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Fourth Annual Spring Conference of the Israeli Center for Third Sector Research

Portraying the “Civil Society” in Israel

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, March 20th, 2001.

“It’s not surprising that, of all the institutions of higher education in Israel, it is Ben-Gurion University of the Negev that has convened the first scientific conference about civil society in Israel.”

With these words, Prof. Rivka Carmi, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and a member of the Steering Committee of the Israel Center for Third Sector Research (ICTR), greeted the conference participants on behalf of the university president. “It is only natural that the issue of Israeli ‘civil society’ would be raised in a university where community involvement and social action are such an intrinsic part. What’s more,” continued Prof. Carmi, “we have come to expect ICTR to be at the forefront of these critical issues, and to bring them to public attention in Israel.”

Prof. Carmi and Prof. Avia Spivak from the Economics Department, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, opened ICTR’s Fourth Annual Spring Conference, held this year in the W.A. Minkoff Senate Hall.

In attendance were 140 participants from almost every institution of higher learning in Israel, organizations from the Third Sector and “civil society”, senior government officials, representatives of



From right to left: Adv. Amiram Bogat, Registrar of Nonprofit Organizations, MK Yossi Paritzky, Chair of Subcommittee for Nonprofits in the Knesset Finance Committee, MK Zippi Livni, Minister for Regional Cooperation, Prof. Yosef Katan, Tel-Aviv University and Center for Policy Studies, Prof. Arie Arnon, Acting Director of ICTR and the Chair of the Department of Economics, Ben-Gurion University.

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the Knesset and government, and individuals.

Immediately after the opening session and greetings, ICTR researchers, Michal Bar, a doctoral student at Hebrew University, and Hagai Katz, Deputy Director of ICTR, presented findings from a study conducted with Prof. Benjamin Gidron, founder of ICTR. Their research; “Portraying the Civil Society in Israel: Empirical Findings on Scope and Character of Civil Society”, based on data from the ICTR Database, proposes a precedent-setting distinction between third sector organizations that are part of “civil society” and those that,

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From right to left: Dr. Uri Ram, Ben-Gurion University, Mr. Eliezer Yaari, Director in Israel of the New Israel Fund, Prof. Yael Yishai, Haifa University.

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are not. The findings that emerge after making this distinction suggest the existence of a broad “civil society” in Israel composed of thousands of active organizations that receive no government funding, and are characterized by their participatory nature and provision of services, rather than by a defiant challenge to state authorities.

The findings also revealed the existence of thousands of religious organizations that are part of “civil society” in Israel, and which do not (prevailing conventional wisdom notwithstanding) benefit from government funding; and only a small number of Arab “civil society” organizations that are registered and functioning. Dr. Elias Zeidan, a researcher at ICTR and Dr. Uri Ben-Eliezer, from the Sociology and Anthropology Department, Haifa University presented and discussed aspects of “civil society” in Israel in two contexts: first, the Arab-Palestinian community in Israel and the relevance of the definitions used in this research to examine “civil society” in the Arab community; and, second, the very existence of “civil society” in Israel, and criteria for identifying an active and effective “civil society”.

Ms. Varda Shiffer, Director of the Mandel School for Educational Leadership, served as discussant for the papers presented. Ms. Shiffer raised several critical points, and ended by saying that perhaps Israel has “civil society” organizations, as reflected in the research, but it is doubtful that Israel has a “civil

society” in the full sense of the concept.

In the second session, moderated by Mr. Eliezer Yaari, Director in Israel of the New Israel Fund, Prof. Yael Yishai, Political Science, Haifa University and Dr. Uri Ram from the Department of Behavioral Sciences, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev presented differing views about the impact of “civil society” on society as a whole, and raised questions about the oft-positing correlation between the existence of “civil society” and social cohesion. Prof. Yishai distinguished between positive and negative pluralism, and discussed the ability of “civil society” organizations to promote both types. Dr. Ram expressed doubt about the relevance of “civil society” to the issue of social cohesion in post-modern societies in general. These views led the way to a discussion about the appropriate public policy for “civil society” and nonprofit organizations in Israel.

The third session, moderated by Prof. Arie Arnon, Acting Director of ICTR and the chair of the Department of Economics, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, was opened by Prof. Yosef Katan School of Social Work, Tel-Aviv University and the Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel. Prof. Katan discussed issues that should be considered when formulating policy about “civil society” organizations, including their accountability, relative effectiveness, and their political exploitation. These issues were also addressed by panelists in the “Policymakers” session - MK Zippi

Livni, Minister for Regional Cooperation, MK Yossi Paritzky, chair of the Subcommittee for Nonprofits in the Knesset Finance Committee, and Attorney Amiram Bogat, Registrar of Nonprofit Organizations.

The three panelists all acknowledged the importance of “civil society” organizations, and urged the formulation of comprehensive policies about the Third Sector regarding funding and oversight. All three expressed support for encouraging and funding nonprofits, while developing an oversight mechanism and clear criteria to prevent the politicization and corruption of these organizations.

A proposal was raised for establishing a government authority for the Third Sector that would bring together analysis and planning, and deal with all aspects of funding, support, and oversight for organizations in the Third Sector and “civil society” in general.

In the vigorous debate that ensued, issues were raised such as the involvement of these organizations in policymaking and the attitude of the government toward them.

Though the conference ended with several questions left open, it was felt that significant strides had been made to bring the important issue of “civil society” to public attention. Reactions upon conclusion of the conference and in the days following indicate that this had indeed been accomplished.

ICTR will publish a summary of the conference proceedings.

Hagai Katz



Due to changes in the area code, ICTR’s telephone and fax numbers have changed:

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Director's Column

Prof. Arie Arnon, Acting Director, ICTR

The Third Sector in Israel, and the Israeli Center for Third Sector Research (ICTR) both, have been undergoing a process of adjustment due to the harsh confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians, which has been raging over the past eight months. In the early days of the confrontation, ICTR was forced to postpone its conference about "civil society" in Israel, but later convened it as promised on March 20, 2001.

The constant tension between leading "normal" lives and living through this patently abnormal war hovers over and preoccupies us. The early days of this violent confrontation resulted in the disruption of our daily routine. Presently, it appears that our adjustment to the spiraling deterioration of the situation has gained the upper hand. Despite everything, we are hopeful that both nations will muster up the strength

and wisdom needed to extricate us all from the slippery slope we are currently descending.

At the conference, we heard many lectures and remarks about the various components of Israel's Third Sector and "civil society". Building a "civil society" in the shadow of a protracted bloody conflict, in which each society is mobilized almost exclusively to defend its own interests and legitimacy, is difficult to say the least. "Civil society" presupposes equality and emphasizes what is common, unifying, and general whereas the conflict stresses that which is different and divisive.

It is difficult to envision the development of Palestinian "civil society" in Israel, and the implications for the Jewish parts of "civil society". The initial impression is that this deep tremor will have dramatic repercussions.

The database created by ICTR continues to serve researchers from a variety of

fields: political science, sociology, economics, law, etc. The development of the database by Mr. Hagai Katz remains at the core of our efforts. At the same time, we are trying to develop new fields of research and to examine the policy issues that will affect the Third Sector and "civil society" in the coming decade.

Prof. Benjamin Gidron will be returning to Israel soon and will resume leadership of ICTR. I am confident that, together with the staff headed by Efrat Keynan, ICTR will continue to play an important role in researching the Third Sector and applying these findings in the shaping of policy with respect to the Third Sector in Israel.

I'd like to thank Efrat and Hagai for their efforts throughout the year, and especially their organization of an outstanding and fruitful conference.



NEWS FROM THE DATABASE

Hagai Katz

The database continues to serve as the backbone of research work done at the ICTR. During recent months, it has been used for a considerable number of studies such as a study of the compensation levels in nonprofit organizations, conducted in collaboration with the Falk Institute for Economic Research.

Another study, done in collaboration with the Department of Economics at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, deals with the economic efficiency of nonprofit organizations.

An analysis of Israeli "civil society", also drawn from the database, was presented at the Center's Fourth Annual Spring Conference. The database has also served as the sampling base for additional studies undertaken by researchers from the Center and other research institutes. It is consulted regularly by the university students

from all faculties for writing research papers.

Partnering with the Central Bureau of Statistics

The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) is using the database for their development of a satellite account for the Third Sector. This is a continuation of the "Hopkins Project", which includes the adding of a national account for the Third Sector to those listed by the Statistics Division of the UN as a guideline for national statistical offices throughout the world. The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics has agreed to be one of the 'trial countries' for the new satellite account, and its use of the database is a natural outgrowth of the cooperation between the CBS and the ICTR on the "Hopkins Project".

Following a concerted effort, the first stage of updating the database was completed in late February 2001, with

the collection of statistics for 1999 from all of our sources. Surprisingly, considerable difficulty was encountered in obtaining information from a number of sources that have previously provided data.

Third Sector information in Israel is very difficult to obtain. Insufficient awareness of the importance of research and the publication of data on nonprofits on the part of the various governmental and supervisory bodies, leads to difficulties in acquiring the information which exists in various formats and in diverse forms. The new data are in the process of being entered into the database and the annual report should come out in early summer. It will include updates on changes in Israel's Third Sector in 1999, along with an updated detailed analysis of the sector.

Hagai Katz, Deputy Director of ICTR and Director of ICTR Database

Research

Doctoral Researchers Members of ICTR Researchers Forum



Moshe Sharir

“Dimensions of success of social innovation and individual entrepreneurship”.

What is the background of this research?

Social entrepreneurship is a field of growing interest in recent years. Today one can find an increasing number of foundations which fund social entrepreneurship-related projects (in Israel too). On the organizational level, many organizations seek to promote such innovative projects within the realm of their work. Despite the large number of such initiatives, this research is the first attempt to study the dimensions of success or failure of such projects, whether as an individual or a group enterprise.

What is the focus of the research?

The research explores the strategies and problems facing entrepreneurs in the process of founding and developing their initiatives, in an attempt to identify the key elements in establishing a new nonprofit organization in the realm of social issues.

What are the subjects of this research?

The entrepreneurial projects studied in this comparative research come from nonprofit enterprises in the social field that were founded within the past decade and are in various stages of establishment and growth.

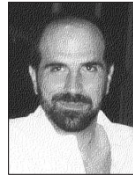
These respondents come from the entire range of the social spectrum in terms of age, demographic characteristics, and economic status.

What will be the contribution of the research to the Third Sector?

The research will contribute to our knowledge of the background and motivation of social entrepreneurs, enabling the identification of key environmental factors in the success of social entrepreneurship projects. It can also help us understand the strategies, patterns and characteristics of individual social entrepreneurs, and enable the development of criteria for evaluating success and added value of entrepreneurship in nonprofit settings.

Moshe Sharir, formerly head of Gadna Unit of the Israel Defense Force, headed

the Division for Educational and Regional projects, and the Division for Development of Special Initiatives at the Joint Distribution Committee-Israel (JDC). Mr. Sharir was also the Director of the Sde Boker Institute, and is the founder and chairperson of the Social Incubator at the Zippori Center.



Raviv Schwartz

“Doves of a Feather: A comparative analysis of identity-based peace/conflict resolution organizations (P/CROs) in Israel, Northern Ireland and South Africa”.

What is the background of this research?

Between 1995 and 1998, data were collected as part of an international study of peace and conflict-resolution organizations in an effort to understand their patterns of behavior and their impact in three conflict regions: Israel, Northern Ireland and South Africa. However, one aspect not explored in this larger project was that of “identity”, more specifically, groups organized around a particular category of identity such as gender, religious affiliation, or profession, as contrasted with those with no such focus.

What is the objective of the research?

This research seeks to analyze and understand the significance of identity in peace/conflict organizations (P/CROs). It examines differences and similarities between identity based and non-identity based P/CROs and among identity based organizations along a variety of organizational parameters (chiefly ideology and tactics).

How will this study contribute to our information about peace/conflict resolution organizations?

The research will enhance our understanding of the role played by these organizations in conflicted societies. It will also shed light on the importance of organizational identity in the mobilization of citizens intended to end or at least reduce the cycle of violence in countries plagued by violent conflict. This knowledge can contribute not only to our understanding of social movements, but of other civil

society organizations as well such as interest groups, volunteer associations, and social service agencies.

Raviv Schwartz is a Ph.D. student in the Social Work Department of Ben-Gurion University. His main areas of research are peace organizations and Israel-Diaspora relations. Raviv received his master’s degree in Social Work (community organization) from the University of Michigan.



Eli Brauner

“Behavioral, Structural, and Environmental Characteristics of Israeli Third Sector Organizations that Violated Laws Related to Exploiting their Privileged Status”.

What is the research about?

The research looks at nonprofits that have abused their special legal status (tax benefits) made possible by virtue of the public trust they are accorded as nonprofits. The study examines the reasons and circumstances surrounding this behavior.

On what data do you base the research?

The research is based on some 200 cases of abuse that took place in Israel.

Will this study have practical applications? What will its contribution be to the Third Sector in Israel?

This study will propose a mechanism to help prevent abuse of the legislative status and concomitant benefits by nonprofit organizations. It seeks to prevent or reduce the types of abuse by nonprofit organizations, that reflect adversely on the sector at large and elicit increased public discontent which in turn prompts public demands to regulate nonprofits and restrict their range of activity.

Eli Brauner heads a department in the State Comptroller’s office responsible for taxation issues. His Master’s thesis examined the characteristics of political nonprofits.

Annual ARNOVA Conference

Michal Bar

The annual conference of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) convened in New Orleans, Louisiana last November. Participants included 550 researchers from 40 related disciplines, with 450 studies presented over the course of 100 sessions. The broad range of scholarship and diversity of researchers, research projects, countries, and academic fields were striking evidence of the great interest in Third Sector research throughout the world.

The plenary discussions this year focused on two key issues: future avenues of research about the Third Sector; and the contribution of historical analysis to Third Sector research. Regarding the first issue, several key questions were raised by a panel of senior researchers in the field. First, what are proper conceptual frameworks for understanding Third Sector activity? While many theories have emerged over the years to explain this activity, a claim has been made that the work itself is still inadequately documented, and thus numerous theories seek to conceptualize Third Sector activity before the activity itself is sufficiently understood. Another contention is that the theories proposed so far have ignored the fact that Third Sector organizations do not operate in a vacuum, but rather are set into a framework of social structures, and their actions have power and influence. The "social origins" approach developed by Salamon and Anheier, referred to extensively in the studies presented at the conference, was proposed as a way to organize social, historical, and religious traditions in the framework of one theory to explain the development and activity of the Third Sector. Another question concerns current research issues. Some areas were presented as insufficiently explored, including legal aspects, government policy toward the Third Sector, the advocacy activity of Third Sector organizations, relations between the government and the Third Sector, and

an attempt to integrate Third Sector research over the past two decades and its implications for current research. It was also proposed that the Third Sector not be regarded as one broad category, but that two main groups of organizations be distinguished: those that provide services, and those who contribute to the growth of civil society. For each of these groups, different questions should be posed and explored about Third Sector activity and development.

In the second plenary, panelists asked what an historical perspective can contribute to research about the Third Sector. History and historical research were presented as important instruments in broadening and deepening our understanding of current developments. The discussion centered on the United States, where it was argued that historical research is critical for appreciating the Third Sector as a force that shapes and influences economics, society, and government. The critical importance of understanding the history of the Third Sector was also noted with respect to programs that train staff and leadership of Third Sector and public organizations. Prof. Peter Dobkin Hall from Harvard University, one of the panelists, contended that for the staff and management of nonprofit organizations to use best the instruments at their disposal, they should acquire a broad knowledge of the context and environment in which these tools developed. Therefore, an historical understanding of the context in which such organizations evolved must play a key role in research and training in the field.

Several annual awards were made at the conference. The Lifetime Achievement award was given to Prof. Robert L. Payton, for his research into voluntarism and philanthropy. Another award went to Prof. Margaret Harris for her book *Organizing God's Work: Challenges for Churches and Synagogues*, which focuses on the practical dilemmas of religious organizations, both Christian and Jewish, as they grapple with organizational problems and changes

around them.

Prof. Benny Gidron and Michal Bar, ICTR's representatives at the conference, presented their mapping and analysis of the unique development of the Third Sector in Israel based on three main orientations: the welfare state, civil society, and religion. This research examines the nature and growth of the Israeli Third Sector based on an analysis of the ICTR Database as well as economic, social, and political dynamics in Israel, and the connection between these factors and the growth of the Third Sector.

Other salient subjects at the conference: the role of Third Sector organizations in applying "welfare to work" policies among the unemployed in the United States, nonprofit organizations as producers of "social capital" and activists in civil society, self-help organizations and their relationship to the welfare state in various countries, the involvement of the Third Sector in various countries, policies about the Third Sector while the government seeks ways to foster civil society, management of Third Sector organizations, philanthropy, voluntarism, cooperative ventures between nonprofits and the business sector, religious activity as part of the Third Sector, and training management and staff for work in the Third Sector.

The range and number of lectures at the conference indicate the rapid and extensive growth of research about Third Sector activity throughout the world, and the wide variety of reference points from different disciplines. This also clarified the need to move from mapping and discovering Third Sector organizations in the world (epitomized by the broad-based Johns Hopkins Project) to a stage in which organizations will be examined for their activities, contribution to civil society, and relationship to the state, as well as normative questions about the role of the Third Sector.

Michal Bar, Researcher at ICTR and Doctoral Student at Hebrew University

RESEARCHERS FORUM

The Research Forum of the ICTR brings together twenty researchers from different research institutes in Israel for monthly meetings, to discuss and share current research in Israel and abroad relating to the Third Sector. The Forum has convened five times during the current academic year to hear presentations of research projects in various stages of completion.

At the first session in November, 2000, Raviv Schwartz presented findings from a paper, "Partnership 2000: Analysis of the Changes in the Philanthropic Relations Between Israel and World Jewry," which was awarded first prize a few months earlier at the National Council of Voluntary Organizations (NCVO) conference in the UK.

In December 2000, Rinat Ben-Nun presented the first stages of a study of nonprofit organizations in Israel based on a distribution of the socio-demographic and community characteristics of the population and in January 2001, Dr. Esther Iecovich presented to the forum the initial findings from her study "Boards of Directors and Patterns of Governance among Israeli Nonprofit Organizations". Other researchers in this study are Dr. Mike Naftali, Dr. Hadara Bar-Mor and Prof. Benjamin Gidron.

In February, 2001, Ms. Nurit Shani-Gamliel addressed the forum about a pilot research project entitled "Patterns of Social Responsibility of the Israeli Business Sector". This session included a review of the paper-writing process, from the early decisions regarding methodology, through the analysis of

the data and findings, to the final conclusions and recommendations. Researchers in this study are Prof. Arie Reichel, Prof. Benjamin Gidron and Ms. Nurit Shani-Gamliel.

In a meeting held in May 2001, Dr. Elias Zeidan presented the first stage of his study "Patterns of Contribution, Volunteering and Participation of the Arab-Palestinian Society and their Attitudes Toward Third Sector Organizations". Other researchers in this study are Prof. Shmuel Shye, Prof. Benjamin Gidron and Dr. Basal Gatas.

At each of the forum's session, lively discussion was generated which invariably went beyond the specific topic of the meeting to touch on central issues of concern to Third Sector research. ■ ■ ■

NEW ON THE BOOKSHELF

Hagai Katz

Making Democracy Work Better: Mediating Structures, Social Capital, and the Democratic Prospect, by Richard A. Couto, Catherine S. Guthrie (contributor), University of North Carolina Press, 1999

As its title implies, this book draws on ideas proposed by Robert Putnam in his seminal work, **Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy**, published in 1993. But Richard Couto goes even further in expanding the notion of the "social capital" developed in Putnam's book by introducing additional concepts well grounded in modern sociology. In so doing, he relies on the work of Nisbet, Wolpert, and even Bourdieu, as well as on extensive original empirical research.

According to Couto, social capital is not obtained only on the basis of morals and values, but also on a material-economic basis. Adopting an approach similar to the resource mobilization theory, Couto

claims that trust, norms of mutual benefit and peaceful cooperation, or civic traditions are not sufficient to develop social capital. Rather, he conditions the ability to develop significant social capital on pre-existing financial and cultural capital. He illustrates his point by describing how the success of intermediary organizations among the marginalized and impoverished population of the Appalachian Mountains in the USA is, in effect, dependent on their ability to raise funds from sources in the region, particularly the various government agencies and the business sector.

Couto presents 23 detailed and diverse case studies of successful grassroots intermediary organizations (although their success is not always unmitigated) that are active in a variety of fields, from health and housing to the environment and the development of local leadership. They include organizations that provide

services, those involved in advocacy and reform, and those which combine the two; very small local initiatives and huge large-scale organizations; those with narrow, focused aims and others with broad, general mandates. All have a common feature - the ability to raise funds, enabling them to convert their civic activities into durable social capital. After presenting these case studies, Couto demonstrates how the organizations contribute to the development of social capital and the reinforcement of participatory democracy. Such organizations are able not only to create social networks, but also to weave new actors into these networks—government agencies and business enterprises—and to induce them to promote the goals of the organization's members while limiting the power of the authorities and capital. The book makes a major contribution in several respects. First, it constitutes an excellent source for an understanding of the public space and

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the place of intermediary organizations within it. Secondly, it presents a critique, well-grounded in empirical findings, of a number of conventionally held concepts, such as the distinction between advocacy and services, the restrictions placed on successful advocacy activity by public funding, the link between social capital and financial capital, and so on. Thirdly, the book offers a very vivid, dynamic, and authentic picture of social occurrences, which are generally presented in research literature in a rather detached manner. Finally, it proposes a highly practical model for the management of civil society organizations. Richard Couto's style is not overly demanding, which makes for a pleasant read. Moreover, by linking the theoretical concepts to actual social goings-on, he brings the text to life. With its combination of theoretical-conceptual analysis on the one hand, and case studies on the other, the book is suitable not only for academic readers, but also for the initiators and directors of civil society organizations, and the general public as well. Although the research was conducted on American organizations, it is also highly relevant for Israel, as the cases described are, on the whole, quite typical. Furthermore, the organizations in the book can serve as a model for similar bodies in Israel. The broader model offered by Couto is also very relevant to Israel and to the major issues on the agenda with respect to its Third Sector and the civil society: the need for public policy regarding Third Sector organizations; the difficulty of raising funds and the link between resources and the success and effectiveness of these organizations; and the contribution of Third Sector organizations to advancing marginalized populations.

According to Couto, such organizations actually promote democracy. In order to understand how, one should read his book.

כי אם גם לארוג אל תוך הרשתות הללו שחקנים נוספים בזירה: סוכנויות ממשלה וארגונים עסקיים, לגייסם לקידום מטרותיהם של האזרחים חברי ארגונים אלה ונד בד להגביל את כוחו של השלטון ושל ההון.

לספר זה תרומה חשובה במספר היבטים. ראשית, הוא מהווה מקור טוב להבנה של המרחב הציבורי ומקומם של ארגונים מתווכים בתוכו. שנית הוא מציג ביקורת, הנסמכת היטב על ממצאים אמפיריים, למספר מוסכמות מושגיות כדוגמת ההבחנה בין סינגור והספקת שירותים, המגבלות שמיומן ציבורי מטיל על פעילות סינגור מוצלחת, הקשר בין הון חברתי והון כלכלי ועוד. שלישית, הוא מציג תמונה חיה עד מאוד, סוערת ואמיתית של התרחשויות חברתיות שלרוב מוצגות בספרות המחקרית באופן מופשט מדי. ולבסוף, הוא מציג מודל מעשי מאוד להתנהלותם של ארגוני "חברה אזרחית".

כתיבתו של ריצ'ארד קוטו אינה מכבידה על הקורא, והספר נעים לקריאה. הקישור של המושגים התיאורטיים להתרחשויות חברתיות אמיתיות אף מגביר את החיוניות של הטקסט. הספר מתאים הן לקהל אקדמי, הן ליוזמים ומנהלי ארגוני "חברה אזרחית", והן לקהל הרחב. זאת משום השילוב של ניתוח תיאורטי ומושגי לצד ניתוחי המקרים שיש בו.

אף כי המחקר שמוצג בספר נעשה בארגונים אמריקאיים יש לו רלוונטיות רבה גם לארגונים ישראלים, שכן המקרים המוצגים בספר הם במקרים רבים טיפוסיים מאוד. יותר מכך, הארגונים המוצגים בספר יכולים לשמש מודל לפעילים בארגונים דומים בארץ. גם המודל הרחב יותר שמציג קוטו בספרו רלוונטי מאוד לישראל ולסוגיות הבולטות שנדונות בהקשר של המגזר השלישי ו"החברה האזרחית" בארץ כיום: שאלת הצורך במדיניות ציבורית כלפי ארגוני המגזר השלישי, הקשיים בגיוס משאבים של ארגוני מגזר שלישי והקשר שלהם להצלחתם וחיוניותם של ארגונים אלו, תרומתם של ארגונים אלו לקידום של אוכלוסיות שוליות ולצמצום הדרתן של קבוצות מיעוט בחברה הישראלית ועוד. לפי קוטו ארגונים אלו אכן מקדמים את הדמוקרטיה. כדאי לקרוא את ספרו בכדי להבין טוב יותר כיצד.

Making Democracy Work Better: Mediating Structures, Social Capital and the Democratic Prospect, by Richard A. Couto, Catherine S. Guthrie (contributor), University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

כפי שניכר משמו של ספר זה, הוא מתבסס על רעיונות שהועלו על ידי רוברט פאטנס בספרו **Making Democracy Work: Civic-Traditions in Modern Italy** משנת 1993, אך מרחיב את המושג "הון חברתי" שעמד במוקד ספרו של פאטנס, ומוסיף לו ממדים נוספים המקושרים היטב לספרות הסוציולוגית המודרנית ולגישות נוספות להבנתו של מושג זה. לשם כך, הספר מסתמך על כתיבהם של Bourdieu ו־Wolpert, Nisbet, ועל מחקר אמפירי מקורי ונרחב.

לפי קוטו, הון חברתי אינו צומח רק על בסיס מוסרי-ערכי, אלא גם על בסיס חומרי-כלכלי. בגישה הדומה לתיאוריית גיוס המשאבים טוען קוטו שלא די באמון, נורמות של הדדיות ושיתוף פעולה בדרכי שלום או מסורות אזרחיות בכדי לפתח הון חברתי, אלא, הוא קושר את היכולת לפתח הון חברתי משמעותי לקיומם של הון כלכלי והון תרבותי כתנאים מקדימים. כראיה לכך הוא מראה כיצד הצלחתם של ארגונים מתווכים בקרב האוכלוסיה הענייה והשולית שבהרי האפאלאציים בארה"ב תלויה למעשה ביכולתם לגייס משאבים כלכליים מסביבתם, ובפרט ממקורות ממשלתיים שונים ומהמגזר העסקי.

בספרו מציג קוטו 23 ניתוחי מקרים מפורטים ומגוונים של ארגונים מתווכים קהילתיים שורשיים (grassroots), שעסקו בהצלחה (אף כי לא תמיד מלאה) בנושאים שונים מבריאות ושיכון ועד איכות הסביבה ופיתוח מנהיגות מקומית. ביניהם היו ארגונים שסיפקו שירותים, לצד כאלו שעסקו בסינגור ושינוי מדיניות, אלו ששילבו סינגור והספקת שירותים, יוזמות מקומיות קטנטנות לצד ארגונים גדולים ורחבי היקף וארגונים בעלי מטרות צרות וממוקדות לצד ארגונים רחבי יריעה וכוללניים. המשותף לכל מגוון הארגונים הללו הוא ביכולתם לגייס משאבים כלכליים שאיפשרו להם לתרגם את הפעילות האזרחית שהתקיימה בהם לכדי הון חברתי בר קיימא.

לאחר הצגת ניתוחי המקרה מראה קוטו כיצד תורמים ארגונים אלו לפיתוחו של הון חברתי ולחילווקה של דמוקרטיה השתתפותית. ארגונים אלו מסוגלים לא רק ליצור רשתות חברתיות כפי שתואר היטב רוברט פאטנס בספרו,

Editor: Eilat Navon ■ Administrative Assistant: Efrat Keynan ■ Graphic Design: Machpil
Published by the ICTR, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

עורכת: אילת נבון ■ עוזרת מנהלית: אפרת קינן ■ עיצוב גרפי: "דפוס המכפיל נגב בע"מ"
מוציא לאור: המרכז הישראלי לחקר המגזר השלישי, אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון נגב