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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the history of rural communities (moshavim and kibbutzim) in Israel and attempts to rehabilitate those that have experienced difficulties. The first section of the paper outlines the context of these communities, most of which are cooperatives. Before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, most of the communities flourished. The next section explains what happened to these communities after the establishment of the State and the formation of more communities, some without ethnic or ideological continuity. The paper then focuses on some attempts made to rehabilitate the rural communities in distress, focusing on the social-communal sphere and using adult education as the major vehicle for rehabilitation. Five aspects of the effort to facilitate the quick absorption of nonfarmers into the established mainstream of the farming cooperative community are listed; these mainly revolve around the amalgamation of different ethnic groups and the imposition of new models. Finally, attempts at rehabilitation are explained, with the caution that no attempt in the past seven years brought about a total recovery of the struggling communities. This section describes attempts to restore "normal functioning" to the communities through education and the role of the facilitators. It is pointed out that the facilitator's role is a very difficult one, suggesting that none of the attempts could be completely successful under present conditions. (KC)

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EDUCATION FOR REHABILITATION OF
RURAL COMMUNITIES IN DISTRESS IN ISRAEL

by

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SETTING THE CONTEXT

Most rural communities in Israel are cooperatives. Their cooperativeness ranges from the total model, that is, the kibbutz, through the half-way model, the moshav shitufi and moshav ovdim, to a partial model, that is the moshava (the Hebrew word "moshav" means "agricultural settlement").

The ideological foundations, initiated and developed by the early pioneers in the beginning of the 20th century, served all those forms of cooperatives.

The common core was:

(a). A working and learning society, drawing its livelihood through direct involvement in agriculture, living in small communities;;

b) Common purchase of inputs, common marketing, self-work;

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(c) Self-government, based on elected rotating officers, operating along a tight Social Contract.

Until the establishment of the State in 1948, most kibbutzim and moshavim zealously fulfilled this ideological call, their mission being to mould and maintain a new Jew on his Land.

The average size of a kibbutz population was 200 families and that of the moshav - 75. Kibbutzim and moshavim alike, were economically viable and there was only a small percentage of drop-outs.

Adult education flourished as there were offered learning institutes, study circles, communal cultural events, week-end retreats, book clubs.

Rural communities which faltered economically were assisted by the national movement either that of the kibbutzim or that of the moshavim.

It should be noted that the pre-State Jewish community maintained its own independent institutions; the agricultural ones were among the most effective and influential. The political leadership was drawn from the rural communities, and the military training and storage of armaments for an independent State was centered mainly in those rural communities.

The establishment of the State marked not only continuity but a revolution in rural communities. Some 300 moshavei-ovdim came into being within a decade. They accommodated Jewish immigrants who came from Moslem countries and who did not share the ideological basis of the founding fathers.

Efforts were made, by the Settlement Organizations, to facilitate the quick absorption of non-farmers into the established mainstream of the farming cooperative community:

(1) Amalgamation of two or three ethnic groups from various Moslem countries in a given moshav;

(2) Amalgamation of several ethnic groups from different continents in a given moshav;

(3) Planning and implementing two Model Regions, each comprised of approximately 10 moshavim, in the proximity of towns;

(4) Providing an intense network of guidance and advisement, both agricultural-economic and social-communal;

(5) Continuously channeling agricultural inputs and economic assistance.

The first cracks in the functioning of those immigrant moshavim appeared right from the beginning and became wider in the 60's and the 70's.

The kibbutzim, however, took a different path in the 50's and 60's. They were reinforced by refugees who survived the European holocaust and shared similar value systems.

Most of the kibbutzim grew to an average of 400 families; prospered economically; sought for diversified industries to complement the income from agriculture and to provide technological trades for the younger generation.

After the Six Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973) a new wave of moshavim came into being in the Jordan Valley and in the Gaza Area (called moshavim of the 70's).

Unlike the immigrant moshavim of the 50's, the settlers were carefully screened and chosen; they were not immigrants; they voiced their desire to settle in the designated areas; they did not come from any one particular ethnic group, rather from a mixture of backgrounds; the average size was 20 families.

Similar to the settlers of the 50's, the majority settlers of the 70's did not have prior agricultural experience. Interestingly enough, though some of the moshavim in the Jordan Valley began their life there as kibbutz or moshav shitufi, after a year or two, they preferred the form of moshav ovdim.

Whereas the moshavim in the Gaza Area prospered, their counterparts in the Jordan Valley faced grave difficulties economically and socially. Within five to ten years (apparently quicker than moshavim of the 50's), some of them were on the verge of bankruptcy and social dysfunction.

Towards the end of the 70's, a survey done on behalf of the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department found out that out of the total of 450 moshavim in Israel, some 100 were "distressed" and in dire need of rehabilitation.

It was not only those 100 moshavim who needed assistance; the whole agricultural sector was shattered since the shift of government in 1977. Due to a distorted credit system, moshavim and kibbutzim alike found themselves to be in huge debts. Also, the collapse of most Purchase Organizations added almost the last nail to the coffin.

This paper will concentrate on some attempts made to rehabilitate rural communities in distress, focusing on the social-communal sphere and using adult education as the major vehicle for rehabilitation.

DIAGNOSING THE SYMPTOMS

Let us now examine the five aspects of the Settlement Organizations' efforts to facilitate the quick absorption of non-farmers into the established mainstream of the farming cooperative community.

The amalgamation of different ethnic groups from various Moslem countries emanated from the melting pot approach to integration. There also existed the fear of ghettoism if only one ethnic group inhabited any given moshav.

In effect, the amalgamation proved to be disastrous: it served as an incubator for internal rifts and continuous struggles for power among the hamulot (extended families). Some of the later manifest symptoms were an outgrowth of this.

The amalgamation of several ethnic groups from different continents was more successful in some instances: East European Jews worked smoothly with North African originated Jews. Other amalgamations were not so felicitous and widened the cracks in cooperative functioning.

Two Model Regions were implemented: Lachish and Ta'anach (near the towns of Kyriat Gat and Afula respectively). There, the melting pot approach was at its best and initially was successful in combating the following symptoms:

(i) Poor achievements in formal schooling:
Regional primary schools were established to provide quality education for the moshavim children who were disadvantaged by objective measures.

(ii) Poor attendance and drop-out in secondary schools and lack of technological training:
Regional secondary schools were designed to provide academic

and technical education, in a way which would attract local youth so that not only a small minority would attend schools outside of the region

(iii) Meagre involvement in social and communal events, not only on the part of the youth, but more importantly, on the part of the parents and grandparents:

Post secondary learning opportunities as well as a variety of cultural events were opened up in newly established community centres. The staff was recruited from within the settlers of the moshavim in the region.

(iv) Repetitive crises in management and leadership:
A cohesive Regional Council was set up to supervise the moshavim's Management Committees, to reinforce them when necessary in terms of municipal services as well as economic, agricultural, and social services.

The two Model Regions were regarded to be the pride of moshavim of the 50's for some 10-15 years, as they were closely supervised and nourished.

In the mid-70's, they were found to be as vulnerable, economically and socially, as other moshavim. The above mentioned survey of the late 70's designated about half of the moshavim in the two regions to be in varying degrees of need for rehabilitation.

The provision of an intense network of guidance and advisement was a necessity for all new settlers of the 50's. The Ministry of Agriculture provided advisors; the Ministry of Education and Culture offered courses and study circles for both secular and religious moshavim; the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department provided economic planning and advisement; the Moshavim National Movements supervised the cooperative and communal life of the moshavim.

Still other organizations were involved.

Paradoxically, that multitude of advisement turned out to be destructive: the settlers believed that they deserved all those services and came to be overly dependent on them. An attitude was developed by the settlers that no matter how poorly they do, the institutions will rescue them, unconditionally.

Indeed, they felt that "the cow wants more to nurse than the calf wants to be nursed."

The continuous channeling of agricultural inputs and economic assistance was indispensable to moshavim who were faltering right from the beginning. Moratorium and consolidation of debts, conversion techniques, credit systems, bank loans, the Purchase Organizations - this network revived, time and time again, moshavim (and quite rarely kibbutzim) and gave them a fourth and fifth chance to exist.

When the rightist government of Likud changed the policy of easy loans, etc., the whole agricultural industry underwent a crisis, especially the "distressed" moshavim.

The ones who survived the crisis were the moshavim who held on to the cooperative principles, such as: common marketing; a strong Management Committee with its functional arms, that is, common purchasing of inputs, mutual guarantee, water management, shared farming equipment. Not the least, activating the whole community in social and cultural affairs.

Strong moshavim, then, present an opposite profile to that of the "distressed" ones. Their children enjoy quality education, benefit from secondary schooling, continue on to post secondary learning institutions, are exposed to new technologies. Their Management Committees work harmoniously and safeguard - to the best of their ability- the cooperative principles.

Their leadership works cooperatively with institutions and organizations outside of the moshav. The youth is responsible for its own cultural and social activities. The parents, that is the actual backbone of the moshav, engage in a variety of learning and cultural opportunities and voluntarily man different committees. The grandparents feel safe economically and are assured of the continuity between the generations.

The other picture, of dysfunctioning moshavim, reveals the following symptoms: The settlers are confused about the principles of cooperation and are scared to question the ideological framework of the moshav.

The Management Committee with its operating arms is torn by continuous rifts and is practically paralyzed.

Each generation in these moshavim feel unsafe about the present and the future.

Although individual farmers may do well economically, the whole moshav is in huge debt and the overall attitude is : "it's not my fault ... it's theirs! .."

This is, in a nutshell, the symptomatology against which attempts at social rehabilitation were made and will be reported on.

EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL REHABILITATION

Re-occurences

We should start this section by giving the final conclusion: no individual attempt at social rehabilitation, in the past seven years, brought about a total recovery of the concerned moshavim.

Furthermore, if there were signs of total recovery, the time span would be too short for long range judgements.

A subsidiary conclusion is that positive achievements in social rehabilitation behaved in a cyclical fashion, that is: several signs of recovery lasted for some time before the symptoms re-occurred.

Our expericne showed that re-occurences were not in the same mode as they appeared originally; they appeared as same and different and posed new challenges to the rehabilitator.

For instance, steady work with a Management Committee in a given moshav, by way of individual and group advisement, enabled this vital committee to harmonisouly work within and without. After 30 months of successful operation, the chairman of the Management Committee wanted to fire the moshav's Treasurer/Secretary based on financial disorders. The members of the Management Committee, who throughout their rather long term of office were willing to cooperate with the chairman, were split on this issue. In less than four months, the Committee collapsed, was practically paralyzed, the chairman resigned, the Treasurer/Secretary remained in office, the whole moshav was thrown again into a state of chaos.

I, in my role of community worker of the moshav, could not stop the raging current of disorganization and dysfunction. When a new Management Committee was appointed I resumed my work with them and initiated a new series of seminars. '

Another instance in another moshav: the rehabilitator-moderator launched a series of twenty-five weekly meetings (3-4 hours each) for a group of activists. The aim being a thorough clarification and understanding of the present situation, including a fact-based analysis of the Management Committee's activities.

Towards the end of those meetings, local elections took place in the moshav for the Management Committee. The majority of the newly elected members came from the group of activists, who seemingly were now better equipped to manage the moshav's affairs more justly and economically.

After the first weeks' euphoria, it was found that the new Management Committee was operating closely along the lines of the previous Committee.

A new task, then, was put forward to the rehabilitator-moderator and his group of activists. The next thirty weekly meetings dealt with committee work and outlined a plan of action.

All of a sudden, the Purchase Organization's crisis came about and the economic situation became intolerable. The rehabilitator-moderator did not continue his work in the moshav (regardless of the economic crisis) and he watched with dismay, the deterioration of his work.

Had he continued, he would have been faced with a new assignment which he and the group of activists would have had to tackle.

Rehabilitation

As the term "rehabilitation" may seem to be awkward, let me define it here: Rehabilitation is the total sum of activities whose purpose is to bring back "things" to their normal functioning.

The rehabilitator strives to jointly identify the malfunctioning "things" and to jointly outline a plan of action for bringing those "things" back to normalcy.

This approach implies that there are normal "things" in a rural cooperative, which people have agreed on as part of their Social Contract. Moreover, people have at least at one given time, performed according to the normal functioning.

"Things"

What are the agreed upon "things" in a rural cooperative community?

First, the implementation of the principles of cooperation; second, the implementation of daily life norms of the moshav community.

We have already discussed the principles of cooperation.

The daily life norms of a rural community are:

- managing the municipal affairs;;
- the organization of special events in the moshav;
- the maintenance of relationships outside the moshav (such as: the Regional Council; government ministries; the Registrar; banks; inspectors).

When we talk about the normal functioning of the principles of cooperation, we imply the need for adjusting the "classical foundations" to current life.

"Strong" moshavim have basically abided by those foundations, but have also modified some of them to suit the emerging circumstances. "Distressed" moshavim, on the other hand, have either abandoned altogether the foundations of the moshav or have stuck religiously to them.



Normal Functioning

Normal functioning, then, is the examination and re-assessment of the ideological framework and the adaptation of the new thinking to actual life in the rural community.

As to the normal functioning of daily life norms, it encompasses the whole range of municipal-civic responsibilities on one hand, and the activation of the moshav's distinct institutions, on the other hand.

Such distinct institutions are:

- local pre-nursery and nursery school;
- well-baby clinic;
- infirmary;
- community hall;
- community library;
- old people's club;
- different social and cultural committees, and others.

Normal functioning has been the practice of all moshavim and kibbutzim, taking into account the different interpretations and adaptation. Even the ones who showed cracks right from their inception, exercised normalcy at least during one period of their existence. The ones who did not, disappeared and we know of a score of moshavim who ceased to be cooperative communities and either disintegrated or gave a new form to their communal life.

The attempts at social rehabilitation concentrated on rural communities who were once "normal" and still had the potential to return to normalcy.

Five Observations

After having analyzed rehabilitation attempts at 15 different moshavim, we have come up with the following observations:

1. Education was the major vehicle for the rehabilitation processes.

By "Education", we mean the three following steps whose hoped-for outcome is the internalization of the present situation's difficulties and the re-energized shared will to act upon those difficulties.

The three steps are:

(a) Making the participants conscious of their present situation through examination and clarification of principles, procedures and daily life norms of the cooperative moshav community;

(b) Mapping out the Field Forces, that is, unfolding the major actors, the impeding and facilitating forces, the resources, the organizations -- both inside and outside of the moshav -- which have affected the present situation and which will also have the potential to assist the participants in returning to normalcy;

(c) Establishing an agreed upon process by which rehabilitation will take place, based on a series of acts with the assistance of outside rehabilitators/facilitators .

2. The place and role of the rehabilitator/facilitator were found to be indispensable and questionable at the same time.

For practical reasons, outside rehabilitators were "hard to come by ", since there was an expressed need of persons who had mastered knowledge of all aspects of cooperative moshav community. They were expected to know how moshavim work, how to mobilize a rural cooperative community, how to

reconcile rivalries within and without the moshav, and how to use scarce economic resources. Moreover, they needed first-hand acquaintance with the particular ethnic groups which comprised the given moshav.

In actuality, such people came from both the rural and urban sectors in Israel, as individuals or in small teams; equipped with either theoretical or practical backgrounds.

In the fifteen moshavim under survey, only a few rehabilitators succeeded in implementing their goals, the majority were left with a sense of frustration and confusion. When they tried to form inter-disciplinary teams, composed of persons working in health, education, agricultural extension, welfare, economic advisement, youth workers - they soon enough confronted the hard reality of competition between those different disciplines.

All of them tried their best to make the moshav members active partners in planning and implementing the "rehabilitation scheme". Without any exception, they had to work hard at gaining the participants' trust; in most moshavim they became entangled in local internecine warfare.

The "human element" in the rehabilitation processes did not bring into fruition the type and quality of human interaction necessary to bring the moshavim members back to normalcy.

Despite the need for outside rehabilitators, either the expertise was not there or the particular "rehabilitation scheme" was not appropriate.

3. Some of the "rehabilitation schemes" were all inclusive; some concentrated on only several aspects of the moshav functions.

The all inclusive schemes attempted to "attack" most - or all - of the malfunctioning aspects, aiming at holistic healing of the moshav.

For instance, they set up several local committees, worked out plans to activate the moshav members, designated critical dates for the manifest activation, "pushed" persons both from inside and outside of the given moshav to stand up to the initial planning.

It should be noted, that such comprehensive schemes also included economic measures, such as the redistribution of inputs and the replanning of the moshav's industries.

In most cases, those all-inclusive schemes proved unwieldly and collapsed.

The other approach either did not believe in a quick panacea, or decided to cut out several aspects and to implement the "rehabilitation scheme" by stages.

Despite the logic of the latter approach, it did not prove to be more successful than the former one.

For example, in one moshav the scheme singled out the moshav's leadership and put aside other aspects of rehabilitation. The moshav leaders were provided with a range of training sessions which included seminars, week-end retreats, group encounters. Indeed, those leaders gained substantially from their education and promised to become activists in the moshav's life.

After two years of intensive training, some of the leaders could not fulfill their promises and the group of trainees dwindled down to a minimum. When the rehabilitator wanted to move on to further phases of the scheme, he was still faced with the problem of the lack of sufficient leadership to back up the scheme.

4. One of the controversial issues in the rehabilitation processes was the measures and sanctions to be used by the rehabilitator. In most instances, the rehabilitator (either as an individual or as a team) did not have direct sanctions over the moshav members.

Indirectly, though, he represented powerful institutions which possessed money and inputs.

It was felt by some rehabilitators that there was a need for sanctions to be exercised in cases of reluctance or unwillingness on the part of moshav members to get on with the "rehabilitation scheme". At the same time, a lasting recovery could only occur within a framework of self-consent.

If measures were to be utilized, they would have to be consistent and just; and the local Management Committee would have to be party to them.

In effect, cooperative moshav communities have proved to be immune to the Settlement Organizations; they have survived different measures and sanctions throughout their existence.

With this reality in view, rehabilitators found themselves to be in a rather peripheral position. When they left the concerned moshavim, their departure was not greatly noticed.

5. The degree of intervention was, in most moshavim, fairly intensive on the part of the rehabilitator as the animator of the "rehabilitation scheme". The interventions did not result in a dramatic re-shaping of the malfunctioning moshavim. In the final analysis, the rehabilitators were outsiders and their rehabilitative intentions were misinterpreted. Unwillingly, they were driven to be less and less neutral in the local disputes, took sides despite their professional conscience, and eventually found their ability to function as rehabilitators hampered.

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