



## The cooperative components of the Classic Moshav



Zvi Galor\*

P.O. Box 18296, 61182 Tel Aviv, Israel

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### ABSTRACT

It is time, 90 years after the establishment of the first Moshav, family farm based settlement in Israel, to examine the idea of the Moshav and its transformation over the years. This article attempts to examine the initial group of Moshav type rural settlements, established during a limited period of time from 1921 to 1950 and which is termed in this article as the Classic Moshav. This type of settlement, a particular model of a cooperative village, is also a multi-purpose cooperative association containing maximum number of cooperative functions, and is characterized by a defined geographical space. The principles of this particular settlement were defined in a period where the economic conditions were unfavourable to the pioneers who settled the Land of Israel in order to make their living from farming. Once the economic and social conditions have changed, 70 years later, the existence of these principles and their cooperative components have been questioned. The complete identity between the village and the cooperative at its base which was unique phenomenon has been redefined. The article makes an attempt to describe and to examine the changes in the model of the Classic Moshav, in its cooperative components and its uniqueness.

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### 1. Introduction

It is time, 90 years after the establishment of the first Moshav, a family farm based settlement in Israel, to examine the idea of the Moshav and its transformation over the years. The Moshav is a cooperative village and is different than the more known Kibbutz. The kibbutz in few words was, and to some extent is, a collective village, belonging to its members together. The Moshav is a cooperative village where the members has their equal units of agricultural production, and the cooperative is to assist the members in all their activities, in the best possible way, and at the lowest possible cost. This article makes an attempt to examine and to describe the cooperative structure of a group of Moshav type settlements, which was founded in what is now Israel in the early 1920s, and which is termed in this article as the “Classic Moshav”. This type of settlement, a special particular model of a cooperative village, was established during a limited period of time between 1921 and 1950 (Baldwin, 1972; Edan, 1993a, 1993b).

The Moshav was established when the country was under British mandate. At that period, only very few countries in the world had experienced the establishment of cooperative villages. Cooperative villages in different countries have various forms.

A review of this kind of rural cooperatives has been done (Westerdahl & Westlund, 1998) and it concerned cooperatives in villages in Europe. These are different than the model presented in this article. Even in India, where cooperatives are found almost everywhere, cooperative villages are practically villages where there exist cooperatives organizing, generally, part of the people who are living and are working at the village level (Alderman, 1987). These cooperative villages are different than the model presented in this article. Even the cooperative villages in Japan and South Korea (Kelly, 1986; McMichael & Kim, 1994) are different than the model I present. Japan is in fact a country which has cooperatives within its villages (Morita, 1960). When dealing with cooperative villages, we know well about the utopian community villages in the USA during the nineteenth century which contained cooperative elements in their structure. There were also some attempts to create utopian cooperative villages by Finnish settlers in the USA during the 20th century (Peltoniemi, 1988). None of these rural cooperatives were close to the Moshav which we wish to present here.

Cooperatives within villages were established in Eretz Israel (Palestine), the name of the country during the British mandate between 1917 and 1948, and already existed during the Ottoman Empire period, prior to the First World War. The Moshavot (singular Moshava), small townships based on agriculture, which were created at the end of the 19th century and had some elements of cooperation, and were known for the first cooperative winery,

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [coopgalor@gmail.com](mailto:coopgalor@gmail.com), [coopgalor@actcom.co.il](mailto:coopgalor@actcom.co.il)

were established 120 years ago (Shemesh, 1986). Raanana, a town 20 km north to Tel Aviv, was established as moshava in the beginning of the 1920s, and also contained, elements of cooperatives, brought by its founders from the USA, from where they came (Sandler, 1978). All of these examples are not similar to the model of the Classic Moshav.

Eliezer Yaffé, the person behind the principles of the Moshav, and one of the founders of the first Moshav, named Nahalal, came to Eretz Israel during the second Alia (the second wave of immigration of Jewish settlers to Eretz Israel), before the first world war. He was educated in the USA, and was familiar with ideas of socialism and of cooperativism that evolved in the USA at that time. When he shaped the idea of the Moshav in his booklet "to the foundation of the moshav ovdim" (Yaffé, 1947), he was inspired, among other ideas at that time, by what he had observed in the USA regarding rural cooperatives.

The discussion in this article does not relate to the hundreds of Moshavim (plural of Moshav), established in Israel after 1948 (Desroche & Gat, 1973; Weintraub, 1964), as these Moshavim do not contain the special components of the Classic Moshav. Cooperative villages have been the corner stone of the Jewish settlement movement since the early years of the 20th century, yet it is important to note that there exists a distinction between the Classic Moshav and other cooperative villages, which were established during the same time, in Eretz-Israel.

The article describes and analyses the Classic Moshav model, its complexity, its features and its special cooperative nature. The discussion focuses on all the components of the Classic Moshav, and particularly on the cooperative ones, being a multi-purposes cooperative, unique in its genre (Galor, 1990). The article begins with a discussion about the cooperative village, and goes on to develop two further parts. First, it discusses the characteristics of the Classic Moshav and its uniqueness. The second part discusses the cooperative components and the changes that the Classic Moshav has undergone. The concluding section raises the point of whether there is a room for a similar model for rural cooperative village under the changing conditions in the current economic space in Israel (Ben-Dror & Sofer, 2010).

## 2. The cooperative village

The cooperative village exists in many countries around the world. It exists with different structures and different levels of success. It is composed practically, for our explanations, of a village on the one side and cooperative(s) on the other side. To describe the situation better let's assume we have a village in a given rural area, which could be in any part of the world. The relations between the two organs, the cooperative and the village, can have the following possibilities. Examples of this situation can be found in Iran (Nikki, 1968) and in Korea (Miles, 1988). This can be described as followed. In a village we may have the part that the inhabitants may decide to establish, for example, a consumer's cooperative. Only a part of the inhabitants in this village, in our example, has joined this cooperative. We may develop the idea, and describe a village where, beside the consumers cooperative, part of the inhabitants have decided to establish a craftsmen cooperative and another group of inhabitants have decided to establish an agricultural production cooperative (Khafagy, 1984). We have now a situation where in one village we have 3 different cooperatives, and in each cooperative we have a separate group of inhabitants, while part of the inhabitants of this village is not in any cooperative. This situation can be found in Vietnam (Thayer, 2009).

We may continue our description by explaining that in this village there is a possibility where any inhabitant(s) may choose to be member of more than one cooperative at the same time (Abhijit, 2001; Burt & Wirth, 1990; Lepp, 2007). Furthermore, we may have

a situation where an inhabitant of that village may choose to be in one cooperative of that village, and at the same time a member of a cooperative in another neighboring village (Anderson & Brian, 2003; Baviskar & Attwood, 1984; Lynn, 2005). Finally, we may have a situation when the cooperative and the village are the same, and the leader of the village is, at the same time, the leader of the cooperative, and the election to the democratic organs of the cooperative serves, at the same time, to elect the same persons to be the members of the governing body of the village. This creates a complete identity between the cooperative and the village. This is the situation existed in the Classic Moshav for almost 70 years and this is the target of our forthcoming discussion.

We may take the note that cooperative villages already started to exist in Eretz Israel, in the Ottoman Empire, at the end of the nineteenth century. The first Kibbutz was established in 1910, and the first Moshav, the Classic Moshav, was established in 1921. There is a tendency in the literature to describe the so-called cooperative villages in the USSR as being similar to the Classic Moshav. This is not the reality. We know that the Kolkhozes and the Sovkhozes, which were a sort of USSR response to the idea of rural cooperative village were established during the thirties, decades after the cooperative villages had been established in Eretz-Israel and had collapsed after 1991 (Engebretson, 2007). These USSR formula of cooperative villages were completely established by the state, whereas the cooperative villages in Eretz Israel were established by their members. Similar efforts have been carried out in Vietnam and with the same rate of failure (Sikor, 2006). Another example of a cooperative village in East Africa is the case of the Ujamaa villages introduced during the sixties, and practically disappeared as cooperatives as well as villages since then, and this initiative is another form of planned and state-imposed mechanism of cooperative villages there (Osafu-Kwaako, 2011). Many other similar so-called cooperative villages in Africa did collapsed.

This research will contribute to a better understanding of the idea of Moshav in its historical and conceptual context. The paper seeks to answer the following research questions: To what extent the uniqueness of the Classic Moshav is a major characteristic of the Classic Moshav? What is the nature of its cooperativeness and how it expressed in the Classic Moshav? What is the nature and particularity of the cooperative structure of the Classic Moshav, and what is the specifics of the operational mechanism of the cooperative departments in the Classic Moshav? What is the specific structure of the advanced multi-purpose cooperative in the Classic Moshav? I have chosen the research of the Classic Moshav since I am trying to show and demonstrate in the article the uniqueness nature of this cooperative village.

Research on the Classic Moshav is not vast or extensive yet. Research on Classic Moshav has mainly focused on historical, social and economic aspects (Kimhi & Rekah, 2007; Zusman, 1990). The paper intends to contribute to the current body of research surrounding the nature of the cooperative and the relationship between the members and the cooperative. The research will also contribute to the understanding of what the cooperative village is in terms of all its variations and components.

We may propose here a further look at the place the Classic Moshav find itself on a continuum of the various possibilities of the cooperative villages we have described above. The Classic Moshav would be on the right extreme of this continuum, when the other forms of cooperative villages are located on different locations on this continuum and the traditional village without cooperatives would be on the extreme left of this continuum. The concern of this article is the Classic Moshav and the rest of this continuum would be the subject of further research.

Not much literature exists on the cooperativeness of the Classic Moshav. The term cooperativeness deserves a special place in our

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