

K. Bartölke, T. Bergmann and L. Liegle (Eds.)

Integrated Cooperatives in the Industrial Society: the Example of the Kibbutz

Publications of the European Society for Rural Sociology, Assen, 1980, 249 p.

The book contains the contributions (16 papers) of the 17 researches submitted at the International Symposium on Problems of Integrated Cooperatives in the Industrial Society, the Example of the Kibbutz, held October 13–15th, 1978, at the Department of Economics and Business Administration of the University of Wuppertal. As the symposium offered an opportunity for research workers to expose and discuss recent research results across the disciplines, cultures and nationalities, the book reflects an excellent view of the present academic discussion on socio-economic problems of the kibbutz. 40 participants attended, thereof 11 from Israel, 2 from Japan, 2 from Norway, 1 from the USA, the remaining from the FR Germany, ensuring an international forum well balanced with insiders from kibbutzim and outsiders. Refreshing to notice is the open and sometimes controversial discussion of specific topics within different papers. Thus, Alexander Barzel considers the kibbutz as an institution sui generis whereas Theodor Bergmann is setting the kibbutz into a continuum of forms and types of cooperation, in which the kibbutz forms the type of highest integration and equality.

The contents of the book is easily accessible by a clear grouping of the contributions under four headings

- philosophy of the kibbutz
- family, women and socialization in the kibbutz
- economy and ecology of the kibbutz
- the relevance of kibbutz-experience for industrial societies,

well summarized by Klaus Bartölke in an introductory part of the book. The first section contains three papers dealing with the philosophy of the kibbutz, the kibbutz as a cooperative, and its meaning for the individual. Alexander Barzel describes the philosophy of the kibbutz, the values on which it is built and the norms guiding decisions in the process of the development of the kibbutz. Theodor Bergmann compares the kibbutz with other kinds of cooperatives and describes it on the basis of a number of continuous categories. Ernest Jouhy interprets the kibbutz as a form of society, in which the problem of fragmented identity and alienation – as in industrial societies resulting from separation of different spheres of life – has been overcome by the possibility to identify with the all-embracing, but in its functioning and interdependencies still understandable community.

The second includes seven contributions dealing with family, woman, and socialization problems. Ludwig Liegle discusses conceptual and methodological shortcomings of previous research in these areas. Menachem Gerson treats the impact, that family and community have on the socialization and education of children in the kibbutz. Family appears to be most important, although due to the characteristics of the kibbutz-community its influence must not be called identical with that of the family in industrial societies in general. Frits Selier describes a change in the family situation in the kibbutz:

The family becomes similar to urban, leisure-oriented families of industrial societies, and he sees tendencies for traditional sex-role differentiation. Maria Fölling-Albers on a similar line relates the socio-structural change of the kibbutz to preschool education and points out that today individualistic values and cognitive development of children have gained ground. Michael Nathan asks, how to explain that the satisfaction of women in the kibbutz with their status is high, although in certain areas they experience inequalities as compared to men. He concludes, that women derive their identity today more from the family than from the community, and tries to give reasons for this development. Michal Palgi discusses, what the kibbutz has achieved concerning women's participation. She describes that there is sex-typing in the distribution of jobs and offices, but concludes that much has been achieved regarding women's equality, because their work and their services have a different meaning in a community from single families. Judith Buber-Agassi takes an opposite position: In her view, equality between men and women has not been reached in the kibbutz due to the central importance of familism and natalism and the failure to resent occupational polarization.

The four contributions of the third part deal with the economy and ecology of the kibbutz. Amir Helman discusses the fact, that in the kibbutz there is no relationship between the amount of income achieved and the amount of consumption. He stresses, that this disconnection might harm the kibbutz in future because of a missing mechanism to adapt to economic depression. Bernd Biervert and Hans Peter Haarland counterargue, that Helman builds his reasoning on the assumptions of the traditional microeconomic theory. To consider problems of participation, humanization of the production sphere and the consumption of private and public goods, particular for collective social systems in capitalistic societies, they plead for a different perspective connecting production, consumption, and leisure activities. Uri Leviathan addresses himself specifically to the work organization. For Leviathan the kibbutz is economically successful not despite its characteristics, but because of them. Joseph R. Blasi tries to answer the question, whether there are differences in the quality of life between different groups of kibbutz inhabitants. Quality of life is defined in terms of attitudes towards and involvement in several aspects of kibbutz-life and locus of control. On the basis of a rather comprehensive case study he shows that quality of life differs according to sex and age.

The fourth section focusses on the relevance of the kibbutz experience for industrial societies – a question which already has been touched in some contributions of the earlier sections. Menachem Rosner describes direct democracy as the basic characteristic of the kibbutz and relates it to other forms of democracy. According to him, the development and the present state of the kibbutz demonstrate the danger of degeneration of direct democracy, too, but ideological commitment, social solidarity, and equality can counterbalance potentially devastating effects of structural differentiation not only in the kibbutz. Karl-Otto Hondrich expresses doubts about the validity of this thesis. In future it is to be expected for the kibbutz, too, that more functional differentiation will appear, if economic need-satisfaction shall be improved. More functional differentiation will result in a transformation of direct democracy in the kibbutz.

The book is closing with summary and conclusions presented by Theodor Bergmann which include the results of the discussions during the symposium.

According to Bergmann – and this is also the opinion of the reviewer – the phenomenon of the kibbutz is bound to the specific conditions of Israeli society and not replicable in the same way anywhere else. But, by its continued existence and adoption it can teach valuable lessons about potential alternatives to inhuman, alienating conditions of work and life. The papers are not so much focussed on particular problems of fully integrated cooperative societies, but on the socio-economic problems of the industrial society in the field of a participatory democracy.

Ottfried C. Kirsch

A. R. Desai (ed.)

Peasant Struggles in India

Bombay, Oxford University Press, XXV + 772 pp.

The volume collects in 6 parts 39 contributions or reprinted papers about agrarian movements in India. The editor, grand old man of Indian sociology, takes a comprehensive view and includes all political movements, in which the cultivators are involved; he orders them chronologically, beginning in the midst of the 19th century and ending up practically with the achievement of independence. (Only the analysis of the struggle in Telengana, precursor of Bhave's land-gift movement, transcends this dateline.) India being an agrarian country, this implies that all political processes and events somehow are linked to the rural population including the tribal groups, the vast majority, that mainly lives on cultivation of land (with some ancillary occupations) largely owned by non-cultivating strata. It is natural that these masses played an important role in the nationalist movement for independence, organized by the Indian National Congress. Desai's assumption is that the image of a passive, fatalistic, superstitious etc. Indian peasant is basically wrong. Long outdrawn protest, revolts and militant struggles characterize the rural scene. Just the revolutionary potential of a rising »peasantry« explains for the editor the ambiguous attitude of the »indigenous bourgeois-landlord classes«, of compromise with the colonial power as also the basic content of Mahatma Gandhi's civil disobedience and non-violent path and his frequent withdrawal from the movements. In his short introduction Desai analyses Gandhi's path, enabling the Congress

»to secure a transfer of power from the British rule and stave off the possibility of the subcontinent following the other militant path of revolutionary class and mass struggles.« (p.XX)

He largely follows Marxist definition and sociological analysis of the rural population, which he sees socially divided and stratified.

The first part gives a general overview of tribal and peasant movements, inter alia largely drawing on V. Raghavaiah's »Tribal revolts.« This book also gives a chronology of