

To Reconstruct Inequality: Remuneration for Work and Actors' Strategies to Increase Income in the Kibbutz

by

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Abstract

In the kibbutz debate about changes, payment for work of the members is considered a fundamental change. Several kibbutzim have experienced this change since the beginning of the 1990s. What actually happens in a kibbutz community after it starts paying members for their work? How do people react to this change? Is it a final change or only a step toward a deeper change, such as the introduction of differential wages? These questions are treated in this paper. On the basis of qualitative data, it is suggested that: The different prevalent agreements of payment for members' work result in unequal opportunities to work for money. First and foremost, they seem to upset the classic stratification by discriminating against the highest strata (managers in the economic and social sectors). More than seven years after the introduction of remuneration for work, no stable rules have been found and this topic is in perpetual negotiation. Finally, Bourdieu's theory of social field seems to provide adapted tools to describe and explain the process involved in this specific change: with financial reward from work the kibbutz community figures as a social field where all the actors (the members) are involved. In this field, the increase of members' private income from work is at issue. To achieve this aim, the actors developed different strategies. But beyond the manifest and short-term "struggle" for accumulation of economic capital, a latent struggle is discernible. In this, at stake is the completion of technocrats' domination of the kibbutz community and the predictable coup de grace to the egalitarian ideology.