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**BETWEEN HISTORICAL SEEDS  
AND FUTURE NEEDS –  
ADDRESSING SILVER ECONOMY  
IN ISRAELI KIBBUTZIM****Piotr Lis**

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**ABSTRACT.** The Kibbutz, an iconic element of Israeli culture with deep historical roots, plays a vital role in the nation's narrative. With the global shift towards an ageing population, the significance of the silver economy, emphasising the economic role and potential of the elderly, has risen to the forefront. The study's main aim is to explore and understand the dynamics of the silver economy within the unique collaborative setting of Israeli kibbutzim. This study applied the Cultural Web Framework to analyse the elements influencing these communities as of 2023 comprehensively. The Israeli kibbutzim, characterized by their unique communal lifestyle and social organization, offer an exceptional setting for exploring the integration of older adults and their influence on the community's economic and social dimensions. A multi-modal approach in collecting and analysing data has been applied using literature, documents and statistics concerning 266 kibbutzim inhabited by 193,5 thousand people. By randomly selecting a diverse range of 54 kibbutzim for the in-depth research framed by the Cultural Web concept, the study aimed to shed light on the shared services provided for the elderly, their participation in community life and decision-making processes, and the overall attitude of the kibbutz towards its older members. The analysis was enhanced through the use of MAXQDA software, which facilitated the efficient import and examination of standardised and open-ended responses. This allowed for a comprehensive application of various analysis methods, such as content analysis and mixed methods approaches, to extract meaningful insights from the data. This research is particularly significant, considering the ongoing transformation of kibbutzim within Israel from traditional collaborative forms to more individualised structures and how these adaptations affect their senior inhabitants. Comprehending these dynamics provides crucial insights for fostering inclusive and supportive communities that leverage the capabilities of their ageing members. This contributes to wider

conversations surrounding ageing, community well-being, and sustainable social frameworks within the context of the silver economy.

**JEL Classification:** R31, R58, Z13

**Keywords:** kibbutzim, silver economy, ageing population, cultural web framework, Israel

## Introduction

Culture involves shared values and expectations about life that are influenced by the history of the organisation and its members, the geographies from which they come and the fields (communities or sectors) in which they operate. Speaking about the ‘seeds, the ‘history’ or the ‘heritage’ of the Israeli kibbutzim recalls socialist ideas about collective living and implementing values like solidarity, democracy, social justice and cooperation (Abramitzky, 2018; Leach, 2016). It is important to emphasise that the kibbutz is not merely an economic entity; it has been pivotal in nation-building. It has done so by cultivating a class of workers and farmers who initially focused on agricultural development and later expanded into industry and services. Additionally, the kibbutz has contributed to the absorption of new immigrants, the settlement of new regions, and the promotion of an equitable society in Israel (Greenberg, 2023). As of 2023, there were 266 kibbutzim in Israel, three-quarters established before 1951. In the 21st century, there is a constant increase in the population of Kibbutz settlements, i.e. starting from 77 thousand people in 1961 to 115.3 thousand in 2000, 143.2 thousand in 2010 and 193.5 thousand in 2021 (The Kibbutz Movement, 2023, p. 33).

The success of kibbutzim is primarily credited to the distinctive ‘social arrangements’ they provide for their members. The egalitarian ethic encapsulated by the phrase, “From each according to ability, to each according to need,” serves as the foundation for the core principle of ‘qualitative equality,’ which promotes an individualised approach to addressing the needs and contributions of each member. Additionally, kibbutz communities take total and unconditional responsibility for satisfying the needs of their members and aiding in their personal development. (Sade & Lewin, 2020). Lastly, the members’ strong sense of solidarity and unity is also evident (Leviatan & Salm, 2007). Social arrangements based on these principles were adjusted to create ‘social capital’ (Leviatan, 1999). The collaborative lifestyle of the kibbutz guarantees employment, housing, mutual support, extensive health coverage, and a range of shared domestic services such as meal preparation, communal dining, laundry, childcare, education, cultural activities, and more for its members (Abramitzky, 2018).

Upon its formal establishment in 1948, Israel was a young society. However, since then, the proportion of individuals aged 65 and older within the total population has more than tripled, rising from 3.8% in 1948 to 12% in 2023 (Statista, 2022, 2023). The population of those over 75, particularly those over 80, has increased even faster. This trend indicates that not only is the proportion of elderly individuals within the total population expanding, but the older demographic itself is experiencing significant ageing (Camel, 2010, p. 5). One of the contributing factors to this situation is Israel’s relatively high life expectancy compared to other nations. In 2023, the average life expectancy was 82.6 years, 84.6 years for women and 80.5 years for men (Statista, 2023). Although the proportion of elderly individuals in Israel is lower than in other developed nations in Europe or North America, it still constitutes a significant population segment. As demographic trends evolve, the Israeli kibbutz system, initially designed for a younger population, is increasingly appealing to older adults. The rising number of elderly individuals highlights a growing market for products and services tailored to their

needs, including healthcare, senior-friendly housing, and recreational activities. In this context, the Israeli kibbutz system plays a vital role in meeting the diverse needs and challenges of the ageing population, especially within the framework of the silver economy. The kibbutzim, renowned for their collaborative work and living ethos, could present various solutions: fostering strong community support and social interaction, promoting intergenerational living, ensuring accessible healthcare, and facilitating the economic participation of all members. Additionally, they could lead in developing innovative eldercare approaches, providing a sustainable and secure living environment, supporting pension and retirement planning, and offering diverse cultural and educational activities. This integrative approach by the kibbutzim may embody a profound understanding of the complex needs of older adults, serving as a model for comprehensive and compassionate care, exemplifying the elements of "successful ageing" through high life expectancy and enhanced well-being. (Leviatan, 1999).

The Israeli kibbutz system is a distinctive example in the broader scope of global economic transformations. Initially functioning without the use of money (Ben-Artzi, 2001), the kibbutzim experienced significant changes, particularly since the mid-1980s (Azarnert, 2017), paralleling the well-known Eastern European Transformation (Kowalski, 2013). This shift was primarily driven by ideological changes among kibbutz members who, facing a severe financial crisis in the 1980s, transitioned away from their traditional communal living practices and non-monetary exchange. These developments signalled a broader shift within the kibbutz movement towards a more individualistic lifestyle, incorporating conventional community practices such as private property ownership (Azarnert, 2017), excluding land ownership. This transition, part of a broader trend of 'privatisation' that began in the early 1990s and persists today, led to kibbutz members opening personal bank accounts and receiving salaries from external employers. The most significant structural changes within kibbutzim are particularly noticeable in the "privatisation of public budgets" (including food budgets, enrichment programs for children, higher education, and healthcare budgets). Additionally, adopting "differential salaries," where compensation varies based on professional or managerial roles within the workplace, marks another significant shift (Leviatan & Salm, 2007). These changes were driven by the dominant neoliberal mindset, which intertwined economic strategies with social perspectives and structures, creating unique challenges and opportunities. Despite these shifts, the kibbutz industry has sought a balance between achieving economic profitability and fostering social value creation (Moskovich, 2022). Even within this privatised framework, kibbutzim sustained a strong bond between members and their businesses. This connection was crucial in preventing these enterprises' sales and preserving the kibbutz's distinctive communal and collaborative spirit (Achouch, 2022).

The main aim of this paper is to examine the impact of the Israeli kibbutzim's cultural organisation on strategic choices in developing a silver economy that addresses challenges driven by the ageing society. This research explores the adaptation of kibbutzim, initially conceived for younger demographic structures, to cater to the growing needs of their elderly population. Utilising the Cultural Web Framework, the study delves into integrating older members into the economic and social fabric of kibbutzim amidst significant socio-economic transformations and privatisation trends. The focus also examines how these unique communal settings balance traditional communal values and modern practices, especially in delivering care and fostering inclusive environments for the elderly. This analysis aims to contribute to the broader discourse on ageing, community welfare, and sustainable social models within the context of the silver economy.

The paper begins with an introduction that outlines Israeli kibbutzim's historical and cultural background, emphasising their development over time. This is followed by a literature review that provides context and synthesises previous research relevant to the study. The

methodology section then explains the application of the Cultural Web Framework, detailing the survey design, sample selection, and data collection processes. The subsequent analysis of research results centres on age distribution, social dynamics, and the evolving roles within kibbutzim. The discussion section explores the implications of these findings, particularly concerning the integration of elderly members within kibbutz communities amidst socio-economic changes. The paper concludes with a summary of the main findings, their significance to the silver economy in Israeli kibbutzim, and recommendations for future research. This structure is intended to offer a comprehensive and insightful examination of how Israeli kibbutzim adapts to the challenges posed by an ageing society within the framework of the silver economy.

## 1. Literature review

One of the significant challenges of the modern world is demographic change, manifested by an ageing population (Gaigné & Thisse, 2009; Vitman Schorr & Khalaila, 2018). This phenomenon results from two main factors: a decline in the birth rate and an increase in life expectancy. Population ageing is characteristic primarily of developed countries, especially large cities (Carbonaro et al., 2018). Population ageing is fundamentally changing the population structure, as the proportion of young people is declining and the proportion of elderly people is increasing. This phenomenon affects several vital issues, including social (Scharlach & Lehning, 2013; Błędowski et al., 2023) and economic or urban sustainability (Buffel et al., 2012). As seniors will constitute an increasing part of society, it seems necessary to take a broader view of the needs of this group of people (Klobukowska, 2014; Jancz, 2019; Jancz & Trojanek, 2020). The answer to these social changes and related needs is the development of the so-called silver economy (Marcucci et al., 2021; Podgórnjak-Krzykacz et al., 2020). The silver economy (silver economy) is an economic system that is oriented to the use of the potential of the elderly and, at the same time, takes into account their needs and requirements (Anderberg, 2020; Klimczuk, 2016). This segment of the economy is expected to gain importance in the coming years (Stafanik et al., 2013). The largest part of the European silver economy comprises housing and utilities (Rogelj & Bogataj, 2019). Many researchers raise the issue of specialised housing solutions (Wood, 2017; Biglieri, 2018; Jancz, 2019), but also new technologies, products and services tailored to the functional capabilities and needs of the elderly (Laperche et al., 2019). However, the concept of age-friendly communities is also attracting researchers' attention. Studies have analysed the physical environment, religious communities, the availability of services, and the history and identity of the community (Hanson & Emler, 2006; Novek & Menec, 2014).

Kibbutzim were originally established as utopian communities whose members were subjected to strict living standards (Munin, 2017). The kibbutz, Israel's unique model of collective working and living (Cheng & Sun, 2015), presents a rich field of study, particularly in examining the experiences and roles of its elderly members. This literature review builds upon existing research to delve deeper into the ageing process within these communities. According to Walter-Ginzburg et al. (2004), the kibbutz lifestyle, characterised by substantial social, economic, and instrumental support alongside an active way of life, may significantly reduce disability rates in older age. These findings suggest that adopting elements of the kibbutz model, such as promoting economic security and fostering strong social networks, could help decrease disability within the wider population. Furthermore, Ganany-Dagan (2022) observed in his research that integration within kibbutzim effectively dismantles barriers and fosters inclusive living for individuals with disabilities. Getz (2015) highlighted the evolving nature of intergenerational relationships in kibbutzim, comparing them to a pendulum swing. The

founding generations of the kibbutz established a collective, socialist lifestyle, creating a stable community supported by modern enterprises and social services. However, a shift towards individualism and capitalism became evident with the third generation, as members distanced themselves from traditional kibbutz life. The current generation seems to be continuing this trend. According to (Simons & Ingram, 2000), the kibbutzim in Israel demonstrates a complex, competitive landscape, engaging in multi-dimensional rivalries with various organisational forms such as moshavim for resources, capitalist banks over ideological principles, and development towns for influence over immigrants. The authors pointed out that all organisations, from large corporations to kibbutzim, are influenced by their ideologies. The key difference is in the type of ideology they adhere to; in large corporations, there is a uniform commitment to capitalist principles, but kibbutzim operate under a distinct ideological framework. This contrast produces variance in the organisational practices employed by kibbutzim and other organisations and inter-organizational conflict (Simons & Ingram, 2000). In turn, (Palgi & Getz, 2014) explored various ways that kibbutz communities have found and the methods their members have used to deal with this crisis. Similarly, (Rosenboim et al., 2010) observed that kibbutz members generally display greater risk aversion and a tendency to undervalue future benefits compared to city residents, challenging the notion of a collective society as a safety net. (Ruffle & Sosis, 2006) reveal that Israeli kibbutz members exhibit a significant in-group bias, showing more cooperative behaviour towards fellow kibbutz members than towards city residents, contradicting the expectation of universal cooperation. This tendency is attributed more to self-selection into the kibbutz community rather than the socialising effects of the kibbutz itself, indicating that the kibbutz environment may not inherently foster broader cooperative attitudes. (Yona, 2012) extended this analysis to kibbutzim in the diaspora, focusing on the pioneer movement in Poland and the Klosova kibbutz. (Letzter, 2023) further explored this theme, investigating the relationship between architecture and culture in kibbutzim, considering three aspects: the master plan, cultural complexes, and the individual's library experience. Interestingly, (Letzter, 2023) found that members of modernised kibbutzim exhibit stronger place attachment than those in traditional ones. Today's kibbutzim, recognised for their inclusive approach, present an appealing alternative to urban living, particularly for young families looking for a healthier, rural lifestyle. However, as Letzter (2023) points out, the modern kibbutz's attractiveness is now rooted more in providing a comfortable environment for raising children, fostering social connections, and enriching family life rather than in its original ideological foundation. This shift significantly impacts the communal ethos that once characterised kibbutz life (Lieblich, 2010). (Amit-Cohen and Sofer, 2016) studied the attitudes of various population segments (young and older members) toward the kibbutz's material heritage. The results showed that the interest of kibbutz members (including newcomers) in preserving traditional cultural heritage reflected a desire to preserve local history and the unique phenomenon of the kibbutz. Qualitative studies shed light on the long-term impact of the kibbutz's communal upbringing, particularly on women, revealing deep-seated emotional scars and regrets about their past parenting approaches among kibbutz mothers. Her research collectively offers a comprehensive view of the transformation within kibbutz societies, underscoring the complex interplay between ideology, lifestyle, and individual well-being. Leviatan (1999) explores how the social structures and policies implemented by Israeli kibbutzim in areas such as work, social relations, role stability, and environment impact the "successful ageing" process, a goal highly valued by researchers and policymakers addressing contemporary demographic trends. His work establishes a foundation for further research, highlighting that Israeli kibbutzim can be viewed as a compelling experiment and a living laboratory offering potential solutions for local communities worldwide grappling with the challenges of ageing populations.

## 2. Methodological approach

In this paper, we have used the Cultural Web Framework, as presented by Johnson (1992), to understand the factors shaping Israeli kibbutzim communities in 2023 thoroughly. Kibbutzim are well known for their distinctive social arrangements and organisational structures, offering a unique setting to explore the integration of older populations and their influence on the economic and social fabric of the community. This study investigates the kibbutzim's readiness to emphasise elderly care within their evolving communal frameworks.

Cultural Web Framework illustrates six interrelated elements that collectively contribute to the 'paradigm' of an organisation, essentially the ingrained habits of thinking and behaviour within the workplace. Firstly, 'Rituals and Routines' represent the everyday behaviours and activities deemed normal in the organisation. Secondly, 'Stories' encompass the narratives, anecdotes, and rumours circulating within the organisation, highlighting significant events or behaviours. Thirdly, 'Symbols' serve as organisational culture's visual and linguistic representations. Combined with 'Organizational Structure', 'Control Systems', and 'Power Structures', these elements create a comprehensive picture of how an organisation operates and maintains its culture (Johnson, 1992). Understanding these aspects is essential for driving change within any kibbutz setting. This understanding becomes even more critical as these communities confront the intensifying privatisation process and shifting political, socio-economic, and international landscapes. These dynamic conditions call for a flexible and adaptive approach to change management to ensure organisational resilience and long-term success.

The research was conducted between 20 July and 28 December 2023. In the initial phase, we compiled a comprehensive list of 266 kibbutzim for the study. In the second phase, we employed Simple Random Sampling (SRS) to ensure an unbiased representation of these communities for detailed examination. This statistical method ensures that each individual in the target population has an equal chance of being selected, facilitating data collection that can be reliably generalised to the entire population (Kalton, 2021). We utilised random numbers generated by Randomness and Integrity Services Ltd. (random.org) to achieve this. *Table 1* presents 54 randomly selected kibbutzim along with their establishment dates, population age structure and type of each community. The collected data will be discussed in the results section.

In Figure 1, the selected kibbutzim are shown to be geographically distributed across the territory, with a notable concentration in the central region. This distribution suggests a potential preference for specific environmental conditions or accessibility to communal resources, as evidenced by the higher density of kibbutzim in this area. The analysis also illustrates fewer kibbutzim in the northern and southern reaches, indicating a wide spatial distribution encompassing a significant geographic expanse. Further scrutiny reveals clusters of kibbutzim, particularly in the central and north regions, suggesting a potential for communal networking or shared infrastructure. These clusters may reflect underlying social or economic factors that favour establishing and sustaining kibbutzim in these areas. The presence of such clusters indicates a trend towards community aggregation, which might be influenced by historical settlement patterns, regional planning strategies, or the natural advantages provided by the landscape.

## RECENT ISSUES IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Table 1. Characteristics of the kibbutzim included in the in-depth research

n	Name	Foundation age	Kibutz type	Number of residents	Age structure (in%)		
					14 and under	15-64	65 and over
1.	Admit	1958	privatization-renewing	265	0,20	0,64	0,16
2.	Or HaNer	1957	privatization-renewing	809	0,31	0,57	0,12
3.	Urim	1946	privatization-renewing	504	0,18	0,58	0,24
4.	Allonim	1938	privatization-renewing	548	0,32	0,47	0,20
5.	Bet HaEmeq	1949	privatization-renewing	730	0,24	0,46	0,30
6.	Bet Zera	1926	privatization-renewing	640	0,21	0,57	0,22
7.	Bet Qeshet	1944	privatization-renewing	713	0,34	0,55	0,11
8.	Gevim	1947	communal communities	617	0,26	0,65	0,10
9.	Giv'at Oz	1949	privatization-renewing	475	0,21	0,58	0,21
10.	Gevat	1926	privatization-renewing	958	0,28	0,52	0,19
11.	Gazit	1948	communal communities	805	0,26	0,53	0,21
12.	Ginnegar	1922	privatization-renewing	666	0,27	0,56	0,18
13.	Dafna	1939	privatization-renewing	1025	0,24	0,54	0,22
14.	Hulda	1930	privatization-renewing	1169	0,37	0,55	0,08
15.	Hanita	1938	privatization-renewing	744	0,26	0,58	0,16
16.	Hefzi-Bah	1922	privatization-renewing	757	0,29	0,54	0,17
17.	Tirat Zevi	1937	communal communities	975	0,35	0,54	0,11
18.	Telalim	1980	privatization-renewing	591	0,34	0,65	0,01
19.	Yaqum	1947	privatization-renewing	794	0,27	0,56	0,17
20.	Kissufim	1951	privatization-renewing	292	0,24	0,61	0,15
21.	Kishor	1976	privatization-renewing	215	0,01	0,89	0,10
22.	Kinneret (Qevuza)	1908	privatization-renewing	701	0,24	0,56	0,20
23.	Kefar Blum	1943	privatization-renewing	765	0,29	0,52	0,18
24.	Kefar Glikson	1939	privatization-renewing	352	0,32	0,51	0,16
25.	Kefar Gil'adi	1916	privatization-renewing	689	0,24	0,54	0,21
26.	Kefar Szold	1942	privatization-renewing	717	0,28	0,59	0,14
27.	Kefar Ezyon	1967	privatization-renewing	1278	0,31	0,62	0,06
28.	Lahavot HaBashan	1945	privatization-renewing	921	0,24	0,62	0,14
29.	Lotem	1978	privatization-renewing	783	0,31	0,63	0,06
30.	Mevo Hamma	1968	privatization-renewing	459	0,33	0,51	0,15
31.	Ma'agan	1949	communal communities	394	0,26	0,60	0,15
32.	Ma'yan Barukh	1947	privatization-renewing	723	0,24	0,62	0,14
33.	Ma'ale Gilboa	1962	privatization-renewing	830	0,43	0,52	0,06
34.	Ma'anit	1942	privatization-renewing	874	0,31	0,55	0,13
35.	Mishmar HaSharon	1933	privatization-renewing	613	0,33	0,50	0,17
36.	Mishmarot	1933	privatization-renewing	1234	0,38	0,56	0,06
37.	Ne'ot Smadar	1982	communal communities	227	0,20	0,70	0,11
38.	Nahal Oz	1951	communal communities	471	0,25	0,62	0,13
39.	Nahshonim	1949	communal communities	435	0,30	0,57	0,14
40.	Nizzanim	1943	privatization-renewing	613	0,34	0,49	0,17
41.	Nir Eliyyahu	1950	privatization-renewing	564	0,30	0,55	0,16
42.	Sa'ad	1947	communal communities	846	0,32	0,54	0,15
43.	Sa'ar	1948	privatization-renewing	910	0,31	0,60	0,09
44.	En Gev	1937	privatization-renewing	671	0,24	0,54	0,22
45.	Amir	1939	privatization-renewing	600	0,24	0,55	0,21
46.	Zor'a	1948	privatization-renewing	946	0,24	0,55	0,21
47.	Ramat Menashe	1948	privatization-renewing	1232	0,30	0,61	0,10
48.	Ramat HaKovesh	1932	privatization-renewing	1183	0,29	0,55	0,16
49.	Ramat Yohanan	1932	communal communities	1031	0,27	0,58	0,15
50.	Sede Yo'av	1956	privatization-renewing	594	0,37	0,54	0,08
51.	Shamir	1944	privatization-renewing	911	0,23	0,61	0,16
52.	Senir	1967	privatization-renewing	641	0,27	0,63	0,09
53.	Tuval	1980	communal communities	344	0,27	0,66	0,07
54.	Tel Qazir	1949	privatization-renewing	500	0,33	0,51	0,16

Source: *own study*.

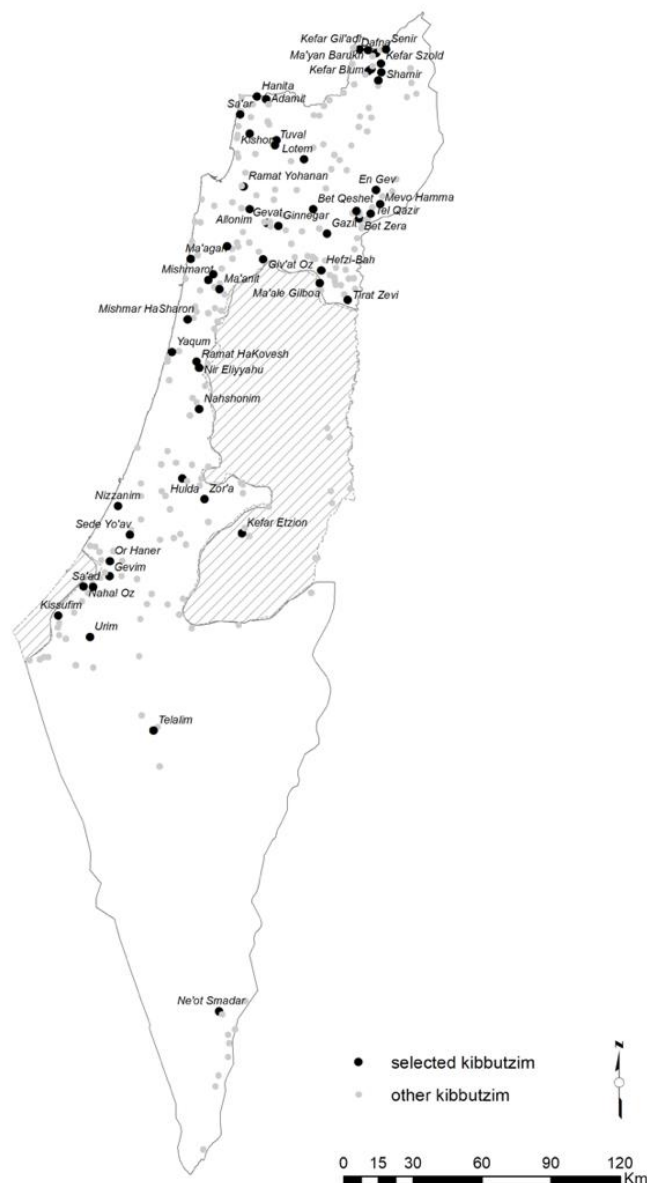


Figure 1. Cartographic Representation of the Sampled Kibbutzim selected from the Entire Population of Israeli Kibbutzim in 2023

Source: *own study*.

For the in-depth research, we distributed a survey questionnaire structured around the Cultural Web Framework, with each question deliberately crafted to address specific issues within this framework (*Table 2*). Although surveys were distributed to 54 selected kibbutzim, initially, results were obtained only from 19 communities under study. After additional discussions and negotiations, the number of completed surveys increased to 30, resulting in a final response rate of 56%. With a confidence level of 95% and a sample size of 30 kibbutzim drawn from a total population of 266, the estimated sampling error is approximately 17%. This implies that the findings from this sample could differ from the true values for the entire kibbutz population by a maximum margin of  $\pm 17\%$ .



## RECENT ISSUES IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Table 2. Kibbutz survey questionnaire and corresponding responses

l.p.	Survey questions	Responses	N (%)
1.	What communal spaces are available within the Kibbutz? (multiple-choice question)	Dining hall	19%
		Child care facilities	23%
		Designated cultural spaces	23%
		Sport facilities	25%
		Additional facilities such as health services, laundry, and storage	10%
2.	What role do elderly individuals hold within the community of your Kibbutz?	1 - very low	0%
		2	0%
		3	7%
		4	30%
		5 - very high	63%
3.	To what extent do elderly individuals (aged 65 and older) participate in the decision-making processes within the Kibbutz?	1 - very low engagement	0%
		2	10%
		3	23%
		4	33%
		5 - very high engagement	33%
4.	What activities, events, or programs tailored explicitly for elderly residents are available in your Kibbutz? (open-ended question)	A club for the elderly offering learning opportunities, sports, and cultural activities	80%
		Meetings	3%
		Medical assistance	7%
		Sports activities	3%
		None	7%
5.	Which values hold the highest importance within the community of your Kibbutz? (open-ended question)	Mutual guarantee	77%
		Education	7%
		Work	7%
		Religion	3%
		Fairness	3%
		No significant values	3%
6.	What distinguishes your Kibbutz from other communities in Israel? (open-ended question)	Community happiness	40%
		Cooperation	40%
		Support	20%
7.	Do you have any comments or suggestions for this research? (open-ended question)	Our kibbutz is privatised but maintains sharing in culture and health	3%
		The kibbutz community shows its strength and abilities in all areas	3%
		Every kibbutz is different	3%
		The kibbutz society has maintained its social quality	3%
		Privatisation has caused differences in Kibbutzim	17%
		No comments	71%

Source: own study.

### 3. Conducting research and results

#### *3.1. Results for the full sample of drawn Kibbutzim*

An analysis of the age distribution across the 54 sampled kibbutzim shows that, on average, 28% of the population consists of individuals under 14 years old, 57% falls within the primary working-age range of 15 to 64, and 15% are aged 65 and above. This demographic profile indicates a community with a youthful orientation but still maintains a strong representation within the working-age group, suggesting an active and productive population. The presence of a significant older demographic points to a structure that supports diverse community roles and intergenerational engagement. Compared to Israel's national age distribution - where 12% are aged 65 and over, 60% are between 15 and 64, and 28% are under 14 - the sampled kibbutzim exhibit a distinct age pattern, with a noticeable shift toward an older population. This suggests that the kibbutzim may have a higher dependency ratio, with more elderly individuals relative to the working-age population than the national average. Such a demographic profile can influence community resources, healthcare, and support systems, underscoring the need for targeted policies and programs to meet the requirements of an ageing population in these communities.

An analysis of data from 54 kibbutzim reveals a significant trend toward privatisation and renewal, indicating a widespread shift within the kibbutz movement. This transformation spans kibbutzim established from the early 1920s to the 1980s and mirrors a broader socio-economic evolution. Initially built on communal living and collective labour foundations, many kibbutzim have adapted to modern, market-driven structures. This change represents a move away from traditional communal frameworks toward more individualised and economically focused models. Conversely, a smaller subset of kibbutzim, including Gevim, Gazit, Ne'ot Smadar, Ramat Yohanan, and Tuval continue to operate as communal communities. The persistence of communal values alongside widespread privatisation highlights the complexity within the kibbutz movement, where traditional principles coexist with modern economic adaptations. This coexistence of communal and privatization-renewing models within the same cultural and historical framework provides a unique lens through which to examine the evolution of communal living in response to shifting economic and social conditions.

#### *3.2. Survey results related to 30 Kibbutzim*

In our comprehensive survey, we targeted 54 Kibbutzim across Israel to gather data on their communal structures, values, and the roles of elderly members within these communities. However, responses were received from 30 Kibbutzim, providing a substantial dataset for analysis (see Table 2). This response rate reflects a significant cross-section of the kibbutzim, allowing for a meaningful examination of their unique characteristics.

The analysis of these 30 kibbutzim highlights various communal spaces, with sports facilities being the most prevalent, found in 25% of the communities studied. This reflects a significant emphasis on physical activity and community recreation. Childcare facilities and cultural spaces each account for 23% of the shared amenities, demonstrating a balanced commitment to child development and cultural participation. While less common at 19%, dining halls still play a vital role in promoting communal interaction. Other shared facilities, such as health services, laundry, and storage, make up 10%, illustrating a diversified resource-sharing approach within these communities.

The survey revealed a strong respect for the elderly within these communities, with 63% of the kibbutzim indicating that the status of older individuals is perceived as very high. Elderly

members also actively participate in decision-making processes, with 66% of responses indicating high engagement levels. This active involvement underlines their significant role in the governance and cultural life of the kibbutzim communities. Furthermore, 80% of the kibbutzim provide clubs for the elderly that emphasize learning, sports, and cultural activities, showcasing their commitment to promoting active ageing and fostering an inclusive community life. These findings highlight a strong communal dedication to creating a dynamic and engaging atmosphere for all members.

The survey findings indicate that 77% of respondents highlighted that kibbutzim's core values predominantly focus on mutual guarantee. This value reflects these communities' deep-rooted ethos of collective responsibility and mutual support. Education and work, each valued by 7% of responses, along with religion and fairness, at 3% each, illustrate a community ethos shaped by a combination of pragmatism and shared social responsibility.



Figure 2. Figure 2. Word Cloud highlighting key features of Kibbutzim as reported by respondents

*Source:* own study using MAXQDA software.

As noted in the survey, the kibbutzim's distinctive attributes include community happiness and cooperation, each emphasized by 40% of respondents. An additional 20% identified mutual support as a defining feature that sets kibbutzim apart from other Israeli communities. Interestingly, 17% of comments noted that privatisation has introduced variability among kibbutzim, reflecting an evolving landscape within these historically communal structures.

### ***3.3. Relating the results in selected kibbutzim to the Cultural Web Framework***

Incorporating Gerry Johnson's Cultural Web Framework into the analysis of our survey results obtained from 30 kibbutzim provides a structured understanding of their organisational culture about shared spaces, the role of the elderly, and communal values. The 'Stories' element is evident in the high esteem and active involvement of the elderly in decision-making processes, painting a narrative of respect and wisdom. This aspect is further reflected in the

'Rituals & Routines' of the kibbutzim, as 80% have established clubs for the elderly, integrating them into the community's daily life and activities.

The kibbutzim culture's 'Symbols' and 'Rituals & Routines' manifest in their shared spaces, emphasising sports facilities, education, healthcare, childcare facilities, and cultural centres. These spaces represent their commitment to physical well-being, child development, and cultural engagement. These services not only function as symbols of the community's values but also as daily routines that reinforce communal bonds and collective identity. Several unique characteristics set particular kibbutzim apart from other communities in Israel. These aspects encompassed location, quality of life, and a strong sense of community. These unique characteristics play a crucial role in shaping the identity and narrative of each kibbutz, reinforcing its distinct position within the broader Israeli societal framework.

Rituals & Routines' are embodied in kibbutzim through events and activities dedicated to the elderly. Survey responses pointed to various programs for this demographic, such as clubs, social gatherings, and cultural events. These activities, tailored to each kibbutz's unique cultural context, help ensure that elderly members remain engaged and connected to the community. Additionally, survey insights highlight the adaptability and resilience of kibbutzim in responding to contemporary challenges, including privatisation. This adaptability demonstrates the kibbutzim's capacity to evolve and adjust their rituals, routines, and narratives to meet changing external conditions while preserving their fundamental communal values.

'Stories' within kibbutzim can be observed in the predominantly positive attitudes towards the elderly. Notably, 63% of respondents rated this attitude as highly positive (a score of 5), with an additional 30% assigning a score of 4. This underscores a deeply embedded narrative of respect and inclusivity, positioning the elderly as esteemed and active community members. This narrative indicates that the elderly are not merely passive care recipients but integral to the kibbutz's social structure. Analysis of the survey responses reveals that despite the ongoing trend of privatisation in kibbutzim, there is a deliberate commitment to assist and support the elderly, recognising their pivotal contributions during the early development of the kibbutz. The younger generation appears highly aware of the growing needs of older adults and seems prepared to bear the increasing financial responsibilities associated with these requirements. Moving forward, it may become essential for kibbutzim to establish standardized policies and clear guidelines to effectively address the needs of their ageing population. The urgency of policy development is accentuated by the rising number of elderly members, which poses significant financial challenges that kibbutzim must manage. This shifting demographic landscape presents challenges and opportunities for the sustainable management of communal resources and the continued support of an ageing population.

The 'Power Structures' and 'Control System' within these communities appear to be shaped more by age and experience than by economic or hierarchical status, as evidenced by the significant role played by the elderly. This influence is manifested through their participation in the decision-making processes. The degree of elderly involvement in these processes varies among kibbutzim, with 33% of respondents rating it at the highest level (5) and another 33% at level (4). These variations suggest that power structures and control systems differ across kibbutzim. In some communities, the elderly hold substantial influence in governance, showcasing more egalitarian and inclusive decision-making practices, whereas in others, their involvement may be more limited.

Kibbutzim's organisational Structure is based on Core Values. Mutual guarantee and support emerged as the cornerstone values of the kibbutzim, as highlighted in responses to the survey. These values, education, and human relations are deeply embedded in these communities' organisational structure and control systems. These elements guide behavior,

influence decision-making processes, and play a crucial role in shaping the social fabric of kibbutzim.

Through the application of the Cultural Web Framework, our survey findings from the selected kibbutzim illustrate a culture firmly embedded in community, mutual support, and a deep respect for the contributions of all members, especially the elderly. These results highlight the distinctive role of kibbutzim within the Israeli social fabric, demonstrating their ability to balance traditional communal values with modern practices.

#### 4. Discussion

While the increased openness of kibbutzim to the active participation of elderly members offers numerous benefits, it also brings forth potential challenges and weaknesses that must be addressed. One of the key issues relates to resources and infrastructure. The increased involvement of older individuals may require additional resources, including specialized healthcare services, modifications to existing infrastructure to accommodate their needs, and access to supportive services to enable their active participation. Kibbutzim may encounter challenges in adequately adapting its infrastructure and resources to meet these evolving requirements. Another concern is the changing dynamics within the kibbutz communities. The increased inclusion of elderly members could lead to intergenerational conflicts or shifts in management strategies and community priorities. Such changes might generate tensions, especially if younger members possess different visions or expectations for the future direction of the Kibbutz Movement. Furthermore, as the Kibbutz population ages, the increasing need for care could become a significant burden. Providing appropriate care and support for a growing number of older members will likely require substantial planning and allocation of resources. Physical and health limitations of the elderly also pose constraints. Increased activities and participation among older members may need to be tailored or modified to accommodate health issues and physical limitations, ensuring that programs and activities are safe and accessible. Sustainable development is another critical aspect to consider. Balancing the needs of older members with those of younger generations poses a challenge for the long-term viability and innovation within kibbutzim. As the demographic shifts towards an older population, it is crucial to maintain a balance that supports sustainable community growth and development. Lastly, the greater involvement of older members could impact the traditional values and culture of kibbutzim, which have been built around cooperation and collective well-being. Adapting to these changes may require a new approach to community management and organisational structures (Weinersmith, et al., 2024).

In the landscape of Israeli kibbutzim, a notable observation is that some kibbutzim have resisted the privatisation trend. This resistance can be attributed to their affluent status, suggesting that financial stability may play a role in maintaining traditional cooperative structures. However, as time progresses, an increasing number of kibbutzim are seen to be joining the privatisation process. This shift points to a probable future where communal communities' kibbutzim may become a rarity or cease to exist (Banai, Nirenberg, 2024). The trend towards privatisation reflects a broader socio-economic evolution within these communities, indicating a significant transformation in the traditional kibbutz model (Mandel, Lazarus, Moreno, 2024).

In recent years, Israeli kibbutzim have experienced a significant shift in their economic focus, characterized by a noticeable decline in agricultural activities. In 2023, only about 30% of kibbutzim remain actively engaged in agriculture, while a substantial 70% have turned towards industrial ventures. This transition has seen the establishment of successful enterprises within the kibbutzim, a significant portion of which have undergone privatisation. The trend

suggests that privatising industrial operations appears to be more feasible than doing so with agricultural activities. This observation highlights the evolving economic strategies of kibbutzim, which are adapting to broader market trends and responding to shifts in the economic landscape.

In conclusion, while integrating older individuals into kibbutzim represents a positive step towards inclusivity, it necessitates careful planning and management. Addressing these challenges head-on is crucial to ensure the successful and harmonious integration of the elderly into kibbutz life while maintaining these unique communities' core values and sustainability.

## Conclusion

The approach to the silver economy in contemporary Israeli kibbutzim can vary depending on the specific kibbutz, its resources, and the preferences of its members. Some kibbutzim may adopt innovative models to address the needs of their ageing population, while others may rely on more traditional collaborative support structures. Regardless of the implemented strategy, by harmonising the rich historical legacy of the kibbutz movement with forward-thinking, Israeli kibbutzim can create a nurturing and inclusive environment that empowers older adults to lead fulfilling lives within the community while also preparing for the evolving needs of an ageing population.

Responses received from 30 kibbutzim out of the targeted 54 provide valuable insights into the dynamic interplay of traditional communal values and modern adaptations. The kibbutzim stand out for their strong emphasis on physical well-being, childcare, cultural activities, and respect for the elderly. They maintain a unique balance between individual needs and communal responsibilities, distinct from other societal structures in Israel.

The Cultural Web Framework has proven instrumental in unravelling the complex tapestry of cultural elements that define the kibbutzim, showcasing their unique blend of tradition and modernity. These communities stand out as dynamic entities, continually evolving while firmly rooted in their foundational values and practices. Our analysis reveals that kibbutzim in Israel is not just a physical location but is deeply embedded in rich cultural elements. The Cultural Web Framework illuminates how shared services, attitudes towards the elderly, participation in decision-making, core values, and unique features collectively contribute to the kibbutz's distinctive ethos. This ethos is characterised by communal welfare, respect for the elderly, active community engagement, and a robust commitment to mutual support and shared values, all of which resonate with the traditional roots while adapting to contemporary challenges and leading towards “successful ageing” expressed in high life expectancy and positive well-being.

The study's limitations include its sample size, which covers 30 out of 54 targeted kibbutzim, potentially not representing the full diversity of these communities in Israel. The study's reliance on survey data introduces risks of self-reporting and non-response biases, which may overlook intricate cultural details. While beneficial, using the Cultural Web Framework could limit the investigation of factors outside its scope. The focus on the older population and the specific timeframe of the study might exclude other essential aspects of kibbutz life, like the experiences of younger members and environmental sustainability issues. These limitations indicate the need for more extensive and in-depth future research to comprehensively understand the evolving dynamics of Israeli kibbutzim.

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