# Discourse as a Practice for Social Change in Intentional Communities

# Abstract

This case study in four New Intentional Communities (NICs) in 21st-century Israel, analyzes 28 semi-structured interviews to apply Mannheim's theory of generational change to specifically explore the impact of generational discourse on social change. This empirical application of generational theory with cooperative ideology and social practices demonstrates that the generational discourse that takes place in the communities motivates actions directed at making constant changes both in the community and in the surrounding city and offers new perspectives on the potential of socially active intentional communities (ICs) to promote social change. The research shows that generational discourse significantly shapes community identity and propels social change, emphasizing that generational shifts may change but do not diminish the fundamental collectivist ethos of ICs.

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

**Contribution to the Field**

* Empirically applies Mannheim's theory of generational change to contemporary Israeli New Intentional Communities (NICs), offering a unique lens through which to examine the interplay between generational discourse and social change.
* Demonstrates how generational discourse within NICs motivates actions directed at continuous change within the community and its urban context and underscores the communities' potential to shape community identity and advance social change.
* Highlights the enduring relevance and adaptability of the collectivist ethos within ICs, despite generational shifts, contributing to the broader discourse on societal development and social change.

# Introduction

While the process of social change has been widely studied, less is known about how it is activated in contemporary intentional communities (ICs). This study reexamines Mannheim's theory of generations to explore practices of community discourse as promoters of social change, focusing on the cooperative missions of the community and, especially, the social missions they pursue in the cities where they are located.

Since the 1980s, the number of intentional communities (ICs) has grown steadily in many countries (Oved, 2017; Pitzer 2014), including Israel (Dror, 2017). Israel’s first ICs, in the form of the kibbutz and moshav, were established over 100 years ago. In recent decades, however, over 200 diverse communities of new Intentional Communities (NICs) have been established in Israel. This is a social development that contradicts the general trend of capitalist, individualistic idealism appears to be at odds with the decline of collectivist practices embraced by Israel’s traditional rural kibbutzim. Formed by young people, the members of these NICs have chosen a lifestyle of collectivism, intending to generate social change.

As the rural kibbutz is undergoing conceptual and organizational change, the growth of NICs in Israel asks for consideration of forces underlying their emergence and their social change missions (Dror, 2017). This study considers the hypothesis that can be explained by the generational discourse that takes place in a generational unit or, using Mannheim's lexicon, the sociological generation concept (Pilcher, 1994; Gan, 2020; Getz, 2015; Leccardi, 2017). Showing how such generational units consolidate unique knowledge (author, 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 analyzes the elements of their generational discourse to demonstrate 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 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.

ICs in Israel and other countries have changed over time, demonstrating different processes of acclimation and adaptation to their environments 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 follow 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 tended to leave 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 specific aspects of 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 cities (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 Israeli social welfare and education (Israel21c, 2023).

Various social programs that NICs in Israel have initiated include contributions to local education and social projects, like those of 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. *Actualization* refers to activities that fulfill the ideas of the group (Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Herzog, 2013; Watroba, 2018). Additionally, social change is seen as occurring when the members of the generational unit succeed in developing public support for their way of life, revealed 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). A previous study showed that NICs in Israel constitute a generational unit with a physical location, a defined lifestyle, and an ideology that they worked to realize (author, 2022).

### **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’s (2017) 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 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 encompasses the levels of the individual, group, and surrounding society. Inspired by the work of phenomenologists, such as Berger & Luckmann (1967), Leccardi further 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 in the private sphere and especially in the public sphere, Habermas (1989: 171) emphasized the importance of time, place, structure, dynamics, and discursiveness, in addition to political influences. Purvis & Hunt (1993) stressed that generational discourse, even in the form of debates, 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 information, knowledge, and insights, these representations may be forms of ideologies, attitudes, emotions, norms, and values (Lyons et al., 2019; 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 creates a unique local language and style of discourse that fits its time and agendas. Furthermore, 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 that extend to how its members want to actualize these ideas.

# Methods

This qualitative case study of four NICs in Israel, using semi-structured interviews, examines the social change that they aspire to, focusing on community practices and relationships between NIC members. Specifically, the analysis uniquely explores with whom and about what the members of the communities talk, as well as the characteristics of these conversations in terms of Mannheim's theory of generations. The research examines the goals of the discourse as well as its content and characteristics –in particular, how members articulate their motivations for establishing communities as part of their vision for achieving broader social change. The study received approval from the Tel Aviv University Ethics Committee. 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 organizational framework, but 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 decisions that the communities made by majority vote. The communities did, however, differ in lifestyle and their chosen social agenda and initiatives. One of the communities, Kibbutz Yuval, is made up primarily of native English speakers, adding a new dimension to the research. The communities also differed concerning geographical location, founding year, average age of the members, and number of members (see summary 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. Interviews were conducted privately in 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 interviewee’s 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 the main ideas and themes that enabled the construction of the knowledge universe of the communities, with each interview adding 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.

The findings were 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, these findings were sent to representatives of the communities for comment and clarification. Additionally, 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.

# Findings on Community Discourse

The analysis of the interviews focused on three areas of discourse that reflect the communities’ ambitions for social change: discourse on changing location (on the choice to live as a cooperative community in the city); discourse on the pursuit of meaning through changing the practices of the targeted community; and 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 how the NIC members describe the challenges, struggles, and solutions they adopted on the way to achieving their goal. The discursive themes, representing three areas of discourse related to social change, are described in this section, and include illustrative quotes from the interviewees using fictional names. The communities are identified by their actual names.

## ***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 the rural kibbutz] is an illusion.” Or, as another community member relates:

I felt that the kibbutz...it's my home [where I grew up] ...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 as an illusion of a once-glorious project now perceived in decline, or no longer reflecting preferred ideological views. 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 arise 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 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, Ron explained that the birth of the children and the move to a permanent home in a kibbutz neighborhood in the city yielded significant structural changes in the community. Similarly, 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… [although] 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 shared space that conveys the feeling of home is reminiscent mainly of rural kibbutz customs, experiences, and practices. Dan adds that the public space becomes a venue for community activity that is not limited to 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 an awareness of growing social gaps and the desire to act as active partners in implementing social change, are reflected in Miriam's words:

Today... the [broader] 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...

Dan adds the concept of NIC members as agents of social change who are *also* a part of the broader 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 talks about the personal biases 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 of 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 work not only 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 be located. 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 reflects an acid test of the actual implementation of their social causes.

[We are taking] the kibbutz idea and updating the methodology without losing the values. Instead of a [kibbutz] 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 concrete realization of their social ideas and their integration into life in the city, incorporating the local tones and nuances, and creating shared events and memories with the other residents of the cities. Furthermore, daily activities were intended to build on acquaintances and shared interests, such as 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.

Committed to the communal social task, each of its members, nevertheless, also implemented a personal mission—with many attendant challenges, as Devora narrates:

... We underwent a training called 'Empowerment of the Disabled,' [to work with people with various disabilities living in] protected housing. The model sees the residents as living in their own home and not just as tenants… [After a construction project to expand the number of units was proposed] we talked with each family, with the engineers, and the architects. We asked them to let the tenants be the decision-makers. [While the parents] will have veto rights... 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 that make a difference. I like it when things come from the bottom up.

Similarly, in a project described by Yehuda:

We began a project of raising small animals…that could be placed in a classroom. [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 [with a nonprofit organization] ... The emphasis was on social work.

Connecting different population groups within the school framework and developing active education 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. The NIC members remained as they said more in the background to pave the way for other projects (Yehuda).

Community members noted that to achieve their goal of transforming the relationship between NIC members and residents of the cities where they lived into a bilateral exchange, a bond and 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 a “We” that includes the residents and NIC members as one community.

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

You feel that from year to year, it gets more complicated. We succeeded on a scale… [with 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.

These findings elucidate a discourse surrounding social change within NICsthat 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**

This study investigates how members of NICs articulate their purpose in establishing these communities as part of a broader vision for societal transformation. The analysis of the intentions and practices of the discourse in the NICs reveals insights into the interrelationships between ideas, generational consciousness, and social change. It highlights the significant role of both internal and external dialogues in shaping not only the microcosm of community life but also the larger societal milieu, providing a perspective on the transformative potential of NICs in Israel.

## The Role of NICs Discourse in the Formation of Generational Consciousness and Collective Identity

The study findings are rich resources for delving into how discourse within NICs impacts the formation and perpetuation of collective memories and shared experiences. They demonstrate how significant historical events, intertwined with current ideologies and communal practices, resonate within these communities. This exploration navigates the interplay between historical and contemporary discourses, merging into a unique generational consciousness and collective identity. This discourse within NICs actively contributes to their evolution as sociological units, offering a nuanced understanding of the relationship between discourse, historical awareness, and collective identity in shaping the social and ideological contours of NICs in Israel.

Internal community dialogue constructs both individual and communal identity, and awareness of the necessity for action and implementation. Typically, this discourse is present-focused and involves multiple participants. It centers on self-reflection—"Who am I?" or "Who are we?"—and addresses future aspirations and communal actions. This stage is vital for generational consolidation, as noted by Mannheim and his successors. The concepts bear significance (Dant, 1991; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Herzog, 2013), and aim at situating each member and the group within the realm of societal ideas. A significant portion of the discourse in this study includes negative critiques of the rural kibbutz movement, paradoxically reflecting a deep connection to the roots from which NIC members have emerged and their parents who often continue to reside in these rural kibbutzim. Thus, the interviews reveal a discourse of childhood memories merged with adult experiences, primarily a comparative discourse on the past—often personal, and sometimes familial or communal—that diminishes over time.

Over time, the discourse evolved to focus on what is worthy of being retained from the past and what should be left behind to create something new, such as forgoing the pursuit of equality among community members, settling for a community partnership tailored to the members, and especially choosing the physical location of the community in the city. This discourse nurtures the identity and consciousness of NIC members as an active generational unit with a vision for action. In terms of generations, this is an inter- and intra-generational discourse focused on the construction of social mission consciousness (Dant, 1991; Edmunds & Turner, 2005; France & Roberts, 2015; Watroba, 2018).

The analysis of findings emphasizes the use of concepts and practices that community members brought from their parents' homes and communities, and their associated meanings. NIC members have transformed these terms into their current realities, thus conceptualizing and materializing memory and history through language, forging an identity and belonging in the contemporary community. The connection between the language of the past and that of the present surfaces in NIC discourse about ideas and concepts related to change processes and perceptions, signifying an internal change concerning values and an external change derived from action.

## Discourse Components of the Generational Unit as a Lever for Social Change

Examining aspects of time, location, structure, and dynamics, as suggested by Habermas (1989) and generational researchers such as Aboim (2013), Dant (1991), and Edmunds & Turner (2005), is instrumental in comprehending and interpreting the components of discourse and their role in solidifying concepts and actualizing the social change aspired to by the communities. This analysis scrutinizes the discourse, its situational context, structural framework, and dynamism over time.

The analysis of personal and collective discourses within NICs unveils the distinct worldviews and paths chosen by the interviewees within their respective NICs. The various topics in these discourses reveal processes related to the evolution of group and personal identities. They illuminate issues that NICs have embraced or rejected, and significant events that have collectively shaped the experiences of individuals or communities. The practice of these discourses and the insights that emerge from them fosters the creation of a novel form of modern collectivism responsive to NIC members' evolving needs and aspirations. In the context of Habermas’s (1989) framework, these discourses within NICs define dominant ideas and establish conversational boundaries, fostering a productive discourse conducive to social advancement.

Over time, shifts have occurred in the content of the discourse and its perspectives on social change. The movement through the life cycle in NICs, transitioning from individual to community and societal levels, aligns with Dant’s (1991) concept of time and place-based social action. The discourse evolves, shifting focus from personal life events to broader societal causes, in alignment with Pitzer's (2014) findings on institutionalization and boundary transformations within comparable communities. The discourse of NICs, rich in emotionally charged terms like 'fulfillment' and 'responsibility,' underscores the significant contribution of intercommunal discourse within the community to developing and reinforcing communal values and norms. It also explores its transformative impact on initiating public initiatives and effecting broader societal changes, transcending the boundaries of the community to catalyze broader social transformation.

Discourse practice has been a constant presence in the interviewees' lives, forming a central axis in shaping their lifestyles and social missions. Similar to the observations of France & Roberts (2015), the structure and practices of intergenerational discourse within NIC generations evolve spirally, predominant in the realms of the individual, the community, and the social objectives pursued, contributing to the development, maturation, and acclimatization of its members to their new realities. These findings also accord with the conclusions of generational researchers like Purvis & Hunt (1993), who propose that generational discourse can initiate the formation of social relationships and signal intentions for societal change, starting with unrest, debate, and dispute as Mannheim (1970) noted, eventually leading to a transformation in social consciousness. NIC members are committed to establishing a new paradigm of consciousness among city residents, emphasizing values such as multiculturalism, cooperation, and shared goals, which align with the insights of generational researchers like Purvis & Hunt (1993).

**Conclusion**

This case study of four NICs in Israel applies Mannheim's generational theory to examine its role in fostering social change. Semi-structured interviews with 28 NIC members explore their experiences, personal histories, community challenges, and social activism. Findings demonstrate that NICs have developed a unique generational discourse that encapsulates social change in location, meaning, and actualization, resonating with Mannheim's theory. Such discourse significantly shapes member identities and promotes a new form of modern collectivism. Moreover, in addition to being pivotal in driving, directing, and realizing social change, it embeds itself in all aspects of life within NICs, affecting the communities’ internal structure, consolidating personal identity, fostering consciousness, and directing actualization.

The NICs, blending secular culture with Jewish traditions, have developed a set of values that support an activistic worldview that aligns 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.

Finally, the study provides a contemporary perspective for reassessing past experiences and assumptions, accentuating the generational shifts and the evolving nature of social change, and 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.

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. Moreover, the study only focused on the members of secular NICs. Including religious and/or non-Jewish NICs in future research, as well as the views of city residents toward the NICs, could yield a more holistic understanding of generational discourse in ICs. 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.

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