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# 'People like us': gatekeepers and the rise of community expansions in the neo-liberal kibbutz

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# 'People like us': gatekeepers and the rise of community expansions in the neo-liberal kibbutz

## Abstract

In contrast to gated communities built for middle-upper classes, the kibbutz, as an ideological gated community throughout most of the last century, has been open to those who wished to commit themselves to a cooperative and egalitarian society. Two significant changes had a critical role in transforming the kibbutz: the movement from ideology-driven to market-oriented communities and the subsequent admission of newcomers as nonmembers. By exploring nine kibbutzim in the Israeli northern periphery, a region which experienced extensive development of such neighborhoods, this article stresses the role of gatekeepers, principally the kibbutzim. In particular, we examine how they view the expansion of their communities and how they screen nonmembers who wish to reside in new neighborhoods built at the perimeter of the kibbutz (in local terminology, 'community expansions'). Despite central-state regulation, kibbutzim have attempted to exercise tight regulation on their behalf seeking to recruit people of specific socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds whom they thought would fit best into their social economic environment rejecting those who significantly diverge from this profile. To minimize foreseeable social and economic frictions and to maintain some recognized socio-cultural values, recruiting 'people like us' or people considered needed for the community was a key objective. For this purpose overt and latent screening techniques were employed. Overall, this case illustrates the power of local communities to shape the social makeup of gated communities notwithstanding state regulation and market constraints.

## 1. Introduction

The recent decade has witnessed a massive interest in research that focused on gated communities. The rapid growth in this area of study has been closely related to the emergence of neoliberal regimes in which market prevails over governmental initiatives highlighting the predominance of capitalist goals over social objectives and the triumph of segregation and enclosure. By and large, this area of research has several common threads. First, in terms of motives, the fear of crime and the anticipation to be part of a protected club and taking advantage of specific services and amenities have galvanized enclosed communities (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). Second, those who live in such communities are people from upper-middle classes even though in some countries lower middle-class people are attracted to gated housing estates. In this sense, money and financial capacity are the devise of natural selection that determines accessibility to gated communities. Third, it is presumed that each type of a gated community is made of similar socioeconomic profile and often also the demographic characteristics of its residents; this makes them homogeneous social environments (Le Goix, 2005; Genis, 2007).

Literature on gated communities has focused on explaining the emergence of such communities. Two major explanations were given (Csefalvay, 2010). The focus of the first approach is on economic rational: the need to deliver services which cannot be sufficiently provided in existing urban environments. This market-driven approach examined the rise of enclosed communities in many parts of the world. The second approach is based on the political process that gives rise to gated communities. According to this approach, gated communities are a result of exclusionary political behavior of the more affluent people. In addition, he provides a third approach which connected the structure and the functioning of the government to the emergence of gated communities. Based on the public choice theory he argues that they constitute an exit option of the upper-middle class of local government which cannot supply the required public goods and services.

What is largely missing from these studies is the scrutiny of those responsible for the production and reproduction of gated communities. In their study of the American case,

Vesselinov et al., (2007) found that it is the 'gating machine' – dominated by interests and actions of local governments, real estate developers, the media, and consumers – is responsible for the production of gated communities. In this sense, powerful agents, either public or private, act as gatekeepers who determine the criteria for entry and screen prospective candidates. In particular, we argue that the study of these agents will contribute to the understanding of these communities.

In Israel, the emergence of new types of enclosed residential communities has been a research area of increased interest. Academics have been engaged in documenting and classifying these types of communities exploring the motives for their emergence. In two papers, Rosen and Razin (2008, 2009) examine both old and new types of gated communities. They identified three types of gated communities in Israel: landscapes of heritage, fortress landscapes, and neo-liberal developments. Each type of these communities has different historical origins, motivations, and gatekeepers. They stressed the complex interplay among diverse actors, both public and private forces in shaping these communities in the neo-liberal era. In their view, older types of gated communities situated at the periphery (fortress landscapes) such as kibbutzim which were based on ideological motives may adopt market-driven features of neo-liberal enclosures. Another study of the new gated communities links between privatization and segregation pointing to the attempts to create communal identity both in symbolic and practical senses (Lehavi, 2005). For those who adopted the post-colonial critique, gated communities are nothing new but they are an integral part of the political agenda of the mainstream polity since Israeli independence. This agenda highlights ethnic, religious, and national cleavages (Ashkenazi/Mizrahi Jews, religious, secular, and Jews/Arabs) (Yiftachel and Kedar, 2000; Monterescu and Fabian, 2003; Tzfadia, 2005, Tzfadia and Yacobi, 2010). The case of the kibbutz illustrates the powerful role performed by gatekeepers in an enclosed community that has been substantially changed in the neo-liberal age. The re-birth of the kibbutz since the 1990s as the Renewed Kibbutz has triggered the reformulation of the well-established kibbutz into a more pluralistic community, especially subsequent to the admittance of a large number of nonmembers into the close-knit of kibbutz members.

Taking the case of the kibbutz as a gated community of a special kind, this article examines new neighborhoods built within the kibbutz situated in a section adjacent to the main residential area. These neighborhoods have been built for those who wish to join the kibbutz as nonmembers. We examine the screening methods of newcomers and how those responsible for admittance, the gatekeepers, have comprehended and practiced these processes. To pursue this objective, we studied nine kibbutzim situated on the Israeli northern periphery (Western and Upper Galilee), more precisely, those situated along or nearby the Israeli-Lebanese border. We selected this region for two major reasons. First, many new neighborhoods were built in kibbutzim situated on the national periphery, particularly in the northern periphery. Second, their remoteness by Israeli standards may suggest that they are unlike mainstream gated communities located adjacent to major metropolitan areas. We used several sources to examine the role of the kibbutzim as gatekeepers. First, we examined official documents: resolutions of the Israel Lands Administration (ILA, the administrator of the vast majority of land in Israel), appeals of those who were rejected by admission committees to the Israeli High Court of Justice, and reports by the Israeli State Comptroller. These sources were used to understand the context and the legal framework of building such neighborhoods. In addition, we conducted interviews with local informants which included members of admission committees, community administrators, sales and marketing representatives of such neighborhoods, and officials in the regional councils in which the kibbutzim are situated. In total, we conducted 11 semi-structured interviews and two dyad interviews with decision-makers. Using content analysis we searched for the common themes relevant in the screening and admittance processes. This article is structured as follows. First in order to understand the neo-liberal kibbutz we provide the background and context by briefly pointing the most significant changes experienced by kibbutzim over the past few decades. Next, we discuss the relations between state regulation and self-regulation practices by the kibbutz in terms of admittance of newcomers. Resolutions approved by the Israel Lands Administration and their weak enforcement made the kibbutz the effective/ultimate gatekeeper. Then we move to explore the screening and admittance criteria and practices. These criteria and practices reflect a compromise between the socioeconomic and demographic profile kibbutzim have

anticipated and the actual characteristics of newcomers which in many ways contradict publicly-proclaimed criteria set by state regulation. In the following section we identify and analyze overt and latent techniques used by kibbutzim to accept/reject candidates. These techniques form an indispensible role in the screening process and making the kibbutz a different type of gated community.

## 2. The context: the changing kibbutz

In 2010 there are 267 kibbutz communities (kibbutzim) scattered throughout Israel from the very north to the Red Sea in the south. Most of the kibbutzim were formed by groups from Zionist youth movements abroad or in Israel and their size varies between 30 and 1500 inhabitants while the average kibbutz size is about 400 inhabitants. The Kibbutzim constitute 2.1% (120,000) of the Jewish population in Israel, yet their contribution to the national economy amounts to 40% in agriculture, 7% in industrial output, 9% in industrial export and 10% in tourism (Palgi, 2010).

The kibbutz ideology and its socio-economic goals led to the following principles for running the kibbutz:

1. Equality among kibbutz members as well as among kibbutzim. From this idea stemmed other values, such as giving equal value to all work and mutual guarantee and help within the kibbutz and between kibbutzim.
2. Direct democracy – all members participate in decision-making, and there is rotation of office holders.
3. Self-labor – to ensure there is no exploitation of cheap paid labor. This principle was mainly kept in the education branches and less so in the production.

Over the years, many changes were introduced to the kibbutz way of life, stemming mainly from the combination of a weakening collective ideology, changes in the economic situation of kibbutzim and transformations in the Israeli society. The kibbutz adjusted, but at a cost. The main changes were (Palgi, 2004):

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1. <u>Integration with the surrounding society</u>: legitimating paid labor in production and education, thus forfeiting the important value of self-labor; opening the children's houses to non-kibbutz children, thus losing one of the most important channels for passing on kibbutz values to the next generation; legitimating and encouraging members' work outside the kibbutz; partnering with non-kibbutz investors in kibbutz enterprises; renting apartments to nonmembers and building adjacent neighborhoods that do not follow its way of life or values in order to rejuvenate its population. As a result, the permanent kibbutz population started to grow once again.

2. <u>Passage from direct to representative democracy</u>: The main body representing direct democracy in the kibbutz is the general assembly of all members. Now meeting less frequently, it has been partially replaced by a council of elected members and board of directors**.** On municipal issues representatives of adjacent neighborhoods usually take part in the decision-making process.

3. <u>Privatization of aspects of kibbutz life</u>**:** The process actually started in the 1950s with a slow change from the distribution of consumption services according to needs to equal distribution of money for buying these services with little consideration of different individual needs (privatization in kibbutz jargon). A bigger step came at the end of the 1990s, when some kibbutzim started to privatize members' earnings; by 2011, about three quarters of the kibbutzim did so. They are the 'differential' or 'new' kibbutzim, the other quarter being the 'collective' kibbutzim. A few kibbutzim transferred ownership of houses to their members. The 'new' kibbutzim are usually those that have decided to build adjacent neighborhoods in order to enlarge its population and put into full use its educational, social and cultural facilities.

### 3. The formation of community expansions in kibbutzim: state regulation and local powers

The idea of building community expansions in kibbutzim is an outcome of structural changes taking place in Israel and in kibbutzim. One the one hand, the dominance of the neo-liberal regime, which closely adheres to market-driven philosophy, became apparent since the 1990s. At this time, the notion of privatization has proliferated into one of the most sacred domains in Israel life: land. Until the 1990s leaseholders of agricultural land that leased land from ILA (Israel Lands Administration) had to return land if it was rezoned to other uses. This precedent triggered changes in the way that agricultural land is perceived. On the other hand, kibbutz needed to adapt to these changes unable and often unwilling to stick into their older philosophies and social agendas. The decreased appeal of the kibbutz as a way-of-life and the need to keep it viable led to the idea of injecting new blood to these communities which experienced declining cooperative traits. Economic restructuring, the twilight of ideology, and increasing privatization have transformed the kibbutz since the late 1980s. Many have turned from quasi-egalitarian into market driven entities (Russell, *et al*., 2011) known as the Renewed Kibbutz, which meant that they are no longer strongly anchored in egalitarian and socialist ideologies. To survive prolonged stagnation and population depletion, kibbutzim have initiated a process which would eventually change their demographic future. This initiative was based on the recognition that population growth is mandatory for the survival of the kibbutz and that relaxation in land-use policies can facilitate such growth. The development of community expansion projects corresponded with the growing preferences of many Israelis to live in non-urban environments and specifically in detached homes. Instead of living in relatively small and crowded apartments in the city close to their workplaces, people were willing to commute and in live in larger homes (accessibility—space tradeoff). At a fairly similar price to that of an average apartment in a town, a spacious private home could be owned in the more peripheral areas of the country. This preference was supplemented by the desire to live in a village-like environment, where community values were best served and children were safe. Kibbutzim were able to cash is on these two processes and preferences.

Attracting nonmembers, an option previously considered unthinkable, became a matter of necessity for demographic growth. Since the late 1990s and especially since the early 2000s more than 150 kibbutzim (out of a total of 267 kibbutzim in Israel) have initiated the development of new neighborhoods (dubbed 'community expansions'); in more than 80 of them people have already moved into their homes. Most of these projects are in the periphery of the country, especially in northern Israel. The decision to launch whether to build a new neighborhood is determined by the kibbutz; kibbutzim which considered it inappropriate or unnecessary (about half of the kibbutzim) did not unveil these projects. At first, kibbutz movements were hesitant about this move, resisting the proposed change. Their main objection was that such projects would have an irreversible impact on the kibbutz and thus destroy the kibbutz lifestyle, ending in a so-called an ordinary 'community settlement', which would not resemble the traditional kibbutz (Arbel and Czamanski, 2001). Pressure exerted by kibbutzim that wished to pursue the development of such neighborhoods and the acknowledgment that it was the only practical option made kibbutz movements relinquish their objection.

Kibbutzim launched the development of new residential neighborhoods which were initially meant to target those who left the kibbutz but later became a formal method to attract the general public. As a result they have transformed from reserved and demographically depleted communities depended on internal population growth and the recruitment of prospective members, into communities which welcome new residents as nonmembers. The notion of nonmember is an important one in the context of the kibbutz. Kibbutz members are part of the Agricultural Cooperative Society (ACS). The ACS holds the collective productive assets of the kibbutz (e.g., cow farm, henhouse, fish pond, fruit plantations, and manufacturing plants) as there is no direct link between individual members and the ownership of means of production. Until recently this was the only way that people could join the kibbutz. The admission of nonmembers as permanent residents was followed by the creation of an association responsible for municipal affairs. This association, (Municipal Association), brings together Kibbutz members and nonmembers

for the purpose of services provision (e.g., education, gardening, sanitation, transportation). Nonmembers do not have any part in decisions regarding the operation of the ACS.

The kibbutz as an entity holds elements that are present in gated communities. First, kibbutzim are surrounded by a fence and entrance to kibbutzim is monitored in certain hours of the day. The reason behind this enclosure is not so much fear of crime, although the fear of thieves as houses were not locked constituted an important factor. Instead, it was rooted in the early days of the kibbutz when security was a key issue and the need prevent the penetration of unwanted elements, namely terrorists. In its traditional perspective, the whole kibbutz was considered "home" by its members and members' residences were considered "rooms", so there were no fences around members "rooms" only around the "home" which was the entire kibbutz. This enclosure allows control over those who enter the kibbutz marking its territorial entity. Nonetheless, unlike most gated communities around the world, people enter the kibbutz as entrance control is not stringent. Second, those who wished to become members had to go through an accepted admittance procedure determined by the kibbutz institutions. In the period of demographic growth based on the admission of new members, stakeholders in the Agricultural Cooperative Society, the kibbutz assembly, had the final say on acceptance. More recently, committees made up of kibbutz members screen and interview candidates who wish to reside in private neighborhoods in the kibbutzim. This practice can be adopted because formal and informal regulatory procedures allow small communities to accept only those that they consider socially fit to be part of their community.

Built on ideological motives as a cooperative and egalitarian society, the Kibbutz from its early days was an enclosed community. This idea was engraved in its elitist role in Zionist and Israeli society. Because many kibbutzim are situated in the national periphery close to hostile boundaries, the general perception was that those who live there are pioneers that have an important role in building the Jewish state. The kibbutz as a social and economic entity was open for newcomers who wished to join but strict screening of candidates and stringent way of life made the kibbutz an elite/gated community, which selects its people. This notion is demonstrated in admittance procedures for new kibbutz

members. Capital and assets were not criteria for admittance; instead they had to go through several stages of socialization. Those who wanted to become full members of the kibbutz usually had to live in the kibbutz, according to its norms, for about three years before a decision was made whether they can become members. The first stage of their stay, the 'guest' stage, lasts about a year. During this time the candidate examines his/her fitness to kibbutz life and the kibbutz does the same. After a year the kibbutz has to decide whether the candidate can continue to the second stage of admittance and become a 'candidate for full membership', this stage takes up to two years (and not less than a year) of experiencing kibbutz life. The decision about the suitability of each candidate to be a future member is made by an internal committee and the kibbutz secretariat; in some kibbutzim the decision is made by the kibbutz general assembly. After an additional year or two are over the candidacy is brought for a final decision of the kibbutz assembly where supporters and opposers of each candidate bring forth reasons why the candidate should be admitted or denied admittance. A ballot of all members determines whether the candidate can become a full member of the kibbutz or not; only candidates who receive the support of at least two-thirds of the vote can become members. This procedure is presently true only for a quarter of the kibbutzim, all the rest have introduced changes that entail also new rules for membership recruitment. Nowadays, the rules for accepting new members are more lenient but they still have to pass through a formal procedure (Drori, 2011).

With new statuses for kibbutz membership and residency, new admittance procedures were applied. Here we have to distinguish between two issues: the *kibbutz way-of-life* and the kibbutz as a *place to live*. Economic difficulties and intensifying individualism in the Israeli society at large have made the cooperative way-of-life even less attractive than before for the majority of people in Israel; nonetheless, other qualities such as good educational system, active community life, and green and tranquil environment have been highly appreciated by prospective candidates. The ability to build neighborhoods and attract newcomers has resulted in the introduction of a new status in the kibbutz: nonmembers or permanent residents or residents (Charney and Palgi, 2011).

The kibbutz desire to regenerate population growth was met by changes in regulation imposed by the state. Until the mid 1990s kibbutzim could have built houses only in the area designated for residential development which encompassed only a small share of the land the kibbutz leased from the Israel Lands Administration. Residential development was prohibited outside the so-called 'Campground' which delineated the buildable area. Land outside this boundary was largely designated as agricultural land; this land was leased to kibbutzim for agricultural use only. Only in 1995 the Israel Lands Administration lifted this restriction by allowing housing development outside this boundary on what was designated as agricultural lands.

In Israel, population growth and control over land are highly related. The majority of land (about 93%) is public, that is, it is administrated by a state agency, the Israel Lands Administration. The idea of allowing kibbutzim to rezone land has opened a new path for population growth changing their traditional method of growth; this came with the recognition that ideological and idealistic objectives are far less pervasive and individualism has become the dominant driver for people for action. Once it was realized that the admittance of members to the kibbutz is insufficient and inappropriate for sustaining demographic growth, kibbutzim turned to state authorities for assistance. The decision to allow kibbutzim to rezone agricultural land to land for residential development and to accept residents in a non-member status was made by the ILA Board in 1995 (a previous resolution made in 1993 targeted other agricultural cooperative societies, namely Moshavim). This resolution (Resolution 737) allowed residential development outside the area previously zoned for housing. In addition, it stated that the ILA would lease land to candidates (nonmembers) recommended by the ACS without specifying admittance criteria. Kibbutzim had the authority to monitor those who may eventually lease public land parcels. Those who wish to lease land from the ILA and build a house have to go through an admittance process. Practically, a committee made of kibbutz members had decided whether candidates should or should not become residents in these new neighborhoods.

In 2002 following an appeal to the Israeli High Court of Justice by a non-governmental organization, the Democratic Mizrahi Rainbow, the court ruled against the

permission given to agricultural communities to claim profits from the redevelopment of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes. As a result, the ILA cancelled Resolution 737. Since then a series of resolutions has specified admittance criteria. In later resolutions criteria were set regarding minimum age, economic competence, and compatibility to social life in the community. The first two criteria are clear and measurable; however the final criterion is extremely fuzzy. A community (defined as an Agricultural Cooperative Society) that wished to include this final criterion had to require all candidates to provide a professional evaluation of a certified evaluation institute and the rejection of a candidate has to be based on such professional evaluation. The vague criterion of social compatibility allows admission committees to interpret it as they like permitting broad space for arbitrariness. An appeal of an applicant rejected by an admission committee attacks this amorphous notion:

> Social compatibility becomes a magic word used by screening committees… The criterion of social compatibility is an instrument through which a small group of people who is in power directs the creation of a 'community' that is fancies. This 'community', which is to a large extent homogeneous consisting of people who can be describe as 'successful', 'well-to-do', and 'young' (High Court of Justice Appeal 3552/08).

## 4. Screening and admittance criteria in community expansions

The poetic phrase 'to be or not to be' describes the situation of many kibbutzim in the 1980s and 1990s. Economic difficulties, social ruptures, and the flight of members and the younger generation of would-be members have put at risk the survival of the Kibbutz as a way of life and as a distinct community (Ben-Rafael, 2011). For decades, the major and often the exclusive means of demographic growth in the kibbutz were recruiting new members who would engage in the collective idea. Nonmembers lived in the kibbutz as residents for many years, but they were "merely" renters. The fact that they were neither members nor homeowners made them powerless and practically they had no major

influence on the kibbutz. Continued decline in the number of kibbutz members made kibbutzim realize that attracting people for membership was neither realistic nor sufficient. The first kibbutzim to realize the need of another solution were those that experienced severe demographic, social, and economic distress as well as those located on the periphery. For them the influx of newcomers was a lifeline. All informants interviewed for this research described the pessimistic mood in kibbutzim before the decision to accept nonmembers as permanent residents. As clearly stated by a kibbutz member keeping the kibbutz alive was in fact a matter of survival:

> The kibbutz was emptying out and a blood transfusion was needed. The demographic graph was very negative, negative migration, aging population. If we were not to bring blood transfusion, it will become a geriatric institution (C, member of an admission committee).

An even more drastic interpretation was presented by another kibbutz member:

> You saw in your eyes that this kibbutz this place is about to fade away… the main motive [to launch the development of private neighborhoods] was that this settlement will last and not become extinct (D, community administrator).

Even so, building consensus among members regarding the need to absorb nonmembers was a challenge. The major concern of kibbutz members was from the unknown. This move is unprecedented in the history of the kibbutz thus causing major anxieties. It is highly sensitive especially in those kibbutzim where the number of nonmembers was expected to larger than the kibbutz itself.

The demographic crisis was accompanied by an economic crisis that threatened the closure of vital services such as daycares, kindergartens, and schools which were on the verge of collapse as a result of shrinking number of children. The influx of newcomers was targeted to remedy such problems:

… new residents will help to lift the debt-laden service system… and it will enable the return of loans to the banks… and for pension plans for kibbutz members (L, community administrator).

Once the idea of admitting new residents in a non-membership status was accepted several criteria were considered important for admitting residents into new neighborhoods. Basically, families with young children and community-minded people were preferred. It is not surprising that a major criterion for admission of applicants was age. As kibbutz member were getting older and a large share has been sixty years or older, priority was given to young adults and families with children.

What we wanted first of all is young population with children. This is bringing life to the community, bringing oxygen, bringing a sense of happening (L, community administrator).

However, real estate in the new neighborhoods was unaffordable for many young families and soon it was clear that they could not strictly follow this criterion:

We understood that nowadays people do not buy a house at the age of 30… Naturally, we get older age cohorts (H, regional council official).

In order to resolve this problem an attempt was made to persuade developers to build smaller houses. Next, it was acknowledged that people at different age cohorts may be an advantage because adding a large number of young families is a too drastic move. Finally, the mix of younger and older populations seemed to be the preferred option. Age restriction did not apply across-the-board:

We did not limit admittance based on the age of newcomers. We have people who just before retirement decided that they want to live in the country (K, sales and marketing representative of the private neighborhood).

The need to compromise on the age of newcomers was a result of a realistic approach that numbers count, that is, kibbutzim realized that population growth is

mandatory for practical reasons. One such reason is the concern or even fear over land and water resources:

> Imagine that land is taken from kibbutzim, water quotas are cut. It is supposedly justifiable because there are no people, people are not coming, so we will take [new residents]. We say: guys, lets open, let people come in, whether it is little bit worse, a little bit better. First, you need to establish rights over the land (G, regional council official).

Another criterion which is much more difficult to grasp is social, namely how fit are applicants for community life. All interviewees stressed the importance given to those who are seeking community life over those who strive for tranquility, better quality of life, and a detached house. It is not just the kibbutz itself that outlines the preferred profile of newcomers but also the regional council:

> We are trying to send the message to admission committees in the kibbutzim: select those that want community life. Not just those who care for their own house and want to be left alone. Check that those who come are not those who want peace and quiet and every time that something they do not like occurs they will make trouble but those who are willing to contribute to the community (O, regional council official).

This view is echoed by the kibbutzim as members of admission committees:

> We do not want anti-social persons, we do not want introverted people, we do not want people who to the kibbutz only for the weekend, we want people that will contribute to the cultural life, contribute to the community (B, member of an admission committee).
> We wanted people with social values… those who know what is mutual assistance and those willing to contribute to the community (D, community administrator).

Real estate in frontier kibbutzim has been relatively inexpensive and people were attracted by the idea of buying a detached house. The idea that people will make the private

neighborhoods their actual permanent home and not turn their houses into weekend apartments or into real estate investments is another criterion. However, in more distressed kibbutzim this criterion was relaxed or even practically ignored. In one kibbutz a major attractions was the option to build two guest rooms for rent as an additional income.

Similar to many gated communities, the issue of security has been an important criterion for selecting applicants. Nonetheless unlike the gated communities discussed in the literature, in the Kibbutz it is a matter of internal sense of safety. For that purpose, some kibbutzim asked for a police certificate that approves that the applicant has no criminal records. Besides this formal document, screening and admission were expected to identify those who can potentially threaten the sense of safety in the community.

## 5. Overt and latent screening techniques

The power of the admission committees has been immense. Their mission has been to screen candidates but they were credited with a significant degree of freedom. Although it varied from one kibbutz to another the screening process usually entails psychological testing and an interview by the admittance committee made of kibbutz members. Screening and admittance procedures are both overt and latent. In theory, these two techniques are used in order to see the compatibility of potential candidates to fit socially and economically into the community's lifestyle. In fact, beyond this criterion, other criteria were applied. The blunt policy was to deny the entrance of population groups with an opposite lifestyle. In this context, two particular groups were unofficially nut practically excluded: Jews who practice religion (ordinary and Ultra-Orthodox) and Arabs. The exclusion of these two groups is namely rooted on deep socio-cultural gaps which may endanger established norms. The deep fear is that the entry of such groups in large numbers may result in irreversible changes to the kibbutz way-of-life. This exclusion was not explicit but there were implicit ways to practice it:

There was an instruction of the marketing manager. She told me: if you admit one Arab family, you will damage the entire marketing even though that in the admission committee we said that it is not an obstacle if one family will arrive… The price of houses they [Arabs] build in the settlements around us is about 40% of the price of houses here. As soon as they [Arab applicants] heard the price, it knocked them down. We did not reach a point that we had to discuss (K, sales and marketing representative of the private neighborhood).

In addition to formal procedures such as sociological and psychological tests and interviews, admission committees employed informal techniques to cause unwanted applicants to flee:

When I saw someone with a black yarmulke, I stressed that it is a secular community. So he said, I do not care that there is no synagogue here. I told him: there is not religious school in the regional council and there will be no school for the children to go to (K, sales and marketing representative of the private neighborhood).

Religious people came asking about a synagogue and ritual bath. We said, guys, it is a kibbutz and there will not be one here. That is, do not expect that if you come it will be. The dining room here is not kosher. All the cards were on the table, that what discouraged them from the beginning. Once they heard that, there was nothing left to say (B, member of an admission committee).

In addition to these groups, other people that admission committees deemed them unsuitable were discouraged from joining the new neighborhood:

At some stage we acquired skills over the phone that allowed us to identify if the person is right for us. There were a lot of people that we tried to evade. If we were

unlucky at this point, we did them the tour [in the kibbutz] explaining to them why it is not right for them to come (B, member of an admission committee).

When you asked a person what he will do here and he would tell you I plan to open a winey, or I will have goats, or I will make cheese. You realize that he lives in fantasy. So we said it will not work and that it is expensive to live here. They would ask why. We would say: the pensions of the older people, they do not have pension, someone has to finance their pensions. People would run away when they heard this sentence, really (B, member of an admission committee).

The screening agenda can be summarized with the following citation:

At the end, we are looking for people like us… We want families that take the initiative, families that are part of the community. We do not want dependent, passive families (G, regional council official).

It conveys an attempt to create a compatible neighborhood that its way of life and norms will not clash with those of the kibbutz and that its residents will integrate into the existing community and contribute to its social resilience.


## 6. Conclusions

The issue of screening candidates in gated communities has been largely ignored by the literature. Except demographic and financial barriers, it was explicitly assumed that social and ethnic obstacles do not consist of barriers to entry to gated communities. In addition, research has overlooked the role gatekeepers perform in maintaining the social fabric of gated communities. The elaborated screening techniques found in neighborhoods built next to kibbutzim reveal first of all the importance of admission committees in selecting desired residents. These committees have are engaged in formal and informal actions which together make them power agents in shaping the form of these gated communities. Second, this study stressed the outspoken desire to accept 'people like us' or those that are likely to

fit the existing social order in the kibbutz. Embedded in older and ideologically enclose cooperative communities, these neighborhoods are shaped by the well-established community, the kibbutz, capable of forming a new type of a gated community which is the closest possible replica or the late-20<sup>th</sup> century version of the kibbutz. These procedures take place in a centralized state like Israel where the actual socioeconomic and demographic texture is determined to a large extent by local powers. In this context, gatekeepers are capable of manipulating state regulation by using screening criteria that would first and foremost fit both explicit and implicit local objectives.

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