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Gender Perspective in an Urban Kibbutz

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ABSTRACT This case study examines how an urban kibbutz translated socialist ideology of sharing and equality into daily practice, from the community's establishment in 1987 to 2014. From the beginning, the members of the urban kibbutz have aimed to influence their surrounding environment as well as to redefine the concept of collective life. The research objective is to study the gender characteristics of this socialist community by examining its daily life. In particular, it focuses on gender-related issues, also the research examines the living space of the community and its changing boundaries of public and private spheres. A number of insights evolve from the findings which explain the interactions and negotiations between genders. These processes have created permeable boundaries between the various spheres of collective and private life. As a result, this paper can contribute to the study of small communities that strive for ideological meaning as well as practical existence.

INTRODUCTION

Kibbutzim (plural for kibbutz) are communal settlements in the State of Israel that were first established in 1910. The typical kibbutz has a few hundred members.

The kibbutz pioneers saw themselves as the vanguard of the Jewish people returning to their ancestral home, setting up villages based on collaboration and equality in all aspects of life. Over the years, the number of kibbutzim and kibbutz members grew. The kibbutzim organized themselves in various national movements, most of them associated with the political left. In 2014, the 270 Kibbutzim made up 1.7 percent of the population (Central Bureau of Statistics 2014), but produced over forty percent of the agricultural goods and nine percent of the industrial products in the Israeli economy (Pavin 2007).

The Kibbutzim underwent an economic and social crisis as part of the severe economic recession and hyper-inflation in Israel during the 1980s. As a result, many people left the kibbutz and the remaining members decided to reevaluate their way of life. More than seventy percent of the Kibbutzim have become "privatized" with differential wages (according to profession and amount of work done) and a lower level of mutual aid among the members (Ben-Rafael 2003).

Another change in the Kibbutz movement, starting in 1978 and peaking in the 1980s, was the renewal of the idea of urban kibbutzim; when small groups of ex-kibbutz members and other young people establishment collective communities in the cities. Their goal was to bring the collective life style to the cities and interact with the cities' residents. One of their goals was to bring more understanding between different communities and lifestyles in Israel (Avrahami and Manur 2006). Today there are about 10 urban kibbutzim, with approximately 20 members in each.

Reshet (a pseudonym) is one of these communities, founded in the late 1980s, based on an innovative definition of the ideological idea of the kibbutz lifestyle, but located in an urban environment. Motivated by their ideology, *Reshet*'s members seek to make a social impact on their surroundings through participation and involvement in the life of the wider, surrounding community.

At the time of this study, *Reshet* had existed for approximately twenty years and consisted of twenty-one adults between the ages of twenty-six and forty-six. Seventeen were full members, two were residents, and two were active in the social aspect of the community, but were not members of the economic partnership. Most of the people at *Reshet* are in traditionally structured families (that is, one male, one female, and possibly children). Some of the couples had married in religious ceremonies, some in secular ceremonies, and two couples were not married. All the married couples had between two and

four children. At the time of the study, there were twenty-three children between the ages of infancy to eighteen. The parents sent the younger children to the kibbutz's own kindergarten, to local urban schools, or to schools in nearby rural kibbutzim.

With the exception of one person, all the adults at *Reshet* had grown up in rural kibbutzim, mostly belonging to the left-wing Hashomer Hatzair Movement. Almost all of the members, men and women, had volunteered to serve an additional "national service" year immediately before or after their mandatory military service. Some of the members spent part of their "national service" time volunteering in various urban kibbutzim. Most of the members of *Reshet* joined the community shortly after leaving the army or the additional national service year. These highly idealistic and altruistic young adults were searching for ideological meaning, as opposed to the spiritual meaning. The search focused on how to implement the values of equality and social justice.

At the time of the study, *Reshet*'s female population was more educated than the male population, in terms of years of education and number of academic degrees. During the time of the study period three people were studying for higher degrees. The kibbutz paid the members' tuition and other study-related expenses, based on the assumption that the member's future income would justify the kibbutz's investment (and indeed, most members eventually worked in the professions they had trained for). The students also worked during their studies. These arrangements were in line with the policies of higher education in traditional rural kibbutzim (Timor and Cohen 2013).

At the time of the research, most people in the community were professionals (for example, lawyers, organizational consultants, computer experts, social workers). Some had additional part-time jobs or volunteer-jobs with a focus on social and community service. All men worked full time and most women worked full-time, with a very few working part-time.

Kibbutz *Reshet*'s economy was based on the pooling of the members' income. About a dozen members worked outside the kibbutz. In addition, the community created two work places that the kibbutz managed. The first was "*The Reshatot Association*" (once again, a pseudonym) which managed social and economic projects in the host city and throughout the country. Located in a building on the same street as the kibbutz's buildings, the association employed about two hundred people at the time of the study. At the beginning of the study eleven kibbutz members worked in the association, but this number dwindled to three at the end of the study. Most of the members who left the association found alternative full-time work; some found part-time work. The second work-place that the kibbutz created was "*Reshet Heshev*", a software firm, which employed approximately ten people, including five members of the urban kibbutz. The offices of "*Reshet Heshev*" were in the main building of the kibbutz.

This study focuses on the concept of "home" in *Reshet*, through the perspective of gender-related issues: the nature of the living space of the members in the kibbutz and the boundaries between the public sphere and the private sphere. The study covers the time period from *Reshet*'s establishment in 1987 to 2014; exploring how *Reshet* members translated a socialist ideology of cooperation and equality into ongoing practice.

There are a number of advantages in studying groups and gender using the concept of boundaries. First, it overcomes the issue of universality of separate spheres. Boundaries are a more generic concept that allows us to see, simultaneously, distinct communities and describe different patterns in historical and contemporary perspective (Rosaldo 1980). Second, the concept of the boundaries allows us to examine gender relations in a more refined way: highlighting the different treatment of tasks, obligations, rights and ways of protest. The emphasis on the boundaries directs us to perform two simultaneous analyses: to determine whether, where, and how the work of boundaries is done; and whether and how the boundaries unravel (Lamont and Molnár 2002).

Studies focusing on social and symbolic boundaries can distinguish the reshaping of the division between private and public space (Becker 1999). Confronting the deeper questions of identity of the individual and the collective, of home and culture, and of the private sphere may lead to new insights (Borneman 1992). Dealing with these questions may also redefine the relationship and solidarity within the community and between the community and other groups (Lichterman 2001). This allows the creation of what

Borneman (1992) called a "mirror reflection", which presented inherently dual feelings, of observations of similarities and differences, seen on both sides of the boundary. Review of this theoretical research allows referencing the ways in which boundaries are expressed, of the community's guiding ideology, and of the daily practices of the community.

The research question focuses on the members of *Reshet* and their decision to establish an urban kibbutz: Did this decision arise from dissatisfaction with the situation in which they were raised on a rural kibbutz? What are the differences between their current daily practices (attitudes and behaviors), in terms of gender equality and cooperation, within the family and the community, compared with those of the former community? This research question is particularly acute with regard to *Reshet*, as the majority of its members were raised on rural kibbutzim. The female members of the community had experienced the disparity between the promise of equality and the actual lifestyles of women on kibbutz, and it was not a given that they would choose to make a change as adults. Thus, the present research examines the gender aspects of the *Reshet* urban kibbutz, on three interrelated levels: the individual, the nuclear family, and the community. In each of these, the daily practices are examined as an outcome measure of the ideology of becoming a community. This is done against the backdrop of comparison with their childhood and adolescence in a rural kibbutz and with the residents of the city in which their community is now located.

METHODOLOGY

The research followed the qualitative methodology of the case study and consisted of interviews. The literature indicates that the case study is a way to learn about human behavior, personal or organizational, and thus about processes taking place in the case being studied (Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Yin 1992). The case study is the observation of human activity in a specific time and place. Observations and data collected, as well as the understanding the researcher brings to the case, build epistemological forms and knowledge of societal life. This is the "descriptive theory" (Stake 1994). Yin (1992) stated that the case study is empirical research that demands examining phenomena springing from the set of events of daily life, where the boundary between the phenomenon and what surrounds it is only partially defined.

Interviews with the members of *Reshet* took place during 2005, with follow-up meetings with three of the respondents in 2011. Of the total population of 21 members and candidates; 17 people, between the ages of 26 and 46, agreed to participate in the research. There were nine women and eight men interviewees: three were single and the rest were living with partners. In addition to the couples who had married in religious or civil ceremonies, there were two unmarried couples. Due to the small population size of the kibbutz, each interview was individual, and in depth, to avoid "common story" bias when speaking to couples together.

RESULTS

Emotional and Physical Spheres in the Private and Public Home

When members of the *Reshet* community spoke of the communal space they had established for themselves, they emphasized their relation toward the kibbutz as an extended home. Yael expressed this concept while speaking about the kibbutz in which she had grown up:

'The kibbutz as a whole was my home. That is, I also felt at home outside and not only inside the house.'

Esther echoed this concept in regard to her home in *Reshet*:

'It is some kind of circle, the center is the specific house I live in, and then the dining hall, the lawn, the street and being a part of Reshet.'

From these and similar remarks, one can understand that *Reshet*'s members regarded the entire kibbutz area as their home. People brought this conception with them from the rural kibbutz, in which the kibbutz fence delineated the wider boundary of the public home, within which lay the space of the private home. The kibbutz was a self-contained sphere, containing other spheres. Such a conception underpins the studies of Lefebvre (2014) and Hintz (1997) as they described the boundaries of social space.

Yitzhak described the sense of an emotional home, connected to the public sphere and containing the personal home. He spoke of the scenery and the scents that gave him a feeling of returning home. Similarly, Avram noted:

'My home is Rachel and our three daughters. But I also have a home in Reshet. In other words, when I arrive at this street and I see from afar the tops of these trees that form a canopy and the children on the lawn, I feel that I have come home.'

Many of the community's other members expressed similar sentiments while describing the diverse activities that occurred in the living space of the kibbutz. They stressed the connection between the sense of home and the community that forms it, their bonds with the people, and the friendship among them.

According to its members, the community constituted the reason for their being in *Reshet* and for remaining there. Yehuda stated that without the community,

'…the place loses its attraction…and there is no point in remaining in the place.'

The community formed an extended family. As Moshe put it:

'…Reshet is a large family, in which there is a small, restricted family cell with certain intimate relationships, and then there is the wider sphere of other relationships. But these are relationships that take the form of living with rather than living alongside.'

Avraham quoted the way one of the kibbutz children called the community:

'the family of the dining hall.'

The community served as a connection to and bond with the space. As Miriam said: *'…everything seems entirely different when you are part of a group…I would leave my house and go to the dining hall or the market…but I had a point of reference…'*

The community also provided a way of locating oneself. As Yael noted:

'I am from here [from the kibbutz, the community], this is my home.'

This is a sense of defining one's allegiance that also demarcates distinctiveness, which Cohen (1983) described in his study of rural kibbutzim. During their interviews, the people of *Reshet* stressed the important and generally positive link between the private home and the physical sphere surrounding it. As Ya'akov said:

'I need the space…in order to wake up in the morning to a life of better quality.'

Previous to the study, the members had moved into larger living quarters, and some people mentioned the size of the space within the new houses, which enabled children to run about and play, to develop, and to grow. Regarding the space within her own private home, Sarah stated:

'I need a territory of my own …'

On the other hand, some felt that the space in the private home was sometimes too large and that they should have restricted it in order to feel more comfortable and intimate; otherwise it could become a "hotel" in terms of its physical size and its emotional nature.

The community's members spoke of the importance of allowing individual space within the domain of the street and the community. As Rivka put it, this enabled the kibbutz members *'to preserve a distance of privacy…'* that she found essential, particularly among neighbors who were colleagues at work and in the community. In the same way, the members required individual space when working in the association. As Ya'akov explained:

'…everyone wants to feel as though he's a king, that he has space and has a kingdom… in which to be creative.'

For some of the community's members, lack of adequate personal space induced distress, which occasionally led to disengagement. For example, Merav, who left her job with the association related:

'…I worked with people who are my close neighbors, Ya'akov who is the boss… and that wasn't healthy for me…'

The lack of individual space could also lead to the unraveling of organizational ties. For example, Hannah and Ya'akov left the official and economic structure of the kibbutz, although they physically stayed in their apartment and maintained close social ties with the community. As Ya'akov phrased it:

'…I have created three trees with dense roots; first is the family; second, the kibbutz; and third, the association; over the years everything has become entangled, one with another.'

The people of the community defined for themselves the boundaries of their individual homes and the public home; the boundaries between time at work and leisure time; and the boundaries between what belongs to everyone and what belongs to the individual. These definitions were reminiscent of Ardener's (1993) work. In addition, within these boundaries the members of the community defined power relations and the rules of the game, as suggested by Gramsci (2009).

Furthermore, the lack of personal space resulted in some people creating different forms of geographical distance between them and the community. Sarah divided her time between Tel-Aviv and the kibbutz. Miriam was absent from home one night a week in order to study. Dvora traveled throughout the country for work. Another instance of seeking personal space was Hannah's visits with relatives in various parts of the country. These examples illustrate the relationship the people of *Reshet* conducted with the space of the private and communal home. As Hintz's (1997) studies of spaces indicated, the members of *Reshet* created a sphere that facilitated both close and more distant interaction, which enabled them to live together. They tried to adapt the space to their needs, with everyone finding a suitable solution that created a state of proximity to and distance from the home and the community.

The interviews indicated that the people of *Reshet* established a home that served as a living space. It was a world of images and symbols that contributed to a collective sense of belonging and identity. In Eshel Street, the physical location of the kibbutz, one could find emotional spheres that generated an interface and an overlap between the public home and the members' private homes. The majority of *Reshet*'s members perceived the communal sphere, like the private-home sphere, through a set of mainly positive images reminiscent of the rural kibbutzim where they grew up. Changes to the space in *Reshet* were processes that created a tangible, as well as a symbolic, quality in the communal sphere. These were similar to the processes that Soja (1996), Foucault (1984) and Hooks (1991) noted. These perceptions and resulting expectations influenced the way the community adapted to its environment, highlighting the disparity between the initial communal idea and its practical applications.

Gender in the Community: Merging the Private with the Public Sphere

According to Sarah's perception:

'The rural kibbutz is a prison for women… which over the years has become conservative and anachronistic.'

Sarah is referring to the original vision and many people's subsequent disillusionment. Starting in 1910, the pioneers of the first kibbutzim, had envisioned a different, more egalitarian lifestyle; one which created equal relations between men and women in all facets of life (Herzog 2006a). Yet, from the outset, reality differed from this sought-after model, and still differs from it today (Lieblich 2002). The early kibbutz pioneers were not able to overcome the traditional concepts of gender and gender roles while constructing their new society. Studies have indicated that gender-based discrimination existed in all spheres of kibbutz society, such as: employment, public activity, family and education (Palgi 2013; Talmon-Gerber 1970). The dichotomous and hierarchical disparity between the genders, shunting women to the margins of economic and political activity in the kibbutzim, has become more entrenched over time (Herzog 2006a).

The interviews indicated that the members of *Reshet* favored equality of opportunities and remuneration for both genders, on the one hand; and respected the abilities and needs of the individuals, on the other. This is in line with the mainstream values of the rural kibbutz movement (Dror 2017). Members of *Reshet* were generally aware of where they achieved equality in their community. For example, every member had the equal right to speak and vote. Moreover, every member received an equal share of the pooled incomes of all the members, in the style of traditional rural kibbutzim. On the other hand, the members were also aware of where they failed to implement equality. For example, the overwhelming majority of administrators in kibbutz *Reshet*, in the *Reshatot Association*, and in *Reshet Heshev* were men. The awareness of the gender inequalities was similar to findings of earlier studies (Shaham-Koren 2018; Tiger and Shepher 1975) about rural kibbutz communities, although the rural kibbutz members tried to explain and justify the existence of the inequalities that did not fit their egalitarian ideology.

Although only one woman at *Reshet* defined herself as a feminist, the opinions of the women testified to a large measure of gender equality relative to the surrounding society. One explicitly spoke in favor of enabling and supporting women. Some consciously exposed their children to diversity (for example, marching in a gay-pride parade). Moreover, despite their awareness of gender inequalities in the rural kibbutz, most people at *Reshet* defined the question of gender as a "non-issue". They had not addressed it

during their formative discussions about establishing the community and its kibbutz vision. They had not created an urban kibbutz in order to 'solve the gender problem', as Moshe put it; but rather to address more urgent social issues in Israeli society, such as social disparities.

Dan raised an additional reason for the unwillingness to discuss the gender issue:

'In Reshet women are people, human beings, I do not see any difference between women and men…'

Ironically, the founders of the rural kibbutz based their conception of equality on this very assumption; they believed that it would apply to all aspects of kibbutz life because it was so obvious. Nevertheless, they failed to achieve the expected equality.

Several years after the founding of *Reshet*, the issue of joining the kibbutz association arose. Sarah, supported by her associates, succeeded in adding a paragraph to the agreement that committed the members of the community to support and promote gender equality. This was the statement of a need that had become more apparent over the years. Now the community decided to publically institutionalize that need, in the written agreement with the kibbutz movement, rather than leave it as an internal practice within Kibbutz *Reshet*. In terms of Gramsci's (2009) definition; Sarah, together with all members of the community, dictated and modified the rules of the game. This change outlines the dynamics of form and results. The way that the group emphasized the importance of this topic led to the willingness to delay confirmation of membership in the movement. The change in the rules of the game also expressed the individual's will and the women's voice in the development of the community.

Daily Practice in Public and Private Spheres

The members of the community described ongoing activities, which painted a complex portrait of how they realized their world view. In addition to blurring gender-role boundaries, this picture delineated distinct areas within the private and public spheres. For example, analysis of couples' activities within private family households revealed extensive joint activity. Esther noted that,

'The decision as to which school the boy will attend is one made by both partners, they arrive at it jointly.'

Rachel and Merav pointed out that the men usually did the cooking and took full or partial responsibility for the laundry, dish washing, gardening and other household chores. On the other hand, responses to the questionnaire, as well as the analysis of interviews, indicated that there were certain chores for which women alone were responsible. For example, Esther said,

'…also in Reshet there are still areas that are somehow accepted as belonging to the women, for example clothes for the children… only the mothers deal with this. If one asks the men, they say, "Ask my wife. I have trouble knowing which clothes belong to whom."'

Devora added,

'He likes to cook, but he doesn't like to clean. I say to him, don't start something that you won't finish because I don't have the energy to complete it for you.'

Analysis of the ongoing arrangements and practices regarding the economy of the public-home indicated many locations where the spheres and gender-roles blended together, juxtaposed with areas of distinctiveness and separation. For instance, cooking at home sometimes turned into cooking for the entire community; given the custom of each family preparing a dish for the shared Sabbath-evening meal in the communal dining hall. In most cases, the male members did the cooking. In addition, male members of the community, particularly those who worked at *Reshet Heshev* (the accounting firm owned and run by the kibbutz) prepared and served the daily lunch for the firm's employees in the communal dining hall. Often other members of the community shared these lunches. There were many other examples of voluntary sharing of responsibility of functions with economic value. Yitzhak was responsible for cleaning and gardening in the street after working hours, but other members of the kibbutz sometimes joined him in the task. Each year, the community's women sorted the children's clothes and re- distributed them according to need, in order to save money. Families regularly looked after children whose parents were away. Individual members often undertook other activities, which benefited the entire community.

As Goldscheider et al. (2015) indicated, the people of any community separate the private and public domains in an imaginary way. Accordingly, over the years the gender perceptions and the division of roles in the family change.

The respective positions of men and women in the public and private domains shift in interrelated processes.

In the case of *Reshet*, within this division of domains, the members drew the outlines of the individuals' various activities. A gender basis determined some activities, such as gardening work in the community sphere and taking care of the clothing. Other activities crossed the boundaries of spheres that gender generally define; for example, the practice of male members preparing lunch for outside workers at *Reshet Heshev* and for any *Reshet* member who wished to eat communally. Here, the dining-hall space, which originally was a community area, became what Bhabha (2004) termed "a hybrid sphere". It was an arena of interaction among individuals who conducted negotiations over space and customs, thus generating a new hybrid custom. This phenomenon echoes the work of Thelen (1999) and Rosaldo (1980).

Interviews with kibbutz members revealed their desire to achieve the community's guiding ideology in the areas of education and subsequent professions. According to this ideology, development of human capital contributed to the individual and to the community through self- fulfillment and securing a future livelihood. Therefore, the community should encourage its members to study what they desired. Based on this rationale, most members initially became professionals in the fields of guidance and teaching. However, over the years, most men and some women turned to jobs that bestowed greater authority and prestige (and in some cases greater monetary reward). Rachel explained that when she and Avram had "started off" as a couple they decided that Avram would spend more time at home and that she would develop a career. As time passed and the family grew, an inversion occurred regarding proximity to the home and the amount of time spent caring for the children (for example, during school breaks and when they were ill). Rachel's work days became shorter and she brought back significantly less salary to the community. Meanwhile her husband's career developed and he was able to bring more salary back to the community than she did. As Herzog (2006b) suggested, the manner in which *Reshet*'s members specialized in occupations and roles over time was a result of, and a reinforcement of, robust traditional gender-based mechanisms. This was despite the spirit of cooperation, the declared rejection of traditional gender-based boundaries and an apparently open job market.

It is important to note that differentiation with regard to occupations and particularly to roles (for example, senior and junior management) evolved in *Reshet* primarily in locations where members participated in spheres beyond the community. The *Reshatot Association* was an example of this type of location which reproduced the gender-based hierarchy of the surrounding environment. These findings in the *Reshet* community resembled research about rural kibbutz society and general Israeli society (Fogiel-Bijaoui 2009; Lahad et al. 2018).

On the other hand, the way people structured their occupations, particularly within the community (for example, in *Reshet Heshev*), shows that most members had jobs that afforded them relative flexibility in the hours and place of work. Most men worked close to home and were available to meet the needs of children returning from kindergarten or school. This created a crossing of boundaries between the sphere of home activities and the sphere of work. As Dan related:

'They play below…they like to know that I'm there…sometimes they come up to see me.'

In addition, work that the members took home required the allocation of space and time in the private sphere. This forced people to engage in non-family-related tasks during time which members generally would have devoted to the family or other leisure activities. Rachel described this phenomenon while telling her experiences of working in her private home at night.

Voluntary Participation: The Private and Public Spheres

There were additional examples of the merging of spheres and gender-issues in the members' public activities. Interviews indicated that most of *Reshet*'s members fulfilled some public role. For example, Rachel was responsible for arranging use of the community's shared vehicles. Avram recorded members' purchase invoices on the computer and also wrote some of the texts to be read aloud at communally celebrated festivals and on Sabbath eve. Most of the members involved in the cooperative economic enterprise exercised their right to participate in discussions and in the community's decision-mak-

ing forums. Most members were also members of the various committees, such as the board of directors of *Reshet Heshev*. The findings showed that the men and women of the community (apart from Hannah and Rivka) participated in the public sphere, even after the birth of their children. Thus, the majority of *Reshet*'s women did not confine themselves to the home sphere; but rather regarded the entire public and private space as an area where they could express themselves. For example, in one of the buildings of the kibbutz, the parents opened a kindergarten, which was also open to children from outside of the community. Merav explained that the kindergarten met the expectations of the community's members with regard to educational principles. Rachel noted that the mothers had successfully applied direct pressure on the kindergarten staff so the hours of activity would suite the parents' work schedule. Esther added that the manner in which the community organized budgetary workshops followed similar considerations, focusing on expressed needs and desires rather than dry numerical data.

Hannah's story about the birth of her children highlighted a further aspect of gender and its place in the public and private spheres:

People found it rather difficult to accept my turning inward toward the family…they found it particularly difficult to understand where I stood with regard to my need to devote more time to the family. It wasn't as though I stopped attending discussions as soon as they were born. It was a process. But the more obvious it became, the more reactions I received from the group indicating the difficulty in accepting it. It wasn't anger, more like disappointment and an invitation to return to being more significant, more present.

Like Hannah, Rivka chose to devote her time to the private home, to her family, and to herself. In fact, she set an individual order of priorities, in opposition to those of the community. As she related,

'…what is more important to me? I am practical. First of all homework assignments, then home and then the "study day". That is my order of priorities.'

Rivka deliberately isolated herself from the public sphere, from the community space and from society, choosing the private and home spheres. This highlighted the difference between Rivka and her husband, who doggedly preferred the public sphere. Rivka noted the differences in approach between them and the underlying conflict. Each had made personal choices and a joint decision, as a couple, to enable these personal choices, despite the cost to the family.

Rivka, Hannah, and their spouses decided to adopt the practical method prevalent in society of dividing spheres in accordance with the patriarchal structure in which men were present and operated in the public sphere, while the women remained in the private sphere. Despite the community's egalitarian founding principles, it tolerated its members' individual preferences.

At the same time, the community tried to be flexible in order to maintain its core value of egalitarian participation. Meetings were set in the evening when at least one parent could attend, based on the decision of the couple. Beyond that, existing technologies were used to electronically monitor the children's bedrooms to detect crying or other sounds. This could allow both parents to participate in the meetings while being ready to tend to their children when necessary.

Nevertheless, judging by people's statements, it was obvious that the birth of children created ongoing constraints for parents and the entire community. This, in turn, created the need to adapt the ideology to the new realities of gender-related issues within the families and the entire community. Despite attempts to preserve the group's core values, family-related commitments made it difficult to preserve the community's initial radical goals. The experiences of Hannah and Rivka illustrated the insights of Talmon (1980) and Goffman (1980) regarding the tension between family and community. There was a fundamental incompatibility between the "addiction" to a revolutionary ideology of collective self-identification on the one hand, and familial solidarity on the other. In *Reshet,* there was an initial replacement of kinship ties with close intentional relations, based on affinity with like-minded people and identification with a common purpose. Nevertheless, some of *Reshet*'s women eventually underwent a change in focus regarding the private and family spheres. This phenomenon closely resembled the findings of Fogiel-Bijaoui (2009) and Palti (2016) in studies of the rural kibbutz shifting to a more traditional family-oriented community. Kanter (1972), in her research on communes in the USA, saw these events as a stage in the developmental process of an intentional community.

The examples, above, demonstrated that the boundaries between the private home and the public home in *Reshet* were not clearly delineated. The private home penetrated the public home in practical ways, such as the use of electronic monitors in the children's rooms for members attending meetings. Similarly, work made its way into the private home, blurring boundaries further. The examples also represented the merging of gender roles that took place in the first shift (at work), the second shift (at home), and the third shift (in the community). This process negated the traditional gender-based division of spheres and daily tasks, which Hochschild and Russell (2012) found in studies of families around the world.

The daily realities in *Reshet*'s community pointed to overlapping and merging of the structure of gender roles in the public and private spheres. This suggested that the binary and normative boundaries within the community and the home were permeable for both genders. The members of the community did not regard women as marginal in the public sphere and considered them as different, but equal, individuals in all public activities and decisions. Thus, the women expanded the boundaries of the narrow conventional spheres. They created more flexible spheres of activity that facilitated participation in general communal life. These findings radically differed from other studies of women's activity in the public sphere (Fraser 1985). The reality in *Reshet* also differed from the findings of studies about women in rural kibbutzim, which revealed that women were isolated and silenced (Shaham-Koren 2018). *Reshet*'s changes in previously more inflexible boundaries paralleled Butler's (2004) suggestions about reforming the rigid terms regarding sexes and genders.

The interviews indicated that the members of *Reshet* listened to the women's voices to the same extent as the men's voices. The interviews also implied that the women's voices were not a collective and distinguishable gender-based voice; but rather were family-based and individual voices.

DISCUSSION

Analyzing the spatial and social structuring in *Reshet* affords a number of insights. First, the initial group set out with ideological motives, as had the founders of the rural kibbutzim (Talmon-Gerber 1970); but over time, the social environment that they had created for themselves became the reason for remaining in the community and for maintaining its communal life-style. They had a sense of belonging to an extended family, with support and acceptance. According to the findings, *Reshet* resembled other intentional communities in Israel and around the world (Cohen 1983; Dror 2017; Redfield 1960; Shepher 1980).

The second insight is that despite the community's importance to its members, family considerations were the decisive factors in the decision making process. Furthermore, the findings described the women of *Reshet* as individual subjects who were able to participate in the decision making process and had a decisive say in communal as well as family decisions. In particular, the women usually determined matters that linked the family to the community. This conclusive role of the women in *Reshet* agreed with Hartsock's (2006) hypotheses about the position of women in general society. On the other hand, this finding contradicted those of previous studies about the rural kibbutz, which had emphasized the inequality and isolation of women in the community (Fogiel-Bijaoui 2009; Herzog 2006a; Shaham-Koren 2018).

The third insight reveals that when major conflicts arose between the needs of the individual and those of the community, the individual prevailed. The community preferred to support the individual and enable the individual to fulfill his or her needs. In some cases, this was done by refraining from making a decision. This discovery was reminiscent of findings of studies that investigated intra-communal interaction in the rural kibbutz (Cohen 1983; Shepher 1980). In addition, in *Reshet* this data exemplified a three-way balancing of the individual will, the community will, and the gender-based will.

The aggregate of the first three insights about *Reshet*'s communal dynamics agrees with studies of other communities in regard to the division into private and public spheres (as noted by Goldscheider et al. 2015), the division of power (Lamont and Molnar 2002), and the boundaries of decision-making (Ardener 1993). Similar to findings of contemporary research conducted in Western countries, in *Reshet* the new position of the genders in the private and public domains enabled increased stability of the ideological and economic productivity of the community.

The present findings suggest greater equality between genders compared with the traditional kibbutz. This might be related to the global and local process of increasing status of women, even in patriarchal communities such as the kibbutzim. Compared with the traditional kibbutz, which was a rural socialist commune, the change is striking. The rural aspect, based on Zionist ideology, has been replaced by a non-collective ideology focused on individuals and their core families. The socialist ideology that encouraged communal life has also disappeared.

The aggregate of the first three insights also supports the surprising hypothesis that in *Reshet*, the smaller the social unit, the more powerful it was in its negotiations with larger groups of people and the more likely it was to prevail. In line with Redfield's (1960) findings, this hypothesis explains the community's desire to preserve its intimate size. The emphasis placed on the power of the individual *vis-à-vis* the group ostensibly signified a weakening of the democratic essence of the community and reinforced the view of its members that the community operated according to anarchistic codes. Yet, the findings indicated that over time the members achieved an ethical balance, in which they weighed the desire to promote personal interests against the fairness of those interests in light of communal norms.

The fourth insight is that the community's concept of cooperation and equality, as well as the dialectic methods it employed, operated bi-directionally. Dialog in the private sphere interacted with the dialog in the communal sphere. This bi-directionality was even more significant in regard to gender in each of the spheres. Although there were boundaries between the spheres; over time, the ideology and practice of the community led to the blurring of these boundaries. Anzaldúa (2006) and Butler (2004) noted a similar process, in which narrow boundaries became broad areas, in the wake of the activity of subjects within and beyond them.

The fifth insight is a process of cumulative socialization. Because all but one adult member of *Reshet* had grown up on a rural kibbutz, they brought with them a faith in equal rights and opportunities in both public and private spheres. This faith in egalitarianism was a result of the long-standing declared ethos of the rural kibbutz (Ben-Rafael et al. 2012; Kanter 1972). The cumulative effect contributed to the character of kibbutz *Reshet*. But in contrast to the findings of research about gender issues in rural kibbutzim, where ideology remained at the declarative level (Palgi 2013); in *Reshet*, there was an active adherence to the long-standing belief that equality existed in broad areas of the public and private spheres of communal life. This belief generated an evolutionary, perhaps even subconscious, awareness of gender equality among members of the community. This belief also generated compatible practical measures of gender equality in *Reshet*'s public and private spheres.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the set of insights stemming from the findings underlines the difference in the way the *Reshet* community defined the meaning and boundaries of home, as opposed to the parallel definitions in the rural kibbutz or in the dominant urban environment. In *Reshet*, the concept of home was not binary; rather it comprised many of the components of the private and the public spheres. The boundary between the two spheres was semi-permeable, resulting in an overlapping of the community's physical spaces and conceptual frameworks. This facilitated the evolution of a broader and more flexible border area, in which everyone could participate in all activities of the community.

The members of *Reshet* explained that they had established their urban kibbutz by deconstructing the meaning of the traditional values of the rural kibbutz and constructing a definition of a regenerated communal identity. The findings of this research indicate that in terms of ideology, the community of *Reshet* is similar to the model of the rural kibbutz or village, with emphasis on cooperation and solidarity rather than equality, and in terms of community interaction and decision-making process, it resembles the third-space model. In its private household and public practices, *Reshet* is situated between the traditional dichotomy and the new, more egalitarian model. The matrix of positions in the space indicates that in many respects, the members of *Reshet* are in positions that represent a blurring and crossing of boundaries. In a minority of aspects considered here, the traditional dichotomy, hierarchy, and reproduction are maintained. Thus it seems that *Reshet* is generating a new society, characterized by a social structure, in which the accepted and traditional ways, including those regarding gender roles, take new directions that are less binary and hierarchical, and more cooperative and egalitarian. The present research also found that the com-

munity is defining the meaning of home and home boundaries in a new way, different from that of the kibbutz home or the urnban home. In *Reshet*, 'home' is not a binary concept, but involves extensive overlapping of the components of the private and public homes: part of the private space is brought into the public space and vice versa. The findings show how this overlapping and penetration of the different components of the community create integrated spaces where some of the boundaries are permeable, enabling a border area in the community space. Within this border area, as shown, it is possible to expand the expression of the individuals of both genders living in a community, as significant subjects who can express themselves in the private and public spaces, in a more integrated manner. This qualitative study contributes to the broad efforts in the research of small communities. It maps out ideas and compares them with the practices in the space of an ideological community. It describes the interrelationships and negotiations within the community and between the genders regarding the positions and the division of work and roles in the private (home) and public (community) domains. Thus, it offers insights into the degree to which the boundaries are reproduced, on the one hand, and crossed, on the other hand. The researcher believes that the study of the *Reshet* community shows that the fulfillment of personal and group ideological visions change over time, influenced by different factors that cannot be predicted at the outset. The members of the community anticipated that changes would occur and that the community might only last one generation. However, the rate of personal and political-environmental changes seem to have accelerated processes of change and the need for the community to adapt to the environment. The declared intention of the community members did not include a change in gender roles. However, in this respect, the ideology arose from the environment. The feminist revolution, even if not assimilated completely, is now influencing many of us in the public and private domains alike. At the very least, it is part of the discourse, even if not fully implemented. In future research, it would be interesting to examine how this is expressed in the community a few years from now, focusing on possible changes in the next generation of families.

This study focused on one particular kibbutz value: egalitarianism, particularly in regard to gender. In *Reshet*, members of both genders enjoyed greater room for expression, both in the private and public spheres, than they would have had in rural kibbutzim (this greater egalitarianism was certainly true in contrast to the surrounding patriarchal norms of the urban neighborhood). The high level of gender equality and the other re-interpreted kibbutz values have ascribed *Reshet* within the political-philosophical sphere of the kibbutz movement and the socialist heritage in Israeli society.

Because of its focus on gender issues; this study did not examine the implementation of other elements of *Reshet*'s social ideology or the community's involvement in the surrounding neighborhood. Further study of *Reshet* and other urban kibbutzim would be fruitful. It would also be important to study the reactions of "outsiders" to the phenomenon of urban kibbutzim: members of the surrounding urban neighborhood, municipal leaders, members of rural kibbutzim, and the leadership of kibbutz movement. Finally, it is logically imperative to study the second generation, now growing up in kibbutz *Reshet*, in regard to the issues examined in this study. Will the community maintain its social and ideological boundaries with the surrounding environment and what will be the nature of the gender-role boundaries within the community, which were the main focus of the current study?

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