






## FROM PIONEERS TO PENSIONERS: ADDRESSING AGING POPULATIONS IN ISRAELI KIBBUTZIM

### OD PIONIERÓW DO EMERYTÓW: KIBUCE W IZRAELU WOBEC WYZWAŃ STARZEJĄCEGO SIĘ SPOŁECZEŃSTWA

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#### Abstract

The kibbutz (pl. kibbutzim), deeply rooted in Israeli culture and history, plays an important role in the nation's narrative as a symbol of communal living and collective values. As demographics shift, the Israeli kibbutz system, originally designed for younger society, is now becoming attractive also for the elderly people. The main aim of this paper is to examine the Israeli kibbutzim's organisational culture in the context of challenges arising from ageing society. Drawing on Edgar Schein's three-level model of organisational culture, the research sheds light on the shared services provided for the elderly, their participation in community life, decision-making processes, and the overall attitude of the kibbutz towards its older members. The study contributes to broader discussions on ageing, silver economy, community welfare, and sustainable development. First, a multi-modal approach in collecting and analysing data has been applied by using literature, documents, and statistics concerning all 266 Israeli kibbutzim identified at the end of 2023. In the second phase, the survey questionnaire with each question intentionally designed to reflect particular issues within Schein's model was conducted in randomly

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selected settlements. Responses provide valuable insights into the dynamic interplay of traditional communal values and their modern adaptations. Schein's model has proven practical in unravelling the complex tapestry of cultural elements that define kibbutzim, showcasing their unique blend of tradition and modernity.

**Keywords:** sustainable development, ageing population, silver economy, Israel, kibbutzim.

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### **Streszczenie**

Kibuc, głęboko zakorzeniony w historii i kulturze Izraela, jest narodowym symbolem wspólnego życia i zbiorowych wartości. Wobec aktualnych procesów demograficznych, a w szczególności starzejących się społeczeństw, izraelski system kibuców, pierwotnie zaprojektowany dla młodszego społeczeństwa, staje się atrakcyjny także dla osób starszych. Głównym celem artykułu jest wskazanie elementów kultury organizacyjnej izraelskich kibuców, które są szczególnie istotne wobec wyzwań wynikających ze starzenia się tego społeczeństwa. Czerpiąc z trójpoziomowego modelu kultury organizacyjnej Edgara Scheina, zwrócono uwagę na usługi świadczone osobom starszym, ich udział w życiu społecznym i procesach decyzyjnych. Opracowanie nawiązuje do szerszych dyskusji na temat procesów starzenia się społeczeństw, dobrobytu i zrównoważonego rozwoju.

W artykule wykorzystano literaturę, dokumenty i dane statystyczne dla 266 kibuców w Izraelu zidentyfikowanych na koniec 2023 r. Przeprowadzono również badanie ankietowe w losowo wybranych społecznościach. Pytania zawarte w formularzu dotyczyły zagadnień wynikających bezpośrednio z konstrukcji modelu kultury organizacji Edgara Scheina. Odpowiedzi dostarczają cennych informacji na temat tradycyjnych wartości społecznych definiujących izraelskie kibuce i ich adaptacji wobec współczesnych wyzwań.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zrównoważony rozwój, starzenie się społeczeństw, srebrna ekonomia, kibuc, Izrael.

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## **INTRODUCTION: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND GOALS**

Culture encompasses shared values and expectations regarding individual and collective living, influenced by a set of geographical and historical contextual conditions that shape particular societies. The origins of Israeli kibbutz, which means 'gathering' in Hebrew, go back to early 20th century socialist ideas about collective living and the implementation of principles such as: voluntarism, equality, solidarity, democracy, social justice, and cooperation (Cheng, Sun, 2015; Leach, 2016; Abramitzky, 2018). Grounded in the central principle: "From each according to ability, to each according to need", Israeli kibbutzim emphasised qualitative equality, assuming complete responsibility for meeting members' needs and fostering their personal growth, as well as a profound sense of solidarity and unity among them (Leviatan, Salm, 2007). Collaborative lifestyle ensured employment, accommodation, collective support, comprehensive health coverage, and a variety

of shared domestic services like dining facilities, laundry, childcare, education, cultural activities, and more for its members (Abramitzky, 2018). Through collective ownership of assets, coordinated division of labour, and democratic decision-making processes, kibbutz members actively participated in shaping their local communities.

Kibbutzim have also played a crucial political role in a nation-building process by absorbing new immigrants, establishing a class of workers and farmers, first in developing agriculture, later in industry and services, and last but not least in colonising land to foster an equitable society of Israel. Despite the relatively small percentage of the population living in the kibbutz settlement type (approx. 2% of the total population), they contributed significantly to the nation's political and economic landscape since the formal establishment of Israel in 1948 producing intellectual and military leaders, as well as contributing up to 40% of the country's agricultural output and 9% of its industrial production (Bloch et al., 2023).

However, as time passed the once young pioneers who banded together on collective settlements in the process of nation-building and defining the State of Israel, gradually became pensioners challenging their communities with both changing abilities as well as needs. Since the formal establishment of Israel the percentage of people aged 65 and over, in the entire population more than tripled, from 3.8% in 1948 to 12% in 2023 (Statista, 2022, 2023). The population of people aged over 75, and especially of those aged over 80, grew even faster indicating that not only is the proportion of elderly people in the total population growing, but that the old population itself is rapidly aging as well (Camel, 2010). One of the reasons behind this situation is Israel's relatively high life expectancy compared to many other nations. As of 2023, the average life expectancy in Israel was 82.6 years, with women averaging 84.6 years and men 80.5 years (Statista, 2023). While the proportion of elderly individuals in Israel is lower compared to some other developed countries in Europe or North America, it still constitutes a significant segment of the entire population.

As demographics shift, the Israeli kibbutz system, initially planned for a younger population, is now also becoming attractive to the elderly people. The increasing number of older adults indicates a growing demand for products and services tailored to their needs, including healthcare, senior-friendly housing, and leisure activities. Within this context, the kibbutz system plays a crucial role in addressing the diverse needs and challenges faced by the elderly population. This is mainly due to the flexibility of the kibbutz settlements deriving from the vitality of the common public space, balance between the private and the public domains, and the preservation of the community's sovereignty (Gitai, 2011). Kibbutzim, renowned for their collaborative working and living principles, could offer a variety of solutions: from fostering robust community support and social engagement, facilitating intergenerational living arrangements, through promoting the eco-

conomic inclusion of community members, to ensuring accessible healthcare and other social security services. Furthermore, they could take the lead in developing innovative elderly care solutions, helping in retirement planning, and offering diverse cultural and educational opportunities. This integrative approach by kibbutzim could reflect a profound understanding of the complex requirements of the elderly, offering a model of comprehensive and empathetic care that embodies characteristics of 'successful aging', as demonstrated by high life expectancy and positive well-being (Leviatan, 1999).

In parallel with the demographic process of the aging population, as a consequence of the financial crisis that Israeli kibbutzim faced in the mid-1980s, the movement underwent significant changes. Basic principles and values have been questioned, shifted the emphasis from the group to the individual perspective, including the adoption of typical community practices with private ownership of property (Azarnert, 2017), excluding the ownership of land. This transition, reflecting a broader trend of 'privatisation', that began in the early 1990s and still continues, resulted in kibbutz members establishing personal bank accounts and accepting salaries from external employers. However, privatisation in the kibbutz does not mean the same as privatisation in a Western economy. There is no selling of public assets to private owners but rather the transfer of responsibilities from the community to individual for working and fulfilling needs of community members (Gavron, 2000). The most notable structural transformations in kibbutzim are primarily evident in the 'privatisation of public budgets' (privatisation of food budget, enrichment studies for children, higher education, or health budget) and secondly, in 'differential salaries' where compensation is determined by professional or managerial roles within the workplace (Leviatan, Salm, 2007). The egalitarian ethic expressed in the phrase "From each according to ability, to each according to need" is being replaced by the concept of reward for effort. These changes were influenced by the prevailing neoliberal mindset, intertwining economic methods with social views and frameworks, presenting unique challenges and opportunities. Despite these transformations, the kibbutz industry continued to strive for a balance between economic profitability and social value creation (Moskovich, 2022). Even in the context of Israel evolving from an idealistic pioneering community into a materialistic free market society, kibbutzim maintained a strong connection between members and their businesses. This connection was critical in preventing the sale of these enterprises and preserving the unique communal and collaborative spirit of the kibbutz (Achouch, 2022).

Drawing on Edgar Schein's three-level organisational culture model (Schein, 1985), this paper explores how Israeli kibbutzim, originally designed for younger demographics, have adapted to meet the increasing needs of their elderly population. The study also investigates how these distinctive communal environments navigate the balance between traditional communal values and contemporary

practices, particularly in the context of providing care and inclusive environments for the elderly. Through this analysis, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on aging, community welfare, and sustainable development.

The paper starts with an introduction that provides the historical and cultural context of Israeli kibbutzim, highlighting their evolution over time as well as offering insights into the related research. Then, the methodology section delineates the application of Edgar Schein's organisational culture model, describing the survey logic, sample selection, and data collection methods. Subsequent to this, the research results are analysed, with particular emphasis on the age distribution and social dynamics within kibbutzim. This is followed by a discussion, delving into the implications of these findings, particularly concerning the integration of elderly members in kibbutz communities amidst ongoing socio-economic shifts. Finally, the paper wraps up with the summary of key findings and perspectives for future research.

## RELATED RESEARCH

The connection between cultural values, social structures and landscape has received attention in the interdisciplinary research literature that combines architecture and urban studies as well as disciplines within social sciences, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, economy and human geography (Rapoport, 1969; Duncan, 1981; Pratt, 1981; Hall, 1990; Sebba, 1991; Soja 1999; Seamon, 2018; Tobiasz-Lis, Wójcik, 2021; Lis et al., 2023). These papers focus on human-environment interactions, placemaking, territorial identity, cultural meanings of living space and home, definitions of privacy and other closely related topics. Addressing these issues within widely defined social sciences results from the adoption of a constructivist approach in the mid-20th century, which assumes not only a socially constructed reality, but also an emotionally coloured one, filled with specific meanings, which arises from the vision of man and entire communities experiencing and shaping spaces according to their needs and possibilities (Klara, 2022).

The kibbutz, a unique model of collective working and living in Israel, often referred to as 'utopian' alternative to the existing and flawed 'world order' has long been considered an ideal social research laboratory and has served as a context for studies by both local and foreign researchers (Near, 1985; Chyutin, Chyutin, 2007). The recent interest in Israeli kibbutzim's unique social structure and principles of conduct results from the fact that within the last 40 years they displayed an openness to both internal and external trends of socio-economic change that influenced fundamental values to be reflected in practice in their urban design (Gavron, 2000; Amir et al., 2005; Gitai, 2011; Segal, 2015). Aging, as an emerging issue in kibbutz society, is also linked with its ideological principles, norms, and demographic development.

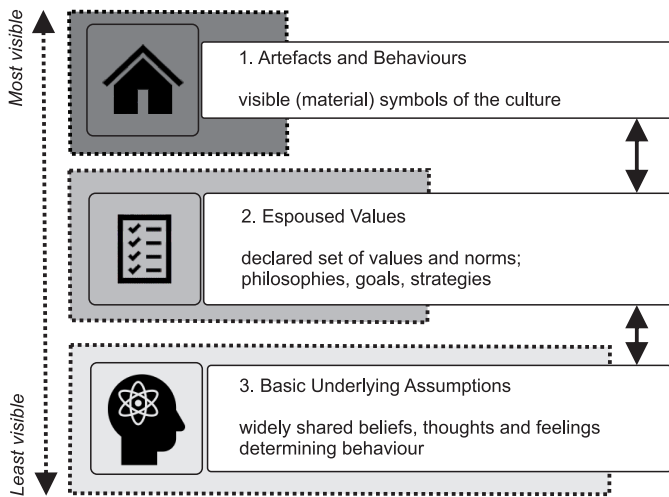
According to Walter-Ginzburg et al. (2004), the kibbutz active lifestyle, marked by robust social, economic, and instrumental support, may contribute significantly to lower disability rates in old age. These findings suggest that emulating specific elements of the kibbutz model, such as ensuring economic security and fostering strong social networks, could be effective strategies in reducing disability across broader populations. Getz (2015) underlines the dynamic nature of intergenerational relationships in kibbutzim, likening them to a pendulum swing. The early kibbutz members established a collective, socialist way of life, leading to a stable society with modern enterprises and social services. The second generation took kibbutzim for granted as strong, rich, and stable. A particular 'gap' occurred with the third generation, marked by a move away from the kibbutz and a shift toward individualism and capitalism, yearning for personal freedom. After the economic crisis, many families and young men left kibbutz but at the beginning of this century, emotion of kibbutzim members turned optimistic again.

Today's kibbutzim, known for their inclusive approach, offer an attractive alternative to urban life, especially for young families seeking a healthier, rural environment. However, as Letzter (2023) notes, the modern kibbutz's appeal lies less in its ideological roots and more in its provision of a comfortable setting conducive to raising children, building social connections, and enhancing family life. This evolution has implications for the communal ethos that once defined kibbutz life. The paper of Leviatan (1999) delves into how social arrangements and policies adopted by Israeli kibbutz communities in domains of work, social relations, stability in social roles, and surroundings, influence the 'successful ageing' process being the aspired goal advocated by researchers and policy makers dealing with recent demographic trends. His work sets frames for further research emphasizing that Israeli kibbutzim can be considered not only as interesting experiments but also as living labs presenting solutions for local communities, elsewhere in the world, challenged by ageing populations.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

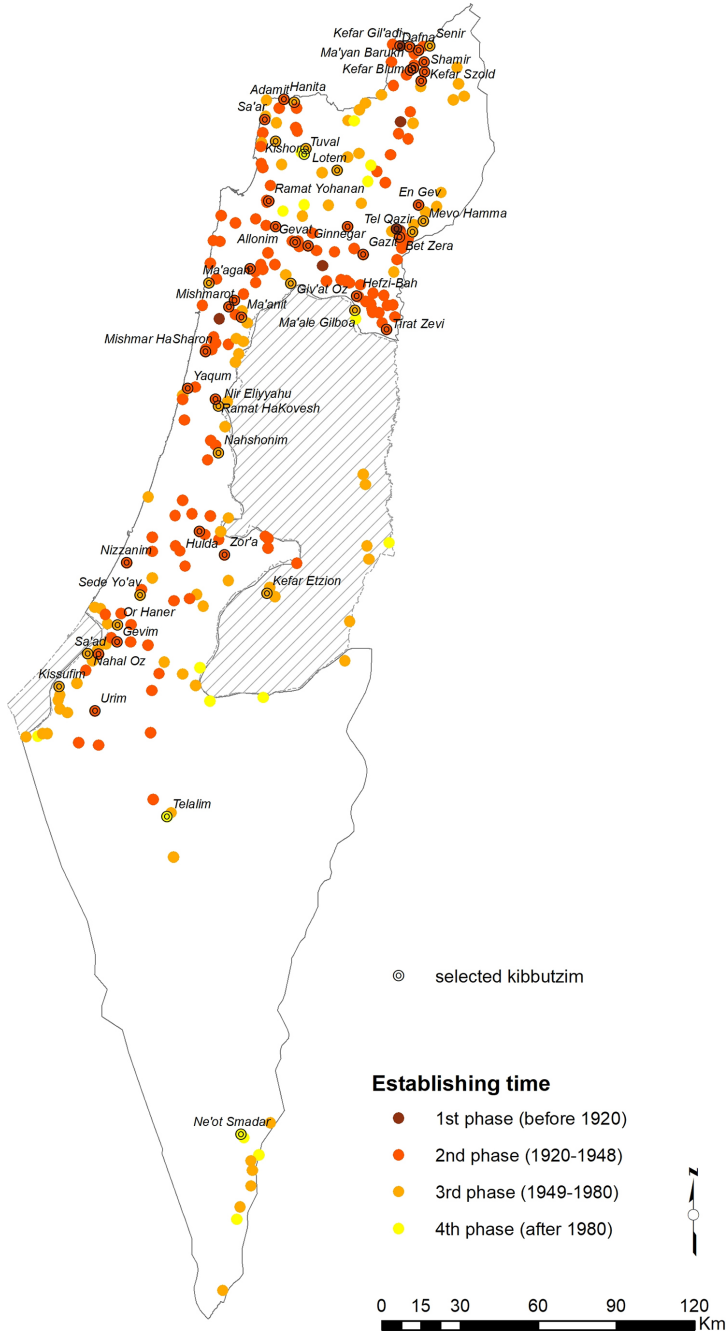
In this paper we have used a model of organisational culture, as presented by Schein (1985), to gain a thorough understanding of Israeli kibbutzim culture layers and how they interact shaping these communities in 2023. Their wide-known distinct social arrangements as well as spatial structures, provide a unique context to examine how older populations are integrated into and impact the community's economic and social fabric. In our study, we examine the readiness of kibbutzim to increasingly prioritise elderly care within their evolving communal structures.

Edgar Schein’s organisational culture model recognises three levels: 1) artefacts and behaviours, 2) espoused values, and 3) basic underlying assumptions (Fig. 1). Each level represents different visibility and depth within an organisation, influencing perceptions and interactions within the community. Artefacts and behaviours that include tangible elements such as physical patterns, symbols, rituals, and observable social behaviours represent the most visible manifestations of culture. They enable insights into the underlying cultural values and assumptions. Espoused values, often articulated in mission, vision or value statements and other official documents, represent beliefs and norms that are promoted and communicated within the organisation and intend to guide the behaviour and decision-making. The third level comprises the basic underlying assumptions which are deeply rooted and taken for granted beliefs and values. They are implicit and shared by members of the organisation formed over time along common experiences, rarely questioned, or challenged. Understanding the interplay of these elements is crucial for aligning culture with development strategies and driving change within any kibbutz setting. This need for understanding becomes even stronger as organisations face the deepening process of privatisation and the evolving political, socio-economic, and international conditions. These dynamic factors necessitate a flexible and responsive approach to managing and implementing change to ensure long-term organisational resilience and success in the future.



**Fig. 1.** Model of organisational culture  
Source: own elaboration based on Schein (1985).

The research was conducted between 20 July and 28 December 2023. First, a complete list of 266 kibbutzim was gathered in order to select a sample for detailed social research using simple random sampling (SRS). This statistical method en-



**Fig. 2.** Geographical distribution of Israeli kibbutzim including settlements selected for in-depth research

Source: own study.



**Table 1.** Survey questionnaire and corresponding responses

Survey questions	Responses	N
<b>Artefacts and behaviours</b>		
Which sharing spaces are provided by the kibbutz? ( <i>multiple-choice question</i> )	Dining hall	19%
	Childcare facilities	23%
	Cultural spaces	23%
	Sport facilities	25%
	Others (health services, laundry, storage)	10%
What activities/events/programmes dedicated to elderly residents are provided in your kibbutz? ( <i>open-ended question</i> )	Club for elderly (learning, sports & cultural activities)	80%
	Meetings	3%
	Medical assistance	7%
	Sports activities	3%
	None	7%
<b>Espoused values</b>		
What is the position of elderly people in the community of your kibbutz?	1 – very low	0%
	2	0%
	3	7%
	4	30%
	5 – very high	63%
To what extent elderly people (65 years old and more) participate in decision making processes in your kibbutz?	1 – very low engagement	0%
	2	10%
	3	23%
	4	33%
	5 – very high engagement	33%
<b>Basic underlying assumptions</b>		
What values are most important for the community in your kibbutz? ( <i>open-ended question</i> )	Mutual guarantee	77%
	Education	7%
	Work	7%
	Religion	3%
	Fairness	3%
	No significant values	3%
What makes your kibbutz exceptional from other communities in Israel? ( <i>open-ended question, synthesis of responses</i> )	Community happiness	40%
	Cooperation	40%
	Support	20%

Source: own study.

sures an equal likelihood of selection for each individual within the target population providing reliable data to be extrapolated to the entire population (Kalton, 2021). We used random numbers provided by Randomness and Integrity Services Ltd. ([random.org](https://random.org)) to select 54 kibbutzim for our research (Fig. 2).

Kibbutzim selected for further study are geographically dispersed across Israel from Galilee in the north to the southern Negev desert, with a notable aggregation in the central region which well represents the general distribution of these settlements, their population – ranging from about 200 people up to over 1,000, and the time of their establishment (Fig. 2). The development process of kibbutzim can be divided into four stages: 1) the start-up stage (before 1920); 2) the early stage (until the formal establishment of Israel in 1948); 3) the golden age (1949–1980); 4) the transformation stage (since 1980s), well reflecting historical patterns of settlement and economic progress in the country. While many kibbutzim are situated in rural areas, some are located in suburban or semi-urban settings. Overall, their distribution is closely tied to factors such as land availability, agricultural suitability, and historical development trends. Most of them are within the boundaries of the State of Israel, but some exist in the occupied territories on the West Bank of the river Jordan.

For the purpose of the in-depth research, we provided a survey questionnaire framed by Schein's model of organisational culture, with each question intentionally designed to reflect one of its levels (Table 1). The questionnaires were translated into Hebrew and transferred to google forms platform. Owing to the nature of local communities, face-to-face interviews were conducted with residents and officials, presenting research goals, authors and their affiliations. Although surveys were initially distributed among 54 selected kibbutzim, only 19 sent their responses. Following further discussions and negotiations, the number of completed surveys increased to 30 translating to the return rate of 56%. With a confidence level set at 95% and a sample size of 30 kibbutzim, selected from a total population of 266, the sampling error is estimated to be approximately 17%. This suggests that the results derived from this sample could vary from the actual values for the entire population of kibbutzim by a maximum margin of  $\pm 17\%$ . Moreover, of all the kibbutzim examined, three of them were collective kibbutzim.

## RESULTS

### Demographic and ideological shifts in sampled kibbutzim

The analysis of the age distribution within the 54 sampled kibbutzim revealed that, on average, 28% of their population is comprised of people younger than 14 years old, 57% are between 15 and 64, and 15% are seniors aged 65 and above (data gathered by the authors based on information from the Central Bureau of

Statistics in Israel, published in 2023). This demographic profile might suggest a population with a youthful bias, yet it maintains a significant representation within the working-age cohort, rather reflecting an active and potentially productive communities. A notable proportion of older residents may additionally indicate their support and openness to intergenerational relations. The answers to the questionnaires in the survey show that the kibbutzim care for the aging members.

As compared to the national age distribution for Israel, with 12% of the population being 65 and over, 60% between 15 and 64 years old, and 28% aged 14 and under, the sampled kibbutzim display a slightly different age structure with a clear shift from groups within working age to those aged 65 and over (Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel, 2023). These differences indicate that the sampled kibbutzim may have a higher dependency ratio, with a larger elderly population relative to the working-age group, compared to the national averages. This demographic structure can have future implications for community resources, healthcare, and support services, reflecting a need for policies and programmes tailored to an ageing population. The kibbutz as part of its general responsibility for its members, views itself as ultimately responsible for the welfare of elderly members in particular (Bergman et al., 1990).

According to information gathered for 54 sampled kibbutzim, the majority of these communities have undergone the processes of privatisation and renewal. This shift, observed across settlements established within all four stages of kibbutzim development – from the early 1910s to the 1980s – reflects a broad ideological transformation within the movement. Originally founded on principles of communal living and collective labour, these kibbutzim appear to have adapted to modern market-oriented structures, indicating a departure from traditional communal models to more individualised, economically driven frameworks. Only few settlements under study continue to operate as communal communities. These proportions well reflect the general situation of Israeli kibbutzim, where about one-quarter maintain traditional communal style, with strictly equal division of income. Renewed kibbutzim practice various forms of privatisation, with a greater emphasis on individuals and families. Despite these changes, core principles of democracy and mutual responsibility remain (Getz, 2015). This persistence of communalism amidst widespread shift towards privatisation suggests a complex landscape within Israeli kibbutzim, where traditional values coexist with modern economic adaptations. The dichotomy between these two models within the same cultural and historical context offers a unique perspective on the evolution of communal living arrangements in response to changing economic and social realities.

## **Schein's organisational culture of Israeli kibbutzim affecting 'successful aging'**

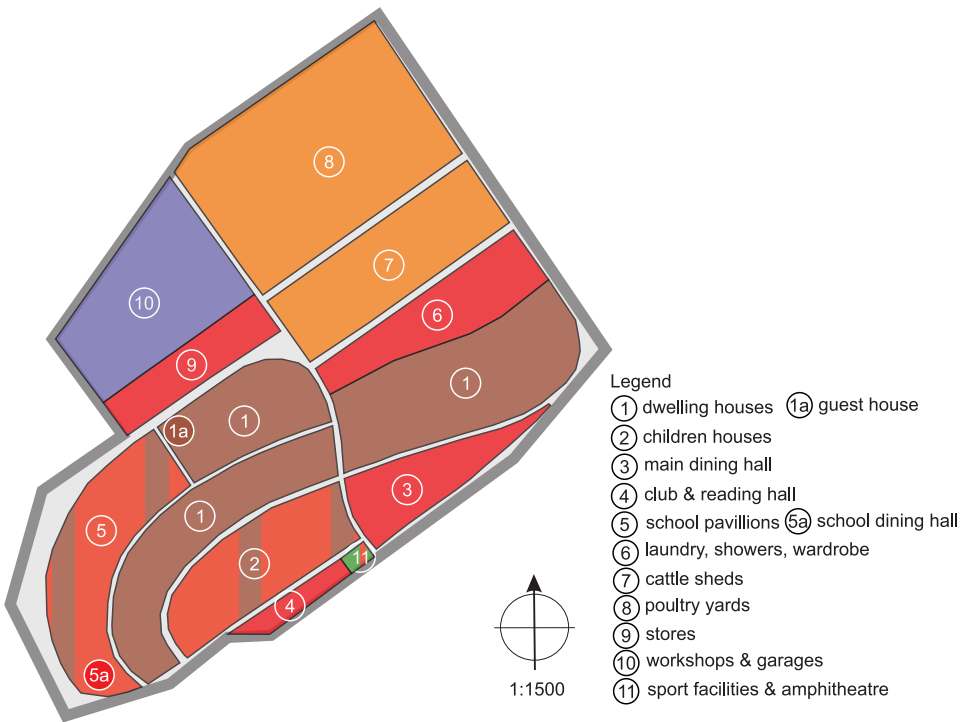
Since the kibbutz was a youth-centred society both in terms of its ideals and the age structure, the issue of aging was of marginal concern. However, already since 1968 the Inter-Kibbutz Department for Older and Aged Kibbutz Members has continually worked to enhance awareness among the kibbutz communities regarding issues of aging and to encourage the development of elderly service programmes (Bergman et al., 1990).

The cornerstone of the Israeli kibbutzim's organisational culture as highlighted by participants of the survey, are mutual guarantee and support, both being underlined in 77% of responses. They underscore the ethos of collective responsibility that is deeply ingrained in these communities. Education and work, valued by 7% each, along with religion and fairness, each receiving 3%, indicate communities driven by a blend of traditional values, pragmatism and shared social liability. These *basic underlying assumptions* have always been and still are deeply embedded in the organisational structure and control systems of kibbutzim in Israel. They guide living and working strategies, behaviours, inform decision-making processes, and are instrumental in shaping the social fabric of these communities.

The survey revealed a deep-seated respect for the older adults with 63% of the kibbutzim under study, perceiving the position of elderly people as very high. *Espoused values*, the second level of organisational culture, can be further interpreted in the context of aging society through overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards the elderly within the kibbutzim. A significant 63% of responses rated this attitude as highly positive (a score of 5), with an additional 30% scoring it as 4. This is reflected within the general narrative of inclusivity, positioning the elderly as revered members within kibbutzim's social structure, suggesting that they are not merely passive recipients of care services but rather integral, respected members of these communities. Especially, when *espoused values* shaping the organisational culture of Israeli kibbutzim are translated to communicated norms that frame social and economic functions in their everyday life. They are strongly influenced by age and experience rather than economic or hierarchical status, indicating the significant role of elderly kibbutzim's members as evidenced through their participation in a decision-making process. The extent of elderly participation in decision-making within these communities is rated very high (5), 33% responses and high (4), also 33% responses, indicating a little diversification of power structures and control systems across kibbutzim. In some communities, the elderly play a significant role in governance, reflecting more egalitarian and inclusive decision-making processes, while in others, their involvement may be less pronounced. However, analysis of the questionnaire responses clearly points out that no matter how strong the trend towards privatisation in kibbutzim is, a

conscious effort to assist and support the elderly, recognising their foundational contributions during the establishment of the kibbutz remains significant. Looking to the future, it may become indispensable for kibbutzim to develop standardised policies and establish clear guidelines for addressing the needs of older adults. This need for policy development is underscored by the consistently rising number of elderly members, leading to significant financial implications that the kibbutzim will need to accommodate. As the evolving demographic landscape presents both challenges and opportunities for the sustainable management of communal resources and the continued support of the ageing population, the younger generation is very much aware of the changing needs of older adults and seems well prepared to bear their increasing financial costs.

The first level in Schein’s model of organisational culture, *artefacts and behaviours*, is reflected by the spatial layout of Israeli kibbutzim – the physical manifestation of the non-tangible values and beliefs that have defined these communities since their beginnings in the early 20th century. Initially, the kibbutz settlement developed as a single plot of collectively owned land (provided first by the Zionist movement and later by the Israeli state) with dispersed buildings



**Fig. 3.** Kibbutz Kefar Glikson, Arieh Sharon 1944 (general layout)

Source: own study based on historical drawings.

around its centre within several sectors of numerous functions: housing sector, educational sector, sport and recreational sector and production sector. The centre was a focal point concentrating all administrative and social functions, with particular attention paid to the communal dining hall serving as a restaurant, social club, meeting place, cinema, and venue for various festivals. Figure 3 presents the general layout of one of the 54 selected kibbutzim – Kefar Glikson, founded in 1939 in northeastern Israel, privatised and reformed within the last few decades.

The findings from these 30 kibbutzim that have responded to our survey reveal a diverse range of shared spaces, with sports facilities being the most common, present in 25% of the kibbutzim under study. This indicates a strong community emphasis on physical activity and communal recreation. Childcare facilities and cultural spaces had the same number of indications, each constituting 23% of the communal offerings, thereby underscoring a balanced focus on child development and cultural engagement. Dining halls, while less prevalent at 19%, still play a crucial role in fostering communal bonds. Other facilities, including health services, laundry, and storage, account for 10%, showcasing a diversified approach to shared resources. What is significant in the context of this study, 80% of the selected kibbutzim offer clubs for the elderly, focusing on learning, sports, and cultural activities, reflecting a commitment to active ageing and inclusive community life. These findings suggest a strong communal dedication to ensuring a vibrant and engaging environment for all their members. *Artefacts and behaviours* also find expression in kibbutzim through events dedicated to the elderly. Responses highlighted a variety of activities and programmes designed specifically for the elderly population in kibbutzim, including clubs, social gatherings, and cultural events. Tailored to each kibbutz's unique cultural context, these activities make elderly members actively engaged and connected to the community. Moreover, insights provided by the survey results reflect the adaptability and resilience of kibbutzim in the face of contemporary challenges, such as privatisation. These highlight kibbutzim's ability to evolve and adapt their traditional rituals, routines, and narratives to accommodate changing external conditions while retaining their core communal values.

When answering the question about these features of kibbutzim that make them distinctive among other Israeli communities, participants of the survey pointed out community happiness and cooperation, each highlighted by 40%, and a further 20% of mutual support. A noteworthy 17% of comments have taken a notice that privatisation has led to variations and different development paths among kibbutzim, indicating an evolving landscape and lifestyles within these traditional communal settings. However, although kibbutzim went through considerable changes in many aspects, the principle of equality, voluntariness, and democracy was not changed. Other characteristics mentioned in the survey included specific aspects of geographical location, quality of life, and a robust com-

munity spirit. These distinctive features contribute significantly to the identity and narrative of each kibbutz, reinforcing its unique place within the broader Israeli societal context.

By applying Schein's model of organisational culture (1985) to investigate the phenomena of Israeli kibbutzim and its adaptations to the changing internal and external contextual conditions, our study results reveal a culture that is deeply rooted in community, mutual support, and respect for the contributions of all members, the elderly in particular. These findings underscore kibbutzim's unique position in the Israeli societal landscape, balancing traditional communal values with evolving contemporary practices.

## DISCUSSION

The growing involvement of older members in kibbutz communities presents both opportunities and challenges that must be addressed. One major concern is resources and infrastructure (Ganany-Dagan Orly, 2022). Adapting to the needs of the elderly may require additional resources, such as specialised health care services, infrastructure modifications, and access to support services (Kulander, Wilhelmsson, 2022; Yust, Meghdari, 2023). Thus, the growing demand for elderly care may strain community resources and require careful planning (Letzter, 2023). It is important to consider the physical limitations of older members and ensure that activities are safe and accessible. Sustainability is also necessary to balance the needs of different age groups and ensure the long-term development of the community (Lux, Senega, 2014).

Demographic shifts in kibbutzim can lead to intergenerational conflicts or changes in community priorities. Such change can result in tensions, especially if younger members have different visions for the future of the community (Getz, 2015). Despite the changing reality of kibbutzim, including a debate in Israel about limitations on living in a kibbutz when one is middle-aged, there is a noticeable improvement in meeting the needs of mid-life population. For example, current kibbutz members have the option of owning a private car, pursuing higher education at a university or traveling abroad for holidays. Nowadays, most kibbutzim are accepting new members, especially young families, as well as returning children of kibbutz members, who continue to respect and care for the older generation that founded the kibbutz. In this way, they maintained a 'mutual guarantee', one of the basic principles on which the idea of the kibbutz was based (Greenberg et al., 2016).

The resistance of some kibbutzim to privatisation suggests that financial stability may influence their decision to maintain traditional cooperative structures. However, the growing trend toward privatisation indicates a significant transformation of the traditional kibbutz model (Moskovich, Achouch, 2017). In recent

years, there has been a shift in the economic focus of kibbutzim toward industrial ventures, with less involvement in agriculture. This shift reflects broader market trends and responses to the changing economic landscape. Although many kibbutzim have been privatised, the kibbutz did not neglect the old members and took care of pensions to exist with dignity. Cesakin and Reiser's results (2017) indicated that members of the renovated kibbutz reported higher levels of place attachment than members of the traditional kibbutz. However, no significant differences were observed in terms of satisfaction with place and satisfaction with life. There has been considerable variation in the development of individual kibbutzim in Israel. Emerging different rates of organisational development can lead to unifying movements or their divisions. In the case of Israel, all kibbutzim are united in an organisation called the 'Kibbutz Movement', established in 1999. The movement also created a fund from the resources of wealthy kibbutzim to help the elderly population in economically weak kibbutzim.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our study looks deeper into the organisational culture of Israeli kibbutzim, using Edgar Schein's model as a framework to understand the dynamics of these communities, particularly in the context of ageing populations and evolving communal structures. In our opinion, this research fills a gap in kibbutzim studies, as the findings so far have not focused on the older adults living in these settlements spread across the State of Israel.

We identified the *basic underlying assumptions* such as mutual guarantee and support which continue to be strongly represented among the residents of Israeli kibbutzim. The *espoused values* can further be interpreted in the context of an ageing society, through overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards older individuals in these communities also reflected by their significant role in kibbutzim boards and decision-making processes. *Artefacts and behaviours* find expression in the spatial layout of Israeli kibbutzim, as well as in services and events addressing older members.

The analysis of demographic changes in the surveyed kibbutzim revealed a growing representation of older adults, indicating a demographic structure with potential implications for community resources and support services. This finding underscores the importance of developing policies and programmes tailored to the needs of the aging population in kibbutzim, ensuring the sustainability of community resources and the well-being of older members. By understanding and leveraging the unique organisational culture of kibbutzim, communities can better address the challenges of changing demographics and external conditions, ensuring the continued resilience and success of these communal settlements.



Considering a parallel ideological shift within the kibbutzim, in particular the widespread process of privatisation and renewal, reflects a significant transformation within the movement. Despite this shift towards a more individualised economic framework, the basic principles of democracy, mutual responsibility and collective support remain embedded in the organisational culture of kibbutzim. The deep-seated respect for older adults within these communities underscores the ethos of mutual support and inclusivity. Our findings reveal a high level of elderly participation in decision-making processes, indicating a commitment to egalitarian governance and the recognition of the contributions of elderly members.

In final conclusion, by explaining the interplay between organisational culture, demographic changes and social structures, our findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the unique position of kibbutzim in Israeli society and offer insights into the future development of these communities.

From the perspective of Europe and the United States, we are familiar with various forms of collaborative housing, nevertheless traditional kibbutzim are still a very unique form of community housing. In the context of the changes in kibbutzim brought about by the privatisation process, a fundamental question arises about the evolution of this form towards collaborative housing. This opens up another research area.

Our study has some limitations. We surveyed only 30 of the 54 kibbutzim, potentially leaving out the full diversity. In surveys, respondents may give the answers the researcher expects. Moreover, only three of the kibbutzim in the surveyed group of respondents were collective kibbutzim. This is too small a sample to draw conclusions on the differences between collective and renewed kibbutzim. These limitations call for broader and deeper future research to better understand the phenomenon of the Israeli kibbutzim.

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