status of the assembly is deteriorating because of the incoherence of our decisions. The mere fact that you can offhandedly cancel the decisions of a former meeting, does not add to its status." in: *Hedim* 107 (March 1978). 158. In the local newspaper in Kibbutz Asif in 1983, one of the members complains about a specific assembly meeting saying that "...things became strange: following several disputes, decisions from last week's meeting fell one by one, as if they were decided upon a week ago only out of absent-mindedness or a lack of public common sense… how, anyway, does it happen that decisions of one meeting are so easily canceled by another?"

approval, held little social authority and many times was not enough to keep them unchanged. But why was this the attitude towards decisions in the kibbutz?

Defetishized Law

My argument is that this attitude to decisions, and the additional amounts of talk that it afforded, was the result of the effort to defetishize the law in the kibbutz. In order to explain this point, I will first zoom out and show what I think is the relevant ideological context: the critique of legal fetish in Marxist thought. I will then zoom in again and show how the same moral attitude to law played out in our debate.

Socialism had a natural suspicion towards the rule of law as part of its critique on the merely formal-legal, rather than real-material justice of bourgeois morality. Instead of intervening at the level of political economy, where real material inequality and misery are reproduced, bourgeois morality artificially restricts itself to the realm of formal legal rights such as the equality before the law or the equal right to vote. In *On the Jewish Question,* Marx equated the fetish of the rule of law in capitalism with the religious fetish of the Talmud in Judaism:

> The law, without basis or reason, of the Jew, is only the religious caricature of morality and right in general; the purely *formal* rites which the world of self-interest encircles itself. Here again, the supreme condition of man is his *legal* status, his relationship to laws which are valid for him not because they are the laws of his own will and nature, but because they are dominant and any infraction of them will be *avenged.* Jewish Jesuitism, the same practical Jesuitism that Bauer discovers in the Talmud, is the relationship of the world of self-interest to the laws which govern this world, laws which this world devotes its principal arts to circumventing (1978[1843]:51. emphasis in the original).

Fetish appears here in its two popular meanings: as false attribution of agency and as a perverted game. First, both the religious Jew and the capitalist subject misrecognize their own agency invested in the law as if it belongs to the law itself. They submit to external, human-made mechanisms as if they were a real, natural constraint on human agency. Second, this submission is perverted because both the Talmudic Jew and the bourgeois subject play a game: they submit to laws that they themselves made as if they were natural and then play all kinds of tricks to circumvent and cheat them.

In the Soviet Union, the most prominent figure in pursuing this anti-legalistic kernel in Marxist thought was Evgeni Pashukhanis. In the 1920s, Pashukhanis, at the time the leading legal theorist in the Soviet Union, argued that in the new communist society, the very attitude towards the rule of law, and not only the content of laws, should radically change. Pashukhanis laid out a Marxist theory of law, and a detailed plan for how the rule of law should function in the new communist society being built in the Soviet Union (Pashukanis 1924). Pashukhanis argued that in capitalism, fetishizing the rule of law was a structural necessity because capitalism is a social formation based on antagonism. Liberal-capitalist politics is based on the struggle and compromise between private interests. The fight of all against all that characterizes capitalism necessitates the rigid, transcendent arbitration of the rule of law. But in communism, political power is operated in unison by the proletariat - the universal class with no private interest - in accordance with the general good. Therefore, there is no need to fetishize the law. There is no need for a rigid, transcendent framework that would constrain politics from without. The law can become a flexible (that is, non-fetishized, non-sacred) administrative tool in the service of politics (Kamenka and Tay 1971). Pashukanis expressed this idea concisely in a speech in 1930:

> In bourgeois-capitalist society, the legal superstructure should have maximum immobility, maximum stability, because it represents a firm framework for the movement of the economic forces whose bearers are capitalist entrepreneurs … Among us it is different. We require that our legislation possess maximum elasticity ... law occupies among us ... a subordinate position with reference to politics. We have a system of proletarian politics, but we have no need for any sort of juridical system of proletarian law (cited in Kamenka and Tay 1971:134).

In other words, since after the revolution, politics serves the general good rather than private interests, it should be absolutely free from any artificial, external constraints. In the kibbutz, the constant overturning of decisions should be seen as the local version of this idea. The political agency of the collective in the kibbutz, embodied in the assembly, should be able to act freely and freshly at each concrete juncture. It may be legitimately constrained by objective circumstances such as financial dire straits or lack of manpower, but its hands cannot be tied by any artificial (that is, human-made, fetishized) constraints, not even its own decisions from last week.

Defetishization or Stability?

The gravity of this moral emphasis was indexed in our case study in the debate between two paradigmatic positions. The first, held by Tor and his camp, made the argument in favor of not fetishizing existing procedures and reopening the debate in light of the new facts that were revealed. Here is Moshe:

> ...we should rethink the whole issue of *shlihim's* trips, which, as we remember, has left a lot of bitter feelings and unfinished business… With all due respect to the committee that

> has put a great effort into drafting the *takanon*, I think we should reexamine the whole matter according to the situation on the ground… My proposal is… to create some kind of graded calculation of the *shlihim's* points. In the case of those who went in the last few years, a 40-point deduction is reasonable. But those who went many years ago - and we don't have many of them - it is known that their conditions were harsh, and this should be taken into consideration. I think it is possible to create some kind of offset and gradation according to the conditions under which the *shlihim* served. The mechanical decision that was accepted earlier is not flexible enough and is not becoming of a kibbutz.

Note the connection that this position makes between defetishizing decisions and administering real, rather than merely formal justice. Holding to the previous decision is "mechanical," that is, thoughtless, automatic, and therefore unjust, on two accounts. First, the decision applied the universal formula on both the old and the new *shlihim,* ignoring the differences between them. Doing so, it applied the law mechanically, thoughtlessly, instead of acting with agency and addressing the situation in all its particularity, that is, instead of taking the initiative and making the distinction between the old and new *shlihim*. This mechanical, thoughtless lack of agency has moral implications: it is unable to administer real justice because it is unable to take into consideration the real-life differences between the old and the new *shlihim*. Second, it is also "mechanical" in the sense that sticking to the decision now, after it has already been revealed that it does not reflect reality and that it creates an injustice, means fetishizing it for no reason. Taken together, this is the whole logic behind the kibbutz's system of real rather than formal equality. Instead of mechanically, blindly applying universal set formulas with no regard to

material differences on the ground, it goes down to details in order to effectively administer real justice, one that really reflects the situation on the ground.[86]

But this is not to say that every single decision in the kibbutz was overturned or that the moral force of the call to refrain from fetishizing decisions was absolute. There was a strong counter argument to give social arrangements minimal stability so as to make collective life reasonable and manageable. Constantly reopening and changing decisions not only postponed the implementation of plans, but also ran the danger of setting a precedent for similar demands by other members and this way further destabilizing the fragile consensus so painstakingly achieved.

In our case, the speakers who opposed Tor's request granted that injustice was done to him, but that the need to defend the fragile consensus around the *takanon* was more important. Shalom argued that the *takanon* is in the "first labor pains of its implementation," and it "would not be smart to grope in it… There is a possibility that some injustices were done… but we would open for ourselves a series of discussions before we even let the child be born." Furthermore, the precedent set in Tor's case would legitimize members of other categories to find similar minor inequalities in the *takanon* and torture the kibbutz with repeated appeals. Incorporating the distinction between old and new *shlihim*, Genia argues, would "open a Pandora's Box that we would then not know how to close" because other inequalities can be revealed if we start looking for historical justice:

[86] Note that in a system of real equality even equality should not be fetishized as people with different needs and circumstances end up getting different, that is, unequal amounts.

> Concerning Meir's proposal to set graded standards for different types of *shlihut*, the same goes for vacations abroad: those who went on vacation 20 years ago also went in a standard much lower than today - they traveled on donkeys, they traveled to Crete... Is there a way to equalize everything, to set everything completely straight? No. So, in my opinion, the approach should be everything in its time. What was in the past - is in the past, what is today should be judged according to today's reality.

Amihai begs and abhors Tor to show public responsibility and refrain from dragging the kibbutz back into the discussion:

> I wish to address you, Tor, in an honest and comradely way: you are a senior member in the kibbutz, with a lot of experience, and you know how much bitterness has inundated our life in this debate not so long ago. It will not serve us to return to that situation again in our social life. With all the injury that it would cause you to be deducted these 40 points because of the new *takanon*, I propose, for the good of the kibbutz as a whole, drop your request. Each one of us that has passed through different periods in our kibbutz life suffered some injustice done to him by the kibbutz. And if we were not able to tolerate these things we could not have lived here together. You know how sensitive this issue is, how it concerns many, and how it will not end with this single request. In order to be able to tolerate in the future these kinds of injustices done to members in all kinds of situations I advise you to be adult about this and act in a manner becoming of a good kibbutznik and this time give up your personal desires.

However, there is something misleading in presenting this as a struggle between two equal positions. Sometimes, the need to wage a battle already means that you have lost the war. This is

the case with Amihai, who needs to protect from further discussion the decision that was already accepted in the previous meeting by having another long discussion about it.

Conclusion

Institutionalization and bureaucratization is one of the main paradigms of the research on the late socialist kibbutz (Cohen 1983; Gan 2006; Talmon Graeber 1972). Scholars point to the growing presence since the 1950s of formal documents and procedures like the *takanon* as signs of the formalization of what were previously unwritten, informal, ad-hoc, and therefore also more flexible social relations. However, when looking ethnographically not at the mere presence of bureaucratic instruments but at their actual practice in concrete cases, a different picture emerges that problematizes the paradigm of institutionalization. The *takanon* formalized social agreements but it did not stabilize or petrify them because it was constantly reopened for discussion. Halfin (2019), working in a communal kibbutz in the 2000s, sees the same tendencies, arguing that the *takanon* is not a finalized document but a process, an on-going cycle of drafts.

On the one hand, the commitment to administer real justice is the motor behind the process of bureaucratization: writing a more and more elaborate *takanon* that would cover all possible cases and areas and will be as close as possible to reality itself. But the same commitment is also constantly undermining bureaucratization: it keeps finding areas and cases and nuances that are not covered by the *takanon* and demands its rewriting. The problem for the kibbutzniks here is similar to the problem of the Creed and other objectifications of faith among the Calvinists as Keane analyzes it (2007:69-82). The Calvinists need the Creed in order for their faith to have some kind of social expression or objectification but since they have a strong emphasis on the authenticity of belief and since the Creed is an external object, a “mere” textual

representation, the latter is also constantly suspected as a potential object of fetish, as something that people say "mechanically" and that therefore does not reflect their real belief, what really goes on in their souls. Analogously, in order to administer real justice, that is, in order to socially objectify the ideal of equality, the kibbutz needs the *takanon*, but since the kibbutz has an emphasis on real equality and since the *takanon* is a "mere" external representation of real equality, it is constantly suspected as an object of fetish, as something that is followed although it has ceased to perfectly reflect reality.

Institutionalization demands the fetishization of certain procedures and decisions. But how does a society committed to defetishization institutionalize? The problem of the late socialist kibbutz, as it was seen in this chapter, was not its petrification in a rigid bureaucratic structure but the opposite: a failure to "properly" bureaucratize. The overwhelming presence of talk - to the point of exhaustion - was the index of this failure.

Chapter 4 Out of Sync: Privatization and Spatiotemporal Unraveling

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 explored some of the structural conditions that afforded the cultivation of a shared substantive culture in the late socialist kibbutz. We have seen how in the absence of the market and the law the kibbutz heavily relied on the reproduction of shared cultural norms and understandings through informal moral monitoring and intensive public deliberation. In the following three chapters, based on my fieldwork in Kibbutz Asif in 2018-2020, we will see how, following privatization, a shared substantive culture gradually fades away, both as a reality and as an ethical ideal. Before describing the chapters, it is important to note that the most important dimension of the demise of shared culture will not be shown in them since it has to do with an absence, with something that is simply no longer there. By moving the responsibility for the economy from the hands of the deliberate management of the kibbutz to the hands of the market, privatization takes off the table and turns socially invisible the whole set of issues and problems that afforded the cultivation of shared cultural norms. Motivation at work, responsible consumption, or equitable distribution of goods are not a social problem anymore but an individual one. Accordingly, the cultural mechanisms that were developed in order to negotiate these problems, such as moral monitoring or public deliberation are dissolving. In Asif, general assembly meetings happen every two months on average, not every week. Out of the 35 active committees of self-governance that we saw in 1977 only about 7 or 8 still function today. The forms of public moral discussion, critique, and complaint about different aspects of social life has not disappeared but has seriously shrunk simply because the range of shared issues,

spaces, and projects has dramatically dwindled. If the elimination of the market "moralized" many areas of social life, the main impact of the introduction of the market is in "demoralizing" these areas.

Therefore, what the chapters explore are the peripheries of this more significant disappearance of shared substance. In Chapter 5, we will see the demise of a shared substantive culture in the kibbutz by analyzing how its *ethical means of production* are being delegitimized today. The chapter will show how some of the elementary understandings and gestures that enabled the cultivation of a shared substantive culture in the old kibbutz are now devalued and delegitimized. This present chapter sets the stage for that discussion by showing how privatization entails the demise of the *physical means of production* of a shared, substantive culture. Cultivating a shared culture and policing shared cultural norms presupposed not only a specific ethical approach but also a set of physical conditions that were afforded by the organization of space and time in the collectivized kibbutz: intensive social interaction, panoptic visibility, and collective spatiotemporal synchronization.

This chapter is based on the fundamental idea that a shared cultural universe is materialized through the routinization and coordination of practices in space and time (Bourdieu 1977:1-29), and as an achievement of concrete instances of social interaction (Goffman 1981:124-161; Garfinkel 1991:35-75; Ochs 1992). The chapter is an exploration of how the kibbutz's shared substantive culture was materialized in space and time, how that spatiotemporal materialization is disintegrating following privatization, and how contemporary kibbutzniks are looking for alternative sites to recreate it.

The chapter starts by introducing the reader to the unique spatial layout of the kibbutz. It then moves to describe the spatiotemporal synchronization of daily life in the late socialist

kibbutz, showing how it enabled intensive social interaction and shared collective rhythm, and how these, in turn, afforded moral surveillance and the cultivation of a shared culture. I then zoom in to look more closely at one specific spatially dispersed form of interaction in the kibbutz: the random encounter on the pathway. Using my own experiences during fieldwork, including as a worker in the kibbutz's gardening crew, I discuss the role of this routine interaction in space in both morally disciplining and in producing a shared cultural world. I then move to discuss how changes following privatization, such as the diminishing of social interaction and the defamiliarization of space, disrupt the ritual of the encounter on the pathway and more broadly the ability to sustain shared cultural substance. In the last part of the chapter, I supplement this description by discussing a new site of intensive social interaction and collective spatiotemporal synchronization in the kibbutz: the exchange of objects and favors.

The Spatial Layout of the Kibbutz

Before looking at the question of spatiotemporal synchronization, there is a need for some background on the organization of space in the kibbutz. By the 1940s, a common and unique model for the spatial layout of the kibbutz was crystalized (Chyutin & Chyutin 2010:118). Let me point out its five elementary characteristics by using an aerial photo of Kibbutz Asif in the early 1980s (Figure 8).

Figure 8 An aerial photo of Kibbutz Asif, 1980. hung on the wall in kibbutz Asif archives. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

First, the kibbutz is built out of **two clearly distinguished half circles**: the "social" area, where the collective services, education, and residence are found, and the "productive" area, where the farms, factories, and workshops are located. The "productive" area (A) is on the upper right third, recognized by the long gray roofs of farms and factories. The "social" area is on the lower left two-thirds of the photo, marked by its densely planted trees, lawns, and red-roofed houses. The two areas are usually separated by a green belt and the kibbutz's access road. In the photo, we can see the access road entering Kibbutz Asif on the lower right-hand side (B).

Second, the space of the kibbutz is **centralized**. The kibbutz has a circular structure that is organized around a clear center: the communal dining hall (C). The dining hall was the heart of daily social life, where members would meet for meals three times a day and congregate for

cultural events and general assembly meetings. It is usually the largest and the most aesthetically appealing building in the kibbutz. Next to the dining hall, in the center of the "social" area, were the other public buildings, where the kibbutz's collectivized services were provided: communal laundry house, secretariat, grocery shop, medical clinic, and club. The large area opposite to the dining hall at the heart of the social half-circle was the area of education where the communal children's homes and the school were (D). The residential areas are built as the outer rings that wrap the communal center (E1, E2, E3). Movement in this space is clearly oriented towards the common center. The residential areas in the periphery are connected to the public center through a hierarchical network of pedestrian pathways that all lead to the common dining hall. The radial structure of the kibbutz was meant to allow it to grow while maintaining a walkable distance from anywhere to the center so that the space would afford lively social interaction (Chyutin & Chyutin 2010:127).

Third, the space of the kibbutz functions as a **collective household**. Originally, the members' private apartment was only a bedroom. The other typical rooms of the private household were dispersed in the outdoor space of the kibbutz. The functions of the dining room, living room, bathroom, children's bedroom, laundry room - were all communal. Only in the 1960s private apartments gradually incorporated a bathroom and a modest living room (Chyutin & Chyutin 2010:69-94). Tellingly, in kibbutz discourse, the private apartment was called *heder* ("room") while the term *bait* ("home") was reserved for the kibbutz as a whole.

Fourth, since the whole kibbutz is an externalized household, it forms a **single, unified, continuous space with no internal barriers.** Buildings are planted within a continuous park of wide lawns. There supposed to be an organic flow of movement through the whole space,

uninterrupted by private enclosures in the form of gardens, back yards, hedges, fences, or gates. The distinction between private and public space is "fuzzy."

Fifth, like a household, the absence of boundaries inside is complemented by **a clear boundary from the outside.** Kibbutzim are typically built off the main road, connected to the outside through one access road that is a cul-de-sac and that passes through a gate with a night guard. The kibbutz was not an isolated commune but because it fashioned itself as a dichotomous alternative to its capitalist surroundings, the outside was many times seen as a potential source of danger (Gan 2006). This combined with the unique construction of public space in the kibbutz as an extended household, which meant that upon entering the kibbutz, one entered, sometimes unknowingly, a home and therefore could expect suspicious gazes and direct interrogation.

Spatiotemporal Synchronization

The practical organization of life in the kibbutz in the 1970s and 1980s afforded a lot of social interactions because it regularly brought people to the same places at the same time. Communal life in the kibbutz was holistic and encompassed a member's workday and pastime. Almost all of the members worked inside the kibbutz in the collective work branches. Aside from jobs that demanded special hours like night guard duties or milking cows, the workday for all members would typically start at around 6 or 7 am and end at around 3 or 4 pm. Besides fellow workers in the work branch, a member had a chance to meet others during breakfast and lunch (and later in the day - at dinner) in the communal dining hall. This was an important pillar of social interaction in the kibbutz as it ensured that a member would see the whole community at least three times a day.

After work, in the afternoon, members went home. Children also came back from school and between 4 and 8 pm was the designated family time. This was the most private part of the

day, but even during this time, members were likely to meet people. Since houses were small, the climate warm, and the physical boundaries between private and public space porous, people spent a lot of time with their kids outside on the lawns, in the pool, and in other places around the kibbutz. Members received services like medical care, laundry, shoe and bike repair, grocery shop and more centrally and on site. Since these services had set and limited hours of operation, they too contributed to the construction of a shared collective rhythm.

At dinner, most of the population would meet again in the communal dining hall. Members with children would then take them to sleep in the communal children's home. To remind, in the kibbutz, children were raised with other children of their age-group in special children's homes where they would spend most of their time, including the night. When the parents brought the children to sleep in the children's home after dinner, this afforded an intimate communal interaction as the whole routine of trying to put one's child to sleep, reading a story, caressing and calming, or arguing and fighting would unfold in the same room with two other parents, and in the same house with fifteen more. The routine also contributed to a night life on the kibbutz's pathways. One of the strongest effects of closing the communal children's' homes in the early 1990s, was a newly felt emptiness of the pathways in the evenings. After dinner, many members would also go to the members' club near the dining hall to drink coffee, chat, and read the newspaper before going to sleep at home. This was another important site of socialization. The evening was also the time when the kibbutz's direct democratic self-governance would take place. Members would meet each other in the meetings of the committees and every Shabbat evening in the meeting of the general assembly.

The Ethical Affordances of Spatiotemporal Synchronization (1): Discipline

Architecture and spatial layout can have an important role in the cultivation of discipline by allowing visibility and social monitoring (Foucault 1977:200-204). Idit Ran-Shachani argued that the spatial layout of the kibbutz, with its lack of private enclosures, was panoptic, affording intensive social interaction and prolonged exposure of the individual to the gaze of the collective (2019). The communal dining hall was the center of Panoptic surveillance. Naaman, one of my interlocutors, told me how in the 1990s, the workers of the orchard were told by one of the coordinators to stay at work for another half hour and not go to the dining hall yet, although they had already finished their tasks for the day and were waiting aimlessly in the orchard, because it was before the formal workday had ended. The coordinator did not want people in the kibbutz to see the workers come in too early to the dining hall and gossip about their supposed "slacking." The panoptic power of the collective in the kibbutz was also due to the kibbutz being a total institution that enveloped almost all aspects of the individual's life. One of my interviewees in Asif quoted something that one of the kibbutz founders once told her: "In any other society, different people see different parts of you. Some see how you are as a worker, others as a citizen, yet others as a friend or a parent. You can be a failure as a worker but a wonderful friend or a devoted parent. But in the kibbutz, the same people see you from all possible sides. You don't stand a chance!"

The control of time also plays an important role in cultivating social discipline. The inculcation of a new type of time discipline was crucial in the creation of the modern subject, fit for bureaucratic citizenship and capitalist production (EP Thompson 1967; Foucault 1977:149-156). In state socialism as well, the control and coordination of time were instrumental in forming cohesion. As Verdery (1996:39-58) had shown, Ceausescu's authoritarian rule in Romania was expressed through the choreography that it imposed on people and the way in

which it controlled their time. State imposed shortages of consumer goods, water, electricity, and gas made people wash their dishes or cook their meals at specific and unconventional times and this temporal choreography both indexed and reinforced state power.

There is evidence that the centralized coordination of time in the old kibbutz also contributed to social discipline. This came up in some of my interviews with veteran kibbutzniks. Dalit tells me that privatization made people more open-minded. In the old kibbutz, people were conservative and conformist in their general attitude, she argues. She ties this to the material dependence on the kibbutz, and through this dependence, to the way the kibbutz controlled people's time:

> The dependence on the establishment was immense. You depend on the establishment in every aspect and in every decision. Even small things like services. They were open at set times that were inconvenient to you. The remnant of that in today's kibbutz is the dental clinic. You get a message in the mailbox: you have an appointment at this and that day and hour whether you like it or not… The laundry service was open only at this and that hour… I worked outside the kibbutz for years, so my mom would have to get my laundry for me because it was closed when I arrived back at the kibbutz.

It is important that Dalit gives me this description not in the context of a complaint about the lousy service in the old kibbutz, although it is also about that, but as a way of explaining what she sees as the conformism and conservatism of the old kibbutz. She ties between subjectivity and practice. The rigid, limited, set hours of operation of the services afforded discipline because through them members practiced on a daily basis the need to accommodate to the rhythm of the collective, without expecting that the collective accommodate to them.

Merav, another veteran interviewee, ties between the sense of daily moral surveillance and pressure to conform to the synchronization of time:

> When I was a teenager, I had a fetish for my hair. My braid had to be really tight, and I would not leave home before checking that it does not move and that it is exactly as it should be, and if it wasn't we had to start over. So, I would make it to the Shabbat Reception [in the children's home] when everyone is already sitting, and I have red eyes from crying and everyone is looking. Meital Sivan [the teacher] has already lit the candles. It is a hard memory that everyone is looking at you and is seeing you. I am talking about this thing that you are in a group, and you have to make it to places at a set time. Everything is organized in these set "boxes," you have to because everyone else is doing it.

The "boxes" in which, according to Merav, the old kibbutzniks thought, were reflections of the practical organization of daily life in "boxes" with their set, obliging times. Note how Merav ties between her "deviation" (the idiosyncratic "fetish" for the braid) and being out of sync with communal rhythm. Her "deviation" is not only her fetish but also that this fetish makes her late to the Shabbat Reception, when "everyone is already sitting… and Meital Sivan has already lit the candles." The high level of collective synchronization affords moral surveillance because it constantly sets times to which one can be late, and being late opens up further questions: Merav arrived late, where was she? And how is this connected to her red eyes?

The Ethical Affordances of Spatiotemporal Synchronization (2): Shared Culture

However, the spatiotemporal coordination of practices is also crucial in producing a shared cultural world (Bourdieu 1977:1-29). Shared rhythm and simultaneity create a sense of

community or what I call throughout this dissertation a shared substantive culture. As Benedict Anderson famously argued, the sense of collective simultaneity afforded by the organization of the modern newspaper and novel had a central role in creating the "imagined community" of the nation (1991:22-36). The founders of the kibbutz movement in the 1920s dreamed of the kibbutz as a "communion of souls" forged through authentic conversations called "soul talks" (Katriel 2004). However, Tama Halfin argued that the sense of moral and social cohesion that characterized the kibbutz was much more a product of shared material practices and routines than of this original ideal of spiritual union through "soul talks" (2019:161-179). The second generation kibbutzniks were much more reserved in their emotional expression and communal pathos than the first generation but they were able to maintain a "communion of souls" by sharing in a highly routinized communal life.

Because the spatiotemporal organization of the old kibbutz afforded both a sense of surveillance and a sense of community it appears in the texts of my interviewees as both one of the most annoying and constraining aspects of life in the old kibbutz *and* as the single thing that they miss the most. In my conversations with veteran kibbutzniks many complained about the diminishing levels of social interaction and togetherness. They complain that nowadays they hardly meet other members, they don't know what is going on with people in the kibbutz, don't recognize the people they meet on the pathways, and don't have opportunities to get to know them. Moris, a 70-year-old male veteran kibbutznik, misses the communal dining hall. "The reason," he says, "is not the food but meeting the people. There are people whom I don't see at all these days. I miss seeing people, hearing what is new, seeing who has a new child born. Today I don't know anything about anybody, I don't know people." The same problematic

aspect about kibbutz life: the dense social interaction, the fact that one does not have privacy and that everybody knows everything about everybody else is also something that veterans miss.

The same ambivalence is expressed toward the kibbutz's panoptic gaze. Social visibility, even in contexts of repression and inequality, can also mean that one is present, that one has a place in the world (Kivelson 2006). In her story of the braid, Merav argued that the problem of the old kibbutz was that you were always seen, your most intimate "fetishes" exposed to the collective gaze. You could not have been anonymous. But later on in the interview, she laments the loss of exactly this visibility and familiarity in the privatized kibbutz:

> … the other side [meaning the old kibbutz] was very stressful. It was too much, too dense in the ear. It wasn't good for me. I think that the situation now is much better. But I want to be in a situation where even if there are a lot of new people, I will know people. That I won't walk around among strangers ... Like, they live with me in the same home, and I don't know them, it is not a good thing… I did not choose to live in a place where I feel like a stranger.

Merav's critical-nostalgic attitude towards the experience of space in the old kibbutz mirrors Simcha's formulation, quoted in the introduction, that in privatization the kibbutz moved from being "too much" to being "too little."

Encounters on the pathway

I now turn to discuss in some more detail how spatiotemporal synchronization and intensive social interaction in the kibbutz enabled both social discipline and the reproduction of a shared culture and experience. In the next section after this, I will move to show how, following privatization, these are fractured or disappear. The material that I use in both sections is taken

from my ethnographic fieldwork in Kibbutz Asif and more specifically from my encounters and experiences in the outdoor space of the kibbutz. The picture that emerges from the ethnography is complex. It tells us both about how things were in the past and about how things are changing in the present. Daily life in the privatized kibbutz contains both remnants of the old experience of space - in existing physical infrastructures, attitudes, and conventions of interaction - and the new processes that are changing this experience. One of the reasons that I am able to show the past through my present ethnography was my unique position as a worker in the kibbutz's gardening crew. Almost all of the members in Asif do not work in the kibbutz anymore. I had the unique position to experience a little of what it meant to be part of the kibbutz's spatiotemporally synchronized workday in the past. Although, as we will see, even in that respect, a lot has also changed.

Much of my analysis will be focused on a routine form of interaction in the kibbutz: the random encounter on the pathway. Since, until the 1990s, almost all members worked in the kibbutz, consumed their daily services in it, and did not own cars, there was heavy traffic on the pedestrian pathways. The daily routes of members were by foot or bicycle between their work branch, dining hall, home, and other service centers. This meant that daily life was dotted with short random encounters with other members on the pathways. An encounter can be a short exchange of "hellos," a "hello" followed by a comment or a short exchange of comments, or a full stop for a short conversation that could last anywhere from five minutes to a half an hour. It is a common image of daily life in the kibbutz to see two or more members standing in the middle of a pathway and talking, sometimes with a bike leaned on a tree or with bags in their hands that indicate that they encountered each other accidentally as they were on their way to somewhere else. The pathways index the "fuzzy" borders between private and public in the

kibbutz. On the one hand they are the kibbutz's streets. They are public spaces, "front regions" (Goffman 1959:66-86), where one carries oneself with an eye on public decency and where one politely greets fellow citizens. On the other hand, if the kibbutz as a whole is an extended home and if the pathways only connect the member's "room" to the other "rooms," then they are actually "hallways" (Ran Shachnai 2021:106). As such, people's comportment on the pathways is informal in dress, behavior, and interactional gestures. As one of my interlocutors, a veteran male kibbutznik who is known for not saying "hello" to people he sees on the pathways, told me: "I don't say hello to my wife every time I pass by her on my way to the bathroom, do I?"

Face to face interactions are a central component of ethical life because they give opportunities for reflective evaluation and justification (Keane 2016:33). This is why encounters and interactions with others are important sites of interpellation, indexical production of subjects, and moral disciplining (Althusser 1971; Capps 1999; Crapanzano 1992:113-154; Ochs 1992; Silverstein 2003:194-197). Routine, mundane social interactions, such as greetings or exchange of clichés and jokes, can also be important in producing the world as common, familiar, normal, and reasonable (Garfunkel 1967:35-75). This is why, sometimes, minor disruption of interactional convention, like not answering someone's greeting on the street, can lead to anxious or even violent reactions (Garfunkel 1967:35-75; Bauman 2012:60-72). In the kibbutz, I argue, the random encounter on the pathway had this dual function of disciplining and forming a common world. This is why veterans feel liberated following the diminishing of social interaction in the kibbutz but also why they feel a sense of loss of orientation when they are not recognized on the pathways like they were in the past. Following are a few examples of how pathway encounters interpellate, discipline, and create a common world for kibbutzniks.

Encounters on the Pathway (1): Work

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the moral monitoring of work played a central role in the kibbutz's non-market economy. The practical organization of work supported this tendency and afforded high levels of scrutiny. Members worked within the kibbutz, so the efforts and the fruits of their work were usually publicly visible. Additionally, the temporal synchronization of the workday produced visibility and discipline. Since most members worked according to the same schedule, being seen outside of one's workplace on the pathways during the day might earn someone the reputation of a slacker.

It is 11 am on a Tuesday and I am walking from my house to the kibbutz grocery shop. I pass by the house of Orit, a veteran female member. Standing on the pathway outside of her house, Orit jokingly calls out to me: "Go to work, you bum!". Orit is a known joker, and she says this humorously, but in her joke, she is making present a social scheme known to both of us: that it is (or at least it was) embarrassing to be seen walking idly on the pathways at 11 am. A few weeks later, I am in the kibbutz grocery shop in the afternoon with my son. Orna, a veteran female kibbutz member is there with her two children (40-50 years old) and five grandchildren (2-12 years old). In the midst of buying popsicles for her whole gang of grandchildren, she addresses me:

> Orna: Omri, I wanted to ask you: what exactly do you work at?
>
> Omri: I am writing a dissertation.
>
> Orna: Oh, and you work from home?
>
> Omri: Yes.
>
> Orna: Oh, Ok… No, it is just that many people have been asking me about this.
>
> Moran (Orna's son): [jokingly and apologetically]: You understand, she has to report back to her constituency…

Note the generational difference in ethical approach between Orna and her son. For Orna, it is natural to interrogate me following information she got from her sources and to make these sources explicit. Moran, on the other hand, is embarrassed by her intrusiveness and makes up for it by poking fun at her.

In the first weeks of my fieldwork, I noticed that internalizing this gaze of work-ethic surveillance changed the way I walk. I had already started working in the gardening crew. One day, on my way back home on foot from work, still in my work clothes, Uriel, a 40-year-old kibbutz born returnee, passes me with his golf cart (a common work vehicle in the kibbutz) also in his work clothes, and we say hello. After he passes, I notice that when seeing him getting near, I automatically raise my pace of walking and walk with the upper part of the body leaning a bit forward, which gives me the gait of a busy person walking energetically and instrumentally on the way to complete a task, not just walking around idly.

As we have already seen in Chapter 1, the other side of the coin of work-ethic surveillance in the kibbutz was also a greater sense of social visibility and appreciation for one's work. Working in the gardening crew, one of the strongest impressions that I had was how attentive veteran kibbutz members were to changes in their public landscape and specifically to how those indexed my work efforts. On the days that I worked in the kibbutz's gardening crew, I worked hard, and I felt almost immediately that my hard work was seen, talked about, and appreciated. This was also due to the nature of gardening where one's work and its products are displayed in the public space. My workday was dotted with small encouraging comments that kibbutzniks gave me. When I was sweeping the square in front of the old dining hall for the upcoming Independence Day celebrations, Irit, a veteran female member, passes by and says: "Way to go, Omri!" When I trim the thick bushes that grew wild near the basketball court and

blocked the nice view of the kibbutz's open fields, Tova, a veteran female member passes by and says: "Let there be light!" Meital, a veteran female member, who lives across the street, comes up to tell me how long they have been waiting for someone to finally trim those bushes. When I am planting a new tree near the soccer field, Miri, another veteran female member, passes by, looks at me, smiles, and says: "Congratulations on a new tree! Congratulations to all of us!"[87]

On other occasions, comments on the pathways were a way to show concern and empathy. Batya, a veteran female member, would repeat the same comment when passing by me: "Wear a hat! It is hot! Are you drinking enough water?" Working late, when many members wander around the kibbutz in their leisure time, carries a specific pleasure of publicizing one's good work ethic. Many times, this would attract the compassionate or acknowledging reactions of by passers. One day, when I was working late, and Shuval, a young kibbutz born returnee and a friend I grew up with, sees me, she jokingly yells at me: "Go home already!" signaling that she acknowledges the hard work and gives me the ok of the collective to stop working for the day. On another similar occasion, Hilik and his wife (veteran members) pass by me on their afternoon walk and Hilik says: "What, Omri, your wife threw you out of the house?"

Encounters on the Pathway (2): "Abnormal" Behavior

Daily encounters on the pathways subtly contribute to creating a shared cultural style in the kibbutz through comments made on small "anomalies" of look or behavior. These were not

[87] Strikingly, almost all of the encouraging comments that I got were from veteran kibbutz women. My sense was that the women were more expressive in their appreciation and recognition. Although, I also got signs of recognition from men that were more subtle, in the form of approving gazes and thin smiles. This might also be connected to their masculine habitus as Sabras that usually entails restraint of expression in the public sphere.

necessarily negative or critical, they were just a way to point out something abnormal or unusual. Here are a few examples:

> (1) At 8 pm, when it is already dark, I am walking on the pathway in front of Ayala's house. Her father, a veteran member, came to visit her and is getting out of his car. He sees me walking towards him, stops, and looks at me for a long time with a puzzled gaze: "Where are you going?" he asks. He finds it strange that I am walking at 8 pm with a backpack on. "Ah, to do sports," he explains to himself out loud, gesturing towards my backpack as proof. I tell him, no, that I am going to the library. He says "Ah" and looks puzzled again as I continue on my way.
>
> (2) Early in the morning, working in gardening, I am spraying the area near Goni's house. Goni is about 40 years old, and she is married to a kibbutz-born returnee. She comes out and sees me spraying with a funny white spraying suit that has the look of a person working in a morgue. Goni: "Are you going to dissect dead bodies today?"
>
> (3) One afternoon, I leave Itamar, my son, in the playground with Noa, my wife, and I am walking back home pushing his empty ride-on baby car. Ofer sees me on the way: "You are missing something there." Ayala is the next person I pass by: "Aren't you missing something there?" When I reach my house, I see Shira, my next-door neighbor, who tells me, gesturing towards the empty baby car: "Didn't you forget something?"

Sometimes, kibbutzniks would feel obliged to apologize in advance for their abnormal behavior on the pathways, even without being asked:

(1) One morning, I see my neighbor Daniela, a 35-year-old renter, walking on a pathway that leads from the minimarket back to our neighborhood. This is an unusual route to take home because it is longer and more circuitous. Daniela tells me apologetically that she is walking from this way because she doesn't want to pass by her daughter's kindergarten where she might see her and cry.

(2) In the morning, on the way to the kindergarten with my son, I pass by Sharon with her two little daughters on her bike. Dina, her elder daughter, is wearing a shiny golden vest that clearly sticks out. Although I did not notice the vest (because the sun is in my eyes) Sharon says humorously and apologetically: "Admit it: you are dying to have a shiny vest like Dina's."

Encounters on the Pathway (3): Keeping Promises

Some of the habits of the socially embedded economy of the old kibbutz, where the provision of service was sometimes entangled with informal interpersonal exchanges and favors, are still present in the privatized kibbutz. As the kibbutz's public gardener, I was constantly asked by members for small favors: cut this or that bud in their private garden, give priority to cleaning the public area immediately adjacent to their house, or let them borrow one of the gardening crew's tools. This would sometimes earn me a sack of avocados or mangos or a challah for Shabbat that I would find on my doorstep. This put me in an uncomfortable situation between two demands: the request of fellow members with whom I had personal familiar relations, on the one hand, and the obligation to my work and my boss, on the other. One of the forces that made me concede to members' demands was the thought of the uneasiness that I

would feel had I declined their request and had to meet them later on the pathway. In other words, intensive social interaction plays a role in maintaining mutual moral obligations.

For example, one night I went out to throw the garbage. On the pathway, I meet Amira and I feel uncomfortable. A week or two ago, Amira had asked me if she could borrow the gardening crew's hedge trimmer to do something in her yard. I knew the gardening coordinator did not like loaning out the crew's tools but felt embarrassed to say a clear-cut "no!" So, I told her that I would ask the coordinator, but I didn't, and was hoping to let the request die down without explicitly saying no. When I see her now on the pathway, I overkill the gesture and say "Hi Amira!" in a too enthusiastic way, as compensation for my embarrassment.

Diminishing Social Interaction

I now move to describe how the spatiotemporal synchronization and intensive social interaction that characterized the old kibbutz, and their particular ethical and cultural affordances, are gradually disappearing following privatization. I start with the decline of social interaction. Idit Ran Shachnai (2019) shows how already in the 1970s, daily social interaction in the kibbutz was in decline. She points to a gradual and latent process in which, while all the structures of collective life were still intact, in practice, the center of the kibbutz gradually dried out of activity due to the splintering of cultural activity in different sub-centers and a withdrawal into the private home (2019:58-76). In fact, the whole history of the kibbutz can be told as a gradual decline in social interaction, where each improvement in members' private homes resulted in less time spent in collective spaces. This is why the introduction of domestic improvements was a cause for concern and debate.

It is possible to describe the changes in the spatiotemporal organization of the kibbutz following privatization as another phase in this long history that starts at least in the 1950s.

However, in my view, they are of another scale. Like the structural changes of the introduction of private property and market relations that they mirror, they constitute a radical break with the kibbutz history. In Asif, most of the collective work branches closed down throughout the 1990s. The kibbutz's two large factories were sold, the dairy farm merged and moved to a neighboring settlement, the chicken farm, auto shop, and many other smaller workshops and services closed. Most of the members started working outside the kibbutz. This substantially empties the kibbutz during the workday. Daily life has been thoroughly suburbanized as members now commute to work in the morning and return to their homes in the evening. The temporal synchronization of the workday and its associated mechanisms of work discipline are gone in a new flexible, post-Fordist work regime. Eitan is a journalist and I see him jogging around the kibbutz at 11 am. Naaman has a successful catering company and works very hard on the weekends, nights, and seasonal peaks, but in the off-season, he is great company for coffee or lunch in the middle of the day. This new reality makes Orit's and Orna's comments about seeing me walking around the kibbutz during workday anachronistic.

The fact that everyone now owns a private car dries out social interaction even further as members satisfy their daily needs and interests outside the kibbutz. They easily purchase groceries, clothes, entertainment, hobbies, and after-school activities for children outside of the kibbutz. This is in accord with the increased commercialization of the kibbutz's immediate surroundings. In the beginning of the 1990s, the main road that passes by the kibbutz had one shopping mall a half hour drive away. Nowadays, the whole roadside has effectively become one continuous strip mall, and a whole array of small businesses from Pilates studios to boutique bakeries opened up in the adjacent kibbutzim.

Importantly and dramatically, as part of these processes, in the early 2000s, the communal dining hall closed down. With most members working outside the kibbutz, there were simply not enough regular customers for the dining hall to be economically sustainable. The dining hall was the symbolic center of the kibbutz and the practical heart of daily social interaction. Nowadays, this building, the largest and architecturally the most impressive, stands like a sad memorial, empty and dilapidated right at the center of the kibbutz (see figures 9-10). During my fieldwork, it was used for occasional parties, children's events, and a weekly evening gym class. However, even these activities were halted for some time because the building was in such bad shape that it lost its license to host events and needed repair. Badly placed solar panels that were constructed during my fieldwork made the building even uglier. Its presence in the center of the kibbutz gives off an uncanny feeling. The system of pathways still leads to it from all corners of the kibbutz, yet when you get to it, it is closed and there is nothing to do there. Nowadays, people get to it only in order to pass it and reach the much smaller, spatially marginal grocery store. This is the direction to which the person in the right-hand side of figure 9 is headed. The feeling is of a large irritating obstacle stuck in the way. Equally, sitting outside the grocery store, which is one of the new centers of social interaction in the afternoons, has a feel of discord because it is in the ugly back space of the dining hall.

Figure 9 Asif's communal dining Hall. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Figure 10 Broken shades in Asif's communal dining hall. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

When I work in gardening near the old dining hall, Hannah, a veteran female member, stops by and says: "I understand you are doing research on changes in the kibbutz. I wanted to tell you that the most important change is that people don't see each other anymore because there is no more dining hall." She tells me that this is the reason why she and her fellow kibbutz members from the North American settlement group (*gar'in*) that came to the kibbutz in the 1970s, started, a few years ago, to hold a 4th of July celebration. "There are people who I meet only on that occasion. I tell them: where are you hiding? if it wasn't for this occasion, I would not have seen you." This is also the reason, she says, that she founded, just a few weeks ago, a sewing class in the club that she calls "stitch and bitch" (in English), where women meet to sew

and gossip. When I returned to the kibbutz in 2018, there were members who I remembered from my past and whom I did not see for months after returning. Regarding some of them, I was not even sure if they were still alive or not. This would have been very improbable in the old kibbutz as, unless they were intentionally secluding themselves, I would probably have met them in one of the meals in the dining hall.

The Defamiliarization of Space

Privatization does not only diminish social interaction it also defamiliarizes space. The new anonymity makes social space less legible and therefore less prone to social monitoring. It also promotes a sense of alienation and loss of orientation. Ya'ara came to visit Dafna, both are veteran female members, in the middle of our interview and joined in the conversation. To my question of what she dislikes in the new kibbutz, she answers:

> I really don't like the fact that I don't know the people around me. It takes a lot of mental work to calm myself down, but the truth is that it really bothers me that I don't know people on the pathways, I don't know if they are renters, they live here, they just hang out here, are they members? What are they?... It is not about having friends. I have friends. What bothers me is that when I walk, kids or people pass by me, they don't know me, don't say hello. So I try to tell myself: well, when I walk around the streets with Talia in Chicago [her daughter, who relocated] I don't expect that people would say hello to me. So what is Kibbutz Asif different? In nothing. It is the same as Chicago. But it is still weird for me to think that Asif is like Chicago.

The position of the veterans betrays a discrepancy between cultural framework and social structure (Geertz 1973:142-169). They still understand the kibbutz as home and expect

familiarity on the pathways. But privatization creates a social reality that undermines these expectations. The privatization of real estate in 2009 defamiliarizes the pathways because it brought in an influx of newcomers and renters. But it is not only that the kibbutz absorbs more newcomers than before, it is also that, because of the diminishing of daily social interaction, there are fewer opportunities to get to know the newcomers. There were newcomers to the old kibbutz as well, but Merav, who is in charge of the Admissions Committee, explains the difference:

> In the past, how many people did you absorb? How many youth groups did we have? Once every four years? Three youth groups?... And the kibbutz was small and was together all the time. Everything was so intensive… The dining hall, three meals a day, you worked together all the time, all the time you spent together in the work branches, and all the committees you were in. Everything was together. People did not work outside the kibbutz. Very few of them did. We very much basked in our own juice. Today, very few people work here, most of the newcomers don't work here, where can you meet them? Maybe through the kindergartens if you are a grandparent… David [Merav's husband], when does he have an opportunity to meet someone? Two years ago, he helped me in organizing the kibbutz's 70th anniversary, so he met two newcomers. But even them, if he does not see them regularly, he forgets them.

In Chapter 5, we will see how one dimension of the loss of shared substantive culture in the kibbutz was the delegitimization of the idea that newcomers should assimilate to the kibbutz culture. Here we see the disintegration of the physical mechanisms that enabled their assimilation. In the past, newcomers were thrown into a reality of intensive social interaction and

interdependence. They would be engaged, observed, evaluated, and moralized on a daily basis in the dining hall, workplace, and the frequent meetings and assemblies. They would quickly make new friends, but also form all kinds of personal commitments and obligations to people. They would depend on their fellow members in a range of issues. Moreover, they, and their family members, would depend on the approval of the assembly for special requests such as university studies, leaves, vacations, or work outside the kibbutz. This would oblige them to cultivate good social relations and a moral persona of a "good kibbutznik." Today, since they are spared from all this, newcomers can refuse and challenge the demand for cultural assimilation.

As a substitute to organic assimilation, the kibbutz initiated, during the time of my fieldwork, several roundtable meetings, for newcomers and veterans to get to know each other and discuss their views on the community. Merav tells me of these initiatives, but also points to their limit:

> I don't know how we can come closer [veterans and newcomers], I mean, how, because the meetings that we have now are very few, they are not enough, they are also… they are too artificial. And many people don't come. It is very problematic. How do you create that "togetherness" that would also be natural, that it would not be artificial.

The initiatives are artificial and flimsy because, unlike in the past, they are not embedded in the practical routine of people's daily life.

Besides a larger number of newcomers, privatization also defamiliarized the space of the kibbutz through a sharp increase in the number of temporary populations on the pathways. These are not only the temporary renters but also many private service providers: gardeners, electricians, plumbers, contractors, etc. Before privatization, these services were provided

collectively by the kibbutz and now each member invites his own. This creates its own problems of social discipline. One day, while working in the gardening crew, I find a big new pile of construction waste thrown on a garden bed. I call Shimon, the coordinator of the gardening crew, a veteran male member, to see it. He tells me that it is really hard to control the behavior of contractors around the kibbutz these days because there are so many of them and they change all the time. I tell him that since at least the 1960s, there were hired service givers and workers around the kibbutz, so what is the difference? He says that since it was the kibbutz that hired one contractor, one electrician, one plumber to do all the jobs around the kibbutz, their number was much smaller, and they tended to be employed for longer. "We knew all the hired workers personally. They were here for years, they worked with us in the factory and in other places, and they were part of the kibbutz."

Annexed Spaces: The Example of the Production Area

Privatization "annexes" spaces from the kibbutz's public sphere. This both contributes to a sense of spatial fragmentation and to a loss of moral monitoring. Let us consider the example of the production area marked A in figure 8. Before privatization, the production area was on the map of members' daily experiences in space. Many members frequented it daily as workers. The kibbutz kindergartens, in their daily walk, a central ritual in kibbutz education, would regularly pass through the dairy farm, chicken farm, and other work branches. Children and members would also pass by the production area in their pastime excursions around the kibbutz.[88] For

[88] An ad in the kibbutz Asif's newspaper in 1968 asks parents who take their children out for excursions in the orchard to remember to close irrigation pipes that they open in order to drink (in: OL. June 16, 1968). In the same newspaper in 1970, in an article about the danger of snakes, a passage warns members who take excursions to the fields not to lift rocks with their bare hands for fear of getting bitten (in: OL. April 17, 1970). In 1972, Gadi, a sixth-grade boy writes to his friend, Amichai, another boy from the kibbutz who is with his family in Argentina in *shlihut* that he "caught two pigeons in the dairy farm with small beaks and a tuft, one brown-white and the other black-white" (in: "Letters to Tamar and Amital". March 13, 1972. KAA).

kibbutz teenagers, the industrial area of the factories and workshops was the preferred space for nightly transgressive activity. It was empty at night, far enough from the members' houses, but still also familiar and safe. Taking the kibbutz's tractors to unauthorized night trips around the fields was a popular activity that indexed a sense of homeness and ownership expressed in a lack of fear of punishment. In 1968 an ad in Asif's newspaper reads:

> The "courageous" operations of tractor "lifting" by the youngsters reached its peak this week when one of our new, expensive tractors (John Deere) was found abandoned and stuck in the mud near the Nitzan River. Only after the grueling work of four members, including a heavy tractor and a pickup truck, work that lasted three hours, the tractor was finally pulled out of the mud.[89]

Even in the early 1990s, during a whole summer vacation between 7th and 8th grade, my friends and I spent almost every night in the field crops office near the auto shop smoking cigarettes and making prank calls. The field crops office was regularly unlocked, and Yotam, one of the kids in our group, invited us to sit there, as his father was a veteran worker in that branch.

The fact that members had a sense of ownership and belonging over the production area and frequently passed through it, not only as workers, also helped to bring it under the sway of the kibbutz's moral monitoring. Some of the moral complaints that I discussed in Chapter 1 about the neglect of public spaces and equipment were directed at the production area and stemmed from people's everyday routes through them. For example, in 1979, a member writes in the kibbutz's newspaper:

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[89] *Our Lives*. March 8, 1968. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

> Dirt and disorder in the factory!
>
> On Wednesday morning, I found a pile of merchandise near the southern door of the factory- piles of paper, boxes with metal fixtures, cones of padding cloth, and many other things.
>
> On Thursday morning - the pile is still there - but even in a bigger mess.
>
> On Friday morning - the same picture - only the pile is dirtier because everyone who had entered the southern door stepped on it.
>
> Sunday morning - the same.
>
> Maybe it is not that bad, but to a temporary visitor in the factory it stings the heart.[90]

Note that the author is not a worker in the factory but still he passes by the place almost every day, enough to be annoyed by the pile of dirt.

Following privatization, the buildings of most of the kibbutz's collective factories, workshops, and farms are now being rented out to private businesses from outside the kibbutz (see figures 11-15 for some examples). While these spaces are still technically owned by the kibbutz and only rented out to private businesses, in practice they are not on the map of members' daily routes as they used to be. Members do not frequent their interiors as workers. I also have the sense, although I have not checked it empirically, that this is also true for their afterwork routes. The eclectic postindustrial patchwork of private businesses, with its locks, fences, alarms and even guard dogs, does not afford the same feeling of homeness and ownership of the place.

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[90] "Woodchips". *Our Lives*. January 5, 1979. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

Figure 11 A private motorcycle business in the old collective auto shop. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Figure 12 A private lawyer's office in the old collective electric workshop. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Figure 13 A private art shop in the old textile factory. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Figure 14 A private dialysis treatment center in the old collective dairy farm. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Figure 15 Opposite the dialysis treatment center, another part of the old collective dairy farm turned into an informal landfill for construction waste. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

The annexation of the production area from the daily routes of members has a direct impact on the kibbutz's spatially dispersed mechanisms of moral monitoring, and in turn, on the policing of a shared substantive culture. Let me give one ethnographic example. As I mentioned in the introduction of the dissertation, in Asif there is a continuous struggle over the establishment of a synagogue. A group of members asked to establish a synagogue in one of the kibbutz's public buildings and the request was declined due to the stubborn resistance of the "orthodox-atheists" from among the veterans. Another chapter in the synagogue saga was written during my fieldwork. An ad in the kibbutz's communal phone app invited the members to join

"Shabbat prayers in the synagogue." A group of veteran kibbutzniks immediately responded and summoned a general assembly meeting on the subject. In the meeting, Yaniv, the manager of rentals in the production area, gives the background to the story. He says that the manager of the electric appliances company that rents the building of the old furniture factory let several members from the kibbutz use one of the rooms as a synagogue and a religious study space. They brought in some Torah books. He says that the renter did not receive payment for the sub-let. He says that he gave the space as an act of piety, and it did not even cross his mind that this could be problematic. This went on for five months. Yaniv says that the renter has agreed to close the synagogue as he does not want to ruin his relations with the kibbutz.

In other words, for five months, at least two times a week, a synagogue operated in the kibbutz without the kibbutz knowing about it. The fact was finally revealed only when the founders tried to make it official by publishing it. It is improbable that such a thing could have happened in the old kibbutz. The grip of informal daily moral monitoring was weakened in this case because the space was rented out to an outside private operator that does not have the same moral sensibilities, and because the space was effectively annexed from the daily routes of the veteran kibbutzniks.

Figure 16 The old collective furniture factory, is now a storage warehouse of a big electric company. In one of its back rooms the unauthorized synagogue operated. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2000.

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Fragmented Space

Privatization contributes to the demise of a shared substantive culture in another way: it offers a fragmented spatial experience. As we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, the space of the kibbutz was originally planned without parcellation into private lots. In the privatization of real estate in 2009, each member was assigned a 450-500 square meter lot surrounding her apartment. The result was the transformation of the residential neighborhoods into a patchwork. Most of the original houses of the kibbutz were called “trains”: a long and narrow structure that was divided into several apartments. In privatization, some members, who had the money for the operation, demolished their portion of the “train” and built much larger,

modern homes. Others did not. Since the old and the new are directly connected by a wall, the aesthetic effect is of a sharp, irritating discord (see figures 17-18).

Figure 17 Patchwork: A traditional kibbutz house in the collective “train” design (left) shares a wall with a newly constructed private house (right). Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2000.

Figure 18 A fragmented “train” house. Ya’ara, a veteran female member, calls this block in the kibbutz: “Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow.” Yesterday is the original “train” apartment in the middle. Today is the one on the left: a new, bigger, yet still “kibbutz-like” home. Tomorrow is the one on the right: “too big and extravagant” in the eyes of the veteran kibbutzniks. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

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A sharp contrast in the level of maintenance of gardens and yards also contributes to the visual breakup of the continuity that characterized the landscape of the old kibbutz. In the residential neighborhoods of the old kibbutz, besides a small front garden, most of the space was made of open lawns centrally maintained by the kibbutz. The equal level of maintenance and the continuity in style gave space an organic, homogenous character. After privatization, most of this space was moved to the hands of private owners and renters and the front lawns were disconnected from the central irrigation system of the kibbutz. Some private owners chose to continue irrigating the lawns and maintained the old look. But many others, those who are poorer

or lessors who do not want to invest, decided to let them dry so as to save on water expenses that can be rather high for a lawn in the long hot summers in Israel.

In Chapter 1, we have seen how the neglect of collective property was caused by the dynamic famously described by Hardin (1968) as the "tragedy of the commons." The dilapidation of the privatized kibbutz's landscape shows the opposite dynamic described by Heller (1998) as the postsocialist "tragedy of the anti-commons." Space deteriorates because it is splintered as private property between many different owners, each with her different priorities and financial abilities, and it becomes much harder to coordinate maintenance and a common standard.

The fragmentation of space is a common object of complaint by veteran kibbutzniks. Sitting on her front porch, Orian tells me that she loves her urban newcomer neighbors who just bought the house next door. They are wonderful people and really good neighbors. She laments, however, their spatial perception indexed in how the first thing they did when landing in the house was to plant a tall hedge between their house and hers and to block the original pathway to her house that now passed through their private property. When I trim the public hedge a bit further down from her house, she asks me to leave it high enough because it depresses her to see the "monster." The "monster" is the big, fancy house built by a kibbutz born returnee who came back to the kibbutz with money. Other big, fancy houses that stick out in what veterans see as an "un-kibbutz like" manner, were called in bitter irony *HaMatnas* (something like "The Y" to indicate that it is too big to be a private home) and "Super Pharm" (after the name of a pharmacy chain store with the same intention).

In her study of the politics of materiality and style in late-socialist Hungary, Fehérváry shows how socialism came to be equated in the eyes of many with the grayness and the generic

gloom of modern, serial, mass construction. In the interior of their homes, people used colors and warm organic materials in an effort to "humanize" and "normalize" their spaces as heterotopias of the uniform, totalitarian "grayness" outside (2013:139-163). In the reactions of veterans to the changes in the built environment of the kibbutz there is an opposite trend: a desire to limit the cacophony of colors and reclaim some minimal level of generic uniformity. When I sat in the meetings of the Planning and Construction Committee, one of the problems that was on the agenda was an effort by the kibbutz to restrict the aesthetic fragmentation of space by limiting the diversity of colors in which people are allowed to paint the facades of their homes. In my interview with Zelda, she tells me that she would gladly add another 50 shekels each month to her kibbutz tax so that the kibbutz would take care of the dilapidated private spaces and reclaim its decent look. In two cases that I followed, the blocking of pathways provoked quiet discontent among neighbors, and in one case an open conflict. In my interpretation, the quality that runs through these different physical phenomena is fragmentation. It is not only the "*nouveau riche*" ugliness of the new, big houses, nor the "lower class" dilapidation and neglect of dry lawns, but their eclectic, cacophonic combination.

The parcellation of space has another, final, impact that is especially pertinent to the object of this chapter: it blocks pathways. Since parcellation was mapped on an existing spatial layout that was meant to serve another kind of property regime, it sometimes creates strange anomalies. What were hitherto public pathways fall into a newly formed private lot and are blocked by the new owners (see figures 19-22). The blocking of pathways and the formation of new fenced-in lots in all kinds of irregular shapes disrupt movement and direct it in strange, circuitous, unnatural routes. Visually, the deadened pathways provoke an uncanny sense of misfit, discontinuity, and fragmentation.

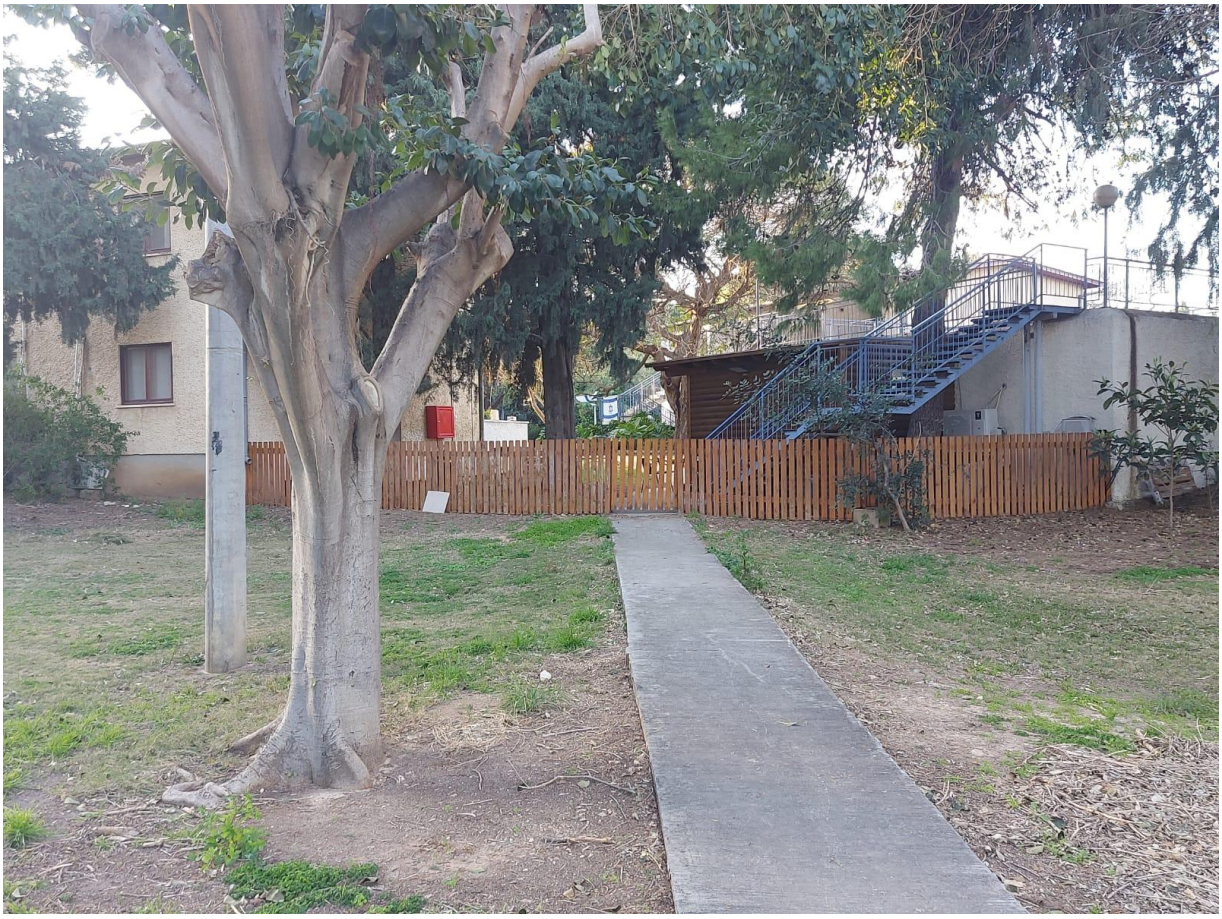

Figure 19 The old youth dorms are rented out to an institution for people with special needs that fenced the area blocking several pathways. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Figure 20 A blocked pathway that was later remade outside the now private lot. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Figure 21 A blocked pathway. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Figure 22 In the process of fencing over a pathway. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Figure 23 The same pathway of Figure 22, several weeks later. Photograph: Omri Senderowicz, 2020.

Countering Fragmentation with Exchange

It would not be accurate to tell the story of social interaction and spatiotemporal synchronization in the kibbutz only as a story of demise and disintegration. Countering the structural and spatial fragmentation of social life in the privatized kibbutz is a developed informal culture of exchange. The texture of daily life is suffused with the exchange of cooking ingredients, hardware tools, toys, medicine, advice, information, favors, and more. As we will see in Chapter 6, this is part of a new ethics of community (*kehila*) that is flourishing in the privatized kibbutz and elsewhere in Israel and the world. This new site of interaction is not of the same scale and intensity of the social life in the old kibbutz. It happens mostly after work, what

is exchanged are mainly surpluses and "extras," and exchange is mostly among families with young children leaving out other populations. However, these social exchanges are important in the experience of daily life in the privatized kibbutz, and they turn it into a hybrid of sorts: not the collectivized kibbutz anymore, yet also not exactly a suburb. I will show three brief examples of sites where this lively culture of exchange materializes and discuss how it creates pockets where a sense of togetherness and shared rhythm exist despite the conditions of social and spatiotemporal fragmentation.

Example (1): Stuff

During my fieldwork, I kept a diary that documented all the exchanges our household of three was involved in. Here is the first week of August 2019 that is typical of the high season of exchange in the summer:

> Sunday: we offer in our neighborhood's WhatsApp group steppingstones left over from constructing our garden.
>
> Monday: We give baking soda to Eran (a neighbor).
>
> Tuesday: (1) Eran brings back a new bag of baking soda. Noa "reproaches" him saying that "you don't need to buy me a new baking soda!" On the same occasion, Eran asks for mustard, and we give it to him.
>
> (2) We give Gonen (a neighbor two houses down) a pipe wrench (he is setting up irrigation in his garden).
>
> (3) Nisan (a neighbor) calls from the hardware store asking if we need anything from there.

Thursday: (1) We are in Tel Aviv. I call Nisan from Tel Aviv and ask him to water our plants while we are out of town. He answers the phone while he is in the supermarket so he asks whether we want something so that when we come back home the fridge would not be empty.

Friday (1) I work in the garden and my shovel breaks. Revital, Gonen's wife, passes by, sees it and offers their shovel. I go over to take it together with Itamar, who starts playing with Revital's son and his games.

(2) We end up staying for coffee and cake and are joined by Ofrit. Ofrit and Revital are urban newcomers from the neighboring town, and they are friends from high school.

(3) After the cake, Revital offers that I leave Itamar to play with her son and go back to work in the garden. I decline the offer.

(4) When we leave, Itamar clings to a toy lawnmower. Revital: "take it and bring it back later, no problem!" We take it.

(5) Noa comes back from Kama (a mother in our son's kindergarten) with a children's bicycle that Kama's son is no longer using and that she is giving us.

Saturday: Gonen takes up our offer and comes to grab those steppingstones to use in his vegetable garden.

These dense circuits of material exchange breach the new privatized physical structure of the kibbutz. An instance of exchange may bring one into another's private backyard as it happened to me going to get the shovel from Revital, and therefore can lead to further interaction (Revital invites me for coffee), which may lead to another exchange (Revital gives us the toy lawnmower). This, in turn, may open up yet further interaction: the lawnmower would now sit in

our backyard for a couple of weeks subtly opening a channel in my consciousness, in which I deliberate with myself when to return it to Revital. In this way, the lawnmower makes Revital present in our backyard for a few weeks by proxy.

Example (2): Favors

Much of what flows in the circuits of exchange are favors. When I needed to drill Jumbo screws into my external wall to hang a fire pipe roller, I called Na'aman, a young kibbutz born returnee, who came with his driller and taught me how to do it. Sometimes, favors get out of hand. My next-door neighbor, Nisan, a young kibbutz born returnee, asked Yonatan, a young urban newcomer (their wives jog together) for some advice on how to build a shed in his backyard. Yonatan started with giving advice, then moved to taking measurements and drafting the plan, and finally ended up actually building it for Nisan over two whole weekends, recruiting his two friends to help in finishing the project. On other occasions, knowing that I worked as a gardener, members asked me to come over to their gardens and advise on the treatment for a sick tree, help with planting a shrub, or spray weeds "on the way" when I work in the kibbutz gardening crew. Other people who are famous for knowing how to do things also get invited to help. When I needed a Notary's signature for some formal business, I turned to Ronen, an urban newcomer and a lawyer, who gladly helped. A few days later, I was in his garden assessing the life chances of a dying orange tree.

Example (3): WhatsApp

Much of the circulation of stuff and favors happens in the WhatsApp group of the kibbutz's "Son's Neighborhood" (*shehunat habanim*). WhatsApp affords a way of countering fragmentation because its phenomenology highlights spatiotemporal co-presence. Ohara et. al

(2014) argue that the gist of the WhatsApp experience is not the communication of content but the formation of a shared sense of "dwelling." The app highlights the phatic rather than referential function of language (2014:1136). Many times, the point is not to communicate concrete messages as it is to sustain and highlight a continuous shared channel of communication in which all members "dwell." This sense of spatiotemporal co-presence is highlighted through several features in the app, like the status that tells you when each user was "seen last," the ticks that tell you if a person has read the message, and the ability to see en vivo when one is typing or when one is connected (Ohara et al. 2014:1138).

Following is a brief example of how exchanges made through the WhatsApp group restore a sense of shared spatiotemporal synchrony in the kibbutz. When people request stuff in the WhatsApp group, it is usually a specific tool or material that they need in order to get some project done: giving treatment to a sick child, fixing irrigation, hanging a picture, cooking a dish. Since the requests are made ad hoc, one has the opportunity to invite the collective in real time into the midst of the project one is privately pursuing:

(1)

Na'aman: Does anyone have a 16 mm R-shaped irrigation connector?

Yonatan: T-shaped?

Nuri: if it is not urgent, I can check later

Sharon: I think I have one. I will get back home at night and check

Noam: R not T-shaped

Racing against the dark

(2)

Na'aman: Does anyone have a SodaStream cylinder? Dying for a Soda.

Dori: checking

Noa: we have one in our soda maker. Come in and make yourself a soda.

Dori: we have one

Noam: coming

By asking for stuff and providing context, Na'aman invites the collective to observe moments of his personal experience: racing to finish a task in the garden before dark falls and dying for a soda in the middle of a hot day. Although he is working alone in his private yard, not in a collective work branch with fellow members, the app gives him opportunities to recall a sense of collective dwelling and simultaneity.

Interestingly, these new forms of intensive social exchange and interaction are afforded by the materiality of an affluent consumerist society. There is a vibrant circulation of gratuitous stuff because people are actively looking to form a community, but it is also because there is a lot of stuff to go around. On the supply side, there is a huge and diverse pool of rather cheap surplus that can be easily circulated. On the demand side, a growing sophistication of consumption creates the kind of needs that are fulfilled in this specific form of exchange. Thirty years ago, a typical dinner in the kibbutz would consist of eggs, salad and toast. Members would usually eat it in the communal dining hall, but even if they chose to make it at home, this would require a rather small amount of basic ingredients that people would usually have in their houses. Nowadays, members' culinary and other projects are much more sophisticated, and therefore require a much wider variety of specialized ingredients. This raises the probability that people would lack one of the ingredients necessary to complete their Japanese or Indian dinners. A random survey of a period of two weeks in the neighborhood's WhatsApp group shows how most of the stuff requested and given is of this category of small specialized ingredients: pinata,

thyme leaves (for making “confit-garlic”), mirin (rice wine for sushi), a dentist who specializes in kids’ dentistry, ginger, varnish spray, barbecue cleaner, and “those really small nails for wood (like those you get in Ikea kits in order to attach the back of a cupboard to its frame).”

Conclusion

What we have seen in this chapter highlights two vectors that dominate social life in the privatized kibbutz. One is the disintegration of shared cultural substance and experience. Chapter 5 will go strongly in that direction. Analyzing two public debates from Asif, it will show how the “procedural” ethical approach dominant in today’s kibbutz iconically mirrors the spatiotemporal processes of fragmentation and private enclosures that we have seen throughout this chapter. The second vector is an effort to recall a sense of togetherness, solidarity, and shared cultural experience under the new conditions of a privatized society. Chapter 6 will take us in that direction by placing the acts of social exchange discussed in this chapter in the context of a new postsocialist moral discourse about community.

Chapter 5 From Substantive to Procedural Ethics: The Unmaking of Shared Culture

In the late socialist kibbutz, the cultivation of shared moral and cultural substance entailed some elementary moral attitudes, perspectives, and gestures. For example, the reproduction of shared cultural understandings was made possible by the high moral status granted to public deliberation as the process in which the kibbutz consciously directs social life in the light of its shared ideals. Or, the cultivation of common cultural norms was enabled through an ethical approach that permitted the ongoing intervention of society in morally correcting individuals. The goal of this chapter is to show how this underlying ethical infrastructure that still instructed daily public life in the late socialist kibbutz is replaced by new ethical attitudes that disable the formation of a shared substantive culture. There are two dimensions to what I am going to show in the chapter. One is the actual demise of the unique cultural identity of the kibbutz. Some of the established cultural understandings and moral values that were the pillars of the kibbutz culture are challenged in the contemporary kibbutz. However, I will also show that the change is much deeper than merely a disappearance of one, socialist cultural content and the emergence of another, neoliberal, cultural content. Rather, we will see how in the kibbutz today, the very idea that society can and ought to have a shared substantive cultural identity - of any kind - is being delegitimized.

I will demonstrate these developments through the analysis of two cases that unfolded simultaneously but independently in Kibbutz Asif in the fall of 2020. The first, which I call the Cameras Affair, was a debate about the introduction of security cameras to the kibbutz kindergartens. The second, which I call the Phone App Affair, was a debate over the publication

of political material in the kibbutz's communal phone app. I bring the two cases together because they show, in very different areas of life in the kibbutz, a similar shift in ethical attitude. Both aroused strong emotional reactions as they combined a struggle between opposing ethical perspectives and cultural identities together with interpersonal strife. What made both cases ethnographically rich and fruitful for the study of local ethical life was that they combined a concrete debate about a specific aspect of kibbutz life - education and politics, respectively - with a debate about how to conduct a debate in the kibbutz. Members were arguing about security cameras and about political ads in the phone app, but they were also simultaneously arguing about how a process of public deliberation in the kibbutz should look like and what is legitimate and illegitimate to do in the context of a debate. Finally, the two cases also had a clear inter-generational fault line. In both, a group of veteran kibbutzniks (*vatikim*) defended the established way of doing things in the kibbutz that was challenged by the younger generation: mostly urban newcomers but also kibbutz born returnees. In that sense, the debates allow us to see the historical shift in local ethical life through the inter-generational cleavage between veterans and youngsters.

The chapter will start by briefly describing the unfolding of the cases. Then, it will move to analyze three dimensions of the contemporary devaluation of the idea of shared culture in the kibbutz. First, we will see how the youngsters' approach indexes a new distrust in the power of cultural norms to effectively regulate social relations. Second, we will see how the youngsters delegitimize some of the traditional gestures of cultivating and policing a shared culture in the kibbutz used by the veterans. Borrowing Charles Taylor's terms, I will conceptualize this as a shift from "substantive" to "procedural" ethics (1989:85). Finally, we will see the demise of the

idea of shared culture through the devaluation of public deliberation as a process of forming shared cultural understandings.

Besides these three dimensions, I highlight the contribution of two other processes to the disappearance of a shared culture in the kibbutz: the growing role of technology and the growing role of the law in regulating social relations. Surveying kibbutz movement's newspapers from recent years, Alon Gan has argued that the dominant language in the kibbutz movement today is the legal language (2019). This is part of a broader contemporary process of judicialization of social and political life that far exceeds the boundaries of the kibbutz (Hirschl 2011). My observations in Kibbutz Asif support Gan's broad overview. The presence of legal procedure in the everyday functioning of the kibbutz is remarkable. Legal consultants closely accompany the kibbutz management in every step it makes, and carefully regulate the process of public deliberation and decision-making. The relations of members with the kibbutz and its institutions are mediated through legal contracts. The state extends its regulative reach deep into areas in the kibbutz that were hitherto in the kibbutz's autonomous discretion, as we will see for example with the demand to install security cameras in kindergartens. Additionally, as we will also shortly see, members today turn much more frequently and easily to the state's organs of law enforcement in solving intra-kibbutz conflicts, an act that was a strict taboo in the old kibbutz.

As Gan rightly points out, what is new about this wave of judicialization is not the mere bureaucratization of social relations in the kibbutz, a process that already happened in the 1960s with the emergence of the *takanon*, as we have seen in Chapter 3. Rather, it is in the fact that things that were once solved through the internal mechanisms of the kibbutz, are now solved by turning to external arbitration. What I will show through our two cases, is how this outsourcing of social regulation contributes to the demise of shared culture in the kibbutz. Turning to higher

legal institutions allows members to circumvent the verdict of the community and in this way diminishes the role of local cultural norms in the regulation of social relations. The legal regulation of social relations supplants the cultural regulation of social relations.

The second process, which also unfolds on a much broader scale beyond the kibbutz, is the growing role of technology in the regulation of social life. In a recent study, media theorist Mark Andrejevic (2019) surveys some of the cutting-edge technological developments (and utopias) in the field of automated media and analyzes their ethical and political affordances. To put it somewhat vulgarly, his argument is that we are headed towards a world in which technological mediation and regulation of social life will substitute for political discussion and shared norms. Andrejevic highlights two affordances of automated media that are relevant in the Cameras Affair and the Phone App Affair respectively. First, in the field of law enforcement, Andrejevic argues, a "post-panoptic" world is emerging (2019:73-93). The old panoptic forms of discipline that Foucault popularized still had an irreducible cultural dimension. Since the state cannot enact real power everywhere and all the time, it has to recruit the self-disciplined cooperation of the subject through the internalization of norms, ideas, and embodied dispositions. However, some of the newest AI-based law enforcement technologies, such as reactive security cameras and autonomous weapons, promise to circumvent the need for internalization of norms and subjectification by offering total surveillance and automatic on-site intervention. The security cameras in the kibbutz's kindergartners are extremely low tech in comparison with AI reactive cameras. In fact, in Andrejevic's narrative, they are portrayed as part of the *ancien regime* still hopelessly relying on symbolic deterrence rather than on operational preemption. However, I will show how in the context of the kibbutz, their affordance

is in a similar direction to the one Andrejevic points to, namely, they offer to substitute cultural regulation of social relations with technological regulation of social relations.

Second, Andrejevic argues, the transition from centralized mass media to dispersed social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, afford a new way of experiencing the public sphere that curtails public deliberation. While in the old era of centralized mass media, one was used to "Having a range of chance encounters, involving shared experience with diverse others and exposure to material that they did not specifically choose" (2020:57), the era of splintered social media and filter bubbles "emphasizes the individualization and customization of news and information, these come to be seen not as a resource for public life but as matters of personal taste and preference reinforcing a *sensus privatus*" (2020:60). This part of Andrejevic's argument will be relevant to the Phone App Affair. We will see how public deliberation in the kibbutz is constrained by the new idea that one has a "right not to hear," that is, one has a right to customize one's experience in the public sphere blocking out any unpleasant expressions. We will also see how the modest technology of the phone app enables and ethically legitimizes the function of silencing the other, both indexing and reinforcing the devaluation of public deliberation.

The Cameras Affair

In 2018, following a wave of media publications about cases of child abuse by kindergarten teachers across the country, the Israeli parliament legislated the Cameras Law. The law obliged all state certified kindergartens of toddlers aged 0-3 to install security cameras. However, it had a qualification: if 70% of the parents in a kindergarten objected to the cameras, their installation could be omitted. But the vote would have to be renewed each year. The new legal obligation to install cameras, and the possibility to omit it, provoked a long debate among

parents and educators in the kibbutz. The issue was brought before the kibbutz's Education Committee, where Ravit, the manager of the kibbutz kindergarten system, and Osnat, the veteran educational counselor, tried to convince the committee to issue a strong declarative suggestion to parents to vote against the introduction of cameras because they contradict the moral character of kibbutz education based on mutual trust and dialogue. To Ravit and Osnat's disappointment, the committee refused, and a political struggle ensued. The struggle unfolded in two parents' meetings, several committee meetings, and in informal politicking among the parents. After several weeks, the vote took place, and 71% of the parents voted against the introduction of cameras. While the Community Manager (the new name for kibbutz Secretary) wanted to end the debate at that point, Eliana, one of the Education Committee members, threatened to appeal to the kibbutz's legal consultant because not all of the parents voted, and the law says that the cameras may be omitted only if 70% of the whole parent body object to them. The vote was repeated, all of the parents voted, and again 71% were against the cameras. A second legal appeal was issued: one of the parents argued that the 70% threshold should be reached from every single kindergarten, while in this case all three kindergartens were treated as a single unit. The appeal made it to the kibbutz's legal consultant, the Regional Council's legal department and the Ministry of Economy and Industry's legal department.[91] At the time of writing, the issue is still in debate between the different legal consultants and for the time being, security cameras have not been installed.

The Phone App Affair

[91] The Ministry of Economy and Industry is the state organ that subsidies kindergartens of toddlers ages 0-3. The kindergartens of children ages 3-6 are under the Ministry of Education.

In July 2020, a group of veteran members decided to join the weekly nation-wide protests against the right-wing government of Benyamin Netanyahu. For several months, every Saturday, the group that numbered around 30-40 members went to demonstrate down at the main road that passes near the kibbutz. Once or twice a week, the informal leader of the protests, Dafna, a veteran kibbutz member, published an invitation to join the protest on the kibbutz's virtual bulletin board on its communal phone app. The virtual bulletin board is divided into thematic sections or boxes: general, lost and found, education, culture, security, etc. Dafna's announcements were published in the general box, where formal kibbutz management announcements are made. After several weeks, Dafna was notified by the kibbutz management that her political announcements would be moved from the general box to a designated politics box because there were some members who were irritated by them. As opposed to the general box, where other information crucial to the whole community is published, the designated politics box could be silenced by the irritated members. Dafna refused the instruction, arguing that politics is a public matter, that she should be allowed to turn her call to the whole public, and that this is an attempt to silence her. She launched a struggle to allow her to continue publishing in the general box. The issue was debated through petitions, kibbutz management sessions, open letters, and a general kibbutz assembly meeting. It was finally settled through the formation of an ad-hoc Communications Committee that upheld the kibbutz management's decision to remove Dafna's announcements from the general box. As part of the struggle between Dafna and Amnon, a kibbutz management member, who allegedly leads the initiative to move her announcements, Amnon threatened Dafna with a libel suit, claiming that she is tarnishing his name by spreading the false information that he is behind the whole thing. The issue between the two was settled through the arbitration of the kibbutz management. The management publishes a

formal letter, circuitously worded in legal language, in which Dafna effectively acknowledges that the steps against her announcements were taken by the whole kibbutz management and not by Amnon personally.

Distrusting the Power of Cultural Norms

The first expression of the demise of the idea of shared culture in the kibbutz is a new popular distrust in the power of cultural norms to effectively regulate social life. We will see this devaluation of the regulating functions of culture by comparing the young parents' position on cameras with that of the traditional educational philosophy of the kibbutz represented by Ravit and Osnat.

The introduction of security cameras to the kibbutz's kindergartens turned into a debate in the first place because it contradicted the kibbutz's traditional educational philosophy. The kibbutz ideology was influenced by a Marxist sensitivity to alienation. The kibbutz eliminated both the market and a formal legal system, not only because they promoted inequality, but also because they entailed alienation. The market and the law - each in its own way - alienated people from each other by substituting direct human dialogue with an impersonal, automatic, formal procedure. They also alienated the individual person from herself and from society as a whole by substituting authentic internal motivation with an artificial motivation created through material sanction and compensation. We have already seen in one of the examples in Chapter 2 how this moral emphasis materialized in the kibbutz's educational philosophy. Until the 1980s, many kibbutz schools were run without sanctions and incentives such as exams, numeric grades, punishments, or a formal hierarchy between teachers and students. Proper behavior and real learning in the school was supposed to happen as a result of close informal relations of dialogue

between students and educators, the cultivation of solidarity and shared norms and understandings, and the authentic awakening of curiosity and enthusiasm.

This was the philosophy that Ravit and Osnat defended in our case. For them, the introduction of security cameras should be rejected because it aims to substitute technological and legal mediation for direct interpersonal "dialogue" (*dialog*) and "mutual trust" (*emun hadadi*) between teachers and parents and between teachers and the children. Relations and conflicts between parents and teachers, which were, until now, resolved through direct informal dialogue, would now become the focus of legal battles. That the system needs electronic surveillance and external legal sanctions both indexes and promotes the dissolution of an authentic moral relation between teachers and parents. Knowing that they are filmed, the teachers' educational conduct and relation with the children would become inauthentic. Instead of acting naturally and humanly and thinking educationally about what is good for the child, the teachers would adopt a distant, politically correct behavior that would seriously limit their educational impact.

The problem with the cameras, according to Ravit and Osnat, is not that they enforce social order, but that they do so in the wrong way. Ravit and Osnat's is not a libertarian critique of the enforcement of social order as such, but a socialist critique of alienated methods of enforcing social order. For example, as an alternative to the cameras, Ravit and Osnat stress in a positive way the notion of "educational hierarchy" (*hirarkhya hinukhit*), in which teachers receive "guidance" (*hadrakha*) in the light of the kibbutz's educational philosophy. Hierarchy, in and of itself, is not bad if it is of the right type: a moral hierarchy based on guidance. Furthermore, they argue that the cameras are unneeded in the kibbutz because of the presence of the "human camera" (*hamatzlema ha'enoshit*), referring to the kibbutz's famous mechanisms of

mutual informal social control that I discussed in Chapter 1. So again, policing is not categorically bad. It only needs to be of the right type: informal comradely moral critique rather than an alienated formal sanction.

For Ravit and Osnat, as well as for the kibbutz's socialist legacy that they represent, these cultural means of social regulation are both morally superior and practically more durable than the techno-legal means of the cameras. The cameras only promote external, artificial motivation through "deterrence" (*harta'a*) and "fear" (*hafhada*), while the kibbutz system promotes "learning and internalizing" (*lemida vehafnama*). The idea is that recruiting moral identification might be harder and might take more time than simply threatening with punishments, but it creates, in the long run, a much stronger, more reliable social tie. In one of the Education Committee meetings, Nina, a member of the committee, a young mother, and an urban newcomer, argues that the cameras are needed because they will protect children. Osnat interjects: "But the camera does not do educational processes!" "Educational process" (*tahalikh hinukhi*) is a common term in Hebrew, but it has a special meaning within the discourse of the kibbutz's educational philosophy. It is a cue for the authentic, long term, patient process of the inculcation of norms that creates a genuine educational and moral bond. In another moment in the conversation, Nina argues against Ravit and Osnat's claim that cameras would only produce more anxiety: "Why should it promote anxiety? I don't understand the argument. Cameras would protect our children!" To which Osnat answers: "We protect them in a *real,* educational way." Again, we see here the same line of argumentation: the cameras only *seem* to protect the children because they do not recruit real moral commitment and social trust, whereas "our" cultural means that create in teachers a real moral commitment, protect children in a real and more durable way.

Contrastingly, for some of the young parents and Education Committee members, the traditional reliance of the kibbutz on cultural means of social regulation was naive. A national plague of child abuse in kindergartens was raging, and the old kibbutz ways were simply too weak to deal with it. The results of guidance, dialogue, mutual trust, and educational process were vague, abstract, and partial. The parents agreed with Ravit's argument that the actual chances that a serious case of abuse would happen in the kibbutz were low, but constantly reminded her that a small risk does not mean no risk at all. Things have happened in the past. For example, Naama, one of the young committee members, reminds that "In Esh Hamered [the neighboring kibbutz] there was a case in which a mother suspected the teacher and found out about the bad things that she was doing only after she put a tape recorder in her daughter's backpack and revealed everything. It can happen. It is a radical scenario, but it can happen." Relying on the teachers' moral obligation and goodwill and on the cultural mechanisms that are supposed to secure it is irresponsible because it leaves open the objective risk that something terrible might indeed happen. Contrastingly, the technological means of the cameras, accompanied by the effective threat of legal sanction would eliminate, or at least bring us much nearer to eliminating that risk.

The youngsters' distrust in the power of shared cultural norms was not expressed directly, but indirectly by delegitimizing its price: the need to surrender to the minimal uncertainty of social life. Although the internalization of norms can create highly predictable patterns of behavior, there is, as Bourdieu argued, an irreducible gap between probability and rule (1977:22). The fact that the subjects of a certain culture are prone to act according to the internalized norms of this culture, does not mean that they will necessarily always do so. Relying on human moral agency, even when heavily constrained by internalized norms, is always a

minimally risky endeavor since a human agent may always choose to act defiantly or irrationally.

It was this minimal element of uncertainty that the parents reconfigured as illegitimate and in need of fixing. The problem was not that the risk to children in the kibbutz was high or that it was higher than before. Even those parents who vehemently supported the cameras admitted that the risk of harm was still very low. As opposed to many kindergartens in the city where the cases of abuse happened, the kindergartens in the kibbutz are few, have a large number of staff per child, are monitored educationally on a daily basis by the manager, and are physically open and visible to the public, located at the center of the kibbutz with no separating walls and gates. But the problem of the parents was the mere theoretical existence of a risk. A common thread that ran through the parents' discourse in the debate was a problematization of all the "dark corners" of kindergarten life, i.e., all those places where what is going on is not recorded. Efrat, a young Education Committee member, said in the first meeting:

> There is a kibbutz perception that is a bit naive. But we are talking about our children here. The most precious thing we have got. There are parents who say: "ok, I drop my child off in the kindergarten in the morning, and Irit the teacher kindly says "Good Morning" and smiles. But what do I know about what happens later inside the kindergarten? I have no guarantee. I have no guarantee that bad things aren't happening there."

Efrat points to a real element of uncertainty inherent in the social contract underlying the institution of the kindergarten: the parents do not have a guarantee that the teachers would not abuse their children when they are not watching even if the risk is small. Naama adds by pointing

to a related “dark corner” saying that “toddlers this age can’t speak. If they are undergoing abuse, they can’t tell the parent about it.” She urges the parents: “Think about it: there might be an ongoing abuse and the parent would not know for weeks and months on. Especially for children at this age, the cameras are crucial.”

Ye'ela, one of the mothers in the parents’ meeting, makes a similar point from a more positive angle. Security cameras, she argues, are good not only for children but also for teachers and their relations with parents. She brings an example of a case that she encountered while working in the municipality of the town where she lived before coming to the kibbutz. In this case, a complaint was filed against a kindergarten teacher because she was seen aggressively pulling a child by the arm. Luckily, this kindergarten had security cameras, and when their recordings were released, they showed that the teacher pulled the child strongly by the arm because he was about to trip on a sharp object. Only thanks to the camera was the teacher able to prove her innocence, and the relations with the suspecting mother were set straight.

The element of uncertainty to which the parents are pointing is real and is not new. What is new is its reconfiguration as a problem that needs to be and can be resolved. Until recently, the forms of uncertainty that Efrat, Naama, and Ye’ela point to were seen as an unpleasant but nonetheless a trivial part of any social relation. For decades, people dropped their children in kindergartens or solved interpersonal problems without recourse to recordings or evidence. The parents delegitimize this element of uncertainty as a matter of principle. Efrat does not give any concrete reason to suspect Irit the teacher, she only points to the general problem of trusting a teacher - any teacher - without surveilling her. Ye’ela does something similar. By pointing out the benefits of electronic surveillance to interpersonal relations, she expresses a background assumption that social relations that go on unrecorded are problematic. She retroactively

problematizes what was until recently a trivial fact of any social relation: that in most cases interpersonal conflicts have to be negotiated without the recourse to hard, unambiguous evidence. Taken together, we see here a first dimension of the demise of the idea of a shared culture. The parents delegitimize the idea of culture as a shared medium that regulates social relations by delegitimizing the minimal risk involved in relying on shared cultural norms and by upholding safer ways of regulating social relations through technology and legal sanction.

The Role of Technology and Judicialization (1)

Note how the transition away from cultural means of social regulation is also afforded by the introduction of new technology and the growing use of legal mediation in the kibbutz. Put in simple terms, what we see here is how the regulation of social life through the policing of shared norms (Osnat's "human camera") is substituted by technological means of electronic surveillance (the real camera). But the availability of security cameras does not only substitute for cultural norms in solving the same problem, it also contributes to its definition as a problem in the first place. The very small risk that something terrible might indeed happen, which is implicit in any cultural regulation of social life, becomes illegitimate because of the technological possibility to reach total security through the security cameras. There is a technological way to watch children 100% of the time, so why not do it? Why take an unnecessary risk? The mere technological possibility to annihilate uncertainty problematizes uncertainty in a new way.

We also see how the shift away from cultural regulation is associated with the judicialization of social relations. The security cameras' recordings are explicitly made in order to act as evidence in a potential police investigation and legal hearing. The problems between teachers and parents were hitherto solved within the kibbutz in direct dialogue or through the

arbitration of Ravit as the head of the kindergartens. The cameras make it possible to transfer that discussion from Ravit's office inside the kibbutz to the courtroom outside the kibbutz. The relations would be regulated not according to the kibbutz's unique shared cultural norms but according to the "objective" norms of the state's law. We see judicialization in another place in the case when there are disputes about the vote and the youngsters appeal to higher judicial institutions and circumvent the kibbutz management. This was seen by Oren, the veteran Community Manager of the kibbutz, as a breach of the social trust that is supposed to characterize the kibbutz society.

Delegitimizing Substantive Ethics

The second dimension of the demise of the idea of shared culture in the kibbutz is the undermining of the ethical approach that made it possible. Borrowing from Charles Taylor, I conceptualize this as a transition from "substantive" to "procedural" ethics (1989:85). In substantive ethics, the idea of what it is good to do and to be is attached to a particular cultural order with its unique norms, tastes, traditions, and social roles. Therefore, society has a mandate to explicitly prescribe this concrete cultural way of life over others. This mandate to make what Taylor calls "strong qualitative distinctions" (1989:80-84) between cultural practices, ideas, and tastes is crucial in sustaining a shared, substantive culture. The turn to procedural ethics that Taylor associates with the emergence of Western modernity shifts the emphasis from the reproduction of the correct socio-cosmic order to ensuring the autonomy of the individual moral agent. Ensuring the proper procedure of individual moral reasoning becomes more important than the actual content of moral choices as long as they don't harm the autonomy of others. Western modernity is associated with a new moral concern - anxiety even - about the purity of individual autonomy (see also Latour 1993; and Keane 2007:59-82). This moral emphasis entails

a new suspicion of shared cultures and traditions since these are seen as potentially contaminating the autonomy of the individual. Procedural ethics has moral injunctions, otherwise it would not be an ethics. Yet, according to Taylor, it involves a moral impoverishment as in it "morality is narrowly concerned with what we ought to do and not also with what is valuable in itself or what we should admire or love" (1989:84). It is shot through with a new "ethics of inarticulacy" (1989:53-90) that problematizes the ability to openly pursue a shared substantive vision of the morally good life. Implied in procedural ethics is a view of shared culture as a neutral, transparent background that only contains and mediates between discreet individual cultural identities.

In the following examples, we will see traces of the old kibbutz's substantive ethics in the position of some of the veteran kibbutzniks. Conversely, we will see how the kibbutz gradually shifts to a procedural mindset by analyzing the antagonism that the veterans' substantive habitus provoked among youngsters and newcomers to the kibbutz. As I noted in the introduction of the dissertation, the application of the substantive-to-procedural framework to the kibbutz is problematic. Note, for example, that while in a moment I will place Ravit and Osnat in the substantive camp, they have a strong emphasis on authenticity, which is an emphasis usually associated with procedural ethics. However, as I also argued in the introduction, socialist ethics combined features from both procedural and substantive ethics in a way that liberal capitalism does not, and the transition from the former to the latter has some of the attributes of the transition from substantive to procedural ethics. I will come back to this point and develop it further in the conclusion of the dissertation. In the meantime, through the following ethnographic examples, I hope to convince the reader that there is a basis for my conceptualization of these questions.

Interpellation and its Discontents

The Cameras Affair was not only a concrete ethical debate about the implications of security cameras, but was also a meta-debate, a debate about how to conduct a debate in the kibbutz. Throughout the whole case, the young parents expressed discontent regarding what they saw as Ravit and Osnat's too passionate attempt to convince them to vote against the introduction of cameras. The parents argued that Ravit and Osnat should be neutral and present both options - for and against cameras - in a balanced way, leaving it to the parents to decide. Implied in this debate-about-the-debate is a meta-ethical difference between the veterans, Ravit and Osnat and the young parents. Ravit and Osnat acted as if it was legitimate that a representative of the kibbutz actively promote concrete moral and cultural content, while the young parents argued that the kibbutz should be value neutral. In other words, the parents undermine the idea that the kibbutz, as a collective, has the mandate to enforce its shared moral and cultural tradition, in this case its humanist education.

Several weeks after the first meeting of the Education Committee, Ravit and Osnat held a public meeting with the parents of one of the relevant kindergartens. The meeting was held in the kibbutz's club on a Monday evening and was attended by about 30 parents. Ravit and Osnat opened and led the conversation using a PowerPoint presentation with which they tried to persuade the parents to vote against the introduction of cameras. After providing a short background of the history and the technicalities of the Cameras Law, the presentation turned into a strong critique of the idea to introduce security cameras to the kindergartens in the kibbutz. The style of the presentation was unabashedly biased, a fact that earned it, a few minutes later, the parents' moral fury. One slide, for example, presented two columns - one good and the other bad. The good column was entitled "The Goals of the Kibbutz's Education System" and had the good

humanist values of "optimal education" (*hinukh meitavi*), "responsibility and consciousness" (*ahrayut vemuda'ut*), and "learning and internalizing" (*lemida vehafnama*). The other column entitled *"*The Goals of the Cameras Law*"* had bad values. Instead of really dealing with the problem, the cameras would only achieve the superficial "exposure of the abuse" (*hasifat hapgi'a*) and worked through "deterrence and intimidation" (*harta'a vehafhada*). The aesthetic effect of the slide that caused the parents' irritation, was in its too strongly articulated moral judgment. This was embodied in its content, for example, the use of harsh negative terms to condemn the rival option ("deterrence and intimidation"), and it was also embodied in the graphic form of the slide: a binary two-column structure, with a good column and a bad column that was seen as too clear-cut and dichotomous. But the final slide of the presentation was the most instructive. It read:

> The Cameras Law = Neglect of Education.
>
> "Instead of working according to a clear plan that would prevent cases of abuse, they turn everybody into potential criminals that only wait to see when it would happen, while severely damaging interpersonal relationships within the system, children's psychological processes, and their normal development."

In both forums in which it was presented, the slide provoked a roar of uneasiness in the audience, indicating that Osnat and Ravit were out of sync with the moral sensibilities of the young parents. What provoked the uneasiness was that the citation did not present itself as an opinion among other valid opinions, but as universal truth. The title is phrased as an objective, mathematical statement of universal value: "The Cameras Law = Neglect of Education." The cited text was stylized as an unambiguous professional judgment, worded in harsh terms, that the

law “severely damages” interpersonal relationships and the children’s psychological development.

This was exacerbated by the combination of the slide’s authoritative tone regarding substance, with a neglect, even sloppiness, in procedure and presentation, which was a tangible reflection of Ravit and Osnat’s substantive rather than procedural orientation. The slide included a citation, but Ravit and Osnat did not feel obliged to specify where the citation is taken from and who the author is. Is this a fact? an opinion? Who’s opinion? These procedural formalities were unimportant to Osnat and Ravit because if the content of the statement was substantially true, it did not need the stamp of proper procedure. In that sense, there is a connection between the old kibbutz’s style of informality and the strong presence of shared moral substance and between the introduction of formality and the disappearance of shared moral substance.

Towards the end of the presentation it was clear that many of the parents were irritated and there was a sense of a growing impatience in the audience. Ye’ela was the first parent to speak:

> When I was invited to come to a meeting about cameras, I expected to hear why not introduce cameras and also why we should introduce cameras. And this discourse of “why not, why not, and why not,” I understand, ok? I understand that you do not want cameras… I am just saying that this direction that you are presenting, of “why not” and “why not” bothers me a lot, because, as a parent, I would also like to hear why we should introduce cameras, ok? … You need to soften a bit this line of “why not” and ”why not.”

This style of complaints continued in the days after the meeting. In a second Education Committee meeting, Naama, one of the members, says:

> As a parent sitting in the meeting in *nitzanim* kindergarten I felt really bad, really bad. Why does the system express only one opinion? All the time the same opinion?
> (Ravit in the background: "that is not an objective description! It was a nice discussion, with a nice atmosphere.)
> (Naama raises her voice in fury): A whole hour! A whole hour you bring only one opinion! It was really not nice, it was scary.

For the young parents, the problem with this situation is that the kibbutz's establishment has a strong moral bias to which it is actively trying to interpellate the parents. The kibbutz should not try to enforce a substantive ethical content on individual members - in this case, a specific ethical vision on how the kibbutz's education system should look. As the representatives of the establishment, Ravit and Osnat should only present in a balanced and neutral way the two options - for and against cameras - and leave it to the parents' free choice. That on the line was a meta-ethical visceral reaction and not merely a disagreement about ethical content, we can see through the fact that even parents who supported Ravit and Osnat's position against cameras were irritated by their style of presenting it. After the parents' meeting, Eliana writes in the committee's WhatsApp group:

> I am a minute and a half in my role as committee member and already I hear parents telling me that the all too decisive position that the system presents causes discomfort even among those who wanted to vote with the system against cameras.

What irritates the parents in Ravit and Osnat's style is that it indexes the presence of "strong qualitative distinctions" (Taylor 1989:80-84).[92] They too-clearly and too-explicitly propagate the kibbutz's traditional culture of non-alienated, humanist education over other options. What was especially scandalous about Ravit and Osnat's bias was that it pertained to purely a moral, "impractical" question: what is a good education? and not to a professional, "practical" question of the safety of the children or the smooth running of the kindergarten. It was an insistence not on "what we ought to do" but on what "is valuable in itself…what we should admire and love" (Taylor 1989:84). The parents' reaction indexed a procedural "ethics of inarticulacy," a suspicion of qualitative distinctions that are too-explicit and too-binary.[93]

From Either/Or to Both/And

Ravit and Osnat draw a strong qualitative distinction between cultural means of social regulation (good) and the new techno-legal regulation through cameras (bad). This is why they construct the issue as an "either/or." It is *either* the kibbutz's humanist, non-alienated education

[92] That expressions of strong qualitative distinctions' are markers of substantive moral orders may be gleaned from the following example: My 4-year-old son is addicted to a short YouTube clip that tells the story of Hanukkah, in which a small group of Jewish fighters - the Maccabim - rebel against the Greeks in order to maintain their Jewish practices and faith. The clip was created by Chabad, the Jewish missionary ultra-orthodox group, from the pupils of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Chabad materials made for the wide secular public usually appear in a secular disguise. In the Chanukah clip, for example, the modern protagonists that tell the story are secular children and their parents. However, what betrays the disguised Chabad identity is their use of strong qualitative distinctions which sound awkward to the secular liberal ear. When they speak of the Greeks, for example, they say: *otam yevanim resha'im* ("Those evil Greeks"). The use of *resha'im* - "evil", sounds foreign to the secular liberal ear because it makes a too strong qualitative distinction and so it betrays the substantive signature of Chabad's missionary discourse.

[93] This ethics of inarticulacy has a common expression in daily social interactions in the kibbutz. In the liberal atmosphere of the privatized kibbutz, as it is in broader liberal circles, it has become customary that when one makes a claim, one should accompany the claim with a qualification so as not to be seen as preaching too strongly for something. For example, in the kibbutz's WhatsApp group, Sarit, a young member, warns other members of the danger of fire ants. She encourages them to be more active about it and claims that "if we will not take this threat seriously, we will not be able to sit on any lawn or bench around the kibbutz anymore." She then felt immediately compelled to add in another message: "it came out a little bit dramatic…" Sarit regretted her own public declaration of a strong qualitative distinction. Even when she makes a strong and decisive claim about something she feels strongly about, as an act of procedural politeness, she has to qualify it and assure everyone that she actually did not make a strong claim.

or electronic surveillance. You can't have both. Contrastingly, the parents attacked this dichotomous and arbitrarily binary "either/or" logic and promoted a "both/and" framing of the matter. This was an ethically sensitive point. Parents had a visceral reaction each time Ravit or Osnat framed the issue as an "either/or." In the first Education Committee meeting the following conversation is recorded:

> Naama: Cameras do not contradict education and communication and all those things that Ravit and Osnat talked about. It does not bring anxiety, it calms it down.
>
> Osnat: The camera will not do the same work that the "human camera" does.
>
> Naama: There is no contradiction between the two! Cameras do not rule out trust and dialogue.
>
> Osnat: Then why introduce cameras?
>
> Naama: Because things have happened in the past… If it can calm parents down, why not bring it? I understand the kibbutz spirit and everything but why object to cameras?

For Naama, security cameras do not contradict trust and dialogue. She acknowledges that the kibbutz has a unique substantive tradition in education ("kibbutz spirit") that favors trust and dialogue but does not understand why it should rule out the introduction of electronic surveillance and legal sanction. In the parents' meeting, when Ravit argues that cameras would harm the sense of informal trust that characterizes kibbutz system, there is a commotion of protest as several parents simultaneously interject and express their disagreement. Ye'ela articulates their disapproval:

> But this is not correct! How is one thing related to the other? Those who support the cameras, it does not mean that they distrust the system… It is not because they distrust the staff… Let's be clear: we have full confidence in the staff.

The parents react strongly because they see Ravit and Osnat's either/or framing as dogmatic and manipulative. It falsely makes the parents believe that they are faced with a zero-sum choice: either they enjoy a kibbutz-style education based on informality and trust, or they incorporate electronic surveillance and legal sanction. Why think about this in such binary dichotomous terms? For the parents, the issue should be framed in a more nuanced and flexible manner as a both/and: the introduction of cameras only adds another layer of security on top of social trust and dialogue, it does not come at its expense.

In the committee's WhatsApp group, Ravit and Osnat send out a draft of a letter they want to send the parents before the vote, explaining the cameras law. Eliana, one of the committee members, writes critically about their "either/or" framing of the subject:

> I join the feeling that the letter gives the impression that whoever signs in favor of the cameras in fact signs against the system. I am sure that there are many parents who are for the system and still want the cameras.

Eliana effectively constructs the moral character of the kibbutz's education as being without substance. She argues that in order not to exclude the parents who support cameras, the committee should make sure that they do not feel that they are "against the system." But if parents who support the introduction of something which clearly contradicts the system's moral character can still be "for the system," then being "for the system" has no substantial meaning. It

is understood as a general emotional identification with the system, which is not anchored in any specific moral content.

A Collective Political Identity

Let me now show how our second case - in an absolutely different area of kibbutz life - shows the same meta ethical transition from substantive to procedural ethics. To remind, what ignited the phone app affair was that some members were irritated with Dafna's leftist political announcements. They demanded that they be removed from the general box in the phone app to a designated politics box, where it would be possible to silence them. This removal of leftist political content from the center stage to a side interest box was a symbolic struggle. In my interpretation, what bothered the members was that Dafna's leftist announcements in the general box - the center stage of the app - gave the impression that the kibbutz had a collective leftist political identity. By publishing on the center stage, Dafna was ignoring the fact that the kibbutz had changed and there is in the kibbutz today a growing minority of non-leftists. The marking of the whole kibbutz as leftist imposes on them a collective identity which they do not identify with. The general claim was that the kibbutz should be an apolitical settlement. We see here the same call for moral neutrality as we saw in the Cameras Affair. The kibbutz cannot openly cultivate a shared substantive moral substance: a particular kind of education in the first case and a particular kind of collective political identity in this case.

The demand for political neutrality is quite normal when dealing with almost any other form of settlement in Israel. Even if the majority of the population in a settlement is leftist, its collective political identity is still not leftist. It usually would not use in an open way its formal organs to promote a specific political or partisan cause. But the kibbutz was a special case in which a municipality had a formally acknowledged political identity. This stemmed from the fact

that the kibbutz was established as a settlement of an ideological movement with a clear political orientation. The kibbutz movement was ideologically and institutionally affiliated with the parties of the Labor movement. Ballot results were almost unanimously in favor of these parties and looked like the results of "elections" held in dictatorships with 99% of the vote going to the ruling party. During my childhood and adolescence in Kibbutz Asif in the 1980s and 1990s, there were only two votes out of about 200 that went to non-leftist parties. When local ballot results were published, everyone knew (and joked about) who these two votes belonged to: a newly turned religious member who voted for the ultra-orthodox party and the kibbutz's only "crazy" right winger who voted for the ultra-right wing.

However, strictly speaking, this political homogeneity of the kibbutz population was not the source of legitimation of its collective political identity. The kibbutz had a collective leftist identity "prior" to, or independently of the political views of its "empirical" individual members. As a corporate body, it openly and legitimately used communal and municipal resources for partisan goals. As part of the kibbutz's committee system (see Chapter 3), up to the 1990s, it had an active Political Committee. The Political Committee formally used the resources of the kibbutz and mobilized kibbutz members to participate in political activities in the nearby towns and at the nation-wide level. Political activity was part of the kibbutz's sense of ideological mission, to bring the word of socialism to the whole of Israeli society.

The peak of action was at times of national elections, when members would be dispersed in nearby towns doing house visits and driving voters to the ballot. As an example, here is an ad on the front page of Kibbutz Ein HaMifratz's newspaper in 1984:

> In the last two weeks, many members went out to make political house visits in Kiryat Yam [the neighboring town]. Almost everybody came back home with a good feeling.

> In the last week before the elections we should increase our efforts, so that every house in Kiryat Yam receives a visit…
>
> The last kibbutz meeting decided that members who go out for political house visits will be released from the second weeding *giyus* in the cotton-fields [*giyus* was a form of semi-obligatory seasonal public works]. Every house visit will be counted as if the member gave a *giyus* in the cotton field. This, of course, allows us to concentrate our efforts towards the last week before the elections.
>
> We ask members to immediately register for their preferred day to participate in the political house visits, and spare us the need to make "political house visits" in our own kibbutz as well in order to recruit members…[94]

In this ad, we can clearly see the presence of a collective political identity in the 1980s, and the substantive ethics that sustained it. We see this in the matter-of-factness of the "we" in the author's "we should increase our efforts," in the kibbutz's decision that leftist political activity would count towards fulfilling a member's work obligation in the cotton-fields, and in the humorous threat that members who do not register for political house visits would receive one themselves.

Dafna's announcements were a weak version of this tradition. They were only a weak version because they were signed by her personally and were not formally endorsed by the kibbutz institutions. In contrast to the past, it was her private initiative and not that of a kibbutz Political Committee that does not exist anymore. However, the location of the announcements in the general box in the app made them look similar to those of the past. The general box is where

[94] The Political Committee. "Only One Week is Left". *Yediot HaShavua.* July 13, 1984.

kibbutz institutions publish their formal announcements, and the mere physical (or virtual) proximity of Dafna's announcements to them gave the aesthetic impression that they were formally endorsed by the kibbutz. Moving the announcements from the general box to a private interest box was a symbolic move meant to make clear that the kibbutz does not have a collective leftist political identity anymore. And this gesture provoked the conflict before us.

The Substantive Camp: Upholding a Collective Political Identity

One reason that the kibbutz's collective political identity was challenged in Asif is the demographic change brought about by the influx of urban newcomers. Many newcomers do not share the kibbutzniks' active leftism. The kibbutz's population had changed and there are now a significant number of members who are alienated from and irritated by the kibbutz's collective leftist identity and are calling for its removal. However, when we look closely at demographics, we can see that numerically non-leftists are still a minority, albeit a bit larger than before. In the local ballot results from Asif from the 2021 national elections, 88% of the votes still went to left or center parties, which is very far to the left from the national average. The parties included in this 88% are all united in the anti-Netanyahu front and therefore the meaning is that 88% of the membership in the kibbutz supposedly support Dafna's cause.

In other words, the change that our debate surfaces is not so much, or not only, a demographic change as it is a change in local ethics. Leftists remain an overwhelming majority in the kibbutz, even with the influx of newcomers. What has changed is the ability of this majority to morally defend the idea that the kibbutz can and should have a substantive collective political identity, regardless of the fact that it does not express the voice of the non-leftist minority that has grown but is still small: 12%. What is lost is not a quantitative demographic

advantage, but a qualitative ethical function: the ability to translate the majority into a formal collective political identity.

At the center of the debate stood a fundamental question: There is a minority of urban newcomers who joined the kibbutz and don't share the kibbutz's active leftism. Should the newcomers adjust to the kibbutz, or should the kibbutz adjust to the newcomers? Does the kibbutz have to change its collective political identity in order to accommodate the newcomers, or do the newcomers have to accept that they joined a community which has a political tradition that is not theirs? If newcomers need to adjust - the announcements should stay in the general box. If the kibbutz has to adjust - the announcements have to be moved to a private box in order for it to be clear that they do not represent the kibbutz's formal political orientation.

In the debate, there were veterans who were loyal to the kibbutz's substantive approach. They upheld the collective political identity of the kibbutz and argued that the newcomers should adapt to the kibbutz's tradition, not the other way around. In the general meeting on the subject, this position was represented by a single member: Yaffa, a veteran female member:

> I would like to say something that is not going to be so popular: there is a long tradition in this kibbutz. This is a kibbutz of *HaShomer HaTza'ir*. We were always, and our heritage was always leftist. Ok, there is a new generation that joined what was already going on here. Newcomers have their own political opinions, and everyone has a right to have their own political opinion, but I think that there is a stronger right to what was here before them… There was a time when in the formal weekly paper of the kibbutz secretariat there was a call to join the May Day parade. Like it, there were many other political actions that we carried out as a collective. All right, things are changing, but there is no right to silence what we believed in for so many years, for so many

> generations… Maybe it is not so comfortable to those who joined the kibbutz lately, but those who join should understand where they came to, and should assimilate to the place that they joined…

Yafa makes a substantive ethics claim. Newcomers have joined a community that already has a substantive moral tradition. Being a kibbutz of the *HaShomer HaTza'ir* movement attaches to the kibbutz a specific set of values, a substantive cultural identity: it is leftist, socialist, Zionist and ultra-atheist. The kibbutz's shared culture and tradition are not an empty container that expresses the multiplicity of cultural and political identities in the kibbutz's population. Upon joining the kibbutz, the newcomers should adapt to the kibbutz, not the other way around.

Uriel has a similar position. A few days after the general kibbutz meeting on the subject, I worked with the kibbutz's gardening crew near Uriel's house. He came out to speak with me about the subject, expressing his criticism about the meeting and about the demand to take down Dafna's political announcements. He said that:

> People here don't have balls anymore. There is a small minority who does not like the posting of leftist political content, and everybody conforms to their demands instead of making them conform. It is ok that some of the newcomers have an independent political opinion. There were always people like that here. But as a settlement, the kibbutz has a clear political identity.
>
> The kibbutz is not from the UN! Since when did we become from the UN? It is not a neutral body. It is, and always was, a political society… Dafna says that she was silenced. But that is beside the point! She is barking up the wrong tree. It is not about her being able or unable to express her personal opinion. I think not only that her ads should be

> published in the general box on the app, but that they should also be formally endorsed by the kibbutz establishment. Her announcements should be on behalf of the kibbutz's management, in the name of the kibbutz's Political Committee. We should establish the kibbutz's Political Committee again and it should be the one publishing Dafna's ads. It should not be only Dafna's personal initiative. Maybe I should propose it to her.

Uriel reframed Dafna's argument. We will see shortly that Dafna argued in the name of her personal freedom of speech. Uriel translated her procedural ethics position into the language of substantive ethics: she should demand that her ads be formally endorsed as the kibbutz's official political position.

Delegitimizing the Kibbutz's Collective Political Identity

But in our case, this substantive position, which was in the 1980s still hegemonic, was already clearly marginal. It was challenged by Amnon and the newcomers who demanded to remove the announcements from the general box in the app. But even among many veteran members, it was seen as anachronistic. In the general assembly meeting, Yafa was the only one who defended it. In the meeting of the ad-hoc Communications Committee that was summoned by the general assembly to solve the conflict, although there was a representation of all social groups in the kibbutz, there was a wide consensus that Yaffa's approach, centered on the notion that "this is a kibbutz of *HaShomer HaTza'ir*" was anachronistic.

Furthermore, other speakers who supported Dafna, including Dafna herself, did so on the argument of the freedom of speech not of a shared substantive political identity. For example, here is Tsipora, a veteran kibbutz female member, one of the central speakers in support of Dafna in the assembly:

> Today, in the kibbutz, there is a wide array of opinions, some of which we did not expect to see here in the past… Therefore, what we need here in the kibbutz is a lot of listening, open-mindedness, and a lot, a lot of tolerance and acceptance of the other. We are a strong community, and I am not afraid of political publications, neither of this side nor of the other… In a society like ours, which is so diverse, one has to act in tolerance towards different opinions, otherwise, we will not be able to live here together…

This position is very different from Yafa's and Uri's substantive position. Both defend the same cause - letting Dafna continue publishing her announcements on the general box - but ethically defend it in different ways. Uri and Yafa argued that the announcements should stay there because they contain leftist ideas, and this kibbutz is leftist. But Tzipora argues that announcements should stay because Dafna has a liberal right to voice her opinion in the public sphere just like any other political voice. In other words, the kibbutz's traditional substantive position was gone even from the camp that supported Dafna.

As we will see in the next section, the debate was actually not with the kibbutz's traditional substantive approach that most people already saw as fringe. Rather, the real weight of the debate has drifted even farther away from the substantive position. It was not so much about the right of the kibbutz to *impose* content but about its right to *voice* it and to try to *convince* according to it in public deliberation. In other words, what we will see is that the shift away from a substantive approach to culture and ethics was even more radical than what I have shown so far.

The "Ambush" of Public Deliberation

As we have seen in Chapter 3, in the old kibbutz, public deliberation had a privileged moral status. Instructed by the idea that social reality cannot be left to run its own course - a state denoted by the negative term *stichia*, "spontaneity," the kibbutz enshrined public deliberation as the process in which the collective reflects on social reality and acts on it consciously. This was marked by the positive term *berur*, "sorting out." The kibbutz regarded the conversation in the assembly as the heart of collective life. The kibbutz's developed mechanisms of public deliberation had an important role in cultivating shared cultural and moral understandings and norms. In other words, they were crucial in producing a shared, substantive culture. In this section, we will see how the two cases before us demonstrate the demise of the idea of shared culture through a devaluation of the process of public deliberation.

The Cameras Law, in and of itself, already significantly curtailed the kibbutz's capacity for collective self-fashioning. Historically, the kibbutz enjoyed relative autonomy from the state and was allowed to fashion its internal social arrangements according to its unique socialist values. In the past fifteen years or so, as part of judicialization, there has been a growing intervention of the state in regulating the kibbutz's internal social arrangements. The Cameras Law is an example of such an annexing of sovereignty. Introducing electronic surveillance and legal litigation into the texture of social relations in the kindergarten contradicts the kibbutz's moral emphasis on informality and non-alienation. Note that when the law does give back some of the prerogatives to the local community through the possibility to omit the installation of cameras, it gives it to the parents as the individual customers of the system and not to the kibbutz's organs of collective deliberation. In its framing of the issue, the law recognizes only two entities: the state and the individual, erasing the intermediary body of the kibbutz as a

society that collectively fashions its social arrangements according to a unique, shared cultural substance.

This external challenge to the kibbutz's organs of public deliberation converged with an internal challenge by the young parents. In framing the debate, the parents made three demands that substantially curtailed the process of public deliberation. The first, we have already seen: a demand that the kibbutz's establishment refrain from trying too eagerly to convince them to support one position. The second demand was that their vote be anonymous. Because exemption from the Cameras Law could be secured only by showing that 70% of the parents object to it, parents had to personally sign the survey sent to them. But the parents were concerned that if the teachers or Ravit knew that they voted in favor of cameras, they would retaliate by giving bad treatment to their children, so it was agreed that a neutral person would count the votes. We see here a connection between the demise of social trust, or more accurately, the delegitimization of social uncertainty that I have discussed in the first section and the shrinking space of public deliberation. Because of the alleged threat of revenge, the debate was framed in such a way that the participants do not stand publicly behind their positions. This gave the debate a strange quality of a poker game, or a legal negotiation, where everyone keeps their cards close to their chest. For most speakers in the parents' meeting, it was impossible to know where they actually stood on the issue. Since parents were not willing to publicly commit to their positions, the debate was carried out as a hypothetical simulation with an acknowledged gap between expressed opinions and real ones. The way the conversation looked entailed a shift in local ethical emphasis from the authenticity of the discussion to individual safety.

The parents made a third demand in framing the debate: that the teachers would not be present in the parents' meeting about the cameras law. The presence of the teachers was

uncomfortable for the parents who wanted cameras because cameras would worsen the work conditions of teachers. In the contemporary atmosphere of suspicion of teachers' violence that sweeps the country, cameras would expose teachers in a new way to public scandal, police investigation, and lawsuits for what were until recently gray zone disciplinary behaviors such as yelling, taking a child by the arm or putting a child in the corner as punishment. In other words, for the parents, directly confronting the teachers meant directly confronting the social consequences of their decision, confronting those who would pay the price for it and who are in a conflict of interest and of opinion with the parents. The parents asked to be relieved of this uncomfortable confrontation by taking the teachers out of the process of public deliberation.

However, the demand was made only retroactively, and in one of the parents' meetings Irit, a teacher, attended, spoke passionately against cameras, and even hinted that she might resign if cameras were introduced. Some of the parents were furious about it. In the Education Committee meeting after the said parents' meeting, Naama and Ravit argued about this point. The debate escalates and both Naama and Ravit raise their voices:

> Naama: Why did the teacher have to be there? Parents came to me after the meeting and were very upset about it. Why was the teacher there, and why did she say those things? Why did she threaten us with her resignation? Parents told me that Ravit said: "The meetings in *dror* and *tapuz* kindergartens went really smoothly, we did not even need to pull the 'teachers' card'." What is this? This was an ambush!
>
> Ravit [interjecting]: But this is how she [Irit] feels! She spoke from the depths of her heart (*midam liba*), and she spoke very nicely. It was not politically correct, but she said what she felt. Your description of the conversation is not objective.

> Naama: Irit said: Don't start a war with us. What kind of a thing is this to say? She said very clearly and explicitly that she would resign if cameras were introduced. This is a threat. This is intimidation of parents! It was very unpleasant.

Oren, the kibbutz's veteran Community Manager also sits in on the meeting. A few minutes later, he answers Naama, defending the decision to let Irit the teacher attend the meeting:

> There is a whole system here and there are various partners in it. The teachers are partners in this system. They are the ones who manage the kindergartens on a daily basis, and they should be present in a discussion about this change. I would not have agreed to hold this discussion without their presence and without them expressing their opinions. Each partner voices his opinion, and we hold a discussion, and then the full mandate to decide is in the hands of the parents.

That the teachers' presence in the meeting is uncomfortable to parents is clear to both the veterans and the young committee members. The difference between them is in the ethical conclusion that each of them draws from it. For Naama, the individual discomfort and threat that parents feel are enough to justify omitting the whole process of public deliberation with the teachers. She effectively disqualifies public deliberation by disqualifying one of its inherent prices: unpleasant confrontations, conflict of interest, emotional clashes, and exposure to manipulations. Conversely, Oren and Ravit express the traditional kibbutz ethics of public deliberation. For them, the consequences that Naama points out might indeed be uncomfortable, but they are a natural part of what it means to be in a public deliberation, and they do not

disqualify the whole process. Individual discomfort is a price worth paying for the higher good of public dialogue between all the "partners" in the system.

The difference in the moral attitude towards public deliberation and its prices was aesthetically encapsulated in Naama's and Ravit's different descriptions of the tension caused by the teacher's passionate speech against cameras in the parents' meeting. Naama sees it as an "ambush" - an unfair, violent, and manipulative attack that stains the whole conversation. Ravit, on the other hand, says that Irit the teacher spoke from the "depths of her heart." The full meaning of this expression is lost in translation, but in Hebrew the phrase she uses is *midam liba*, which literally means "from the blood of her heart." To speak from the "blood of your heart" means to express a combination of protest, passion, and deep moral commitment to an issue. The phrase has a romantic load, in which the strong, even violent expression is seen as a positive index of authenticity and a passionate engagement with an issue. In this context, Ravit uses it to argue that the teacher's presence, and the tension that it produced, made the conversation an authentic public dialogue in which the hard issues were boldly confronted, and things were not swept under the rug.[95]

From Freedom of Expression to the Right not to Hear

At the center of the devaluation of public deliberation lies a generational shift of emphasis from authenticity to safety. As I hope to have shown through the Cameras Affair, the moral emphasis shifts from the authentic self-expression of individuals to their insulation from the damaging effects of public engagement. In the Phone App Affair, the same tendency took the form of a shift from Dafna's emphasis on the freedom of speech to Amnon's emphasis on the

[95] For a good account of the place of the ethics of authentic dialogue in Israeli Sabra culture see Katriel 2004.

right not to hear. To show the change, I compare the open letters that each of them sent to the kibbutz community. Dafna's letter starts with a motto in bold letters taken from Wikipedia and then moves to address the members:

> ***Censorship: the monitoring and control over the distribution of information, opinion, and literature… Many times, censorship is turned towards limiting the efforts of communicating to the masses through the oppression of opinions…. (Wikipedia)***
>
> Members of the Kibbutz, Shalom!
> I, Dafna Ben-Hur, am the one who organizes the protests down in the main road in favor of changing the corrupt regime in our country. It is my own private initiative, there is no institutionalized body behind me… There are members that this initiative annoys them, and they are trying to shut my mouth! … The management decided to block me! I will not give up! I demand to continue publishing my call for protest in the general box on the app in order to expose everyone to the possibility of a legitimate protest….
>
> I will not give up my right to publish to the whole kibbutz!
> Soon, I will publish a petition asking for 30 signatures in order to bring the issue to a discussion in the general assembly…
> Attached is a letter that I have read to the ears of kibbutz management in its last meeting:
>
> Today I am sad!
>
> The face of the society in which I live is changing.

No, not because of the multiplicity of opinions: each one can believe in any side they want, but because of the attempt to silence an opinion that is not accepted by someone. When they tell me that my publications "annoy part of the public," then yes, in a democratic discussion different opinions come up and they sometimes "annoy" people, but our strength as a pluralistic community with tolerance… is to hear and deal with the different opinions in a democratic way…

No more! Today I am here to annoy…

Members, if we would not struggle for our right to a way of life that is tolerant towards different opinions, slowly our way of life would change, and not for the best… Where did we come to that words start to threaten?

And here is Amnon's Letter:

7.12.2020

Members,

I have read Dafna's letter, and I wish to respond:

There is no doubt that our country is going through hard times, and I believe that Dafna's activity is nothing less than good citizenship.

It is safe to assume that all of us would agree that it is our duty to stand guard with open eyes and voice our critique in an open and respectful way.

This is the meaning of democracy and the freedom of speech, and we should value and honor both, and act all the more forcefully to make sure that they are not harmed.

Freedom of speech is a slippery slope, and we should be wary not to trip. We should find the correct and worthy balance that combines the right to voice one's opinion and the right not to hear (*hazkhut lo lishmo'a*).

We are obliged to allow each member to voice his opinions, this is the basis of democratic society.

But for exactly the same reasons, it is incumbent upon us to respect the right of a member who is not interested in hearing, so that he will be able to control the content he receives, according to his wishes…

I want to add as a personal note, that if we do not respect the right of a member that refuses to hear, as it is right and important to respect the will of the member who wants to be heard, we hurt the concept of "freedom of speech" and turn it to "imposition" (*kfiya*).

Imposition - continually forcing one will over another.

(Taken from Wikipedia)

I am sure that we all want to live in an open and enabling environment that does not impose or oblige. [emphasis in the original].

Dafna upholds her freedom of speech and therefore, for her, the main threat is censorship and silencing. On the other hand, Amnon argues that the freedom of speech is a slippery slope and advocates for the right not to hear. One's basic liberal right in the public sphere is not only to express oneself freely and equally but to be insulated from unpleasant expressions of others. This is why for him, the main threat is the imposition of undesired content on the individual, which he

juxtaposes to Dafna's Wikipedia definition of the threat of censorship. Later, in the general assembly meeting, Amnon would change his wording a bit and say that it is more accurate to say the right not to listen (*lo lehakshiv*) rather than the right not to hear (*lo lishmo'a*).

The Role of Technology and Law (2)

We have seen, apropos the Cameras Affair, how the demise of cultural mediation was associated with the introduction of technology (security cameras) and legal procedure (circumventing the "law of the community" by appealing to higher legal instances). In the Phone App Affair, we see the same thing regarding the issue of public deliberation. The shift from the freedom of expression to the right not to hear, and the subsequent devaluation of public deliberation, were afforded by the technology of the phone app. In the old days, Dafna would have published her announcements on the physical bulletin board in the communal dining hall.[96] The members irritated by her announcements would have had to remove them from the bulletin boards, and thus expel her completely from the public sphere. This would have probably aroused antagonism. Dafna could rightly claim to be silenced and excluded. But when the bulletin board moves to the app, what was the single physical public sphere of the kibbutz (the bulletin board as the "town square") is now splintered into many "public spheres" on each member's phone. First of all, this makes the public sphere much more intrusive and therefore potentially more annoying. The physical bulletin board could have been avoided, a message that pops up on one's phone less so. Second, it makes the silencing of Dafna more politically feasible. Dafna's

[96] For a good ethnography of the role of the communal dining hall's bulletin board in affording a shared cultural experience in the kibbutz see: Halfin, Tama. *A Home by the Sea: Daily Life on a 21st Century Kibbutz*. Tel Aviv, Israel: Open University Press, 2019. 161-179.

announcements can now be expelled from some of the "public spheres" (the phones of those who are irritated by her) and allow her to stay in other "public spheres" (the phones of those who would like to continue receiving the messages). In this way, it was possible to silence Dafna without excluding her, and this made the request perfectly acceptable in the liberal discourse in which it was voiced. In fact, the very technical possibility that Dafna can publish the announcements without imposing them on everyone made Dafna's insistence to continue publishing in the general box, which was hitherto a taken-for-granted of public life, seemed now preposterous and dictatorial.

Second, the case also shows another example of how the growing use of legal mediation, hitherto a taboo in the kibbutz, substitutes for shared cultural norms in the regulation of social relations. Dafna went in the traditional kibbutz manner and, allegedly, did informal politicking among the membership, condemning Amnon's (or the management's - it is not clear) actions. She did so in order to tilt the verdict of the community in her favor. Her actions aim at provoking an internal public discussion within the kibbutz, according to the norms of the kibbutz. Amnon works according to a different logic that was foreign to the kibbutz until recently. He threatens to file a libel suit. By this he aims to move the discussion outside the kibbutz and into the courtroom, to circumvent the internal verdict of the kibbutz, made according to its unique norms, by turning to a higher legal authority. The difference in approaches is caused by reasons of both ethics and power. Newcomers tend more to turn to legal mediation because they do not identify as much as veterans with the norms and habits of the old kibbutz, but also because they usually have less social capital within the kibbutz in comparison with the established veterans. Circumventing the "subjective" verdict of the community in favor of the "objective" arbitration of the court makes sense. Additionally, they are usually more versed than the veterans in legal

procedures because they tend to have white collar professions such as managers, accountants, doctors, or, as in Amnon's case: lawyers.

The threat of the libel suit was for the veteran kibbutzniks a breach of taboo. Oren, the community manager, comments on this when we discuss the issue several weeks later: "A lawsuit? Since when do we do things this way? There are personal disputes in the kibbutz - of course. But you talk about things, you sort things out. If things get really nasty, you can turn to arbitration, but threatening a lawsuit?" Following the threat, Dafna published an open letter to the kibbutz:

> This week I was told that I am at risk of "being sued in a court of law" for defamation of a member… I am sharing this with you because it is important that you know that the rules of the democratic game in our country and our kibbutz are changing. We should be on guard and protect the possibility to express ourselves freely without the fear of being legally sued. [emphasis in the original].

On many other occasions, Amnon, as the main representative of the newcomers and in some cases of the youngster generation in the kibbutz more generally, takes an active role in the process of public deliberation in the kibbutz. However, on this occasion, his threat of a libel suit constrained the debate, and it is an example of how the judicialization of social life is detrimental to public deliberation. A public discussion necessitates a minimal space of play, where the meaning of words is partly suspended. It is not a coincidence that Dafna speaks of the "democratic game." By threatening to file a libel suit Amnon ruined the game. The threat is

meant to attach to words a heavy price. But when using the wrong words can have a high price, the game becomes much more restricted, and the engagement of the actors more reserved.

Conclusion

The trajectory of ethical transformation in the kibbutz can be described as moving from "substantive" to "procedural" and then to "neo-procedural." The chapter started by showing how the shared moral and cultural substance of the kibbutz is disappearing, and more importantly, how the ethical attitudes and gestures that enabled the reproduction of any shared substance are being delegitimized. But as the description of the cases progressed, we saw that this was yesterday's news. The position of the veterans already indicates an oscillation between substantive and procedural ethics. This was expressed most clearly in the Phone App Affair, where most of the veterans defended Dafna's freedom of speech, not the kibbutz's right to hold a substantive political identity. The real struggle that was gradually revealed was with a new, radical form of "neo-proceduralism" embodied in the position of the youngsters. This was encapsulated in the transition from one procedural emphasis - the veterans' emphasis on authenticity - to a different procedural emphasis - the youngsters' emphasis on safety. Taylor locates the romantic emphasis on authenticity and expressivism on the procedural side and as a trend that inhibits the cultivation of a substantive moral order. But in the kibbutz, it seems that the insistence on authenticity, that is, the insistence on direct public deliberation and against the introduction of alienated forms of mediation like cameras and libel suits, was the condition of possibility for the reproduction of shared cultural norms. The transition from authenticity to safety marks a new epoch in the history of proceduralism with a new and more severe impact on shared cultural experience in the kibbutz and far beyond.

Chapter 6 From Society to Community: The New Moral Language of the Kibbutz

Localism and local autonomy are becoming widespread political creeds… even though the structures of power grow evermore into an international system. Community becomes a weapon against society, whose great vice is now seen to be its impersonality. But a community of power can only be an illusion in a society like that of the industrial West, one in which stability has been achieved by a progressive extension to the international scale of structures of economic control. In sum, the belief in direct human relations on an intimate scale has seduced us from converting our understanding of the realities of power into guides for our own political behavior. The result is that the forces of domination and inequity remain unchallenged.

Richard Sennet[97]

The overarching argument of this dissertation is that the most significant process in the kibbutz in the past 30 years is the gradual unmaking of its shared moral and cultural cosmology. The following chapter complicates this overarching argument. In a way, the privatized kibbutz does have a new shared moral language centered on the notion of community (*kehila*). From the officials of the kibbutz movement down to the rank-and-file community is on the lips of everyone. The vision of community combines notions of mutual help, solidarity, generosity, and good neighborly relations, together with a specific sense of togetherness, familiarity and social cohesion. Community is presented by the kibbutz movement as proof that the privatized kibbutz still has a unique shared moral mission. The kibbutzim, which were on the verge of bankruptcy since the late 1980s, have fully recovered by the 2010s, and enjoy an impressive financial and demographic boom. Furthermore, in opposition to the standard view of capitalism as a conflictual, socially polarizing regime, at least in the limited case of the kibbutz, the transition

[97] Sennett, Richard. *The Fall of Public Man*. London, UK: Pinguin, 2003 (1977). 339.

from socialism to capitalism had substantially calmed social relations. In these more comfortable conditions, freed from the survivalist mindset of the 1990s and early 2000s, kibbutzniks can now turn to cultural and moral reconstruction. Community is presented as a return to some of the kibbutz's core values of solidarity and togetherness in an updated form that balances some of the socially entropic effects of privatization.

So, if the kibbutz has a new shared moral language, doesn't that mean that my argument about its demise is incorrect? The argument that I develop throughout this chapter is that community is indeed the new shared moral language of the kibbutz, but in some of its basic characteristics it already demonstrates the loss of shared moral substance. The argument has two parts that are in tension. On the one hand, the emergence of the vision of community attests to the presence of a "collectivist" component in kibbutz culture - and in Israeli culture in general - that persists after privatization. As Tamar Katriel has shown in a series of insightful ethnographies, Israeli popular culture is shot through with a utopia of social cohesion (*gibush*) that is cultivated at schools, army, and public life, and that dates back to the "communion of souls" sought by the small groups of socialist-Zionist pioneers, who later established the kibbutzim (1986; Katriel & Nesher 2004). Although the kibbutz was privatized this cultural emphasis on social cohesion persists and its new iteration is the social utopia of community. The tension between the kibbutz's privatized social structure and its collectivist cultural legacy results in a compromise formation. Daily life in the privatized kibbutz is a peculiar cultural form of "collectivist neoliberalism." It is not the collectivized daily life of the old socialist kibbutz anymore, but it is also not a full-blown suburb with its stress on privacy and individualism.

On the other hand, when the kibbutz tries to translate this longing for community into a coherent, substantive moral discourse, problems emerge. Community cannot be translated into a

clear moral and political plan for society, in the same way that socialism was. With community, moral discourse moves away from the critique of social structure and turns from a discourse of social justice to a discourse of charity and warm interpersonal relations. As such, it relies on all-embracing notions of humanity and compassion, rather than on the coordinates of a concrete moral-political project. This is why it is not unique to the kibbutz, but shared with many other forms of settlement, and is compatible across diverse social structures and political milieus. These points, which are gradually developed as the chapter progresses, are fleshed out in more detail in the last section, where I argue that the ethics of community is a local Israeli variant of what Oushakine (2000) called the "aphasia" of postsocialist morality. The community discourse is indeed the new moral discourse of the kibbutz, but in its abstract, polysemous, "aphasic" nature, it already indicates the loss of what Oushakine calls a "meta-language," a totalizing meta-narrative, in which a clear and coherent moral and political projects can be formulated.

The chapter has four parts. The first draws the pre-history of the term community (*kehila*) in Israel and in the kibbutz. Although it is in such extensive use nowadays, the term entered kibbutz discourse only in the 1990s, substituting for "society" (*hevra*), which was the term the kibbutz used in referring to itself before. I take some time in describing the historical circumstances of the emergence of the term community in order to denaturalize this way of framing the polity, which has now become almost transparent, and to consider some of the implications of the conceptual shift from society to community. Next, I turn to the explosion of the discourse of community in Israeli popular culture since the 2000s. Only at this point, does "communality" (*kehilatiyut*) as a desired state, and "communal" (*kehilati*) as an adjective, begin to be attributed to, and sought by various social projects. After having presented this historical and discursive context, I move, in the third part, to analyze the materialization of the community

ethics in Kibbutz Asif in acts of solidarity and mutual help. Finally, in the fourth part, I zoom out from Kibbutz Asif once more, and move to the discourse of the kibbutz movement. I flesh out in detail what I see as the "aphasic" characteristics of the community discourse through a close analysis of a lecture about the Vision of the Kibbutz Community at its Best, given by the chair of the Kibbutz Movement's Department of Society and Community in a conference in 2019.

1950s-1980s: Diaspora and Welfare

In Israel, the term community (*kehila*) was first used as a positive and desirable term only in the 1980s. Until then, community shows up in popular discourse in mainly two contexts, both of which carry a rather negative connotation.[98] The first and most widespread use was to refer to the Jewish community of the Diaspora. For example, the specific Jewish community of Lublin, is called *kehilat Lublin* ("The Community of Lublin"), and all the Diasporic communities together are referred to as *kehilot Israel* ("The Communities of Israel"). At least until the 1970s, in official Zionist discourse in Israel, the Jewish community of the Diaspora had a negative connotation. It was the archetypal *ancien regime* of the Socialist Zionist revolution. Especially the East European Jewish community, the *shtetl*, with its "backward" traditional hierarchies, religious "mystifications," internal socio-economic stratification, and helpless "submissiveness" before the gentiles, was seen as the place of "morbid" Jewish existence that the socialist-Zionist pioneers had left behind in order to build something totally new (Elon 1971:59-83; Neumann 2011).

[98] This subsection and the next are based on a search that I conducted in past issues of *Ma'ariv*, one of the big newspapers in Israel through an online archive. *Historical Jewish Press.* https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/newspapers/jpress. Accessed on March 17-20, 2021.

The second context, in which community shows up before the 1980s, is in the discourse of welfare and poverty, where it appears in terms such as "community center" (*merkaz kehilati*) and "community worker" (*oved kehilati* that had the same meaning as "social worker"). This would come up, for example, in newspaper articles that tell about the construction of a new "community center" (*merkaz kehilati*) in a poor development town. In other words, until the 1980s, community was used to refer to Jewish life in two contexts which were the "other" for mainstream Zionism, and carried a rather negative connotation: the Diaspora, and the country's economic periphery.

1980s: Community Goes Middle Class: The "Communal Settlement" (Yeshuv Kehilati)

Only in the late 1970s, and really only in the 1980s, do we start seeing the word community widely used in a positive way to speak of "normative" middle class settlements. This happened with the invention of a new form of settlement in the countryside by the Israeli state called *yeshuv kehilati* ("Communal Settlement"). Until the mid 1970s, the state built two kinds of Jewish settlements in the countryside: the kibbutz and the moshav. The idea of both was of a holistic settlement, in which members both lived and worked inside the settlement in agriculture, industry and services. The main difference between the two was that the kibbutz was based on collective ownership and material equality, while in the moshav members privately owned their houses and farmland. The yeshuv kehilati was new in that it had no agricultural or industrial means of production and was based on members commuting to work in the city. In this new suburban model were built the two last significant projects of Zionist settlement in the 1970s and 1980s: the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and those built in the Galilee in Arik Sharon's "hilltop settlement" plan that was meant to ensure Jewish majority in this area populated by Palestinian Arabs.

What new meanings and cultural connotations did the term community gain in this new iteration of the communal settlement? The communal settlement was a suburban instrument for settling the land adjusted to Israel's rising consumerist society and gradual post-Fordist transition from agriculture and heavy industry to high-tech, finance and services. A newspaper article from 1982 titled "White Collar Pioneers" introduces Yuvalim, a new yeshuv kehilati in the Galilee, and asks ironically: "Is Yuvalim a settlement? With no agriculture? No tractors to count for? With all kinds of smart guys who work in the city and come back home in the evening?... Yes!... it is a settlement fit for the 2000s."[99] The yeshuv kehilati targeted the professional middle classes. In the new settlement Giva'at Ela they are: "...engineers, doctors, community workers and more. The salt of the earth."[100] In Yuvalim:"... petit bourgeois couples in their thirties, who went through the regular career of elite kids from Haifa: school, youth movement, army, Technion, university, a good job… a car…, a privately owned home in Neve Sha'anan or on the Carmel… "[101] The yeshuv kehilati was attractive to these "petit bourgeois couples" because of the quality of life close to nature that it offered: "Galilee, mountains, terrific vistas, fresh air, new settlements, quality people."[102] As opposed to the moshav, where the residential area was mixed with farms and workshops and their peculiar collateral damage of bad smell, noise and dirt, the yeshuv kehilati offered a clean environment and high quality of life. For example, in Meitar, a new yeshuv kehilati in the Negev, says an article from 1983, members may build garages next to their homes but not "small factories or workshops that would make the environment ugly, and bring in noise, smells and pollution." In addition, building water boilers on rooftops and building

[99] Levav, Amos. "White Collar Pioneers". *Maariv* (Tel Aviv, Israel), October 22, 1982, 67-68.
[100] Gold, Uri. "Givat Ela: Yishuv Kehilati in a Different Style". *Maariv* (Tel Aviv, Israel), July 15, 1987, 96.
[101] Levav, 67.
[102] Ibid.

one's house on columns (both are typical markers of the ugly aesthetics of the moshav) were disallowed.[103]

Attractive in the yeshuv kehilati was also the combination of communal life and individual freedom and privacy, and this is one of the important and lasting cultural connotations of the communal relevant to the contemporary kibbutz. It was presented as a perfect "third way" between the atomistic life in the alienated city and the burdensome collectivism of the kibbutz. On the one hand, it had a strong communal bent. In Givaat Ela, "The social cohesiveness... created a sense of intimacy that gave birth to social meetings… joint trips, Shabbat trips and others, organized voluntarily by one of the members… in addition, there are meetings of families and children, and meetings for creating social cohesiveness. On Shabbats and holidays, there are parties and wine-and-cheese evenings, and of course, sports days."[104] Efraim, a physicist from Yuvalim says "there is a feeling of 'good'. Everything here is good: the air, the people, the company. I drive back home from work 35 minutes, and from the gate of the settlement to my house it takes me another 30 minutes, as I stop on the way, talk to people I meet, see what new streetlights or new pathways have been built. It feels great to be with the people here."[105] On the other hand, the professional "petit bourgeois" were convinced to leave the city and come to a small "socially dense" settlement like Yuvalim only once they understood that it was a "yeshuv kehilati with a quality of life, a small house, a piece of lawn, and no collective life whatsoever, each individual to himself…"[106] According to the article, reducing the level of collectivism is top priority in Yuvalim: "The one thing they are now concerned with is reducing the 'traction

[103] Barkai, Mordechai. "Between Mountains and Creeks". *Davar* (Tel Aviv, Israel), February 16, 1983. 7.
[104] Gold, 96.
[105] Levav, 67.
[106] Levav, 67.

factor.'"[107] When they had to divide up the lots, a potentially conflictual moment of collective decision making, "each member wrote down his preference, and those among them who work in computers put all the information into a special software which determined in a fair way how to divide up the lots… We are trying to decrease the traction between members, Efraim explains… there is a lot of individual freedom here."[108]

In other words, the term "communal" was baptized through the communal settlement as the name for a "wise" and "balanced" alternative to kibbutz socialism that combines individual freedom and prosperity with intimate interpersonal relations and goodwill.

1990s: The First Steps of "Community" into the Kibbutz Discourse

In the discourse of the kibbutz, the term community first appeared in a widespread fashion only in the 1990s. In plans and decrees of the central kibbutz movement from the 1970s-1980s, as well as in internal newspapers and kibbutz meeting protocols from individual kibbutzim, one hardly ever sees the term. Instead, until the 1990s, the kibbutz typically referred to itself as "society" (*hevra*).[109] "Community" (*kehila*) came into extensive use in the 1990s at first as a bureaucratic term. It was born through one of the preliminary steps in privatizing the kibbutz, which was called the "separation of the economy from the community" (*hafradat hameshek mehakehila*. see: Harel 1993). This was an organizational, economic, and legal

[107] "Traction" means here the tension that arises from close and intensive social interaction and from collective self-management.

[108] Levav, 67.

[109] There is one famous exception of emic use of "community" in the early kibbutz. The first group of pioneers from the HaShomer HaTzair kibbutz movement that reached Palestine in 1920 settled temporarily in Bitanyia near the Sea of Galilee. The group combined manual labor in agriculture with an intensive communal life of "soul talks". The group documented its communal life filled with romantic longings and soul searching in a collective diary called Our Community (*kehilatenu*). The diary became one of the canonical texts of the kibbutz movement and was also made into a play called The Night of the Twentieth (*leil ha'esrim*). As far as I know, there has been no substantial continuation to the use of the root word *kehila* in the kibbutz discourse since.

separation of the kibbutz's productive, profit-generating activities (mostly industry and agriculture) from its internal social activities (welfare, services, education, culture). The kibbutz was originally set up as a holistic system, in which all spheres of social life were managed together. All profit from the productive sector was funneled into a single common pool, and redistributed according to a comprehensive plan that treated the whole kibbutz as one collective "household," and therefore took into consideration in an integrated way both economic, social and moral issues. In other words, the productive sector was not run on a pure profit rationality but was subordinated to various social and moral considerations.[110] In the new discourse of privatization this socially embedded economic system was blamed for the kibbutz's economic inefficiency. The kibbutz's productive activity should be managed according to pure profit rationality purged of all other considerations. In the community part of their life, kibbutzniks may split the profits like socialists, but in the economic part of their life, in generating that profit, they had to behave purely like capitalists (Harel 1993:168:172). Subsequently, the kibbutz was divided into two new organizational and legal bodies: the productive sector called *meshek* and the social sector called *kehila* (community). The official in charge of social issues, who used to go by the socialist sounding "Secretary" (*mazkir*) was now called "Community Manager"

[110] For example, as was told to me by Yanay, who was the economic manager of Asif in the 1980s: the manager of the dairy farm was not free to use the profits that the farm made in a certain year for reinvestment in developing the enterprise. Rather, the profit would go to the comprehensive plan, and more often than not would find itself covering for the unexpected expenses of the dining hall that year or for sponsoring the purchase of new air conditioners for the sick and the elderly that the plan saw as was more important. Neither was the coordinator free to choose which members would work in the dairy farm and was not authorized to fire a sloppy worker. Allocation of work was managed collectively and determined by the work coordinator who took into consideration a range of social and personal issues. He might insist that a certain member stay in the dairy farm although he is a sloppy worker because he does not get along in any other work branch. Equally, a non-profitable work branch might be sustained, through other branches covering for its losses, because it provides employment for the elderly, or has some other social or moral benefit. The separation of the community from the productive sector was meant to eliminate this socially embedded economy.

(*menahel hakehila*). In other words, community was a new name given to a new entity that was born from a new partition of the polity into an economic and a non-economic sphere. Community was the name for the kibbutz minus its political economy.

The separation of the economy from the community was the project of the camp within the kibbutz movement that supported privatization, but in itself it still did not entail the end of kibbutz socialism. The community could still divide up whatever funds it had in an equal manner. However, it was an important conceptual shift that prepared the way for privatization. It taught kibbutzniks to start thinking separately about the economy, where pure market rationality reigns, and the community, where social and moral considerations are made. This was the start of a broader and deeper unlearning of the basic Marxist premise that guided the kibbutz's holistic approach to economy in the past, namely, that the separation of "state" (the place of politics and ethics) from "civil society" (the economy, the realm of material production) was artificial, morally unjust, and should be overcome (Marx 1978 [1843]:26-52).

Antagonism in the Kibbutz Against the Term Community

Possibly as a result of these ideological implications, the term community, when first introduced in the 1990s, encountered some resistance from those veteran members who remained loyal to kibbutz's socialist ideology. In 1991, a member published in the newspaper of Kibbutz Ein HaShofet an "In/Out" list of concepts, pointing to recent changes in the kibbutz discourse.[111] The list has a clear critical tone against the new terms brought in by the discourse of privatization. Terms that are clearly loaded with the morality of socialism give way to supposedly value neutral, or even capitalist terms:

[111] "In and Out". *Yediot Ein HaShofet*. August 23, 1991. 14. KEHSA

Out (old terms)	**In (new terms)**
"Dear Comrades…" (*leyediat hahaverim*)	"Dear Public…" (*leyediat hatzibur*)
Left the kibbutz (*azav et hakibbutz*, which has in Hebrew a connotation of abandoning a duty or a commitment - O.S)	Went out of the kibbutz. Good Luck! (*yatza mehakibbutz*, which is a more neutral term for leaving - O.S*)*
To each according to his needs	To each according to his money
Motivation	Material remuneration
Factory	Profit Center (*merkaz revakh* - a new name given to kibbutz work branches in the process of "separation of the economy from the community")
I read it in *Al HaMishmar* (the kibbutz movement daily newspaper)	I read it in *Yediot Aharonot* (a general mainstream daily newspaper)

To these, the author adds:

Out (old terms)	**In (new terms)**
Kibbutz	Home (*bait*), Community (*kehila*)

The author clearly places community within the new semantic field of privatization. It is listed among other capitalist evils such as the transition to material inequality ("material remuneration"), profit oriented society (from "Factory" to "Profit Center"), and the loss of kibbutz's clear socialist identity (from "comrades" to "public," from reading the movement's newspaper to reading the newspaper of the "colorless," "general," mainstream society). The author sees the term community as the sentimental, superstructural counterpart to kibbutz's privatization.

A year later, in the same newspaper of Kibbutz Ein HaShofet, in the context of an article in which a member criticizes the deterioration of the kibbutz's participatory democracy and calls for the "rejuvenation of the conversation in the general assembly," she writes that "The kibbutz is not a community. I lament that this concept was inserted into our discourse by mistake, borrowing from the English concept community. We know the European Community. We know very well the Jewish Community, mostly from Eastern Europe, with its advantages and disadvantages…" [emphasis in the original].[112]

In 1996, a critical-sarcastic article was published in the newspaper of Kibbutz Asif, by one of the kibbutz's founders, which reads:

> The medical services of the kibbutz have received in the last few days an emergency fax from one of the *chaverim* asking for help:
>
> Who Am I?
>
> Recently, there have been deep changes in our society (*hevratenu*).
>
> On the one hand, the kibbutz turned into a community (*kehila*), in the words of its advocates, while on the other hand, two new classes have arisen: managers and directors.
>
> Now, I am searching for my own identity, and I am asking myself:
>
> Who am I? And What am I?
>
> Am I a Proletarian (*proletar*)? a Worker (*oved*)? a Hired Laborer (*poel sakhir*)? Or maybe just a Nobody (*klumnik*)?

[112] "Rejuvenate the Conversation in the General Assembly". *Yediot Ein HaShofet*. March 20, 1992. 8-9. KEHSA.

> Or, as they say in Yiddish, *stam a garnisht*?
>
> I urgently need help in order to find my lost identity. Who am I?
>
> Anyone who could help, would win a significant financial prize, as it is now customary in our place.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> The Citizen of the Community (*ezrakh hakehila*), Mr. Ya'akov Tamir [emphasis in the original].[113]

Ya'akov can't find himself in the new discourse of privatization. Discourse is crucial in the production of subjectivity because it defines the social roles that people occupy. Since this is a primary process in the production of subjectivity, and not a supplement to an already constituted subjectivity (Sahlins 1985:145-148), radical changes in discourse may cause a grave sense of loss of self. Ya'akov ties between two such destabilizing discursive shifts in the kibbutz associated with privatization: on the one hand, the introduction of a capitalist language ("managers" and "directors"). In the old kibbutz, there was a strict taboo against using "Manager" for kibbutz officials, because of its capitalist connotations. Instead, the kibbutz used "Coordinator" (*rakaz*). For example, the "manager" of the factory was called by the now-awkward sounding "Factory Coordinator" (*rakaz hamif'al)*. On the other hand, there is the introduction of the communal language. Like the author from Kibbutz Ein HaShofet, Ya'akov identifies community as the superstructural counterpart of the new capitalist language, as is evident from the structure of his sentences: "on the one hand… community, on the other hand…'managers'..." For Ya'akov, as a devoted kibbutznik, these discursive changes are

[113] "Who Am I?". *Our Lives*, October 4, 1996. Box: Newspapers. KAA.

existential, they destabilize the very core of his identity. The ironic tone of the article does not hide a tragic sense that the changes make him into a "nobody," a strong term that he repeats twice - in Hebrew and in Yiddish.

A final example was given to me by anthropologist Tama Halfin, who, while doing fieldwork in a communal kibbutz[114] in the early 2000s, was told by local kibbutzniks that "we do not use the word community around here because it is the language of privatized kibbutzim." Despite this declaration, and despite the fact that the said kibbutz remains socialist to this day, the concept of community had indeed colonized much of its public discourse in the past couple of years.

Some of these are visceral reactions to community that stem from a vague sense that the term is bad simply because it belongs to the new and foreign discourse of privatization. To date, I have not found in the primary sources a local theory to the objection to community articulated by the historical actors themselves. Nonetheless, there seem to be at least two good reasons for socialist kibbutzniks to feel that the transition from society to community is a deviation from kibbutz ideology. First, there was the heavy influence of sociology, and specifically modernization theory, on kibbutz thinking. In these, the constitutive distinction between the "archaic," "pre-modern" *gemeinschaft* (community) and the "modern" *gesellschaft* ("society") was central (Tonnies 2011[1887]). In Marxism, socialism was the overcoming of the alienation

[114] The Communal Kibbutz is the name given to those kibbutzim who remained in the old collectivized, egalitarian model in distinction from the Renewed Kibbutz, which is the name for the privatized kibbutz. The use of communal here is confusing in the context of this chapter's discussion. In Hebrew, there is a distinction between two words that are translated in English into "communal": one is *kehilati* - this is the new term of community that I am discussing throughout this chapter. The second is *shituf*î, which means something like "collective." It is part of the old discourse of the collectivized kibbutz and therefore connotes exactly the opposite to the whole turn to community that I am describing here. This second term is the Hebrew term translated as "communal" in the "communal kibbutz."

of modern industrialized society, but it was not a retreat back to the warmth of the pre-industrial community. Accordingly, the kibbutz did not construct itself as a conservative village, where old local traditions and the warmth of an organic community are preserved. Rather, its discourse constantly highlighted its "modern" aspects: the "rational" organization of social life and material production, industrialization and industrialized agriculture, introduction and development of technology, etc.

Second, the kibbutz's self-analysis as "society" was influenced by the privileged status of the "social" in Marxist theory. In Marxist epistemology the social is the name given to the forms of cooperation constitutive of the production process.[115] The social is the part of human activity that pertains to the organization of production, and as such, has a superior epistemological status over the cultural, moral or ideological. In other words, in a Marxist framework, speaking of the social means speaking about universal, objective structures and institutions, especially those pertaining to the economy that cut across the merely epiphenomenal cultural, moral and ideological differences. When the kibbutz calls itself a society - much more than when it calls itself community - it frames its reflexive public discussion as a discussion about social structures and political economy. For example, society affords speaking of the "socio-economic" (*hevrati-kalkali*), while community does not offer an equivalent "communo-economic" (*kehilati-kalkali*). Or: society affords a discussion about "social justice" (*tzedek hevrati*), but community does not offer an equivalent "communal justice" (*tzedek kehilati*).

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[115] For Marx, the base, the realm of production, is composed of both material aspects (the raw materials and technologies applied in production) and social aspects (the modes of social cooperation applied in production, the relations of production): "The production of life… now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship… by social we understand the cooperation of several individuals… a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of cooperation, or social stage, and this mode of cooperation is itself a 'productive force'" (1978 (1845):157). So, the "material" base of society is no less "social" than it is "material."

Before we move on, there are two additional points to make that complicate the picture. First, the use of society in the kibbutz has additional layers of meaning, beyond its sociological and Marxist connotations. The word society in Hebrew - *hevra* - has several additional meanings that it does not have in English. The word for the individual in the kibbutz is *chaver*, which shares the same root as *hevra*. *Chaver* means in Hebrew both "member," "friend," and "comrade" (in the sense of an ally in a joint struggle). According to Avrahami (1998:126), *chaver* in the kibbutz conflates these three different meanings. A *chaver* is a formal "member" in the kibbutz as organization - with formally specified rights and duties; she is also a "friend" to other *chaverim* in what is supposed to be a society characterized by intimate, non-instrumental relations; and finally, she is a "comrade" to other individuals in her kibbutz and her movement, an ally in a joint ideological struggle.

The second qualification is that the term community for the kibbutz was in use since the 1960s in at least one discourse: academic discourse on the kibbutz. The first big sociological study of the kibbutz was a research project conducted at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in the years 1954-1968 under the direction of Yonina Talmon, and later Erik Cohen. The goal of the project was to study the institutionalization of the kibbutz as a revolutionary society. In conceptualizing this process, Talmon used Schmalenbach's amendment to Toennis's model of *gemeinschaft* - *gesellschaft*, in which he added the notion of the *bund* - the small, charismatic revolutionary cell (Schmalenbach 1961). The kibbutz in the 1950s, Talmon argued, passed from the model of a revolutionary *bund* to the more institutionalized, complex model of the *gemeinschaft* (community, *kehila* in Hebrew). Talmon used *gemeinschaft* and not *gesellschaft,* because institutionalization on the kibbutz did not take the form of formal laws and contracts and market relations as in a *gesellschaft* model. Since Talmon's influential theorization, it became

common in academic discourse to refer to the late-socialist kibbutz as community (see for example Gan 2006:349).

However, broadly speaking, the term did not migrate into the popular discourse of the rank and file. In internal kibbutz newspapers and meeting protocols from the 1970s and 1980s, almost only society appears. In fact, I was told by Shlomo Getz, the head of the Institute for the Research of the Kibbutz, that when he, as both a kibbutz member and an academic researching the kibbutz, brought up the term in the general assembly of his own kibbutz in the 1990s, the veterans reacted with fury and told him: "Why do you say community? Kibbutz is not a community but a society!" In other words, this seems to be a case in which there is an ethically motivated incongruence between emic and etic discourse. The academic discourse about the kibbutz said it was a community, but kibbutzniks themselves insisted that they were a society. Today, there is an interesting inversion of this same tension between emic and etic. After privatization, the social reality of the kibbutz with its market relations and legal regularization arguably amounts to its transition from community to society (in the sense of a turn from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*). Interestingly, exactly at this moment in which the kibbutz effectively becomes a society, its members insist that it is actually a community.

The 2000s: The Rise of the Discourse of "Communality" (*kehilatiyut*)

While community (*kehila*) entered kibbutz discourse in the 1990s, the conjugation communality (*kehilatiyut*) as an ethics and a desired social state, came into extensive use in the kibbutz only in the 2010s. This was part of a wider cultural trend that I now move to describe, before discussing its particular iteration in the kibbutz. This will place the kibbutz in the relevant cultural and historical context and will also help in starting to analyze some of the defining contours of this new moral discourse. I bring together three iterations of the "communality"

ethics: the discourse of a new environmental think tank called the Heschel Center, a "communality" survey by Kibbutz Asif's Regional Council, and a "communal" neighborhood in the new city of Harish. I pull together this eclectic set of examples in order to show how widespread the ethics of "communality" has become since the 2000s, and to show how it unites different social and political milieus: from leftist environmental activists to bureaucrats of the Regional Council and hightechist "strivers" in a new middle-class neighborhood.

The Heschel Center: Place and Placeness, Community and Communality

One of the entry points of communality into the discourse of the Israeli Left - and from there to the mainstream - was the activity of the Heschel Center for Sustainability. Established in 1994, the Heschel Center quickly emerged as one of the leading and prestigious environmental think tanks in Israel. It was the main channel through which Israeli environmentalism was brought up to date according to the newest trends in the US and Europe. One of its main contributions was a new environmental discourse focused on place and community. According to Elon Schwartz (2000:10), one of the founders of the Heschel Center, the problem with the "scientific" environmentalism of the 1970s and 1980s was its instrumental attitude to the environment. It was focused solely on solving problems of pollution in an industrialized society, but not the burning spiritual problems of industrialization and globalization, namely a dwindling sense of place, and a loss of local lifeworlds. In a translated chapter in a Heschel Center reader from 2000, called "Place and Placeness, Community and Communality" the American environmentalist David Orr associates "the diseases of modern civilization" with "the demise of the small-scale community." He argues that "the price for the lack of a sense of belonging and the admiration of rootlessness is the ruin of the small-scale community and a social and ecological degeneration" (Orr 2000:160). In the same reader, the American environmentalist and

poet, Wendel Berry, mourns the "...destruction of the continuity and the integrity of local life… the place loses its memory of itself, its local culture and history." (Berry 2000:169).

Therefore, "an environmentalism fit for the 21st century," Elon Schwartz argues, is a Placed-Based Environmentalism. The goal should be to invigorate the personal, intimate relations of people with their small-scale places and communities (2000:10). This is an "art of being local" that "demands a meticulous knowledge of the place, a capability for observation and a sense of caring and rootedness (Orr 2000:161). For Wendell Berry, this involves preserving and reinventing local traditions: "a human community needs to collect leaves and stories and turn them into life. It needs to build the soil and to build its memory of itself as a community - in local knowledge, stories and songs - that would turn into its culture" (2000:164).

The Regional Council: The Communality Index Survey

This new sensibility to community, first introduced in the early 2000s to the discourse of the Left, soon trickled down to mainstream popular culture. By the 2010s, a whole new cultural appetite for local community life emerged.[116] Note the following examples in this subsection and the next, one from rural and the other from urban Israel. In July 2021, the Regional Council of which Kibbutz Asif is part, launched the Communality Index Survey (*seker madad hakehilatiyut*), which was sent to all residents of settlements in the Regional Council via email. The Chair of the Regional Council accompanied the survey with a letter explaining that "the

[116] For example, from a certain point in the 2010s, many pubs and cafes started adding captions to their names that labeled them as "neighborhood cafe" or "local bar", signaling that places were now more attractive if they could prove their "local" nature. The same happened with various other social projects that started wearing the adjective "local" (*mekomi*): The leading annual exhibition of photojournalism in the country, established in 2003, is called "Local Testimony" (*edut mekomit*); the leading online journal of the radical Left, established in 2014, is called "Local Conversation" (*sicha mekomit*); and the 2022 exhibition of photographs of Kibbutz Asif's landscape taken by *chaverim* is called "Local Perspective" (*zavit mekomit*).

council had set itself the goal of strengthening communality (*kehilatiyut*) in its settlements." The Regional Council sees itself now as a "regional community (*kehila ezorit*), which aims to form a new, high-quality way of life that we call a 'new rural settlement'... characterized by a high level of communality." The chair elaborates: "When we are talking about communality, we mean a situation in which people who share a geographical space, act together for the benefit of each other and the place where they live, have relationships of trust and solidarity in a way which makes them feel valued and agentive and promotes a sense of local pride." The survey, as we will see in some more detail in a moment, studies the levels of "communality" practiced in its settlements, and the levels of "local identity" and "local pride" in the region.

Betzavta ("Together"), Harish: The First Communal Neighborhood in Israel

Harish is a new city being built along the Green Line, about forty minutes' drive from Tel Aviv. One of its new neighborhoods is "*Betzavta* ("Together"), which billed itself as "The First Communal Neighborhood in Israel." Unlike the other new neighborhoods in the city, *betzavta* is being built in its entirety by one construction company. Since the company had the unique opportunity to fashion the character of the whole neighborhood, it conducted a survey among the main target population of Harish - young middle-class families - in order to fine tune the marketing of apartments in the neighborhood. In the survey, people were asked what kind of character they would want their dream neighborhood to have. The clearest result, according to the company, was "communality," and the neighborhood was planned and branded accordingly.

The neighborhood is built as a circle around a communal nucleus, where there is a communal shop (*hanut kehilatit*), where "the residents would be able to exchange such things as hardware tools, gardening tools, DIY equipment, camping gear and more"; a community garden (*gina kehilatit*) where "you could not only pick vegetables and herbs, but also enjoy a joint

experience with the kids and the neighbors, and a communal grocery shop (*makolet kehilatit*). The names of the streets in the neighborhood are loaded with the vision of community. Some are quite archaic reproductions of the ideological discourse of the kibbutz: *ahva* ("fraternity"), *yahad* ("Together"), *ahdut* ("Unity"), *reut* ("Comradery"), *havruta* ("Togetherness"), *hagshama* ("Fulfillment," as in fulfillment of a high moral goal), and *hakehila* ("The Community").

There is a line of commercials that advertises *betzavta* that depicts short excerpts from interviews with married couples, who are about to move into the neighborhood. The wife in the Nataf family says: "What I expect the most is to feel that warmth of the neighbors, of the community, because, really, everyone there is together (*megubashim*) and everyone is for one another, I am waiting for *that*, more than anything else." With other couples, the vision of the warmth of *betzavta* is depicted as a return to the lost warmth of the typical Israeli neighborhood of the past. When each interviewee speaks, photos of his or her childhood in the 1980s are screened in the background and sentimental music is played. Avi Lati tells: "we used to live right off the wadi, all the time there were children outside on the street, no matter when you went out, you would always find who to play with, doors open all the time, the smell of dishes being cooked…"

The Ethics of the Concrete

In a moment, we will see how this new ethics of community plays out in the kibbutz. But before that, I want to start showing some of the fundamental differences between this new moral discourse of community and the old socialist moral discourse of the kibbutz by using the three eclectic examples that I have just presented. The three examples demonstrate a new moral sensibility to the conduct of people with their immediate neighbors in the here and now. Moral concern turns from the impersonal political struggles at the level of mass *society*, to the intimate,

personal relationships in a *community*. For example, in the Heschel Center Reader, Orr criticizes college education for teaching students only "abstract knowledge" instead of teaching them about the immediate "ecology, water, geology, history, economy… of the campus or its community..." He laments that "...much of what is passed on as knowledge is no more than abstract knowledge piled up over more abstract knowledge, severed from real experiences, real problems, and the places where we live and work..." (2000:157-158). The Regional Council's survey asks residents how often in the past year they picked up someone else's child from the kindergarten, watered the plants or fed the pets of a neighbor while they were out of town, and loaned things to others (clothes, work tools, a car). The new community ethics turns moral focus towards the socio-phenomenological realm, which the phenomenologist Alfred Schutz called one's "fellow men," the directly experienced community of neighbors in the here and now (Schutz 1967:139-214). Arguably, the other side of this is a moral divestment from other realms that are based on impersonal relations, such as national or global politics, or distant ethical ideas and goals. Paraphrasing Levi-Strauss, we can see this as a new "ethics of the concrete."

However, what is new about the moral discourse of community is not exactly its focus on the small scale of one's community of neighbors. In order to explain where I think its main difference from the old socialist discourse of the kibbutz lies, I turn again to Charles Taylor and look at his general definition of morality (1989:1-8). Taylor distinguishes between two basic components that make up morality. One, is moral gut-feelings of compassion towards other humans. According to Taylor, this is a rather universal trait of elementary sympathy for other human beings, in the light of which most people, most of the time, would find it hard to seriously hurt another human, or even to be bystanders when another human is seriously hurt. Even when people do seriously hurt others, as they sometimes do, this usually entails an emotional effort of

rationalization to overcome this basic moral gut feeling. The second component of morality is elaborated moral theories that further develop, direct, and at times also override and restrain our moral gut feelings. While all moral orders emanate from the same basic gut-level capabilities of universal compassion and solidarity, each specific moral order is built on a different epistemology, a specific rationalized narrative of what the world is about and what is one's moral role within that world. This rationalized morality may sometimes override moral gut feelings of compassion towards other humans in the light of higher, more distant moral goals (1989:1-8).

My argument is that the moral discourse of community entails the disappearance of this second level of ideologically rationalized morality. To put things vulgarly, it is a gut feeling morality without epistemology. The community discourse endorses universal notions of human warmth and mutual help that are politically unmarked. Watering someone's plants or helping a friend in distress - no doubt morally valuable acts - would probably be embraced by any political camp and any ethical project, secular and religious, Left and Right. This is why the moral discourse of community does not distinguish the kibbutz from any other form of settlement in Israel and is prevalent in the kibbutz just as it is in the moshav, yeshuv kehilati, and the city. In other words, we are starting to see in what ways its dominance in the kibbutz today indexes the loss of a unique, shared moral substance.

Warm interpersonal relations were also endorsed by the old socialist kibbutz. But this gut level morality was also always in tension with a strong component of rationalized morality in the form of the image of how a utopian socialist society should look. A focus on the fulfillment of this more distant, ideologically elaborated and rationalized moral goal sometimes challenged and even ruined the interpersonal relations of neighbors. In fact, this is one way to interpret much of what the first three chapters of the dissertation have shown. Let me give one small example of

how injuring one's immediate interpersonal relations for the sake of the distant moral goal was ethically legitimized in the old kibbutz. This is another moral complaint article from Asif's newspaper in the 1970s, in which the author discusses the problem of individual members who act selfishly and dirty the surroundings of their private apartments to the detriment of the face of the kibbutz:

> The problem is, actually, that there is no one who is willing to tell his fellow member what he should do and what he should not do.
>
> "Why should I fight with someone? I better shut up, stay a good guy and let him do as he wishes. After all, I would have to live with him here for many years to come. I should rather work on cultivating good relations and not be the ombudsman just because some small issue isn't right."
>
> Thus, in a few years from now, we might have a dirty environment, but we will also have wonderful and improved human relations - and that is also something!

A good kibbutznik should be ready to do what is right for the kibbutz even if this means ruining the relations with her immediate neighbors.

The Practice of Community in Kibbutz Asif

I now move to discuss more concretely how this new social vision of community plays out in the kibbutz. My examples are taken from the period of the Covid crisis in 2020, when the kibbutz's community ethics was at its peak. The kibbutz organized "meal trains" (ongoing delivery of food to someone in need), delivery of medication and groceries, toys and games for people in quarantine, elders and people at risk. Many kibbutzim unlocked emergency funds or gave tax cuts to support members who got into financial dire straits. All kinds of cultural cheer-

up activities were invented and enacted across the kibbutz movement. In Kibbutz Asif, a special "beer-bulance" (a word play connecting "beer" and "ambulance") improvised from a tractor, drove around the kibbutz on Fridays playing loud party music and distributing beer. The kibbutz distributed several cheer-up gifts to all members, such as a challah and a flower seedling. The Culture Committee attached to the gifts a card that read: "We will not let Covid hurt the communal growth of Asif" (*hatsmiha hakehilatit*). After about two weeks into the lockdown, Nahman, a lessee in the kibbutz , publishes an open letter on the kibbutz app:

Dear Community,
We have been living in Asif for several years now and we certainly feel a part of the community.
In these hard days that we are experiencing, especially the elderly population, we want to thank from the depths of our hearts the community of Asif, kibbutz management, the Emergency Task Force, Culture Committee and the many volunteers who come right up to our doorstep and warmed our hearts with a fresh challah, a flower, cold beer and a good word.
It is great to feel a part of a strong and carrying community.
Nahman

The Sali family, who rent an apartment in the kibbutz, went into quarantine because they tested positive for Covid. The kibbutz organized a food train. Na'aman posts a request on WhatsApp and people volunteer one by one. He writes: "thank you to our good community." After the week is over, the Salis post a note on the app: "Thank you very much to the Asif family for the support, care and treats. You really surprised us, and you warmed our hearts. We love you very much. The Sali Family."

Another case during those first weeks of Covid was Tamar and Meir, a husband and wife, veteran kibbutzniks, who wrote an open letter to the kibbutz about "our private initiative for the good of the extended Asif community that we name: from the member to the community (*mehahaver lakehila* - emphasis in the original)." The initiative asked all those who were not harmed financially by the Covid crisis, but who nonetheless received the small one-time compensation from the state, to create together a "lever for social growth here in our home" by contributing what they got to a joint fund that would sponsor communal projects. Meir and Tamar emphasize that the contribution is "personal and anonymous" and that "any contribution is legitimate (not contributing is also legitimate)." They suggest that "since the goal is social and communal (*hevratit vekehilatit*)... the funds would go to upgrading the Orchard [a public park on the outskirts of the kibbutz]."

Let me now point out one important difference between the new ethics of community and that of the old socialist kibbutz. The discourse of community presents a significant change in tone from the moral discourse of the late socialist kibbutz as we have seen in Chapters 1-3. While the discourse of the old kibbutz was both positive and negative, the discourse of community is always positive. Nahman "feels part of the community," "thanks from the depth of the heart" those who "warm our heart with… a good word." He speaks of a "caring" community. The Sali family thank the "Asif family" who they "love very much." In Chapter 1, we have seen that the old kibbutz was also absolutely capable, and even exceptionally good at expressing warm moral praise and gratitude. But we have also seen that the tone of moral complaint, disappointment, and critique was dominant in public discourse.

This distinction in tone and mood between the two discourses is anchored in the different ways in which each of them constructs moral action. As I have tried to show in Chapters 1 and 2,

since the old kibbutz lacked the market's and the law's material remuneration and compulsion, it heavily relied in its daily function on members' moral commitment. Since moral action was a functional necessity for the kibbutz system, it was frequently formulated in the language of demand, critique and disappointment. A structural moral obligation preceded the moral action that could then either fulfill or disappoint the obligation. The privatized kibbutz, on the other hand, does not rely on members' moral behavior for its daily function. Material incentive in the free market now takes care of motivation and a members' baseline moral obligation is quantified in a fixed monthly flat tax. Therefore, in this new system, moral action is not a functional necessity but an "extra," something good that people do on top of their obligations, which calls for warm gratitude. The privatized kibbutz does not "structurally" expect anything moral from its members and therefore the latter, as long as they don't hurt someone else, cannot fail or disappoint. This is why, in contrast to the moral discourse of the old kibbutz, you will never see ads on the bulletin board, in which people are lambasted for *not* bringing a beer or flowers to an elderly person or *not* baking a cake for a woman who recently gave birth.

This qualification does not mean that the acts of mutual help, support, and community that characterize the privatized kibbutz are morally flawed, "false," or insignificant. The fact that the acts of community do not stem from a "structural" obligation or that they are afforded by material affluence does not make them less valuable from a moral standpoint. They are moral, very real, and make a significant difference. That daily life is dotted with small moments of solidarity, help, and togetherness is an important achievement of the privatized kibbutz society. In times of trouble, it becomes even more impressive. During my fieldwork period, I had an accident while working in the kibbutz's gardening crew and was hospitalized for a few days. About a year later, Noa was also hospitalized for a few days because of complications after

having given birth to our second son. In both of these occasions, the amount of real, concrete practical help and the show of interest and solidarity that we received from fellow kibbutz members was truly overwhelming and radically surpassed anything that I experienced living in other places. My only point is to show how the morality of community is different from the moral world of the old kibbutz and how it indexes the demise of an articulated shared substantive culture. As we have seen in the first part of the dissertation, that it does so is not necessarily a bad thing.

Community as Aphasic Discourse

Sergei Oushakine has argued that post-Soviet moral discourse is characterized by a collective state of "aphasia" (2000). The collapse of the totalizing moral meta language of socialism was not replaced by an alternative meta language of the same scope. In these conditions of "symbolic shortage," as Oushakine calls them, his young post-Soviet interlocutors were unable to define in clear terms the moral and cultural substance of their society and their subject position within it. Aphasia was not expressed in silence. On the contrary, Russian public discourse was inundated with projects of moral resurgence and talk about the moral and cultural uniqueness of Russia. However, aphasia was expressed in some of the formal qualities of these discourses: the reversion from semantic to metonymic analysis of concepts, parasitic use of the past discursive resources of socialism, and the abstract, polysemous nature of moral concepts that makes them infinitely open to different and contradictory interpretations. This is why, Oushakine argues, at least in the case of Russia, the end of socialism is not a *transition* from one moral order to another but a specific kind of moral *unraveling*, a new inability to construct a coherent meta-narrative with which to interpret social reality and purposefully act on it as political subjects.

I argue that the new discourse of community has some of these similar aphasic qualities. I demonstrate my argument through an analysis of a presentation in a conference that I attended in 2019, entitled "What is a Kibbutz Today? Kibbutz Identity in the Trials of Time." As the name indicates, the goal of the conference was to discuss the uniqueness of the kibbutz way of life after privatization. One of the speakers was Efrat Gavriel, the Chair of the Department of Society and Community in the national Kibbutz Movement. Tellingly, the department was traditionally named the Department of Society, and gained the additional "and Community" only in the 2000s. Gavriel's main argument was that "communality" (*kehilatiyut*) forms the new ethical core that unites and defines the kibbutz after its privatization. I bring in some detail the ethnographic description of her presentation because it demonstrates nicely - in its content as well as in its style - the new aphasic quality of discourse, to which I want to draw attention.

Gavriel starts by presenting three examples from "cases on the ground" of the kind of community spirit that should animate the kibbutz. The first example is from Kibbutz Lehavot Haviva that has recently undergone a massive restructuring during privatization, including the absorption of 100 urban newcomers that has remarkably destabilized this kibbutz's community. Gavriel tells of a project she initiated in which members built a communal mosaic together that was later hung on the external wall of the dining hall and will "remain there for many years on."

The second example is from Kibbutz Nahal Oz that lies on the border with Gaza. After Operation Protective Edge in 2014, in which one of the children of the kibbutz died from a missile, the kibbutz faced a social crisis as many families left. As a Community Manager in that kibbutz as well, Gavriel, together with another member, brought to the kibbutz a group of youngsters in a gap-year program from *HaShomer HaHadash*, a right-to-center youth movement that is engaged in a Zionist "return to the land" through guarding farms and doing agricultural

work. When Gavriel names the group, she adds: “god forbid!”, mocking the fixations of the old, dogmatic kibbutzniks who would think that letting a right-to-center youth movement into the kibbutz is a blasphemy. She presents a photo that shows veteran kibbutz Nahal Oz members together with the young newcomers from *HaShomer HaHadash* working in a communal vegetable garden.

The third example is from her own Kibbutz Palmachim that celebrated its 70th anniversary this year with many cultural activities. Gavriel brought an “expert witness” this afternoon: Ofek, who is 18 years old and “who sits in the audience here with us and significantly brings down the age average.” She humorously “cross-examines” the “witness” about the rich communal life in Palmachim:

> Ofek, is it true that last summer you participated in an activity to help sea turtles that hatch on the beach near Palmachim make it back to the sea? True.
>
> Is it true that your brother is the youth guide of Palmachim? True.
>
> Is it true that you are now in an educational gap year here in Kibbutz Sarid? True.

Gavriel summarizes what she wants to show in these examples:

> These examples are unique because they express not only a product, they express a Path which is also a Value [“Path” and “Value” rhyme in Hebrew: *derekh she’hi gam erekh*]. In all of these examples, if you analyze them a little bit deeper, you will find that it is the thing itself, but also something deeper, something of value that trickles into it ... In the last 15 years, I have met excellent people who have a desire for this whole thing, both for the Path and for the Value, and they are of all ages - veteran kibbutzniks and young urban newcomers. And I dare say: “yes, we have shared values!”...

Gavriel argues that “yes, we have shared values!”, but the definition of these shared values that emerges from the examples is quite wide: it ranges from creating a collective artwork or a communal vegetable garden to helping sea turtles hatch. It is also being a youth guide or doing a gap year. But what moral “meta-language” totalizes these different activities? Educating the youth - but in the light of which values? Ofek is doing a gap year - but in which movement? What ideological or political goal does the gap year serve? And how do these goals articulate with helping sea turtles hatch or with building a communal mosaic? Oushakine notes how one of the main expressions of his interlocutors aphasic discourse was its abstractness as “they would refer to elusive, vague and yet utterly stereotypic concepts of 'soul', 'spirituality' or 'national character' without, however, elaborating the content of these notions” (2000:1004). Similarly, Gavriel uses some of the common morally loaded concepts of kibbutz discourse: path (*derekh*), shared values (*arakhim meshutafim*), something deep (*mashehu amok*), but gives very few clues as to how these might be filled with concrete content. She says that these values of community are

> shared by both communal [that is, socialist] kibbutzim and privatized kibbutzim… In both types of kibbutzim they strive for more communality... In other words, this gap between the communal kibbutzim and the privatized kibbutzim, I don’t know how deep it actually is. We were really worried about this gap in the past, and I am in a place where I dare say: “wait a minute, we are all kibbutz: this kind of kibbutz, that kind of kibbutz, but we are all a kibbutz!”

Today, 15% of the kibbutzim remain in the old socialist model, while the rest are privatized, having incorporated differential salaries and private property. Gavriel argues that these structural

differences in political economy between socialist and privatized kibbutzim are not that important since both are united in their spirit of community. She continues:

> And I say: the whole is greater than the sum of its components, and the greatest metaphor is that mosaic: it is not only that everyone is a small part within the same whole, it is also that the whole is truly bigger than the sum of its components, and this insight is present in the kibbutz - be it communal or privatized - in a deep sense. What is the source of this? What is the inspiration? … The inspiration for this is the kibbutz itself. the kibbutz as it once was, and the kibbutz as it is today… a language is being forged and crystalized here... I myself participate in dozens of WhatsApp groups of kibbutz Community Managers and there is a language there! And it is interesting, it is intriguing, and it is very very uplifting.

The moral language of communality is shared by both socialist and privatized kibbutzim. It is not related to any concrete social structure or ideological universe. It fits the kibbutz just as much as the city or practically any type of society and ideological discourse. Since it is not tied to a specific set of traits or to a specific way of organizing society, Gavriel has trouble defining it in concrete terms. Her definition retreats either to abstract catch-all notions (the moral principle that distinguishes the kibbutz is that "the whole is greater than the sum of the components") or to self-referential definitions (the inspiration for the kibbutz is "the kibbutz itself, the kibbutz as it once was and the kibbutz as it is today").

At some point, Gavriel encounters a challenge from the audience from David Ziv, a veteran member of a still socialist kibbutz:

Gavriel: “Just as Alon [in the previous presentation] spoke about the changing languages in the kibbutz in the past decades, our goal is also to strengthen the language in the present and towards the future…”

David Ziv [interjecting from the audience]: “which language?”

Gavriel: “The kibbutz language, our language, the language of you and I together. But let’s leave this discussion for a little later. In my view, it is not even a debate, it is a discussion. And the goal is to deal with this, to discuss this, because this kind of discussion brings about a strengthening of identity. As opposed to the past, when there was an ideological language and they said: “this is how you should do it,” what I am presenting is not a method for measuring who is more kibbutz-like…

This is a confrontational moment. Gavriel promotes the ethics of community as an inclusive ideology that blurs the boundaries between socialist and privatized kibbutzim. As a veteran socialist, Ziv is irritated by this ethical ambiguity. He challenges Gavriel by asking her to pour into the frame of “kibbutz language” some more concrete content. Gavriel, on the other hand, does not feel obliged to provide more content. Instead, she gives a self-referential answer. What is the content of kibbutz language? It is “the kibbutz language, our language, the language of you and I together.” Instead of concretely answering the question, Gavriel says that it is good that Ziv brings it up because “this kind of discussion brings about a strengthening of identity.” Gavriel talks about “our shared language” from without, as it were, but does not animate “our shared language” from within, by arguing, for example, that kibbutz society should be organized in this way and not the other, its social arrangements, economy, education or politics should be X rather than Y.

Towards the end, Gavriel does give some more concrete examples of what communality as the kibbutz's new ethical identity might mean. She mentions the cultural revival in many kibbutzim, the way the kibbutz "exports" aspects of its unique kindergarten educational philosophy to the general education system, and the remaining forms of solidarity in the kibbutz expressed, for example, by the fact that members who do not have children still pay a relatively high tax that allows for an investment in education that is higher than the national average.

In the question-and-answer session, David Ziv makes another comment that nicely captures the difference between the community ethics and the socialist ethics of the old kibbutz:

> I want to make a comment about one weak point in the presentation. Throughout this whole presentation, there was no mention of equality and socio-economic gaps. You can't possibly have a community with big socio-economic gaps! This would be a weak community! You can call what I am saying "ideology," or you can call it "pragmatism," I don't care. It is correct. It is simply the reality and the truth. And we should take this into consideration.

Like in his interjecting comment earlier, Ziv critiques Gavriel for the abstractness of her vision, pointing out how it does not mention what he sees as the kibbutz's core moral content: material equality. As a socialist, he locates the abstractness of the community discourse in its almost total neglect of political economy. Gavriel makes some comments relating to solidarity and mutual help, but this is not concrete and systematic enough for Ziv because it does not directly and comprehensively address questions of structural material justice.

Conclusion

Gavriel's presentation distills what I have been trying to show in different ways throughout this whole chapter, namely, that in this present moment of reconstruction after privatization in the kibbutz, there is a genuine and energetic effort to find a new moral language. And the kibbutz indeed seems to have found it in the new vision of community. As we have seen in the ethnographic examples, the vision of community galvanizes kibbutzniks (and many others outside the kibbutz) to moral action and fashions daily life in the kibbutz in a unique way, countering some of the atomizing effects of privatization. However, in its abstract, polysemous nature it also embodies the loss of a concrete shared moral substance in the kibbutz. Although the ethics of community is becoming extremely popular, in my view, it has not been able so far to translate this enthusiasm into a clear, consistent, and substantive moral and political plan for society, in the same way that socialism was - for good or for bad.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I wish to highlight and develop a bit three main arguments that this dissertation made. First, much of the first part of the work has been focused on fleshing out some of the chronic social problems that accompanied the socialist experiment of the kibbutz. The argument was that the elimination of the market and the law in the kibbutz prompted an ongoing crisis of social mediation and regulation. I suggest seeing the most annoying and exhausting sides of kibbutz culture as indexes of this crisis: constant moral monitoring, unending debates, and the flourishing of envy and resentment.

One of the original contributions of this analysis to the literature on the kibbutz is to offer an alternative explanation to the fall of kibbutz socialism in the 1990s that has been largely neglected by the literature. Rather than external influence and intervention, internal economic deficiencies, or ideological contradictions, this work highlights a series of unexpected problems at the level of social and interpersonal relations that were internal to the kibbutz's success in creating an egalitarian, non-alienated society. These problems were not fatal. Throughout the years, the kibbutz found ways to adapt to them, to work around them, and carry on. But they do index a leak in the system that made life in the kibbutz for many exhausting, frustrating, and constraining. The kibbutz had a chronic lack of manpower and its numbers in comparison with the total population constantly declined. People refused to join in masses because life in the kibbutz was hard even when material conditions were good. The reasons for leaving a kibbutz were almost always social reasons and not the desire for material comfort that anyhow, until the 1990s, was not that great outside the kibbutz either.

As a historical case study, the kibbutz highlights some of the consequences and shortcomings of organizing social relations so that they are independent of the market. The lesson is relevant to the current conversation on the possibility of a direct democratic, post-capitalist future. The conclusion of this study is certainly not that the market, bureaucracy, or legal alienation are natural or that there is absolutely no way to organize social relations without them. The kibbutz, and twentieth century socialism more broadly, were one, specific historical attempt that came to an end in the 1990s. It does not teach us about the universal truths of human nature and society. We know very well that there have been and that there are societies that manage their business without the market. There is no basis to assume that new sustainable forms of social organization outside the logic of the market cannot and will not be invented in the future. Furthermore, this dissertation focused on the impact of the elimination of the market on the micro level in a small-scale society. The question of the translation of its insights to the macro level of state and global politics remains open.

Nonetheless, the case of the kibbutz does highlight that in industrialized capitalist societies, the market has some crucial functions, not only economic but also social and psychological. The market regulates and disciplines, legitimizes goods distribution, "explains" people's fates, and "cushions" interpersonal relations with alienation. These functions do not create an egalitarian or just society. The social relations that they promote are quite alienated. But even when we speak boldly against neoliberalism, we practically and silently rely on these functions for mediating and regulating our social relations in the everyday, much more than what we would like to admit. Therefore, we should expect that eliminating the market will bring up in this way or the other the problem of social order and mediation.

Second, abstracting from these observations, the dissertation tried to make a theoretical contribution to the anthropological study of ethics and socialism. It showed how the chronic social problems created by the non-market economy were part of its broader impact on meta-ethics. The elimination of the market in the kibbutz expanded the portion of social reality that was given to moral cultivation and evaluation. A genuine democracy, human dignity, and warm moral recognition were the positive sides of this extensive "moralization." The flourishing of moral complaints and endless debates were its negative consequences.

Put more broadly, the dissertation demonstrated the ethical affordances of political economy, and of a non-market economy in particular. As the notion of ethical affordance suggests, this does mean that the economy determined the nature of ethical life in the kibbutz. Ethical ideas and economic structure were intertwined in a way that does not enable us to clearly distinguish between the two or to postulate unidirectional causality from the one to the other. For example, Chapter 1 discussed moral complaint articles that pertained to economic behavior, and those, indeed, could be explained as affordances of non-market arrangements. But in my materials, there were moral complaint articles that were not discussed in the chapter about many other aspects of kibbutz life: dirt and disorder, "uncivilized" behavior, lack of values among the youth, and the malfunction of kibbutz institutions that cannot be explained as effects of the economy. Rather, these were the result of ideological causes: the fact that the kibbutz was an intentional community with a strong collective "superego" that dictated moral surveillance and correction.

But it is not only that ideology and economic structure functioned autonomously and each had its contribution to the fashioning of ethical life. Economy and ideology were intertwined in a stronger sense. I tried to show throughout the first part of the dissertation how

the area of social reality that was given to moral evaluation was expanded in the kibbutz as a more or less "spontaneous" effect of its non-market economy. But the kibbutz's economy was set up the way it was - by an original ideological intention - exactly in order to produce this "spontaneous" effect, that is, for social life to be governed by authentic moral motivation and not by self-interest. In other words, economic structure was already a materialization, an index of an original ideological agency, a fact that blurs the distinction between agency and structure, matter and idea. But once ideology was materialized in a specific economic system the latter also had, to some extent, a life of its own, carrying its effects even as ideological zeal waned in the late socialist period. But even then, the spontaneous affordances of the system had to be picked up and reproduced through practice and discourse. In Chapter 2, which focused on the debates in the kibbutz over the use of sanctions, we saw one example of how the absence of material sanctions and incentives was not only a structural effect of its economic or legal system but also had to be guarded intentionally and through the articulation of ethical reasoning.

Finally, the third argument pointed to a connection between the meta-ethics of a non-market society and the specific meaning and function that culture, broadly conceived, had in this system. That social life in the kibbutz was regulated through direct democratic self-governance and collective deliberation and not by outsourcing decision-making to external, automatic mechanisms (the market, the law, even the kibbutz's own past decisions) gave a pivotal role to the cultivation of shared, substantive cultural norms. Conversely, privatization in the kibbutz is accompanied by a growing distrust in culturally mediated self-governance expressed in a tendency to offload social functions to external, supposedly objective mechanisms such as the market, formal-legal procedure, and new technologies of social regulation. In other words, the transition from socialism to capitalism in the kibbutz is accompanied by a process in which the

explicit, acknowledged role of shared culture in the regulation of social life is diminishing. Through the Cameras Affair and the Phone App Affair especially, we saw the underlying ethical shift that accompanies this demise: the devaluation of the idea that society can and should be managed through shared cultural norms that are hammered out in a process of public deliberation and enforced through mechanisms of moral discipline within the community.

This new distrust in the cultural process expressed in the position of the youngsters encapsulates in small scale a specific form of political pessimism that, in my view, is one of the main characteristics of our neoliberal *zeitgeist*, for lack of a better, more precise term. As the meticulous discussions about the *takanon* that I described in Chapter 3 show, the old kibbutz was instructed by the idea that everything can and should be regulated by society. This tendency, I think, is part of what made the experience of social life in the old kibbutz exhausting, or as I quote Simcha in the introduction: "too much." On the other hand, the new form of political pessimism that the youngsters of the privatized kibbutz expressed betrays a sense that more and more areas of social life cannot be managed and regulated by society. In my view, this new form of political pessimism (interestingly coupled by a radical form of technological optimism) is part of what makes social life in the privatized kibbutz feel lacking, impoverished, or as Simcha put it, "too little."

Borrowing Charles Taylor's terminology, I conceptualized this process as relating to a shift from a substantive to a procedural ethical framework. The non-market system of the old kibbutz, where the role of shared cultural norms and moral discipline was made more visible and more explicit, entailed a substantive ethical approach, where society has a mandate to explicitly and directly prescribe concrete cultural norms, practices, and beliefs. We saw one expression of this substantive approach in Chapter 1 in the ongoing stream of public moral criticism on

members' behavior that characterized social life in the kibbutz. In the privatized kibbutz, the introduction of the market and its more latent, concealed, ways of disciplining through material incentive allowed a shift towards procedural ethics that delegitimizes the explicit prescription of moral and cultural content. In other words, the transition to procedural ethics, with its emphasis on individual autonomy and suspicion of the authority of shared tradition, seems to be intimately connected with the market. Its "ethics of inarticulacy," as Taylor calls it, regarding concrete, substantive moral goods, relies on, and is compatible with the masked, depoliticized form of social discipline endemic to the market.

The findings from the kibbutz are illuminated by the substantive-procedural binary but they also complicate it. More specifically, they suggest two further subdivisions in Taylor's original conceptualization. First, Taylor and other historians of ethics locate the turn from substantive to procedural ethics with the rise of Western modernity as such, and this includes both socialism and liberal capitalism. However, as I try to show throughout the dissertation, as a moral order, socialism combined elements of both substantive and procedural ethics, that is, a commitment to a shared, substantive tradition and an anti-traditionalist emphasis on authenticity. The transition from socialism to capitalism at the end of the twentieth century has many attributes of the move from substantive to procedural ethics as it is described by Taylor. This is why in many cases it is experienced as a loss of cultural substance - for good or for bad. We cannot account for this process if we simply attribute the socialist tradition and the liberal capitalist tradition to the same category of Western modernity. We can think, therefore, of a further subdivision within the procedural camp of Western modernity between what we can call "procedural-substantive" ethics (socialism) and "procedural-procedural" ethics (liberal capitalism).

But my findings complicate Taylor's binary even further because in kibbutz socialism, it is not only that components of substantive and procedural ethics co-existed, they were also mutually reinforcing. The procedural emphasis on authenticity is seen by Taylor and others as something that hinders the reproduction of shared tradition because it is suspicious of the "blind" adherence to existing norms and customs. But what we find in the kibbutz is that the emphasis on authenticity both undermined and afforded the cultivation of a shared substantive tradition. The kibbutz, as other socialist projects, refrained from outsourcing agency to the "invisible hand" of the market because it insisted that social reality had to be fashioned according to the authentic expression and conscious, rational direction of society. This expressivist emphasis on radical voluntarism undermined the reproduction of shared norms, decisions, and understandings, but at the same time, it also created the conditions that made the latter crucial. In other words the same emphasis on authenticity that undermined the authority of tradition also gave it an indispensable role in the reproduction of social order. We have seen this best in Chapter 3, where the same emphasis on the conscious, agentive fashioning of society through public deliberation afforded both the reproduction of shared understandings and their constant undermining, the writing of evermore elaborate *takanonim* and their constant overturning and rewriting.

A second modification to Taylor's conceptualization emanates from what my findings show to be a contemporary intergenerational split within the liberal-procedural framework that could not have been accounted for in the 1980s, when Taylor made the substantive-procedural distinction. Taylor defines the individualism of procedural ethics as resulting from a combination of modernity's new emphasis on individual autonomy and disembeddedness with its new romantic emphasis on individual authenticity and expressivism. But while the youngsters in the Cameras Affair and the Phone App Affair embraced and radicalized notions of individual

autonomy, they also sacrificed and devalued authenticity. In fact, in the two affairs, authenticity and autonomy were pitted *against* each other. There was a struggle between the Sabra boomer-veterans who emphasized individual expression and sincere conversation and the millennial-youngsters who emphasized safety, insulation, and the right not to hear. For the youngsters, the main problem was not how to make sure that the individual can express herself freely and authentically in the public sphere but rather how to limit expression so as not to harm the individual.

What we get, then, in this local intergenerational culture war is a split within the proceduralist tradition that was not accounted for in Taylor's scheme: a transition from a romantic, expressivist proceduralism centered on authenticity to an ascetic proceduralism focused on autonomy and safety. What we can now see, retroactively, is that romantic proceduralism, with all its individualism, still entailed a strong sense of a public sphere. In the kibbutz, it was expressed, for example, in the high status granted to public deliberation as an authentic dialogue that produced shared understandings and a genuine moral bond. Expressivism demands an audience before which the individual's inner truth is communicated and against which it is pitted. The transition from authenticity to safety entails a more effective foreclosure and privatization of public life. Maybe this is what stood in the background of my interlocutors' feeling that socially and culturally, privatization has left them with "too little."

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