Discourse Between Yesterday and Tomorrow: New Intentional Communities in Israel

# Abstract

This qualitative study, applying Mannheim's theory, explores generational discourse aims for social change in New Intentional Communities (NICs) in 21st-century Israel. applying Mannheim's theory to assess their impact on social change. The empirical application of generational theory to four NICs with cooperative ideology and social practices reveals a fusion between secular and Jewish cultural elements and social-liberal activism. The generational discourse that takes place in the communities motivates actions of constant change both in the community and in its surroundings in the city and offers new perspectives on the potential of socially active communities (ICs) to promote social change. The research shows that generational discourse significantly shapes community identity and propels social change, emphasizing that generational shifts do not diminish the fundamental collectivist ethos of ICs.

**Keywords:** intentional communes, Mannheim, generational unit, generational discourse, social change

# Introduction

The process of social change has been widely studied. There is a gap in the study of the role of contemporary intentional communities (e.g. community) as part of the process. This study re-uses Mannheim's theory of generations and practices of community discourse as promoters of social change. This study examines the importance of community discourse in the process of social change - a. in their cooperative mission as a community and even more so b. the social mission they set for themselves in the city where they live.

Since the 1980s, the number of intentional communities (ICs) has grown steadily in many countries (Oved, 2017; Pitzer 2014), including Israel (Dror, 2017). Israel has a history of ICs, and in recent decades over 200 diverse communities of new Intentional Communities (NICs) have been added in Israel. This is a social development that contradicts the general trend of capitalist, individualistic idealism, that appears to contradict the decline of collectivist practices embraced by Israel’s traditional rural kibbutzim, as the young people creating NICs have chosen a life of collectivism and contribution to society as a lifestyle, intending to generate social change.

As vibrant variations on the rural kibbutz, a previous communal form on the decline, the growth of NICs in Israel asks us to consider both the forces underlying their emergence and their social change missions. This study considers the hypothesis that both can be explained by the concept of generational discourse—or, as will be described below—the concept of a generational unit emerging from Mannheim’s concept of a sociological generation (Pilcher, 1994; Gan, 2020; Getz, 2015; Leccardi, 2017), and how Generational units as NICS consolidate unique knowledge (Ganany, 2022). Mannheim’s theory of generations can offer a structure in which to elucidate the generational discourse underlying these forces. Two main questions emerge from the research on generational discourse: What is the structure, content, and purpose of generational discourse? And, how can it be applied to understanding social change? Focusing on four NICs in Israel, this study expands and analyzes the elements of the generational discourse of the NICs in Israel with the aim of demonstrating how the structure, content, and purpose of the generational discourse has promoted their unique development and social change goals.

Before turning to the study’s design and methods, and a description of the NICs that will be the focus of this research, we provide background on intentional communities and, in particular, provide support for the possibility that they represent a generational unit that can be understood via an examination of generational discourse.

***Intentional Communities in Israel and Other Countries***

The term ‘intentional communities’ has been adopted by many researchers to broadly describe collectivist communities that are also committed to a social cause. For the sake of consistency in the present paper, the term *intentional community* (IC) will refer to such collectivist communities more generally and *new intentional community* (NIC) to their current iteration in Israel. The terms *group* and *community* will also be used interchangeably below, depending either on the quote or the spirit of the text discussed.

ICs in Israel and other countries have changed over time, demonstrating different processes of acclimation and adaptation to the environment and changing lifestyles (Oved, 2017; Pitzer, 2014). In his research on ICs in North America, Pitzer (2014, p. 94) coined the term “adaptive continuum” to describe the developmental stage of collectives, which Pitzer examined in terms of their separation and integration into the surrounding communities. Pitzer identifies seven defining criteria of intentional communities: a shared cause; separation from the surrounding society; some concession of personal choice in favor of group decisions; geographical proximity of members’ residences (a single building or adjacent buildings); personal reciprocity among members of the group; some economic collectivism (with the possibility of private property); a long-term communal lifestyle; and at least five community members who are not related in a group. Based on these criteria, Pitzer concluded that a variety of communities, such as eco-villages and co-housing groups, meet the criteria of intentional communities.

There are some essential differences between the ICs in Israel and those in other countries. **First**, the members of the ICs in other places encourage their children to continue in their footsteps to ensure the continued independent existence of the community and its values and customs. However, Pitzer found that, over time, the second generation left for nearby cities. In contrast, the members of ICs in Israel say they are content if their community lasts for only one generation. **Second**, in Israel, ICs strive to integrate with the surrounding population in work, family, and careers and not remain isolated from society (Dror, 2017). **Third**, many ICs worldwide are involved in social action related to sustainability, ecology, education, and inclusion (Escribano et al., 2020; Jarvis, 2019; Farias, 2017); however, most ICs in Israel have embraced social causes aimed at improving and contributing to Israeli society (Dror, 2017).

The evolution of the concept of NICs in Israel marks a significant transition from— rural kibbutzim—the country’s traditional ICs—while adapting to the changing socio-economic landscape of the country. NICs, some of which still call themselves kibbutzim and maintain a cooperate framework, shifted the collective model from agricultural and rural development to addressing education and social welfare issues in the city (JNS, n.d.; Dror, 2017). The NIC movement encompasses over 200 diverse communities including both Jewish and non-Jewish groups, secular and religious, with most focusing mainly on social welfare and education (Israel21c, 2023).

The various social programs that NICs in Israel have initiated include the contributions to local education and social projects, ~~(e.g.,~~ Kibbutz Masha'ul~~)~~. The first urban kibbutz, Kibbutz Reshet, made a notable impact through its educational network, emphasizing cooperation, partnership, and long-term community commitment. Kibbutz Beit Yisrael, supports residents in nearby public housing, fostering understanding, respect, and building trust (Israel21c, 2023). The widespread influence of NICs is documented in the report of ‘MAKOM Pioneers Organization of ICs for Social Changes,’ which estimates that the activities of these new ICs promote such goals as improving equality, narrowing disparities in education, increasing access to cultural activities, and better integrating the workforce. Together, their activities affect approximately 700,000 people (Barak, 2018).

### **The Sociological Generation and NICs as a Generational Unit**

Mannheim’s generational theory (1923; 1970) posits that members of a society in similar age groups who experience similar historical events will share common cultural traits, ethical codes, and deep social structures. The theory is grounded in the term “sociological generation,” or as Mannheim’s successors called it, the “generational unit.” Referring to small, diverse groups that create movements of social change, this term is preferred in recent research (Beck, 2008; Connolly, 2019, Corsten, 1999; Herzog, 2013; Popescu, 2019).

Studies of social change in history have found that the creation of a generational unit that constitutes an engine for social change requires three components: location, meaning, and actualization. *Location* refers to a conceptual, emotional, and usually also a physical affiliation; meaning is based on a code of values and behavior patterns that are meaningful to the group; and *actualization* refers to activities that fulfill the ideas of the group (Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Herzog, 2013; Watroba, 2018). In addition, social change is seen as occurring when the members of the generational unit succeed in developing public support for their way of life, when they enjoy public recognition, and when their social insights become widespread and are translated into action among the broader public (Mannheim, 1936; 1960, 276-277). Ashowed a.

### **Generational Discourse as a Practice of Social Change**

Researchers have discussed the ways in which the structure and content of generational discourse can serve as a window for examining the messages of generational units (Dant, 1991; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; France & Roberts, 2015; Pilcher, 1994). Accordingly, Dant (1991, 31) claimed that “discursive practice involves social action that can be identified in time and place.” Another example can be found in Foster’s (2013) empirical study of intergenerational conflicts in Canada in which he concludes that a group can be considered a microcosm of its generation, and that analysis of its discourse can help explain how the group serves as a human agency of the generation working for social change. In other words, this view holds that social knowledge is constructed by means of discourse—through narrative or story.

The ways of telling the story of human experience vary with time and technology. According to Leccardi (2017) in a study of the 2008 recession that linked historical-social time with biographical time, the story enabled a unique representation of time for each generation based on its generational experience and social and cultural conditions. In other words, this research suggests that the sense of social identity, belonging, and the emotional meaning that form a sociological generation are important. It follows, then, that the examination of generational discourse requires a multidimensional view that includes levels of the individual, the group, and the surrounding society. Inspired by the work of phenomenologists, such as Berger & Luckmann (1967), Leccardi proposed that identity is not a concept that resides in the mind of the self but rather reflects a process of construction that has its locus in social interaction.

In a comprehensive view of discourse, Habermas (1990) emphasized the importance of time, place, structure, dynamic, and discursiveness, in addition to the power relations expressed in discourse. Like Habermas (1990), Purvis & Hunt (1993) stressed that generational discourse, even in the form of debates and disagreements, forms social relationships employing information, insight and knowledge. Interactive discourse may also contribute to the formation of a core identity in the classification of companies (Hester & Eglin, 1997), reflecting as it does on the specific ways in which societies create, discuss, and negotiate their meaning. In addition to insight information, knowledge and insights, these representations may be forms of ideologies, attitudes, emotions, norms, and values (van Dijk, 2009). Collective identities, whether national or political, have been a favored object of investigation for scholars interested in using discourse analysis to fight social inequalities and prejudice (Fairclough, 1989).

Previous research on Israel supports this view of discourse. Gan (2020) found that every generation has created a unique local language and style of discourse that fits its time and agendas. In addition, in a study of the components of contemporary Hebrew language in the youth movements in Israel, Katriel (1999, 13) found that, in the discourse that adolescents adopted, the central theme usually identified with the middle class in which “Israeliness” was developed as perceived in the public image. These studies suggest that generational discourse can be a tangible representation of the ideas of a generation and the ways in which its members want to actualize these ideas.

# Methods

This qualitative case study examines the social change that the members of the four NICs in Israel aspire to, focusing on community practices and relationships between NIC members. The analysis presented unique view with whom and what the members of the communities talk about, as well as the characteristics of these conversations in terms of Mannheim's theory of generations. In the first stage of the research, the goals of the discourse were examined. In the second stage, the contents of the discourse and its characteristics were investigated. The study was approved by the ethics committee.

A note on the use of a case study: Stake (2005, 438) distinguished case study from methodology: “Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied." According to Van Wynsberghe & Khan (2007, 90), “…Case study [is] about the unit of analysis being discovered or constructed." In keeping with this view, it was therefore important in this study to examine the NICs in terms of "meaningful social action and [an] in-depth understanding of how meaning is created in everyday life and the real-world” (Travis, 1999, 1042).

In examining the generational context of the communities, NICs were selected that were similar in ideology and general organization framework, but that differed from one another in other respects. Most of the members of these NICs were educated in youth movements, kibbutzim, and moshavim, and all were Jewish. Nearly all had direct experience with collective life. The decision to join an NIC with a social agenda was characteristic of all the participants in the study. The members centered their lives in the community and agreed to comply with the decisions the communities made by majority vote. They did, however, differ in lifestyle and their chosen social agenda and initiatives. The different origins of language and culture of the members of one of the communities (Yuval, whose members are part of Kibbutz Masha'ul and primarily native English speakers) added another dimension to the research. The communities also differed with respect to geographical location, year of founding, age of the members, and number of members. The communities’ demographics are summarized in Table 1.

# Table 1. Demographics of Four Target NICs in Israel

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Community | Migvan |  Yuval | Jaffa | Kama |
| Youth movement | Hashomer Hatzair | Hashomer Hatzair | Initially, Habonim-Dror; later, HaMahanot HaOlim  | HaNoar HaOved or no affiliation |
| Membership in an association of communities |  yes | yes  | yes | yes |
| Location in Israel | South | North | Center | South |
| Year of founding | 1987 | 1999 | 2003 | 2005 |
| Approximate number of members in community  | 17 people  | 7 people | 10 people  | 34 people |
| Respondents by Gender | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| 9 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 15 | 19 |

The research was guided by purposive sampling. After locating the NIC communities for the case study, an initial letter was sent to all community members explaining the research purpose and procedure. Of the estimated 68 total community members, 28 consented to be interviewed. Although the total number of community members is estimated due to frequent member transitions, there was a permanent core group in each NIC. The data collection process was primarily based on a semi-structured interview (Stake, 2005). In all, between four and 17 people were interviewed from each community (on the minimum size of a group, see Creswell & Creswell, 2018, 186).

The interview protocol applied thematic/content analysis. The interviews were conducted privately in the homes of the interviewees or at a neighborhood coffee shop. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes until prompts yielded no additional information. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The questions focused on each interviewees’ experiences and development in engaging with the NIC. In particular, they spoke about their personal history and the community's future, and about the community’s social action activities in the surrounding city.

The analysis of the interviews yielded main ideas and themes which enabled the construction of the knowledge universe of the communities, with each interview adding additional information and insights. Analysis of the findings related to the four communities as a single research unit. An analysis of the transcriptions helped identify the central ideas in the discourse and, based on these, the characteristics, intensity, frequency, and main themes of the discourse.

Findings were then sorted into areas of discourse to create a more precise map of the composite of information and discourses taking place in each NIC according to the interviews. As part of the process of ensuring interrater reliability, the findings were sent to representatives of the communities for comment and clarification. In addition, two researchers in this research field were asked to offer feedback as expert peers. Finally, the findings were presented to a forum of colleagues, who also contributed constructive feedback. The discursive themes are described below and include illustrative quotes from the interviewees using fictional names. The communities are identified by their actual names.

# Findings on the Discourse of Social Change

The analysis of the interviews focused on three areas of discourse that reflect the communities ambitions for change: a discourse on changing location (on the choice to live as a cooperative community in the city); a discourse on the pursuit of meaning through changing the practices of the targeted community; and a discourse on the social purpose of the community. The framework of each discourse ranges from the immediate, the familiar, and the personal to broader general discussions about ideas, values, and ideology. The importance of the generational discourse emerges from the ways in which the NIC members describe the challenges, struggles and solutions they adopted on the way to achieving their goal.

## Discourse on Changing Location

Community discourse on the decision to live as a cooperative community in the city can be reflected in an overarching sentiment, expressed by Yair: “The vision of fulfillment [in rural kibbutzim] is an illusion.” Or, as another community member relates:

I felt that the kibbutz...it's my home...people I love...[but] an environment where I didn't find enough common language. Maybe I could have fought and made changes, but my feeling was...not to try to change what exists.... A need of mine is to do something else, something new...yes, ideological! (Miriam)

Here the discourse reflects a sense of disappointment with the present state of the rural kibbutz which is seen either as an illusion of a once-glorious project now perceived in decline, or no longer reflecting a common ideological position. Some interviewees attributed this to the perceived failure of the previous generation to uphold and advance the kibbutz movement, with one NIC member, Jaffa, stating: “Within these communities, a lively, critical, and emotional group discourse emerged concerning the rural kibbutz.” As Guy also expresses:

We understood that social change motivated by… a tension that always needs to be present… between the ability to say we are now building a society where there needs to be a shared economy, shared intentions, shared learning, and shared praxis...the internal group discussion allows for this tension.

The desire to form a bridge between past, present, and future worlds arises from the understanding that social change and community evolution are not isolated processes. The disappointment with the past melds with remembrance and longing for the possibility of living near their families in the pastoral atmosphere of rural life. As Hepworth (2002) discovered in his study on sociological generations, these recollections enable a sense of “generational subjectivity,” which simultaneously evokes memories of positive experiences and a nostalgic longing.

The discourse among the members of the NIC centered on finding a home for the fundamental principles and practical aspects of their ideas and lifestyles. A deep emphasis was placed on building a meaningful and fulfilling life for the individual and the community.

To fulfill its ideology and its implementation goals, the communities have undergone significant structural changes. As Ron explains the birth of the children and the move to a permanent home in a kibbutz neighborhood in the city. Esther's words highlight the transition from communal living to establishing permanent homes and families, signifying a different social construction of the community and its positioning within the urban and community neighborhood:

…Suddenly...this is your home, it's not a place you're alienated from, both in terms of aesthetics, space and a sense of belonging... There's a statement here that we're not in temporary houses but permanent homes.

Reflections capture the essence of communal living, highlighting the value of shared spaces and traditions in fostering a sense of belonging and togetherness. Dan adds another layer to this narrative:

...Out here in the square, we sit on the grass and talk and be together for Shabbat receptions and holidays… [We] want to be together… I don't know if it will still be right for me in 20 years... [It’s a] very different from the approach of the [rural] kibbutz...

This statement emphasizes the informal yet significant practices contributing to the community's social fabric. The individual and collective dialogue showcases the dynamic negotiation between personal dreams and the community's shared vision despite the differences and differentiation from the rural kibbutz. The community space that gives the community the feeling of home is reminiscent mainly of the rural kibbutz's customs, experiences, and practices. Dan adds that the public space becomes a venue for community activity that is not limited to the community members but is open to city residents, highlighting the community's outward engagement.

## ***Discourse on the Pursuit of Meaning***

Beyond tangible considerations related to place, the interviews revealed a profound emphasis on cultivating meaning and constructing a meaningful and fulfilling life. The discourse focused on striving for meaning through changing the practices of the intentional community.

Every change starts from within... Life is essentially a workshop. I have the tools to cope with them, to understand them. I believe that changes do not happen because one day, you sit so satisfied with yourself and then say – now I need to make a change. Changes almost always come where you get a slap…[It is] very much involved in awareness and the energy (Jacob).

Jacob's statement highlights a profound reflection on the nature of social change and encapsulates an understanding of the personal transformation required for change to occur. The nature of that change, emerging from growing social gaps and the desire to act as active partners in social change, are reflected in Miriam's words:

Today... the social situation is very, very bad, [with] many gaps between rich and poor, between secular and religious, between development towns and kibbutzim. So the feeling was that it was [important] to realize a dream in the way of coming and being and making a change—but from the place you live in and not from outside...

To this, Dan adds the concept of NCIs members as agents of social change who are nonetheless a part of society. The change also took place within the community, as Hannah says: in "significant parts of my life, when I feel that I am standing at a crossroads that I need to make some kind of change... something that says - enough! What has happened so far is beautiful, now we need something else." She understands this as a "soft shell junction" and talks about the personal bias points that require reflection on the need for innovation and self-exploration. Similarly aware of *meaning*, Yael discusses the adjustments in communal living arrangements to suit their and their families' needs better, emphasizing the importance of taking breaks from the community to rejuvenate.

The analysis on this discourse reveals the complexity of living in a mission-driven cooperative community. The required flexibility among individuals and families indicates that change is a constant part of the community's life, necessitating periodic adjustments to maintain harmony and cohesion.

Community members not only seek to create a space that aligns with their ideals of collectivism and equality but are also deeply invested in the pursuit of personal and collective meaning. This pursuit is essential to their broader engagement with society and their contributions to social change, highlighting the intricate relationship between individual transformation and collective action.

## Discourse on Social Change

The discourse on social change was held within the environment in which the groups chose to locate. It was unique in several respects. Discourse on social change is the primary discourse for examining the declarations of the NIC members regarding their practices, and it serves as an acid test of the implementation of their social causes.

Taking the kibbutz idea and updating the methodology without losing the values. Instead of a factory, there's education and social work. Social justice without an agricultural economy, without a rural settlement... Taking responsibility for a commitment to improving the state. Today, it sounds logical, but back then, it was revolutionary in our eyes (James).

Here James’ views reflect what in Mannheim’s (1923/1970) terms is the discourse of generational actualization. This discourse deals with the realization of the social idea and their integration into life in the city as, incorporate the local tones and nuances, and create shared events and memories with the other residents of the cities. Furthermore, daily activities were based on acquaintances and shared interests: participation in the city choir, meetings at the center for religious studies, activities in the city choir, kindergarten, and school meetings for children and the shopping center.

Facing the communal social task, each of its members turned to implement a personal mission, and the challenges were many, as Devora narrates:

... [We underwent a training called 'Empowerment of the Disabled,' [which is] the social model. ... In the protected housing [the hostels], they decided to expand the [number of] houses… It's their home, and they are the tenants, and they will decide. These are people with intellectual disabilities: one doesn't hear, one doesn't speak, one has moderate intellectual disability...and it developed into a model. We have mandatory data, and some data can be changed. [So] various arbitrary factors, supervision data, money, safety, and all the security, all these data are mandatory. What can be changed… is discussed. ... We talked from family to family. We asked them to let the tenants be the decision-makers. We will invite them at key points, and they [the parents] will have veto rights.… [Each has different views.] The engineer said, ‘My interest is that it must be safe regarding safety and construction quality.’ The architect said, ‘I am committed to architectural values. It's important.’ To build a partnership, we [the NIC members] said, ‘We are committed to empowerment and partnership with the tenants.... All values must be integrated.’ So, they sat, discussed, and created something new. ... It's work. I like it when things come from the bottom up. I'm a bit obsessive, but there will be change.

Involving the residents, and in this case, people with intellectual disabilities and their families, as well as professionals in the project, embodies the community values in a specific approach to social change that change should come from the bottom up, placing the individual at the center and empowering them. Similarly, in the project described by Yehuda:

We began a project of raising small animals, squirrels, and parrots that could be placed in a classroom [at an Ethiopian caravan site]. [It’s] a project that works both on the educational and emotional sides.... Relationships were formed with children from a social perspective, and teachers said that the social atmosphere has improved. We expanded the project to three schools, and then to the entire city and [with the nonprofit organization] the Society for the Protection of Nature.... The emphasis was on social work.

Connecting different population groups within the school framework and developing active teaching that educates towards values is at the project's foundation. It developed into a separate school in the city. The credit for the success of the project is given to the municipality and the school and the NCIS members remained as they said more in the background in order to pave the way for other projects (Yehuda).

Community members noted that to achieve their goal of transforming the relationship between the NIC members and the residents of the cities where they lived into a bilateral exchange, a bond and a shared consciousness with the “it” in I-It must be formed (Buber, 2012, 27). In other words, it is necessary to create an entity that is neither “I” nor “Thou” but “We” that includes the residents and the NIC members as one community.

Engagement in the social mission also provides the livelihood of the community members and involves implementing the community's social conception of change. But, as those interviewed note, this involves a lot of effort and a reward that will probably only be seen more over time. As Yehuda added:

You feel that from year to year, it gets more complicated. We succeeded on a scale… [Native-born Israelis] who don't want the immigrant children [in their schools].... [But] within two years, the school has the highest registration in the city. [It is] a real success. But in the end, you look a few years ahead and you see that it's enough for a department manager to change. They cut hours here [and change] some standard there, and everything deteriorates and returns to the same [frustrating] stage.... I'm involved in a few projects there but less [now]. I hope I will be able to influence in another way... I work in marketing and support (Yehuda).

The findings elucidate that the discourse surrounding social change within New Intentional Communities (NICs) underscores the strategic relocation to urban peripheries, the quest for a meaningful existence through practices tailored to the community and its members, and a concentrated effort on its overarching social mission. Participants collectively express disenchantment with the conventional rural kibbutz model, underscoring the significance of personal transformation and positioning their communities as pivotal in catalyzing widespread social change.

# Discussion

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| This study examined how members of NICs articulate their motivations for establishing communities as part of their vision for broader social change. The discussion of the findings focuses on analysing the two main category: terminology and practice by time and place. This can be seen in the topics and content, time and place in the forum. direct speech or indirect speech, about the private or public space and active practice in the community and outside the community. | terminology (direct speech or indirect speech) | Practice (active practice in the community and outside the community) |
| time (past, present, future) |  |  |
| Place (privet sphere, public sphere) |  |  |

The importance in analyzing aspects of time, location, structure, and dynamics, as Habermas (1990) and generational researchers (Aboim, 2013; Dant, 1991; Edmunds & Turner, 2005) suggested, to obtain a more accurate picture of the relationships between the discourses conducted in the NICs in this research.

The NICs conducted a generational discourse along ~~two axes~~ at the same time, where one referred to chronological time and concerned the rural kibbutz, and the other referred to location within the consciousness of general Israeli society. The discourse that referred to time and the rural kibbutz was a conflictual discourse of the generational struggle, which generational researchers consider inevitable. Connolly (2019) and Roberts & France (2021), for example, have argued that the formation of a new generation involves a confrontation regarding worldviews, political attitudes, ways to realize ideology, and so forth. However, most of the members of the NICs noted a gradual conciliation among those around them and their families with their choices, reflecting an essentially different process from the crisis described by generational researchers (Edmunds & Turner, 2005). According to the interviewees, the methods and culture of the discourse customary in the NICs, which they brought from their parents’ homes, helped reduce the conflicts. In time, Thus, the present research shows how, as Steven & France (2020) showed, the structure and the practices of intergenerational discourse in the “NIC generation” developed in a spiral form that contributed to the development and maturity as well as to the NIC members’ adaptation to the new situation in which they now lived.

This discourse accompanied the interviewees throughout their lives. It was dominant and located in the space of the individual, the community, and the social causes they promoted, and it constituted the central axis of the discourse. However, the analysis also revealed that from the perspective of time, there was a motion in the life cycle from childhood to adulthood and old age, which inevitably included the roles of parenthood, work, and livelihood. Thus, for example, with the establishment of the families and the birth of children in the NICs, and afterward when the children grew up and left home, the NICs experienced processes of institutionalization alongside changes in the perceived boundaries between the community, the individual, and the family so that the community became a collection of families.

Over time, the center of gravity shifted to different external subjects that were important to the NICs. A clear example of this is the importance of the effect of the NIC on the surrounding community and its lifestyle, which was replaced by the intensification of the discourse on the role of the individual in the community. In Dant’s (1991) terms, this choice combined social action characteristic of the time and place. The findings of this study indicate that the social cause was present, but daily personal life simplified the vision, and the imagination created the generational subjectivity (Hepworth, 2002) of the NICs. This is consistent with the findings of Pitzer (2014) regarding the process that occurred over time in similar communities in Israel and other countries.

The change over time in the emphases of the discourse regarding social activism is evident in the keywords of the interviews and the connections between them. Further, the central ideas in the NIC discourse highlight additional differences. Examples of such ideas can be found in the words accompanied by strong emotion (such as fulfillment, enabling, and responsibility). The use of concepts that the NIC members had been taught in their parents’ homes and in the communities in which they grew up appeared in the NIC discourse as well. The research shows that the NIC members had transformed these terms into reality in their present lives, thus conceptualizing and realizing memory and history through language to create a sense of identity and belonging to the NIC in the present. The link between the language of the past and the language of the present emerged in the NIC discourse on ideas and concepts related to processes and perceptions of change. This was an internal change regarding values and an external change derived from action.

The analysis of the personal and group discourses indicates a worldview and path the interviewees chose to follow in the framework of their NICs. The diverse subjects covered in the discourse reveal processes related to developing group and personal identities. They indicate issues that the NICs adopted and others that they rejected, as well as the events they experienced as individuals or as a community that became significant. The practice of discourse and the understandings that arose from it enabled the construction of a new modern collectivism that responded to the needs and aspirations of the members. In Habermas’s (1990) terms, the discourse conducted in these NICs defined the dominant ideas and the boundaries of the discourse, creating a fruitful discourse that promoted social development.

The generational discourse as a terminology and practice was embedded in all aspects of life in the NICs. It can be found between the members of the NICs, between members and their parents, and between the members and the people in the surrounding community. This is an overall discourse that, as Foster (2013) put it, activates the body, the organization, and the space, and it includes daily arrangements, decision-making, and the like. It is a discourse examining past and common assumptions through a critical, contemporary lens. Finally, it attempts to draw lessons from the past while preserving the ideational essence of collectivism and concession of symbols, rituals, and decisions that do not serve the establishment of life together.

The combination of terminology and practice led to the roots of an “evolution of a language” that generated, as the research shows, the generational discourse unique to the members of the NICs. Its meaning was social change that is continually adapted, in location, meaning, and actualization, in the way that Mannheim and his successors referred to the actualization of the sociological generation (Mannheim, 1923/1970). It can be said, then, that the members of the NICs described a process similar to that described by Mannheim (1923/1970) of separation from and development of an alternative to that shaped by the former generation reflecting an inevitable process of gradual change by a generation that leads to the integration of their worldview with that of the past generations.

In terms of generation theory, the NIC members tried to create a new “paradigm of consciousness” with the city residents of multiculturalism, cooperation, and shared goals. They wanted to convince the residents that their intentions were genuine and honest. This was the ideal, but its realization required action on many levels.

Their for this, generational discourse can set off a process of developing social relationships and demonstrate intentions for social change, as generational researchers have found (Purvis & Hunt, 1993).

The study has several limitations, including the subjectivity of the interviews. Further studies incorporating survey methodology and/or observational studies may provide a more comprehensive view than was possible using interviews. In addition, the study only focused on the members of secular NICs. Including religious or non-Jewish NICs in future research, as well as the view of city residents toward the NICs could yield a more holistic understanding of generational discourse in intentional communities. Future research could broaden these insights to global contexts, including urban perspectives on NICs and a deeper linguistic analysis of their discourse, with the potential to validate the model that emerged from the analysis of the findings.

**Summary**

This study applies Mannheim's generational theory to New Intentional Communities (NICs) in Israel, examining its role in fostering social change. By conducting case studies and semi-structured interviews with 28 members of four secular NICs, it explores member experiences, personal histories, community challenges, and social activism. The findings demonstrate that generational discourse significantly shapes member identities and promotes a new form of modern collectivism. This discourse is pivotal in driving, directing, and realizing social change, embedding itself in all aspects of life within NICs.

The NICs, blending secular culture with Jewish traditions, have developed a set of values that support an activistic worldview that align with modern social-liberal ideals. This integration has led to the creation of an active, supportive community structure. The innovative engagement of NICs with urban environments is highlighted, especially in terms of their organizational structures and social consciousness, where time plays a significant role.

The study underscores the significance of generational discourse in driving social change and fostering identity and belonging. It provides a contemporary perspective to reassess past experiences and assumptions, offering insights into the dynamics within ICs and the unique discourse of each generation. The research suggests that generational discourse and a vision for inclusive, respectful partnerships could extend to broader societal groups in Israel and elsewhere.

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