

# Basic Dilemmas of Utopia in Comparative Perspective

by  
Eliezer Ben-Rafael  
Department of Sociology,  
Tel-Aviv University, Israel

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## Abstract

This paper is intended to consider, at the light of the recent transformation of the Israeli kibbutz, the variety of social experiments which similarly illustrate the Proudhonian-Comtian-Durkheimian emphases on cooperation and collective solidarity, within societies dominated by market economy, the philosophy of progress and, nowadays especially, processes of globalization. These forms draw their interest from the fact that they put this vision to empirical test which shows the tensions, difficulties, and potentialities involved. We will especially focus on the kibbutz, the Mondragón complex of cooperatives and the American communes which show, beyond the differences of context and the singularity of each specific type, how far collectivism may concur with individualism, and solidarity and egalitarianism with social differentiation and conflict. On the other hand, the comparative analysis also reveals, in varying respects and at diverse degrees, similar concerns, dilemmas and tensions. As a rule, the tension between the enterprise and the community principles has gradually witnessed a predominance of the former over the latter and this “embourgeoisement” leads to confrontations between values and aspirations as well as between callings and interests. The collective’s survival, it appears, is endangered both when it is threatened by insolvency - ipso facto - and when it is successful - as it risks then to be torn apart by divergent interests which impend on its moral purposes. Above all, this comparative analysis breaks the naivety of those who fully participate in this era of globalization and still perceive utopia beyond technocracy.