The necessity of generational discourse for social change: A case study of cooperative new intentional communities in Israeli cities

# Abstract

This qualitative, empirical study applies Karl Mannheim's theory of generations to analyze discourse in New Intentional Communities (NICs) in Israeli cities. Examining the interaction between the content of the discourse and its structure reveals a structure of three axes along which the process of social change that these communities seek to bring about is founded: the lifestyle axis, the location axis, and the mission axis. Analysis of the research findings indicates that discourse is an essential practice for analyzing communities in a sociological sphere. Here, there is a parallel between the three components of Mannheim's sociological generation and the three stages of discourse in communities: discourse about identity and awareness that culminates in the discourse of action.

**Keywords**: generational discourse, Mannheim’s generational theory, social change, intentional communities in Israel

# Introduction

In recent years, there has been increased research interest in “generational discourse” (Dant, 2013; Gan, 2020; Leccardi, 2017). Researchers have investigated the structure and content of such discourse, its purpose, and how social change can be understood through it. The phenomenon of generational discourse is part of Karl Mannheim’s theory of generations, which deals with the cultural characteristics, value codes, and deeply embedded social structures that lead to social action in general, and action undertaken to bring about social change in particular (Mannheim, 1970). This theory is based on the concept of a “sociological generation,” which is a community that drives change.

Contemporary generational researchers, including Mannheim’s successors, tend to prefer the term “generational unit” because it allows for the investigation of diverse types of small groups that create a movement for social change (Beck, 2008; Connolly, 2019; Corsten, 1999; Herzog, 2013; Popescu, 2019). Researchers who have examined social changes throughout history have found that for a generational unit to form and serve as a catalyst for social change, three components must be present. The first is social location, which refers to an attachment to a conceptual and emotional place and, in most cases, a physical place as well. The second is attribution of meaning, based on a code of values and behavioral patterns that are meaningful for the group. The third is actualization or activities that help realize the group’s ideals (Ganany-Dagan, 2022; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Herzog, 2013; Watroba, 2018).

According to Mannheim (1970), social change occurs when members of a generational unit succeed in gaining sympathy, recognition, and public support for their direction, and when their social ideals become widespread and translated into actions among the general public. However, Mannheim did not clearly define in empirical terms how a generational unit is formed and how it creates social change (Corsten, 1999; Dant, 2013; Leccardi, 2017). Rather, he said that words are “repositories” for meanings and that ways of thinking or worldviews are built from these words (Mannheim, 1960). Words, and the way they are used, create a language, and discourse is formed through language.

The purpose of the current research is to examine new intentional communities (NIC) in Israeli cities by looking at the interaction between the content and structure of their discourse, which is central to the social change processes that they are advancing. The study is based on findings from previous studies, which indicated that NICs are essentially a generational unit with a physical location, defined lifestyles, attributed meaning, and an ideology that they are working to actualize (Ganany-Dagan, 2021).

After a theoretical review of generational units and discourse as a practice of change, the research field of NIC and the research methods will be described. The findings chapter presents key themes that emerged from the interviews, dealing with social aspects of the discourse in the research field. The discussion section looks at the structure of generational discourse, its content, and the social change processes that the NIC seeks to bring about, in the context of the generational unit’s development.

Throughout this article, the terms “group” and “community” are used interchangeably, because in this context their meaning is the same. The term “commune” carries other meanings that may complicate the analysis of the issue and is deliberately avoided.

# Literature review

## Generational discourse as a practice of social change

Foucault (2019) defined discourse as a set of statements that fit into a single pattern. He noted that when objects, statements, concepts, or themes (such as science, ideology, theory, or objectivity) arise in discourse, the distinction between them creates forms of representation, codes, conventions, or terminology. These, in turn, create historically situated fields of cultural meanings, which are translated into discursive practices. Similarly, generational and cultural researchers refer to empirical aspects of discourse analysis by focusing on issues such as cultural differences between generational units that are working together to achieve a goal (Edmunds & Turner, 2005) or memory and discourse (Corsten, 1999).

Some researchers claim that in order to be understood, a social discourse must reach a wide audience, and thus develop into a generational discourse (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2014; Dant, 2013; Edmunds & Turner, 2005). This implies that a generation does not function only as a cultural or structural unit, but through a dominant cultural narrative that appears at a given time and place.

In empirical studies of intergenerational conflicts, researchers have looked at the structure and content of generational discourse as a way to analyze the messages of generational units (Dant, 2013; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; France & Roberts, 2015). Foster (2013) concluded that a group can be seen as a microcosm of a generation and that analyzing the group’s discourse can help explain how it serves as human agency for the generational unit working for social change. This approach differs from research that is focused on the linguistic aspects (Van Dijk, 2015) or pragmatic aspects (Foucault, 2019) of discourse. However, it shares the desire to understand what is being said: the discourse content and meaning (Van Dijk, 2015).

The current study uses a sociological approach to examine the ideas around which the content and structure of a community’s discourse are organized, and their distinctive way of articulating their shared social goals (Dant, 2013; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; France & Roberts, 2015). Regarding the ~~structure~~ transtemporal and global nature of discourse, Dant (2013, p. 7) claimed that: “'Discourse' emerges as an appropriate object of study in a number of places at more or less the same time.” Leccardi (2017) conducted a longitudinal study in various European countries (starting with the recession of 2008 and ending in 2016) on perceptions of the future among young people (born after 2000) and found that a generation develops its own representation of time according to their experiences as well as the social and cultural conditions. Leccardi linked socio-historical time with biographical time to show how people’s narratives about their life experiences give form to their generational experiences, and vice versa. “In other words, it tends to change in keeping with historical transformations in the ways of representing the relationship between past, present, and future,” (Leccardi, 2017, p. 63)

 Leccardi (2017) showed that for contemporary generations, technological change and globalization have led to the rapid integration of the immediate future into the present so that the gap between action and result has almost disappeared. These findings indicate that action and experience are important factors in discourse since they generate conceptual affinity, a sense of social belonging, and the feeling that their actions were successful, on which a generational unit is based.

In terms of content, generational discourse structures members’ shared information and knowledge, but debates and disputes also contribute to this construction, because they create new insights (Purvis & Hunt, 1993). Gan (2020) found that in Israel, each generation has created its own distinctive local language and discourse style, which are adapted to the time and current issues. According to Gan, in recent decades, the predominant discourse in rural intentional communities in Israel has delved into a wide range of organizational, mission-oriented, and economic issues, including the norms and values that are integrated into the mindset of Israeli society overall. Katriel (1999) studied contemporary Hebrew language use in Israeli youth movements and found that their discourse reflects the middle-class mainstream that established the image of “Israeliness” as it is widely perceived by the general public. Research on the structure and content of discourse shows that generational discourse tangibly represents a generation’s ideas (Dant, 2013; Mannheim, 1970). Discourse represents the way that the NIC members want their communities to be manifest.

## Intentional communities in Israel and around the world

Since the 1980s, dozens of new intentional communities have been founded around the world (Oved, 2017; Pitzer, 2014) and in Israel (Michaeli & Dror, 2008). There are thousands of adult members in these communities in Israel (Barak, 2018; Michaeli & Dror, 2008). This is a social phenomenon that goes against the current; rather than choosing capitalism and individualism, these young people are choosing to be part of a community (whether it has a religious or socialist ideology) and to make a social contribution through a lifestyle that aims to bring about social change.

In his research on Intentional Communities (ICs) in North America Pitzer (2014) coined the term “*adaptive continuum”* ” to describe the change process taking place in rural and urban ICs around the world. According to this concept, the New Intentional Communities (NICs) that have emerged in recent decades are a continuation of the development of the traditional ICs that began to operate at the end of the nineteenth century (Oved, 2017). Pitzer (2014) listed seven characteristics for ICs: Leadership; Ownership; Familyism; Partnership; Adaptation, Growth, Expansion; and at least five people who are not family members or couples in the group. Based on these criteria, communities such as eco-villages and co-housing are ICs, as are kibbutzim and other cooperative settlements in Israel (Oved, 2017). (Kibbutzim are collective communities in Israel, based on socialist values. Most members are secular. All are Jewish.) Members of ICs around the world encourage their children to maintain their way of life, values, and customs, so the community will continue to exist and not assimilate into the surrounding social environment.

In Israel, intentional communities have undergone modification. Previously, all the income of a kibbutz and its members was put into a common pool and divided among families according to their size. Recently, kibbutzim have been privatized, and now members are responsible for their own livelihood. However, the kibbutz remains an economic and social cooperative, and members make decisions together regarding the development of the organization and its economy, and on accepting members (Ben-Rafael & Topel, 2020).

Unlike traditional ICs, NICs around the world have a social mission in addition to creating a cooperative lifestyle. Many are involved with ecology and sustainability, and others are involved in diverse fields such as education or caring for people with special needs (Escribano et al., 2020; Farias, 2017). In Israel, NICs take on social missions perceived as contributing to and improving Israeli society. According to the National Council of Mission-Driven Communities in Israel (known by the Hebrew acronym MAKOM, meaning “place”), an umbrella organization for many NICs in Israel, these communities strive to reduce educational gaps, make culture more accessible, and integrate people with disabilities and youth at risk into employment opportunities (Mandel Foundation, 2023). It is estimated that this activity affects some 700,000 people, indicating that these NICs have a beneficial effect on the general Israeli public (Barak, 2018). Unlike NICs in other parts of the world, members of NICs in Israel wish to remain integrated into the surrounding society, particularly in the realms of work, career, and family. They often choose to settle in cities in Israel’s social periphery (Michaeli & Dror, 2008).

# Method

Members of NICs in Israeli cities that participated in this study may be divided into two types: urban kibbutzim and groups of youth movement alumni. An urban kibbutz is a community of a few dozen people who join together to live a shared mission-driven lifestyle in a city, based on the cooperative tradition of rural kibbutzim. Youth movement alumni also join together to form communities with a shared mission life; currently, such communities have several hundred members, in dozens of groups located in rural and urban areas throughout Israel (Michaeli & Dror, 2008).

## Research questions

The main research question examined is: How does generational discourse function as a central element in the social change processes that NICs in Israel are trying to bring about? Several important secondary questions arose during the research: What are the elements of generational discourse in these communities? Is there a correlation between the discourse elements and the developmental stages of the generational unit?

## Research method

This research is a case study of NICs in Israel. It is based on a research framework that has been used to examine characteristics of discourse and experiences among various social groups (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). As is common in qualitative research of this type, no hypothesis was formulated prior to beginning the investigation of the field of NICs. As described by Robert Stake (2005, p. 443): “Case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied.” This approach offers an opportunity for broad examination and interpretation during the research process. In seeking to understand NIC members’ experience of the processes they undertake to bring about social change, I chose to analyze the structure and content of their discourse, using an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

I selected NICs that are similar to each other in ideology and organizational framework. For example, most of them participated in various socialist youth movements. However, they differ from each other on several core issues, such as the degree of social collectivism and background demographics: their geographic location, the year they were founded, members’ ages, and the population size. Members in one of the selected communities, Yuval, come from the United Kingdom and therefore differ from the others in terms of mother tongue and culture of origin. This diversity enhanced the research interest. Table 1 shows the basic characteristics of the communities studied. All participants joined the NICs when they were in their 20s.

Insert Table 1 about here

They each have educational and social missions that they operated by the nonprofit organization each one of them establish. For Migvan, the mission is to develop individual and group programs to integrate people with disabilities into community life. For Yuval, the mission is to establish inclusive kindergartens and schools that integrate special needs and normative students together. They also operate and maintain the Collective Movement Archives. For Yafo, the mission is to create youth movements and schools based on nonformal educational principles and promote Jewish-Arab dialogue. They also maintain and develop the Collective Holidays Archives. For Kama, the mission is to offer educational and rehabilitative activities for disconnected/alienated youth, at a neighborhood café.

Data were collected through face-to-face, open-ended, personal interviews. First, a cover letter was sent to all 68 members of the selected NICs, explaining the study’s rationale and framework. A total of 28 community members were interviewed: 4 each from the Kama, Yaffa, and Yuval communities and 17 from Migvan. Of the interviewees, 19 were women and 21 were men. Their ages ranged between 23 and 45 at the time of the research. All of them work in liberal (white collar or blue collar) professions, many in formal or supplementary education.

The interviews began by asking the interviewees about their personal background, the path to joining the community, motives for joining, and thoughts about life in the community as an individual and as a family. Interviewees were allowed to respond without interruption. Then, additional questions were asked for expansion and clarification. For example, they were asked about their community’s founding ideology, their social and mission-driven activities, the process of integrating members into the community, and thoughts regarding the activity implementation to date.

The interviews lasted until all data saturation was achieved, usually between 60 and 90 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Pseudonyms are used whenever quoting or referring to the interviewees. The study received approval from the ethics committee of Yad Tabenkin, the kibbutz movement’s research and documentation center.

## Data analysis

The initial data analysis was conducted on the background data of the interviewees and the communities. Subsequent analyses examined specific concepts, such as their values and beliefs. The transcripts were re-read to identify themes and to note the frequency and intensity of these themes in the texts. Various types of discourse were identified as well as the main topics that arise in the community’s discourse (i.e., practical or philosophical, discussion about the past, present, or future). Later in the process, the focus was on the structure and content of the discourse and contexts dealing with social change. To ensure accuracy, a copy of the findings was sent to community representatives for review, and they were able to refine the terms.

# Results

The results reveal the structure and content of discourse in the NICs. The study further explores the findings of a study that found that these communities are generational units and meet all three conditions: location, meaning, and actualization (Ganany-Dagan, 2021). Analysis of the discourse content and structure focused on several organizing ideas that emerged:

1. Discourse framework: ranging from close, familiar, and private discourse through distanced, general discourse with others;
2. Discourse participants: the individual, family, community, or other people;
3. Discourse intention: purposes for sharing thoughts and ideas;
4. Time period discussed: the community’s beginning, the course of its development, or the current period;
5. Location discussed: the home, community, city, or country.

The content of the discourse in the communities may be divided into three main themes: (1) internal discourse about oneself, family, and community; (2) critical discourse on the traditional rural kibbutzim and the kibbutz movement; (3) discourse about the community’s social mission in the part of the city where they reside.

## The first discourse theme: Internal discourse among community members

Internal discourse is the predominant and most frequent type in NICs. The community members spoke about their interaction as a practice that creates discourse and leads to decisions regarding their lifestyles. They said that their approach is based on principles of sharing, and therefore the primary importance of discourse is its very existence; the decisions made are not necessarily an essential aspect of it.

The content of the internal discourse emerges from texts that community members study together from Jewish literature and socio-philosophical writings, and daily practices in their community life. The discourse examines assumptions regarding their ideological-historical origins. All the communities chose names that have symbolic meanings rooted in these origins. At the same time, their discourse deals with practical aspects of community life and items on their agenda about decisions that must be made pertaining to, for example, studies, financial expenses, and the community’s goals for the next year. The NIC members described some discourse issues in terms of their desire to as one said: “turn back the wheel of time” and renew and update the Zionist vision to reflect contemporary ideas and lessons learned, with a focus on social and educational entrepreneurship.

In Dant’s (2013) terms, these NIC members are choosing to undertake social action that characterizes a certain prior time and space. Their decisions create a kind of “compression of time” as Leccardi called it, which enables community members to move between past and present ideas and experiences as if they form a single entity. As in traditional communes in Israel and around the world (Oved, 2017), it was found that in the communities examined in this study, the frequency of internal discourse tends to diminish and the discourse content changes over time, as the community settles into its permanent site, its members become professionalized in their occupational fields, and they have children and raise families.

Katriel (1999) noted that discourse has been part of the cultural basis of Israeli youth movements and intentional communities since they were established. Similarly, NICs today strive to preserve and develop the framework and methods of discourse. According to the interviewed community members, internal group discourse creates a connection between the individual and the group, strengthens attachment to its ideals, and ultimately leads to action for social change. Their assertions reflected those of researchers in the field of generational sociology (Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Herzog, 2013; Watroba, 2018),

## The second discourse theme: Critical discourse on rural kibbutzim and the kibbutz movement

The second discourse realm deals with the gap between the ideal of the traditional, rural kibbutz and its realization. The subject of kibbutzim and their practices provides fertile ground for dialogue in the NICs. The interviewees’ narratives and examples indicated that they are intimately familiar with the structure and content of kibbutz life. Some of them grew up in kibbutzim, and some spent time in kibbutzim as part of their youth movement training. Only a few were unfamiliar with the kibbutz framework and kibbutz life before joining the NIC.

Following their introductory statements, many interviewees voiced lively, critical, and charged discussions about rural kibbutzim, indicating that they hold a unique place in the groups’ discourse. Memories and past experiences were often recalled in a satirical or exaggerated way. This showed a subjective generational perception of their connection to this kind of community, but also included lessons that could be applied to the present; this is similar to findings by France and Roberts (2015) in their research on sociological generations.

The interviewees expressed disappointment regarding the current state of the ambitious kibbutz enterprise. In their view, its failure lies in the previous generations’ inability to promote and develop collective work. As one said: “Realization of the vision [in rural kibbutzim] is an illusion.” Their disappointment was combined with nostalgia and longing for a life that is close to family, with many opportunities for meeting with friends, a safe community that provides, for example, car-free areas with bicycle paths, and agricultural work. Their common experience with rural kibbutzim provides a unifying connection, meaning, and emotional affinity among the NIC members. The collective narrative of their experiences with kibbutzim and the kibbutz movement was intertwined with personal experiences in childhood and adulthood. Their common experience establishes social relationships through insights and debates that are “awash with talk of ‘discourse’ and ‘ideology,’” to use the terms of Purvis and Hunt (1993, p. 473).

The NIC members interpreted their experiences as contributing to their choice of a location for their community, its ways of life, and especially the degree of community participation and sharing. This narrative and discourse are also fundamental to the social mission that the community members selected as their goal.

These findings indicate that even four and five generations after the establishment of the rural kibbutzim, the NIC members are still having lively and poignant discussions concerning them and their meaning. The intense debate regarding the kibbutz lifestyle and practices indicates that it remains an active and present consideration in the decisions made by the generation of the founders’ children and grandchildren to act according to its example, or contrary to it. This finding is consistent with the research of France and Roberts (2015), regarding a spiraling repetition of generational responses to experiences and social phenomena. A similar phenomenon emerged in Gan’s (2020) research on the discourse between the first and third generations in rural kibbutzim who, like their peers in the NICs, critique the basic assumptions and truths held by the previous generations on the kibbutzim.

However, for NIC members, this discourse concerns a social framework to which they no longer belong, making their intense emotions when speaking about it particularly intriguing. The NIC members often spoke about tangible concepts, such as location (urban vs. rural), social mission, and cooperative practices of a shared life, rather than equality. There is often confusion between these two concepts. The NIC members saw from their experiences that there was no true equality in rural kibbutz life, and the best one can strive for is sharing. The rural kibbutz enshrined the concept of equality, but never truly achieved it. The NIC members want to work towards a sharing lifestyle, without striving for a goal as impossible as full equality

It also addresses their need to establish a meaningful life. The interviewees indicated that they are not disconnected from the past, but rather are appropriating parts of the collective and socialist ideology while rejecting other parts of it. In adapting to city life, the NIC members place themselves in the location, a concept that has both generational importance and importance to the analysis of the discourse (Foster, 2013; Mannheim, 1970). This choice allows the NIC members to create a community framework infused with meaning, yet positions them as a generational unit distinct from its environment and separate from its past.

Regarding the intergenerational aspect, the NIC members expressed interest in the generation of their parents and grandparents who founded the kibbutzim, alongside concern for their children’s future in their community. Although in reference to their children’s future in the community, the NIC members refrained from stating a definitive position on the continuity of their community-building enterprise. They claimed that they do not aspire to multi-generational continuity. They chose this collective urban lifestyle for themselves; their children will decide to live as they wish. As Reuven, from the Migvan community, said: “We will continue to live here; they will live their lives.”

This perception reflects their observation that the community’s economic survival does not depend on the next generation continuing to work on the farm. The urban community’s economy depends on skills such as social communication, training and education, and earning a living in the liberal professions. These do not require a succeeding generation in the same sense as is required for an agricultural economy. In this respect, the general perception among the NIC members differs from that in intentional communities in the United States (Pitzer, 2014) and in other kibbutzim in Israel (Ben-Rafael & Topel, 2020), which placed great importance on keeping the next generation on their path of collectivism.

## The third discourse theme: The social mission

The third discourse realm pertains to other people in the city where the community is located. The structure of this discourse realm differs from the previous ones and is central in interpreting their statements regarding their social mission. In Mannheim’s (1970) terms, this is the discourse regarding the generational unit’s actualization. Unlike the other statements concerning memories and past experiences, this discourse realm pertains to action and is relevant to the present and especially the future of the NIC. The interviews indicated that the NIC members place great importance on living in the city and conducting long-term activities in this environment. They strive to make their voices heard and to have an impact, but also to preserve the diversity of the local population’s experiences. They want to create shared memories with other residents of the city. Nevertheless, this is an almost entirely one-sided conversation; while the NIC members shared their mission and its implementation, the city residents’ views are not heard. This discourse content relates to practical tasks and activities.

In contrast to findings from other studies in Israel and around the world that emphasized the group’s separation from the surrounding society (Ben-Rafael & Topel, 2020; Oved, 2017; Pitzer, 2014), the NIC members strive to create opportunities for meetings, dialogue, and involvement in their environment. However, this finding must be qualified because the study did not examine the city residents’ perspectives, and it is possible that they perceive the group’s decision to live communally in a separate building or street as creating differentiation and alienation. However, the interviewees asserted that, although the conversation between them and the city residents may be partial or one-sided, their message of cooperation gets through and promotes social change; this is similar to the findings of Bakó et al. (2021).

In the terms of generational theory, the group members try to offer a different cognitive paradigm to the city residents and to convince them to leave behind their old experiences and create a new present and future based on multiculturalism, cooperation, and common goals. They want to demonstrate that their intention is authentic and sincere. This may be an idealistic vision, but as the interviews showed, they undertake continuous actions toward its realization.

Analysis of the personal and group discourse reveals that the members’ worldview, their actions on behalf of their community, and the issues they discuss, indicate that they are undergoing processes of group and personal identity formation. The analysis revealed the issues that the community embraces and those it rejects, significant events they experienced as individuals or as a community, and more. The discursive practice and the insights that emerge from it enable NIC members to create a renewed, contemporary collective community that responds to their needs and aspirations. the discourse that takes place in these communities defines its predominant ideas, its boundaries, and enriches and advances their social development. The various topics that arose in the interviews and their discourse illustrate the reciprocal influence that the individual and the collective have on their mission in the community, and their shared social mission as a group. This initial analysis sets the stage for a deeper analysis of the structure and context of the formation of the generational unit and discourse in these communities, as I will elaborate upon in the discussion.

# Discussion

The analysis above covered the structure and content of three realms of discourse in NIC in Israel whose members strive to bring about social change. This next section will examine three structural axes of the discourse in these communities: lifestyles, location, and mission. I consider the central elements within each discourse axis separately, then connect them in a model that organizes the intertwined and parallel elements of the generational unit and its generational discourse.

The three main discourse realms among NIC members can be organized along three axes, as shown in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The lifestyles axis, between the individual and the community, relates to the discourse participant(s) themselves and is parallel to the attribution of meaning component in Mannheim’s theory. The location axis, paralleling the same component in Mannheim’s theory, includes the community’s physical location, ranging from its internal environment to its external environment (the city where the community is located). The mission axis includes the internal mission of forming a community and their external social mission. This parallels the actualization component in Mannheim’s theory.

The lifestyles axis pertains to the community members’ internal discourse about the individual and the group. Its essence is constructing their personal and communal identity and an awareness of the social change they wish to bring about through their actions. It involves multiple participants. For the most part, this discourse focuses on the present, and on the attribution of meaning (Dant, 2013; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Herzog, 2013). It is an attempt to answer the questions: Who am I? Who are we? Where do I/we want to go? What do I/we want to do?

The location axis hinges on critiquing the rural kibbutzim and the kibbutz movement and constructing an awareness of their social mission. This is a comparative discourse about the past and is mainly personal, although sometimes communal. It tends to diminish over time. Discourse regarding location is intergenerational and refers to continuity (Dant, 2013; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; France & Roberts, 2015; Watroba, 2018) in the sense that it complements and completes the community’s internal ideological and emotional discourse about what should be taken from the past, what should be left behind, and what new aspects need to be created. Much of this discourse involves negation and rejection, although it is rooted in a deep affinity to community members’ past because many of their parents still live in the same rural kibbutz where they grew up, so it is a reflection on childhood memories and their mixed feelings about them. Together, these individual and group discussions develop the NIC members’ identity and consciousness as a generational unit working together towards an ideal.

The mission axis pertains to discourse that takes place in the community as a whole regarding their collective action to actualize their vision in the city where they are located. This is a discussion about the present and the future, which is, therefore, a crucial link in the generational discourse. This is as it fulfills the criteria for the NIC’s existence as a generational unit as Mannheim and his successors described it: a unit with a location, ascribed meaning, and actualization as it works for social change.

Analysis of these three axes shows how the content in the generational discourse among the NIC is expressed through a method and practice that is a routine part of their lifestyle. As noted by Foster (2013), this is a comprehensive discourse that involves the individual, the organization, and the place, in terms of daily arrangements and decision-making. These are voluntary renderings of how a generation shapes its individual behavior and circumstances. Its purpose is to examine the past and its assumptions from a critical and contemporary point of view. There is an attempt to draw lessons from the past and preserve the fundamental concept of sharing while rejecting the symbols, rituals, and decisions that do not serve the basis for living together and fulfilling their social mission.

Figure 2 illustrates the communities’ development as a generational unit (each one individually and all together) and the connection between the empirical aspect (inside the dashed square) and the theoretical analysis. It also shows the comparison between the three components of the generational unit and the aspects of generational discourse that exist in each.

Insert Figure 2 about here

This analysis emphasizes that NIC members bring concepts from their parents’ home and the community where they grew up, as well as the meanings attached to these concepts. However, they adapt these terms to the reality of their present lives, creating a conceptualization and presence of memory and history through language, to create an identity and belonging in the present community. The link between the terminology from the past and the language of the present means that the community discourse is filled with ideas and concepts related to processes and perceptions of change. This includes internal changes related to values, as well as external changes derived from their actions. This combination of terminology and practice sheds light on how a language develops. In this case, a unique generational discourse developed among NIC members, which expresses a social change and worldview that has been updated in terms of location, meaning, and actualization; the concepts Mannheim and his followers defined as the manifestation of a sociological generation (Mannheim, 1970). The NIC members described, in their own words, a process similar to the scenario described by Mannheim, of gradual separation from the previous generation and the development of an alternative. This inevitable shifting of generations leads to an assimilation of their concepts and worldview into that of the previous generations.

Analysis of the findings revealed that the NIC maintains two parallel and simultaneous streams of generational discourse: a chronological time stream vis-à-vis the kibbutzim, and an emotional and perceptual stream vis-à-vis the predominant Israeli society. The former is a conflictual discourse that reflects the generational struggle. According to generational researchers, this is inevitable and a new generation’s development involves conflict with the previous ones regarding worldviews, political positions, ways of realizing ideology, etc. (Connolly, 2019; France & Roberts, 2015). However, most NIC members said that the surrounding culture and their families have gradually come to accept their choice. This is fundamentally different from the rupture described by generational researchers Edmunds and Turner (2005). The NIC members said that the culture of discourse and its methods, which they learned in their parents’ homes and continue to use in their new communities, contribute to easing conflicts. Eventually, parents become familiar with their children’s lifestyles, leading to reconciliation.

In terms of the second stream, perceptions vis-à-vis Israeli society, the structure and practices of NIC members’ intergenerational discourse have evolved in a spiral manner that contributes to their development, maturation, and adjustment into the new reality in which they live and work. This is similar to the findings by France and Roberts (2015).

This study shows that similar to the findings of Purvis and Hunt (1993), generational discourse may begin a process of creating social relations and indicate an intention to make a social change. As noted by Mannheim (1970), a change in social consciousness often begins with discomfort, debate, and controversy. In the case of NICs in Israel, acceptance of the change moves out from the community to the population in the surrounding city through formal and informal activities, enabling the integration of a wide range of people and groups in contemporary Israeli society, and finding an appropriate place for their mission and aspirations.

Researchers on generational discourse (Dant, 2013; Gan, 2020; Leccardi, 2017) have stated, explicitly or implicitly, that discourse about identity and consciousness is essential to developing a generational unit’s perspective. Analysis of this study’s findings verify the importance of the final, critical link—translating the generational unit’s vision into action. Previous studies have not emphasized or explained generational discourse about their actions, even though the realm of activities they have undertaken is an essential aspect that gives practical expression to the communities’ words.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the links between aspects of the communities’ discourse are essential to the development of the generational unit, and discourse about action is a clear and tangible sign of the actualization, through activities, which will contribute to bringing about the social change they wish to make.

# Conclusions

This article looked at action for social change among generational units through analysis of the structure and content of their discourse. It integrates these elements into a structure for development as a generational unit, following Mannheim and his successors.

This discourse analysis, following previous studies in the field cited above, shows that the discourse methods used in NICs in Israel help to create members’ connection to the group, with their experience as individuals and families living together collectively with a united purpose. They have their own worldview, a binding factor that contributes to their desire to stay together as a small and intimate community that shapes their perception of “us” and their social identity. The group’s decision regarding the location where they settled reflects their goal of bringing about a social change that they hope will affect the society around them.

The first conclusion that emerges from the research is that parallel to the process of forming the generational unit and its components (location, meaning, and actualization) another process takes place simultaneously; namely developing the generational unit’s discourse. The second conclusion is that the generational unit’s discourse includes various aspects: discourse concerning identity, discourse concerning awareness/consciousness, and discourse concerning action. An innovative contribution of this research is that discourse concerning action is a necessary element, which evolves and takes place during the generational unit’s actualization phase. The third conclusion is that the practice of generational discourse is a powerful tool for motivating, directing, and implementing social change.

These research findings and the conclusions derived from them regarding the development of sociological generations (or generational units) through a clearly structured process contribute to the body of knowledge in the field. The proposed models provide a basis for follow-up studies examining individual generational units and the overall process of generational unit development in Israel and around the world, thus enriching and deepening the study of generational discourse.

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Table 1. Basic characteristics of the NICs

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Community  | Migvan(Diversity) | Yuval(Jubilee) | Yafo(Jaffe) | Kama(Arise) |
| Year founded | 1987 | 1999 | 2003 | 2005 |
| Location | Sderot (southern region) | Migdal HaEmek (northern region) | Givat Haviva(central region) | Be’er Sheva(southern region) |
| Number of members at the time of researchMale/female | 179/8 | 73/4 | 105/5 | 3415/19 |

Figure 1. Structure and content: The three axes of discourse in NIC



Figure 2: Model of parallel aspects of generational units and generational discourses in NICs

