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## REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ISRAEL

P. Gidoni

Agricultural settlement in Israel is young compared to agricultural settlement in other countries with older traditions. In Biblical times the country was mainly agricultural, but in exile the Jewish people abandoned agriculture and turned into town-dwellers with urban occupations. The return to the Homeland brought with it a desire to return to the land. The first immigrants who returned at the beginning of the century found this rehabilitation most difficult. They were inexperienced, lacked tradition, were ignorant of agricultural work and local conditions. Their desires were influenced to a great extent by the new social movements and trends in Europe and after trial and error they created new organizational and social patterns based on maximum co-operation in all areas of living; in work on the land, in education and culture.

The new patterns of living were founded on several fundamental principles common to all. The land was owned nationally and leased to the farmer to be worked. The principles to be applied were self-labour of the farmer and his family without recourse to hired labour; proper division of the land, water and investment, so that each settler and settlement might have a decent income; full co-operation in marketing the crops and supplying means of production and mutual assistance for those in need. The many forms of settlement in Israel are the result of the free choice of each settler as to what suits him best.

### THE KIBBUTZ

The *kibbutz* evolved, developed and exists essentially as an agricultural settlement although recently there is a growing tendency to embrace various branches of industry. The first serious steps carried out in this sphere have been most encouraging. The life of the *kibbutz* is a collective one. Property is co-operatively owned by all the members. Work in the field and factory and services is carried out collectively. Each member works according to his ability and receives what he needs. The member gets no pay and his food, clothes, entertainment, culture and health services are supplied to him in accordance with the means of the whole collective. *Kibbutzim* vary in size from 80 families up to a maximum of 200-250 families. The *kibbutz* on the average has a membership of 500-600 persons. Agricultural production, irrigated lands, number and kind of livestock, and also non-agricultural production such as factory produce and convalescent homes are adapted to the size of the settlement without the need of hiring labour.

The various kinds of agricultural crops are determined according to the natural conditions of the soil, the climate, the economic considerations prevailing, and the water supply. *Kibbutzim* also run workshops and factories involving agricultural produce, such as food canning, agricultural machinery and sprinklers as well as industry unconnected with agriculture. Development of this industry helps the farm to balance its work programmes and employ members who for

various reasons cannot continue to work on the land. The factory brings in added income in order to strengthen the economic basis of the *kibbutz*.

The *kibbutz* is managed by the secretariat elected at a general meeting of members, and it works in accordance with directives laid down at this general meeting. Fundamental problems such as agricultural plans, budget, and new members are brought up by the secretariat which meets at regular intervals before the general meeting.

The dining room includes an efficient central kitchen equipped with the most modern machinery and is used by all members. In most *kibbutzim* the children live in their own houses grouped according to age from infants to school children. They spend most of the day and night under the guidance of experienced teachers. After working hours the children spend their time with their parents until bedtime. This allows mothers to return to work a short time after delivery and frees them for productive work and other services. Kindergartens and primary schools are separate for each *kibbutz*, and secondary schools are shared by a number of *kibbutzim*.

There are various types of houses in the *kibbutz*. The most common are the single storey houses usually containing 4 dwelling units. Each unit is of 29-31 square metres and includes a living room, sleeping niche and conveniences, a kitchenette and verandah. The older *kibbutzim* have a bigger unit of 36-38 square metres. A number of *kibbutzim* build 2 or 3 storey houses because of the growth of population and the need for economy as well as to shorten walking distances to the common dining room and other services. Around the dining room and in the residential area gardens are planted, and there are shady woods and lawns, so that the members can enjoy their leisure outside their rooms after working hours and on Sabbath and holidays. Cultural and social activities of the *kibbutz* are carried out in the club and libraries. All services such as washing, dress-making, shoe-repairs and clinics are housed in separate buildings where the members work in accordance with the work programme. The farm buildings are suited to the character of the *kibbutz* and its various branches. The farm buildings usually include a cow-shed with at least 80 head of cattle for milking, equipped with up-to-date milking and refrigerating machinery and also feeding equipment; a series of buildings for poultry equipped with installations for feeding and laying eggs which enable one worker to deal with 10,000 chickens. There are also sheep runs, grain stores, general stores, sheds for sorting and packing fruit and vegetables, a carpentry shop, metal workshops and garages which service the transport and heavy tools for working the land (tractors, combines and diggers).

The farm branches are divided into sections in accordance with their functions so as to keep transport separate, make pedestrian paths shorter and services more efficient.

The number of *kibbutzim* in 1963 was 230. They had a population of 80,000 as compared with 138 *kibbutzim* in 1948 when the State was established. This form of settlement exists in Israel for 55 years. The first *kibbutz* was established in Degania in 1909.

## SMALLHOLDER'S CO-OPERATIVE VILLAGE

The *moshav* is a smallholder's co-operative. Each farm is privately owned and worked by the family. All services are co-operative. Marketing and selling the crops and purchasing supplies for the farm and house is carried out by the village co-operative union. The village is organized as a co-operative union to which all the families belong.

The *moshav* is based on the principles of equal conditions of production, which each settler receives in order to enable him to reach a certain income. Part of the utensils and agricultural machinery are the property of the village, to be used by the farmer when needed. Some of the lighter tools are owned privately by the member. Most of the *moshavim* are planned for 80-100 families, apart from several which have 150-200 families. Others, especially in hill country, have 50-60 families only. The planning of the *moshav* is carried out to suit the topographical and economic conditions of the region. The principal aim is to create a solid organic entity, unified in the organizational efficiency of its social and economic life and in its aesthetic architectural appearance. The width of the building plot is mostly 30-35 metres and the average area of the farm is about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  dunams. This in division allows for an adequate and efficient construction of a house and auxiliary farm buildings (cow-shed, barn, chicken co-operatives, stores) and leaves sufficient room for a small garden and reserve land for development. There is also space for an additional house for the younger grown-up generation, who help their parents or earn their living elsewhere but continue to live in the *moshav*.

Before the establishment of the State there was a tendency to keep the member's fields near his house. This resulted in villages covering large areas with the houses set very far apart. This also led to large distances having to be covered to reach the various services at the village centre. Lately, the tendency has grown to build more concentrated *moshavim* with part of the farm land away from the house in separate areas. The size of the plot near the house varies according to the topography. In several hilly settlements there are 2-2 $\frac{1}{2}$  dunams near the house and in lower-lying country there may be plots of 7-10 dunams while the rest of the farm land is not near the house. The size of the fields and their sites differ according to the type of farm.

There are 4 main types of *moshavim* in Israel.

(a) *Dairy Farm (Moshav)*

Here the agricultural unit is of an area of 28-35 dunams. The land is irrigated throughout and is intended mainly for the growing of fodder, with the remainder for the planting of fruit trees and vegetables. The main branch of agriculture here is the cows for milking; and their number varies from *moshav* to *moshav*. In young *moshavim* there are on an average 4-5 cows per family and in older *moshavim* from 5-10 per family.

(b) *Market Gardening Farm*

Here the area of land is about 40-50 dunams and most of the fields are irrigated. Most of the land is used for growing vegetables for marketing and crops for

industry. A small portion is used for orchards and the unirrigated area for grain crops. There is an auxiliary branch of chicken farming. These farms are usually found in the younger settlements.

(c) *Citrus Farm*

Here the land area is about 28 dunams of which 10-15 dunams are citrus groves and the rest are planted with various field crops, mainly vegetables. The area is irrigated throughout.

(d) *Hill Farm*

The area of land varies according to conditions. In higher hilly regions (more than 400 m. above sea level), the farms cover from 12 to 18 dunams. In lower regions (300-400 m.) it rises to 20 dunams and in several regions reaches up to 30 dunams. In higher regions, the land is planted with deciduous fruit trees and vineyards and is generally irrigated. The rest is intended for field crops both irrigated and unirrigated. Among the unirrigated crops must be mentioned tobacco while amongst the irrigated crops the main product is vegetables and vegetables for seed.

Although the planning varies according to the type of farm, there is always a pleasant central site where all the public services, the general stores, kindergarten, school, club and the secretariat are situated.

Nahalal was the first *moshav* in the country, built in 1921. From then until the establishment of the State in 1948, 72 *moshavim* were founded. Now there are 350 *moshavim* in Israel.

#### COLLECTIVE SETTLEMENT

*Moshav Shitufi*

This is a co-operative farm which is the general property of the settlers. Each family runs its house separately but the farm is worked collectively according to a work rota fixed by the secretariat, just as in the *kibbutz*. The income is apportioned to each family equally and each month the *moshav* committee determines how much each member will receive, according to the monthly turnover. Each member or family may use its income as it sees fit. The planning of the *Moshav Shitufi* is something of a cross between the *kibbutz* and the *moshav*. Each family has a dwelling unit with a small plot of land for a garden surrounding the house. They have more public buildings than the *moshav* and less than the *kibbutz*. Most *Moshavim Shitufim* have no general dining room and each family runs its home separately. The number of such collective settlements in Israel is small, relatively speaking. In 1936 the first one, at Kfar Hittin, was established and since then 21 more were founded, making for 22 in all, with a population of 4,500 people. In addition to these three forms of settlement, there is the ordinary village, the *Moshava*. This is an agricultural community with private ownership, and in most cases the land belongs to the settler rather than to the nation. Nevertheless, most of these settlements market their products in an organized way through regular marketing institutions used by the collective sector of agriculture.

FROM THE PLANNING OF SEPARATE AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENTS  
TO REGIONAL PLANNING

In the past, the different forms of agricultural settlement were planned specifically for each settlement, with little reference to the general structure of the region or the inter-relation of all the settlements in one area. This was mainly due to the geo-political and social conditions existing before the rise of the State, which because of the lack of land available to the Jewish settlers prevented the setting up of highly populated centres of settlement. Each settlement was a closed social economic unit unconnected with its surroundings, which contained most of the economic and social services it required. With the establishment of the State the changes in economic and social conditions brought about a new approach to planning. The most important change was the appearance of a new type of settler. Until the foundation of the State, the majority of settlers were of western origin but after 1948, many immigrants came from Mediterranean, North African and Asian countries, and brought with them the patriarchal social pattern of their origins and little or no technical or vocational skills in agriculture or other trades, as well as a lower standard of living.

It soon became apparent that the methods in use until then would not be suited to these settlers and would not ensure their absorption. New ways had to be found to harmonize the knowledge and skills with the social structure and mode of life of the Afro-Asian newcomers. A further change took place in the economic conditions. The rise in the general standard of living, the necessity to ensure that these immigrants remain among the agricultural population and the need to raise the volume of exports, led to new agricultural methods based on increase of efficiency and specialization and the maximum exploitation of each region's natural resources and conditions.

A fundamental change took place in the structure of the agricultural economy. This became an economy which exploited the specific character of each region and is based on produce suited to the region's soil and climate.

These changes brought about the emergence of new rural organizational patterns which are mainly as follows :

(a) Creation of suitable conditions for the new settler and the fostering of a feeling of leadership in the agricultural settler. It is, therefore, necessary to gain the confidence of the immigrants and slowly to train a new leadership from the younger generation, without unduly undermining the traditional social structure, so as not to disturb the development of the settlement.

(b) The creation of conditions to attract and settle teams of experts and civil servants from the veteran population to the new agricultural regions. Such teams, consisting of teachers, doctors, nurses, instructors and mechanics, to be gradually replaced by local residents after they have been trained.

(c) The establishment of economic, educational, cultural and recreational services which would be both efficient and inexpensive. These services should be comparable to those enjoyed by the townsfolk. In addition, if we are to esta-

blish settlements which can compete in the open market and improve the quality of their produce, it is essential to establish special services adapted to the needs of the region (and not to a single community) which will be both cheaper and more effective.

(d) The increased production of crops requiring industrial processing during the last few years requires the introduction of industries into agricultural areas and the erection of processing industries nearer the fields. The geographical proximity of those factories (such as sugar factories, cotton spinning mills and vegetable canning factories) near agricultural areas, lowers the cost of agricultural production.

There is an entirely novel approach in the development of the countryside which is based on a general regional agricultural plan, in which agricultural industry and services in any one region are treated as a composite whole within the regional framework. Each village ceases to be an independent unit and becomes one link in a composite regional structure. About 4-6 agricultural settlements are linked to a rural centre where most of the services and institutions which formerly existed in each settlement are located. This rural centre is generally within walking distance of each settlement, generally not more than 2-2½ kilometres. The services included are regional tractor stations, central regional shop with supply stores and refrigeration, marketing centre, grading and packing of agricultural produce, school, clinic and cultural centre. These services are for 4-6 villages or 400-500 and make for higher efficiency and reduce the cost of the services. The residential quarters of the service personnel, the teachers, doctors and technical staff are also situated in the regional centre.

This separate residential district creates a social atmosphere congenial to professionals while helping to maintain lively contact with the district and its people. The settlement of these civil servants on the site helps to win the confidence of the settlers and they collaborate in the social, agricultural activities of the region. This form of a number of farms with a rural centre is called 'The Composite Rural Structure.' A number of such structures constitute a development region, at the heart of which is situated the regional town where all the larger industrial concerns and the central institutions intended to serve the whole region are concentrated. Here we have the factories for processing of locally grown farm produce, a regional secondary school; a regional experimental station; a central clinic or hospital; government branch offices and the regional commercial centre. The structure of the regional settlement in Israel is adapted in each region to local conditions. In hilly districts the topography and layout produce smaller agricultural settlements, and, on the other hand, these conditions do not allow a large concentration of settlements around one centre, so here the rural centre is planned for a smaller population.

Some regions were planned as "nuclear regions" whose basis is 3-4 *moshavim*, of 60 families each, linked together by a collective sub-centre—the rural centre—which is about  $\frac{3}{4}$ —1 kilometre from the *moshavim*. Three to four groups such as these are concentrated around a regional centre which is the town. In all the farms mentioned above, the essential basic factors of regional settlement have been maintained: collective services to a number of settlements; the creation of



decent living conditions for public servants in agricultural regions, and complete harmony between agriculture, industry and these services. Regional settlement in this way contributed to the firm establishment and strengthening of the agricultural regions in Israel and prevented the economic disasters which recently occurred in agriculture in many countries, leading to the abandoning of the farm for the city.

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