Organisational Learning, Politics and Change: The Mundane and the Extraordinary in Peacebuilding. A case study of OneVoice (US), Darkenu (Israel), Zimam (Palestine) and Solutions Not Sides (SNS) (UK)

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Organisational Learning, Politics and Change: The Mundane and the Extraordinary in Peacebuilding

A Case Study of OneVoice (US), Darkenu (Israel), Zimam (Palestine) and Solutions Not Sides (SNS) (UK)

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Professor Georgina Blakeley, Dr Stefanie Sinclair
Organisational Learning, Politics and Change:
The Mundane and the Extraordinary in Peacebuilding
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Abstract

How do international hybrid NGO/SMOs learn to create political space for change and transformation in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Addressing this overarching research question, this thesis concentrates on how organisational learning takes place and what its relationship with politics might be. Four peacebuilding organisations in Israel, Palestine, the US and UK are the focus of the research. These units of analysis, conceptualised as hybrid non-governmental (NGO)/social movement organisations (SMOs), are used to identify and analyse some of the as yet unexplored political dimensions of organisational learning which is understood as processes, mechanisms, sites and outcomes of learning. The thesis argues that organisational learning can provide a lens for understanding these organisations’ multiple levels of engagement with politics and change and transformation. The research uses mixed qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, participant observation, documentary analysis of organisational materials) with multiple stakeholder respondents (activists, staff, trustees, external stakeholders) associated with each of the organisations. Politics is characterised as involving the exercise of power. Change and transformation are analysed and evidenced both through individual capacity building which leads to political participation as well as through organisations’ abilities to adapt in order to collectively influence norms and values and to lobby for national political change. The mundane of the thesis title can be found in the incremental organisational learning, which is part of working to bring about structural change for peacebuilding. Transformation is addressed as the extraordinary in the attainment of personal agency at the individual level, as organisational transformations and as transformations in wider local and national politics. This understanding of learning as political and potentially change-making adds to organisational learning, development management and social movement literature while expanding on the role of learning in social movement organisations.
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Abstract

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Defining the Problem

Civil Society organisations, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social movement organisations (SMOs), generally seek ways to improve their effectiveness, particularly in the context of conflict, when conditions change and visions, mission and strategy are continuously adapted. However, the formal mechanisms for learning used by civil society organisations are for the most part framed by the funding structures within which they work. They are often informed by management tools for evaluation which measure performance and success in ways which are not always sufficiently adapted for the social and political context of each organisation nor for fully reflecting their levels of political engagement. Although I have not included evaluation as a major focal point in this particular research, the need for investigating and improving the use of evaluation in this kind of context is one of the key points for a future research agenda (chapter 9).

From a management perspective, the concept of ‘organisational learning’ only partially addresses issues of politics and change as it does not currently include conceptualisations of how organisations operate within, and impact on, their political contexts. There is therefore room for new thinking about how learning takes place within and between organisations and their wider contexts by expanding on understandings of organisational learning to include how it might be thought of as political. This should prove useful for organisations focused on the Israeli Palestinian conflict as well as for organisations working ‘in’ or ‘on’ other conflicts.
Global development as a subject area is an important point of reference in this research as all the organisations included in the case study are focused on engaging with either Israel or Palestine, or both; they work for peace and social justice (Sustainable Development Goal no. 16) and to address the causes and effects of anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic hate as part of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Although global development as a concept lacks a clear or single definition, it is linked with human, political, economic and technological sustainable development which aims to address a complex set of global challenges through efforts, amongst others, to reduce poverty and inequality and to address conflict (UN, 2022). In the field of global development, development managers, as those who steer development in and outside organisations which work towards those goals, play a role in the ways in which learning is managed and facilitated within and between the organisations. Global development and more specifically the field of development management, which is also an area of much debated processes and practices, are an initial reference point for my research, and are then cross-referenced throughout this thesis.

My PhD research grew out of a MSc thesis in Development Management which focused on how learning takes place within social movement organisations. It concluded that development managers play a role in that learning through the learning tools and processes they implement. This research now delves deeper into these issues by focusing on the relationships between organisational learning as processes, mechanisms, sites and outcomes of learning and politics. The thesis builds on conceptualisatios of organisational learning by incorporating ideas born out of development and development management approaches which see management and learning as part of political processes where
learning addresses power and influence and where shifting multi-levels of power and
influence can be used to address inequalities and social change (McGee and Pettit, 2020).
Managers and the staff of organisations are again included in this study but their roles are
no longer the primary focus as I seek answers to my research questions.

A better understanding of the issues which arise when investigating organisational learning
in hybrid NGO/SMOs in the complex context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has required
me to go beyond development management literature. As I will explain in chapter 2, my
research builds on insights from this literature on development management, particularly
the study of organisational learning, social movements and processes of peacebuilding,
from a wide range of disciplinary approaches, including development studies, political
science, social psychology and religious studies. Therefore, to address these issues, I have
taken an interdisciplinary approach.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The thesis focuses on OneVoice International (US), Darkenu (Israel), Zimam (Palestine) and
Solutions Not Sides (SNS) (UK) to identify and analyse some of these as yet underexplored
political dimensions of organisational learning. Politics is understood here as the exercise of
power which is dynamic and relational and where asymmetries of power exist and are
challenged (see chapter 2). The political dimensions of organisational learning are observed
and analysed through an examination of processes, mechanisms, outcomes and sites of
learning at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS.
OneVoice, Darkenu (Israel) and Zimam (Palestine) are grass-roots, civil society advocacy organisations which see the status quo in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as untenable and aim to contest it. All the organisations are linked through the OneVoice International peacebuilding movement, the history of which I describe in more detail in chapter 3. In 2019, OneVoice’s website stated that they aim to empower politically moderate Israelis and Palestinians to pressure their governments towards a two-state solution and to ‘provide the centrist mainstream on both sides with the opportunities and tools to build momentum for a peace agreement’ (OneVoice International, 2019). Their work includes interventions such as advocacy, dialogue, education and protest work as well as the learning which accompanies these processes.

Solutions Not Sides (SNS) works predominantly in schools, and also with community groups in the UK, introducing young Israeli and Palestinian activists to school children as part of their anti-racism programmes which are particularly focused on anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic hate. The Israeli and Palestinian speakers who visit UK schools are managed by SNS coordinators in Israel and the West Bank.

According to the CEOs of OneVoice (OS1, 2018), Darkenu (DS2, 2020) and Zimam (ZS1, 2020) (see Appendix B - Coded Schedule of Interviewees), the work of Darkenu and Zimam does not, however, focus solely on conflict resolution issues as it encompasses social and political action programmes and campaigns. In the West Bank and Gaza, Zimam’s work includes non-violent community activism, youth leadership and women’s empowerment programmes (Zimam, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). In Israel, Darkenu runs highly visible
campaigns, an online news programme, DemocraTV, events and demonstrations encouraging the emergence of a politically moderate majority. Darkenu addresses issues ranging from corruption in government to the divisive culture of public discourse in Israel (Darkenu, 2018, 2022a). These social and political programmes are not cross-border peace initiatives involving participants from both Israel and Palestine, which are more characteristic of peace work in Israel and Palestine (Lazarus, 2017), or limited to supporting a two-state solution, but are promoted as part of building a broader infrastructure for change within their own societies (OneVoice, 2020, 2022; Darkenu, 2020; Zimam, 2019c).

For example, in its organisational materials, Darkenu states that ‘it aims to help build a liberal, democratic, moderate state of Israel where discussions can also be led by moderates who understand that diverse views can be balanced’ (Darkenu, 2022). However, at SNS, where they deliver conflict resolution training and workshops in UK schools, their Executive Director says their aim as an education charity is non-political (NS1, 2019), and they work to provide critical, non-partisan education on the Israeli Palestinian conflict (SNS, 2022).

Observing the ways in which OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS try to capture or measure their success in peacebuilding and political arenas around the Israeli Palestinian conflict has led me to question what the relationships are between organisations, learning, politics and change. Conceptualising learning and its relationship with politics and change is, however, challenging. Where organisations whether corporate, government, NGOs, civil society or social movement organisations are the units of analysis, learning is generally thought about in terms of organisational learning which, as a theoretical and practical approach, does not incorporate thinking about the political dimensions of organisations and their learning. In order to address issues such as these, the thesis analyses some of the ways in which
organisational learning takes place and can be deemed to be both a facilitator of and result from political change at individual, organisational, local and national political levels. I do not focus on all aspects of organisational learning as political but more specifically on the organisational learning which enables individuals and organisations to adapt, change, transform – internally and in relation to each other and to be able to engage better with struggles for peace.

I argue that mechanisms for organisational learning are part of political processes which take place in political sites for learning and produce outcomes of change or transformation which are political at the level of the individual, organisations and society. As part of an analysis of these aspects of organisational learning, I evidence how individuals become empowered, how organisations adapt or change their structures or visions, how policies change, and how change at wider societal level means that different values and norms around accepting ‘the other’ become more prevalent. I also suggest that an examination of processes, mechanisms, sites and outcomes of organisational learning as part of managed and participatory approaches to evaluation might capture some of the relationships between organisational learning, politics and change and transformation in ways which could help organisations reach their political goals.

Thinking about organisational learning as it relates to politics, change and transformation lies at the heart of this research and is examined in closer detail in subsequent chapters. I look at how learning in and between hybrid NGO/SMOs in Israel, Palestine, the US and the UK takes place in different ways and at different levels (individual and organisational) and how it includes tacit learning through informal relationship building as well as formal
training programmes and the implementation and outcomes of managerial processes. I
examine how organisational learning encompasses the learning which takes place in political
spaces where accommodation and conflict coexist. In these spaces, I analyse how people,
individually and collectively, see the world and the courses of action which they decide to
take, and how different ideas and values are discussed and debated in safe and
accommodating spaces and shape the changing narratives that they tell about themselves.
Throughout these learning processes, where relationships are fluid and dynamic, I question
whether power shifts in relationships at individual and organisational levels produce change
or transformation, creating pathways to broader social and political change.

I refer to OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS as ‘hybrid’ non-governmental NGO/SMOs as
they have characteristics of both social movement organisations working for social and
political change, and of non-governmental, civil society organisations offering skills
development and training. I also use the term transnational activism, where activists
supporting OneVoice draw on resources, networks and opportunities beyond Israel and
Palestine (Tarrow, 2005), to help advance their shared cause. Describing organisations as
hybrid NGO/SMOs is useful for understanding how organisational learning and change
happens within and between civil society organisations which each have different
characteristics. This definition also helps explore the common as well as different problems
of organisational learning in their different contexts.
1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions have been formulated to investigate and understand the relationships between processes of organisational learning, politics, change and transformation. These questions have influenced the steps taken to conduct this research forming the basis of my interview and focus group questions (see Appendices C and D). The overarching question is: ‘How do international hybrid NGO/SMOs learn to create political space for change and transformation in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?’

Secondary research questions which help answer this main question are:

1. Who and what influences organisational learning at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and Solutions Not Sides?

2. How does organisational learning take place at personal, intra and inter organisational levels; who participates and how?

3. How does organisational learning impact on the thinking and activities of internal and external stakeholders (staff, activists, board members, donors, external partners)?

4. How can learning in organisations be understood to be ‘political’?

5. What are the relationships between organisational learning and political change?

I formulated these questions as a way to help me understand how organisational learning takes place, and how it might be considered political on both theoretical and practical levels, for organisations which operate in highly politicised environments.
1.4 Chapter Outline

In chapter 2, an interdisciplinary literature review situates my research within the context of a range of different disciplinary approaches to the study of organisational learning, development management and social movements. I outline my thesis’ contribution to gaining a deeper understanding of mechanisms, processes, sites and outcomes of organisational learning that can bring about change and transformation in complex conflict situations. This interdisciplinary approach helps me create a map (Appendix F – Conceptual Map) which borrows from different understandings of learning, the role and conceptualisations of organisations and politics and the relationships between them. Where gaps in the literature and current knowledge have been identified in specific subject areas, these are for the most part filled by literature from other subject areas. This map therefore sets out the investigative arena that the thesis is going to cover and is based on the reading of and contributions from the literatures in relation to the problem I have posed and the questions that I am asking.

In chapter 3, I explore the context of the work of OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS in order to help answer research question 1 which asks who and what influences organisational learning in these organisations. The chapter provides an overview of the historical dimensions of the Israeli Palestinian conflict and of conflicting Israeli and Palestinian historical narratives. It also analyses how social movement organisations for peacebuilding navigate the political realities of current day Israel and Palestine. OneVoice (US), Darkenu (Israel), Zimam (Palestine), SNS (UK) are introduced as hybrid NGO/SMOs which have evolved out of the OneVoice Movement, founded by social entrepreneur Daniel
Lubetzky in 2002. These hybrid NGO/SMOs have since developed their own independent strategic aims, identities and programmes of activity specific to their own particular contexts and, with the exception of SNS, continue to receive some grants from the original OneVoice organisation/movement.

The research is built on a social constructivist epistemology which does not see ‘the truth’ as fixed. Chapter 4 sets out my research methodology. My research questions try to capture some of the ways in which learning is experienced, rather than to empirically measure learning among and between individuals and organisations. I describe the qualitative methods used to gather data and to answer these research questions. These methods which changed to online research after research plans for fieldwork had to be adapted in 2020 due to Covid 19, include participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and an analysis of organisational documents. This chapter discusses the use of these methods bearing in mind the limitations which the Covid 19 pandemic imposed and the opportunities which the unusual circumstances also provided. The chapter also discusses how data was analysed.

Chapter 5, the first of four chapters driven by data collected in the field for the research, addresses research question 2: how does organisational learning take place at personal, intra and inter organisational levels; who participates and how? This chapter analyses organisational learning and how it takes place through interactions, relationships, action learning and more managed processes within and between all four organisations and at different levels, some formal and some informal. Analysing some of these processes and the mechanisms used to implement them provides an opportunity to better understand
how learning takes place, who participates in that learning and how. It also highlights how
tacit and explicit learning can take place concurrently and in sometimes unexpected ways in
different sites for learning. Understanding these different processes and mechanisms for
learning sets up the subsequent chapters which explore outcomes of learning and how the
exercise of power takes place and is also challenged as part of those processes.

While also focusing on who and what influences organisational learning, chapter 6 aims to
answer question 3 on how organisational learning impacts on the thinking and activities of
internal and external stakeholders. The chapter looks more closely at the organisations and
the individuals within them to analyse how national, organisational and individual narratives
are reformulated in ways which shape the changing stories that stakeholders tell about
themselves, their communities and their organisations. It discusses how individual and
organisational identities and narratives change, and how identities and narratives and their
shifting terrains create space for political change and transformation within, across and
outside of their organisations. This includes how stories and narratives frame and reframe
perspectives, shape and reflect identities, and inform strategic direction and action to make
change. It also includes an examination of how religious and political narratives are
disentangled and then rewritten through activism, resulting in the creation of new individual,
organisational and national narratives which promote peace and social justice. In this way,
organisational learning provides safe spaces for learning, an idea which is further explored
in chapter 7.

In chapter 7 I begin to answer research questions 4 and 5 which ask how learning in
organisations can be understood to be ‘political’ and what the relationships are between
organisational learning and politics. Politics is understood here as the exercise of power and involves the asymmetries and dynamics of power which can be associated with the learning which takes place within and between organisations and wider political landscapes. Chapter 7 analyses power in the organisations and how they learn in terms of creating space for political change and transformation. I address how organisational learning processes can be understood as political: in the context and ways in which they take place; as a result of the relationships which inform them; as well as in the processes which enable political values and messages to be constructed and negotiated by those participating in them. This involves acknowledging the asymmetries which exist in different kinds of relationships of power within and external to organisations and understanding how power is then challenged and reshaped or becomes sedimented in those relationships. Reshaping power through organisational learning is then explored through an analysis of how organisational struggles are managed and how peacebuilding and politics are reimagined within and between organisations in politically accommodating and conflictive spaces. Many of the shifts in power which I describe as taking place at individual, organisational and national levels are for the most part forms of incremental change, while some can be seen as transformational.

Chapter 8 analyses how understanding the role of organisational learning in facilitating changes or more fundamental transformations can help promote and impact on individual, organisational or broader social and political change. In response to research question 5, I argue that a multi-level understanding of politics which involves power helps capture the relationships between organisational learning, politics, change and transformation. In the context of social movement organisations working for political change I argue that change
and sometimes transformation take place at an individual level when individuals find ‘power within’ and hope for change. At an organisational level, change takes place in how organisational visions, missions, strategies and planning are adapted and sometimes impact on local and national politics. At a national level, transformation is not only understood as major shifts in the balance of power between Israel and Palestine (something which has not yet taken place), but also when values, norms, policy and attitudes are changed on a national scale. Change for peacebuilding, as described in the thesis title, is shown to be born out of organisations and organisational learning and is, I argue, for the most part incremental and mundane. However, these changes are no less important than the extraordinary transformational and more fundamental changes, also referred to in the title, which the organisational learning in organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS helps to promote.

The concluding chapter 9 presents the findings of this research and highlights both their practical and theoretical implications which in this case point to a reconceptualising of organisational learning as political. It includes a proposal for new evaluation frameworks for NGO/SMOs working for peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine. Such evaluation frameworks would document how power relations, narratives, discourses, values and policies are changed through organisational learning.

This analysis of organisational learning as political adds to literature about organisations and organisational learning by demonstrating some of the ways in which civil society organisations might conceptualise internal as well as external political struggles and work to address them. While there are longitudinal studies which chart the course of national and
cross-border peacebuilding organisations in Israel and Palestine, this study also fills a gap where no studies have yet been done on the internal challenges of hybrid NGO/SMOs in the peacebuilding sector in Israel and Palestine which:

- chart how these kinds of organisations either build strategies, have built-in mechanisms or use organisational learning for survival more intuitively (Lazarus, 2020).

Social movement literature, which underlines the importance of the use of narratives in mobilising support for social movement organisations, informs many of my arguments, and the research also contributes to thinking about how organisational learning can in practice and at organisational levels, help SMOs conceptualise and work for political change. Changing people’s world view is, for example, highlighted as one of the most powerful of political changes, in a way which I believe can be understood as transformational. Finally, this approach, which places politics at the heart of organisational learning, certainly at least in the context of peacebuilding organisations in Israel and Palestine, contributes to organisational literature which is only just beginning to explore the social and political aspects and implications of organisational learning in civil society organisations in conflict situations.
Chapter 2 – An Interdisciplinary Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter sets out the ways in which literature has informed the theorisation and analysis of organisational learning in the context of SMOs working in and on the conflict in Israel and Palestine. I use an interdisciplinary approach, which includes social science perspectives to understand how learning takes place in hybrid NGO/SMO organisations and might be political. A development management approach is my starting point which I then interweave with other areas of literature, particularly in sections 2.2 where learning is discussed in the context of conflict and peacebuilding, and 2.4 where development is discussed in the context of organisational learning. The chapter also draws on social movements, organisational learning, political science, religious studies, social psychology and peacebuilding study literature. Although all these subject areas are ‘not static wholes that exhibit constant character across time and space’ (Chettiparamb, 2007: 7), none of these areas of study are able, on their own, to answer satisfactorily this thesis’ research questions.

Miller et al. (2008:46) argue that an approach like this, which embraces ‘epistemological pluralism’:

recognizes that, in any given research context, there may be several valuable ways of knowing, and that accommodating this plurality can lead to more successful integrated study.
An interdisciplinary approach provides fresh insights and perspectives on organisations, the learning which takes place within and between them, and in relation to the wider context of conflict and attempts at peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine. As part of this literature review, I first examine existing bodies of knowledge about organisational learning, peacebuilding, social movements, development and development management, social psychology, religion, politics and ideas and work in disciplines related to the work of NGOs and SMOs. This approach helps me to think about and situate existing bodies of thought and identify key conceptual areas. These conceptual areas where some themes interconnect include: collective learning and identity construction; organisational learning and the learning organisation; politics and participation; the role and functioning of social movements and other types of non-governmental organisations; the nature of change and transformation and the use of narratives in peacebuilding.

For the most part the literature referred to comes out of European and North American academic traditions. Organisational learning originates from Western management theory and remains a Western concept about how organisations are more effective, competitive and resilient when they engage in reflective practice (Tsang, 1997). As such, organisational learning is often contested in terms of what is perceived as its neo-liberal market capitalist agendas (Ferdinand, 2004). I acknowledge these critiques of organisational learning as central to theoretical discussions, but as not always relevant on a practical level for NGOs and SMOs, already deeply embedded within and reliant on capitalist systems and institutions. I also draw on non-Western literature which challenges the role and purpose of development (again as a neo-liberal construct) (Rekhviashvili, 2021) and by extension, the role of management and development managers (Hanlon, 2018). This too allows me to
offer a wider and critical perspective on development management practices taking place within organisations in Israel and Palestine.

Literature by Israeli and Palestinian authors is also included. Socio-psychological approaches to peacebuilding produced by Israeli academics (Bar-Tal, 2000, 2007, 2013; Bar-Tal and Halperin, 2011; Halperin et al., 2010; Halperin and Sharvit, 2015; Sharvit and Halperin, 2016) provide a fresh approach to some of the issues which peacebuilding organisations face when working to shift attitudes and behaviours in Israel and Palestine. Palestinian writing questions ‘orientalist’ (Said, 1978; 1985) western attitudes to the Middle East and more recently delves deeper into questions about religious and political identity in Palestine (Mi’ari, 2009; Zeira, 2019). Existing Israeli and Palestinian studies also add to the longitudinal studies about Palestinian and Israeli youth attitudes and participation in politics, sometimes through civil society organisations (Al Khalidi, 1997, 2001, 2006; ALLMEP, 2021a; Lavi and Solomon, 2005; Natil, 2016). However, linking learning, organisations and politics in the context of social movement organisations and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an approach not fully addressed in either Western or Middle Eastern literature. Although there is literature, including Israeli and Palestinian, which discusses issues affecting specific peacebuilding organisations (Lazarus, 2011; 2017; Gawerc, 2013; 2015), there are currently no other published academic studies of the organisations which I am researching.

I now provide a review of the literature which informs this thesis, and a conceptual map which that literature helps shape. I start by looking at literature which considers how conceptualisations of development, development management and peacebuilding help think about organisational learning in conflict environments. Probing of conceptualisations
of social movements as organisations and organisations as part of social movements (Section 2.2), helps to understand the organisations in the case study which function as hybrid NGO/SMOs. Conceptualisations of organisational learning are then explored (2.3) and I suggest how they might be developed to incorporate the political aspects of social movement learning. Social movements’ approaches to learning through framing, narrative and identity formation are introduced (Section 2.4) and provide a departure point for the exploration of the political dimensions of organisational learning (Section 2.5). Conceptualisations of change and transformation are then discussed in the context of relationships between organisational learning and politics (Section 2.6).

2.1 Conflict and Peacebuilding as Context for Learning

As early as the 18th century, Kant (1983 [1795]) conceptualised the absence of war as ‘perpetual peace’ and as an ideal moral principle which ought to be realised (Kant, 1983 [1795]). However, peace and conflict studies, which later emerged in the 1950s and 60s in the Global North is a relatively new academic discipline which describes peacebuilding as ‘an activist oriented discipline that is future-centred and aimed at designing a way forward, from violent conflict to peace’ (Rank, 2013: 430).

Galtung (1976) argues that ideas of peacebuilding or ‘designing a way forward’ are inapplicable in conflict situations unless the causes of conflict and the roots of violence are dealt with. He believes peacebuilding structures must be constructed in such a way as to promote peace and to enhance peace management and conflict resolution (Galtung, 1976),
and that this kind of conflict transformation must be relevant to each local context. He also suggests that conceptualisations of peacebuilding as interdisciplinary are necessary and that ‘if the road to peace passes through conflict resolution, then a transnational, transdisciplinary conflictology is a must for peace studies’ (Galtung, 2008: 511).

Notably, Galtung (1969) proposes approaches to peacebuilding which are bottom-up and include conflict transformation, restorative justice, healing, dealing with the past, reconciliation, forgiveness, while calling for national unity for peacebuilding. ‘Top-down’ approaches to peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine (Aall, 1996) are also challenged by bottom-up and grassroots attempts to reconcile structural and social psychological approaches (Gawerc, 2006) to peacebuilding which focus on people-to-people contact. In this vein, Lederach (1995) and Autesserre (2014a; 2014b) propose a model of conflict transformation, not solely for Israel and Palestine, which involves combining top-down and bottom-up approaches through policy, community and grassroot work to address issues around conflict and peacebuilding.

In all these activities, human encounters at an individual level with ‘the other’ provide important opportunities for relational change and for learning (Lederach, 2001; Gawerc, 2006). Meeting ‘the other’ is a key aspect of how learning takes place within and between peacebuilding organisations. Encountering, having dialogue with and understanding ‘the other’ features strongly in peacebuilding and conflict resolution literature as a practical learning tool for peacebuilding organisations (Maoz, 2004). As a concept, ‘othering’ applies to any process of alienating those who are different or not within one’s social group (Findlay et al., 1977). Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978) described the relationship between ‘the
West’ and its ‘others’ and was informed by his experience as a Palestinian (Shlaim, Iskandar and Rustom, 2010). In socio-psychological terms, ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups are understood as the groups which one identifies strongly with, or not, and how stereotypes associated with these groups can change (Halperin and Bar Tal, 2011; Halperin and Sharvit, 2015; Dixon and Levine, 2012). The concept is indeed powerful in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where not only has Palestine ‘not yet succeeded in gaining power over its representation in the world’ (Ashcroft, 2010: 1), but is also where ‘in’ and ‘out’ group relationships in Israel and Palestine continue to fuel resistance to acceptance of ‘the other’ and to putting an end to the conflict (Halperin and Bar Tal, 2011).

Peacebuilding organisations themselves are conceptualised in different ways. For Gawerc (2006, 2013), organisations that work across difference and power asymmetry as part of peacebuilding need to be aware of the reasons why people stay engaged and recognise that what keeps participants engaged with peacebuilding is both individually and socially structured. Drawing from a fifteen-year study, Gawerc (2015) focuses on peacebuilding organisations in Israel-Palestine with an investigation of what motivates and encourages local peace actors to persist in periods of acute violent conflict, and what civil society initiatives and organisations can do to maintain the commitment of their staff and participants. She concludes that organisational action helps maintain commitment from activists (Gawerc, 2015: 43-45). Actions, such as those taken by individual and networks of organisations to build and reinforce a stronger sense of community and a collective identity are, as Gawerc (2015) underlines, important to strengthen commitments to peacebuilding.
Within the literature on peacebuilding, there is a debate over what kinds of peace are to be achieved. For example, the liberal peace debate centres on a critique of the liberal frameworks that have been applied to conceptualisations of peacebuilding and conflict resolution which rose in prominence after the end of the Cold War when the liberal era of international relations emerged. Liberal peace is based on the idea that democracy, the rule of law and market economies can create the right conditions for peace in post-conflict countries (Campbell et al., 2011). The UN Report on Peacebuilding (UN, 2017), for example, looks at peacebuilding as a process aimed at strengthening national capacities (such as rule of law and market economies) and as managing conflicts peacefully while matching sustainable peace with justice and development. The democratic peace theory, an extension of liberal peace ideas where peacebuilders attempt to turn conflict-ridden and war-torn societies into liberal democracies, claims that democratisation is an important tool for building liberal peace (Bouris, 2014). However, critical peace and conflict studies, challenge this approach and focus instead on a concept of emancipatory peacebuilding as the ‘local turn’ in peacebuilding which truly listens to the ‘voices from below’ (Leonardsson and Rudd, 2015: 826). Visoka and Richmond (2017) also argue that current theories need to challenge the ‘liberal peace’ paradigm and provide better tools to empower voices in grassroots and bottom-up peacebuilding.

‘Designing a way forward’ might also be a way of conceptualising global development and the role of development managers (both also part of much-debated fields) in peacebuilding. Pieterse (2010 [2001]: 3) defines development taking place at local and regional levels as well as at a global one, as ‘the organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement’, and suggests that what constitutes improvement or appropriate
interventions ‘varies according to class, culture, historical context and relations of power. Development theory is the negotiation of these issues’ (Pieterse, 2010 [2001]: 4). Theories of development, understood as a ‘vision of a more desirable society’ a ‘historical change process’, or even just ‘deliberate efforts aimed at improvement’ (Thomas, 2000a: 29) are intrinsically linked to change. From this perspective, learning and knowledge for individual and collective development is also linked to change and seen as potentially enabling structural societal change (Johnson and Wilson, 2009; Roper and Pettit, 2002).

Development is not a straightforward or undisputed process at either practical or theoretical levels. The ways in which different forms of development issues are addressed, including peacebuilding, are made up of a variety of different challenges (Lampert, 2022). These include thinking about how competing interests, which are intrinsic to how all development processes are understood, how the rules through which those processes are managed are decided and enforced, what ‘good change’ (Chambers, 1997) looks like, and how meaningful change is then achieved. Importantly then, development challenges not limited to peacebuilding around violent conflict include thinking about how conflict and competing interests are negotiated as part of all kinds of development efforts:

Every development issue involves the challenge of conflict, with the divergent interests and actions of different social actors coming up against one another, potentially undermining each other’s welfare and any collective efforts to achieve broad-based ‘good change’ (Lampert, 2022).
Post-development theorists critique the ways in which Western-centric discourse, which also underpins and extends to development management discourse, however inclusive it may prove to be, has ‘invented the world’ (Escobar, 1995). Those critiques challenge ideas that so-called ‘underdeveloped’ countries need to modernise in the image of the West, using tools imported from the West (Mowles, 2010). As noted above, approaches and the tools used for peacebuilding are critiqued in similar ways.

The precise role of managers working in NGO, social movement and other civil society organisations, is also contested (Mowles, 2010). As a debated academic and professional field, development management is thought of at a theoretical level by Thomas (1996) in the context of ‘conflict of goals, values and interests’ as ‘the management of intervention in the process of social change’ (p. 106). Thomas (1996, 2000a) sees enabling, empowering and working on behalf of the ‘powerless’ as being distinguishing features of ‘good’ management.

Copestake and Williams (2014) develop these ideas and see ‘good development management’ ‘both as a form of intervention and as a process of interaction and discovery’ (Copestake and Williams, 2014:149). This approach places learning through ‘interaction and discovery’ at the heart of development management. Some educationalist and development theorists recognise a transformative power in learning (Freire, 2005 [1970]) and others, such as Pieterse (2010 [2001]), suggest that any understanding of the complexity of the dynamics of development requires a definition of development as ‘a collective learning experience’ (Pieterse, 2010 [2001]: 159).

The role of the development manager and their relationship with learning is explored in literature through an approach to development which includes both a focus ‘on the
everyday learning that takes place through development’ (Johnson and Wilson, 2009:1), as well as the more specific ways in which NGOs ensure knowledge generation in order to live up to changing expectation and needs of their donors and recipients of aid (Roper, Pettit and Eade, 2003). The role that managers play in guiding or facilitating collective learning experiences includes how learning is structured, managed and planned as informal and participatory processes. The role that leaders play in these processes is also highlighted (Hailey and James, 2002).

Roper et al. (2003) and Pasteur (2004) acknowledge that learning is increasingly recognised as critical to improved performance by non-governmental organisations. Mowles (2010), however, suggests that learning tools adapted for these purposes borrow too extensively from management theories developed in the private sector which do not properly address contexts or values of organisations working for social and political change. Roper et al. (2003) bring together and review literature on development and the ‘learning organisation’ as a way to explore innovative ways in which development practitioners (not limited to managers) approach issues of learning in organisations as a way of dealing with the uncertainties, including funding, and the complexities of development work. So, while on the one hand development management theory grapples with what learning might mean from a theoretical perspective, it also seeks to understand what learning means for organisations on a practical level and how it is operationalised. In terms of development management, I adopt the second approach to understand how the individuals working within hybrid social movement organisations seeking social justice and political change as part of peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine, can better understand and manage organisational learning.
Conflict and peacebuilding provide a context for learning in Israel and Palestine, and my research is informed by peacebuilding and conflict resolution literature (Lederach, 1995; Autesserre, 2014a, 2014b) as well as by how OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS work to address issues around the conflict. This extends to OV’s and SNS’s work to address the anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic hate which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fans on an ongoing basis. Conceptualisations of the ‘other’ and ‘in and out groups’ also inform this analysis of organisational learning and politics which focuses on the multiple levels of relational change required for peace (Halperin and Bar-Tal, 2011; Dixon et al., 2016). However, when discussing the concept of ‘other’, the ‘other’ is understood both within the contexts of Palestinian and Israeli societies, as well as in the relationship between those two societies. The people-to-people contact understood in peacebuilding literature to be about the relationships built across enemy lines (Pundak, 2012), is also conceptualised here as the ways in which people choose to move across lines of conflict within their own societies in order to help create conditions for peace between Israel and Palestine, as well as to address stereotypes and discrimination within their own societies. Encountering ‘the other’ within one’s own society, and addressing some of the internal and often conflictual dynamics between groups within Israeli and Palestinian society, provide some of the biggest challenges for Darkenu and Zimam, and are discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters. Encountering ‘the other’ also takes place and is discussed in the context of the US and the UK where OV and SNS work on campuses and in schools and to bring disparate groups together.

Understandings of management and learning for development are applied in this peacebuilding context. Like theoretical approaches to understanding development work
where change is brought about by addressing conflict at different levels, I also see organisational learning as being part of multiple level practical efforts towards a more equal exercise of power (see section 2.6).

2.2 Social Movements as Hybrid Organisations

The organisations included in my case study (with the exception of Solutions Not Sides which describes itself as an education organisation) work to strengthen democracies as a route to peacebuilding and describe themselves as social movements. Understanding how organisational learning is part of that work which aims to bring about social and political change, and how as organisations they approach and think about learning, I start by probing conceptualisations of social movements as organisations and of organisations as part of social movements.

Organisations are distinguishable from institutions. Organisations can be a narrower term than institution in that organisations organise a group of people who take on specific roles to achieve a particular purpose (Hodgson, 2006). Institutions can, however, be understood as a more abstract ‘set of rules that structure social interactions in particular ways’ (Knight, 1992: 2) and be a term for either larger and influential organisations or entities which model societal practices and behaviours.

In social movement studies, where research has generally focused on how social movements use advocacy and protest work outside institutional structures to achieve
change (McAdam et. al. 1996), the role and place of ‘organisations’ remains contentious.

Scholars of social movements have ‘rarely agreed about the forms, functions, and consequences of organisation with respect to social movements’ (Snow, Soule and Kriesi, 2004:9-10). Della Porta and Diani (2020) highlight, for example, how social movements connect through ‘dense, informal networks’ where actors ‘share a distinct collective identity’ (Della Porta and Diani, 2020: 21) while Tilly and Tarrow (2015) describe how contentious politics involves many different forms and combinations of collective action.

Like organisational theorists Ahrne and Brunsson (2011), Della Porta and Diani (2020) distinguish between ‘decided order’ and the ‘partial order’ to describe the models of organising which exist as part of social movements, but not necessarily in the form of organisations (Della Porta and Diani, 2020: 138).

They also point out that different organisational models can coexist within any social movement and that social movements are ‘networks of interaction between different actors which may either include formal organisations or not, depending on shifting circumstances’ (Della Porta and Diani, 2020: 16). Equally, Tarrow (1998: 123–4) distinguishes between social movements as formal organisations, the organisation of collective action, and social movements as connective structures or networks. He also argues that the transnational activism, which takes place through international networks and results from an increase in global awareness about issues and new forms of communications and organisations, takes multiple forms (Tarrow, 2005).

Zald and McCarthy (2017 [1989]) were some of the first to make an argument for paying attention to the organisational aspects of social movements as long as, they pointed out,
equal attention is paid to the structural and individual levels which also shape them. Davis et al. (2005) called for a closer connection between organisational and social movement theory, and for further studies about the ways in which both movements are organised and organisations take on movement processes which challenge political, cultural and economic hegemonies (Snow, 2004). For Clemens and Minkoff (2004), rethinking the place of organisations in social movements suggests that organisational forms impact on protest and are also arenas for interaction in and between themselves.

However, social movement organisations all take on different forms, and theorisations about hybridity conceptualise some of these differences. Evers (2020: 294), for example, combines two predominant theories of hybridity to suggest that hybrid organisations in the third sector represent ‘a kind of intra-organisational intertwining of usually separated institutional logics’, as well as of distinct purposes such as service provision, advocacy and value change. Institutional logic, a term derived from organisation studies, is understood as the multi-level, macro and micro structures and belief systems that shape organisations (Thornton et al. 2012). Minkoff (2002) more specifically analyses social movement organisations that combine advocacy and campaigning with providing resources and services. She suggests that new hybrid forms of social movements borrow ‘self-consciously from both traditional and newly emergent social movement organisational forms’ (Minkoff, 2002: 381).

Beyond the role of organisations in social movements, most literature agrees on the general nature of social movements which Batliwala describes in the context of women’s rights movements as ‘forms of collective action that emerge in response to situations of
inequality, oppression and/or unmet social, political, economic or cultural demands’, which comprise ‘an organised set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change over time’ (Batliwala, 2012:3). However, social movement theory is also contested and includes concepts which emphasise different explanatory factors as to why, for example, social movements appear, why they succeed and fail, why individuals get involved and maintain their involvement or not, and how and why individual opinions lead to collective social participation (Della Porta and Diani, 2020). US ‘old’ and European ‘new’ social movement theorists focus variously on political opportunity structure and political process theory, resource mobilisation and framing processes which conceptualise how and why social movements succeed and persist (Buechler, 1995). These theorisations attempt to understand how social movements address structural inequality within their historical, cultural and political context (Horn, 2013) and include individual and group perspectives.

Political Opportunity Structure (POS) and Political Process Theory (PPT) argue that political opportunities must exist before social movements and SMOs are able to reach their objectives. Only then can they make change through existing political structures and institutions, with the drivers of this change being activists with links to both traditional and contentious politics (Tarrow, 2012). Within a Political Opportunity framework, the ability of organisations or looser networks to engage in advocacy and social movement activities presupposes that they operate in political systems with specific characteristics. This includes political systems that are open and competitive, or where political elites are divided, where use of threats against social movements and organisations by the regime is checked, where they have access to elite allies and where new opportunities arise for them
when those systems and/or institutions might fail (Tarrow, 1994; Della Porta and Rucht, 1995).

Resource mobilisation (McCarthy and Zald, 1977) conceptualises social movements in terms of the resources which social movement organisations are competing for. This approach with its emphasis on social movements’ abilities to acquire resources and to mobilise people towards achieving goals, considers social movements as ‘social institutions where organisational infrastructure is a resource in itself’ (Morris, 1992:3). However, resource mobilisation theory, while acknowledging and theorising social movement organisations, does not specifically address concepts of organisational learning. Instead, this approach which focuses on organisational systems, resources and capacities, was the first to bring together social movement and organisational theory (Walker and Martin, 2019).

Framing processes are also key to understanding how movements produce collective social movement agendas which accentuate and highlight specific issues, events and beliefs over others (Snow, 2004; Snow et al., 2013) and shape these ideas into narratives (Polletta and Gardner, 2015). These narratives are, however, sometimes critiqued, either for the ways in which they are hegemonic (Escobar, 1997, 2018), or, it is also argued, for the ways in which they sometimes impose ‘strategic simplifications’ which ignore complexity in order to make political and policy action possible (Roe, 1991).

For the purposes of this research, the role of hybrid organisations in social movements is conceptualised as complex meaning and identity making arenas rather than simply as tools for mobilising support. This is a conceptualisation of social movement organisations as sites
for learning where learning takes place in and between organisations with different institutional logics (see 2.6) and purposes. That learning, understood as organisational learning, can then also be considered in its wider social and political contexts.

Political opportunity theory is an interesting approach to apply to the work of Darkenu in Israel and to Zimam in Palestine, which both operate in political milieux where there is seemingly little political opportunity for change and where not all of these conditions are met, but where they nonetheless help drive the creation of new narratives and discourse for peacebuilding. I do not, however, operationalise Tarrow’s (1994) political opportunity structure concept as I am more interested in politics as the exercise of power in multi-level relationships in hybrid NGO/SMO organisations, rather than purely in how the success or failure of social movements is determined by political opportunities external to them. Thinking about politics in this way also allows me to explore politics at the level of the individual and organisations, as well as at the level of the state and other institutions.

Resource mobilisation provides a broader framework which can be used for thinking about the organisational structures and processes within which learning takes place in social movement organisations. Resource mobilisation theory also provides a framework for thinking about transnational activism (Tarrow, 2005) where in the context of this research, activists supporting organisations draw on resources, networks and opportunities beyond Israel and Palestine to help advance their shared cause. Social movement literature’s conceptualisations of framing processes - as the specific context related ways in which issues, events, cultural items and ideologies are interpreted and articulated by social movement actors (within networks or organisations) - are particularly useful for this
research. The impact of framing processes on the ways in which narratives and collective identities are consciously and unconsciously created as part of organisational learning also help in arguing for the ways in which organisational learning processes can be understood as political and relate to change and transformation (chapter 6).

In this section I have highlighted some of the concepts which are dominant in social movement theory which are helpful for thinking about social movement organisations as sites for organisational learning and relate to the political dimensions of organisational learning. I discuss the usefulness of conceptualisations of resource mobilisation and framing processes in helping to shape identities, and to frame and operationalise issues. I also expand on the role of organisations in social movements as meaning and identity-making arenas, which are distinguishable from larger and more influential and established institutions. I now move on to conceptualisations of learning and organisational learning and how they might usefully apply to social movement organisations.

2.3 Conceptualisations of Organisational Learning

Learning is conceptualised from varied epistemological and philosophical positions (Seel, 2012). This is also true of organisational learning which is applied in different kinds of organisations, different settings and with different goals. Organisational learning originates in constructivist learning approaches which suggest that, by engaging with different knowledges and adding all kinds of new knowledge to what we already know, people can construct new knowledge and adapt organisations. However, organisational learning is also
characterised by positivist approaches to management and accounting which rely on seeking rational, finite explanations to problems that can be measured (Huzzard, 2004). This dichotomy presents dilemmas for social movement organisations with goals for social and political change, which cannot always be easily measured through data-driven metrics (Edwards and Hulme, 1996). It also lies at the heart of how organisational learning can be understood, either simply as managed processes or in a wider range of ways in which ideas and learning flow in different directions of influence, within and between organisations and their wider social and political spheres.

Social and constructivist theories of learning say that how individuals characterise anything (people, objects, nature, issues, conflicts etc.) grows out of the sets of relationships, traditions, communities and values in which we are involved or hold dear (Gergen, 2005). In order to understand our worlds, we either therefore adhere to existing systems (hegemonic, community, familial etc.) which suit us, or push back against the status quo - in both instances by creating stories and narratives, and by framing issues to sit comfortably with our own values and value systems, our relationships to people and the world around us (Gergen, 2005).

These ideas strongly inform the concept of social learning (Bandura, 1971; Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Schwandt, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978) which underpins organisational learning theories. Social learning is used to explain individual and organisational learning processes, the formation of one’s identity and how individuals learn by observing and interacting with others in a social setting.
While Shapira (2020) discusses the psychological foundations of organisational learning, Kozlowski and Bell (2017) argue that organisational learning involves both individual learning processes and social processes such as collaboration, coordination and information exchange. Additionally, although individual learning is a critical aspect of group and organisational learning, individual learning by itself does not, they suggest, either constitute or explain organisational learning.

In organisational learning, the concepts of communities of practice (COPs) (Lave and Wenger, 1991), networks of practice (NOPs) (Brown and Duguid, 2001; Oreszczyn et al., 2010) and landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014) are also based on a social theory of learning where learning is a socially constituted and situated experience of meaning-making in different spheres. Social learning is seen as the continuous process of learning from other people and is applied to organisational learning where learning between actors in organisations can be understood as processes ‘of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding’ (Fiol and Lyles, 1985:803). The success of organisations in these change processes depends on their learning abilities as social learning systems (Brown and Duguid, 2001).

Senge’s work popularised the notion of ‘organisational learning’ (Senge 1990, 1994) in the corporate and public management spheres. Cyert and March (1963), Schön (1973), Argyris and Schön (1978) and Pettigrew (1985) laid the foundations for later work on the ‘learning organisation’:
Learning organisations [are] organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive alternatives of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together (Senge, 1994: 3).

Theories of single, double and triple loop learning all describe how errors are detected and adjustments are made in organisational learning. Single loop learning is directed at making techniques and mechanisms more efficient, while double loop learning questions the learning systems themselves and requires individuals and organisations to make decisions in changing contexts (Argyris and Schön, 1974; Argyris, 1982). An additional level of learning in organisations is also proposed by Nielsen (1993: 118), based on Argyris’ and Schön’s work where there is also ‘change in the embedded tradition system within which the governing values of a behaviour can be nested’.

The terms ‘organisational learning’ and ‘learning organisation’ are sometimes used interchangeably, but there is also literature which differentiates between them (Ortenblad, 2001). In this literature, the learning organisation is most commonly understood as a form or ideal type (Tsang, 1997: 81) of organisation where it provides an environment that facilitates the learning of individuals (e.g., Garratt, 1990; Pedler et al., 1991; Senge, 1990). On the other hand, organisational learning is seen as formal and informal processes which use specific mechanisms for learning. Organisational learning can therefore be seen as processes taking place within the learning organisation:
Organizational learning is as natural as learning in individuals ... the ‘learning organization’ can be distinguished as one that moves beyond this ‘natural’ learning, and whose goals are to thrive by systematically using its learning to progress beyond mere adaptation (Dodgson, 1993: 380).

Not all organisations, even those which incorporate processes of organisational learning, are therefore learning organisations and it is never a given that organisations (including those included in this research which I do not necessarily label as ‘learning organisations’) are able to provide processes or an environment conducive to the formal and informal learning that is characteristic of the ‘ideal’ learning organisation (which is always in a state of becoming in relation to their ever-changing context). Hoffman (2001) describes concepts such as these that cannot ever be fully realised, as momentum concepts.

Schön’s seminal work (1973) argues that because of instability in periods of change, society and its institutions are in a continuing process of transformation and that people and institutions, including organisations, must become adept at learning in order to guide these transformations (Schön, 1973; Blackmore, 2010). Organisational learning then becomes a framework for understanding the learning paths to those transformations and change.

Although they do not necessarily refer to organisations or organisational learning, different disciplines place different emphasis on learning collectively. In order to understand how people and social movement groups and organisations learn while engaged in collective action for social justice, Kilgore (1999), for example, focuses on group learning processes for individual and social change and makes the case for a theory of collective learning:
It is my hope that collective learning theory will provide a framework in which we can examine how people construct shared visions of social justice, and learn and act together to promote these shared visions (Kilgore, 1999:201).

This conceptualisation of collective learning describes the relationship between individual and group learning and how ‘people and groups learn while engaged in collective social action for the purpose of defending and/or affirming a shared vision of social justice’ (Kilgore, 1999: 192).

This approach resonates with individually-focused theories of learning or group learning which include aspirations for social change and which highlight how individual and shared meanings are mutually bound within local contexts as well as larger fields of meaning-making:

No learning community is free of engagement with individuals and other groups, political processes, mass media messages and economic structures outside the local community. Research toward a theory of collective learning would include the social, economic, and political contexts of collective social actions taken by a local learning community (Kilgore, 1999: 200).

Melucci (1995) argues that a social learning theory framework for collective learning also includes the construction of a collective identity (Melucci, 1995). He considers how groups of people in social movements look critically at their own and others’ assumptions, perspectives and values, and subsequently construct or reconstruct shared visions of social justice (see section 2.5.1). Collective learning and the construction of a collective identity is
then fundamental to how social movements construct visions and missions for political change through learning.

Thursfield (2007), however, elaborates a social theory of learning that incorporates and gives equal weight to both individual and collective learning. She argues that personal identity is crucial in learning and that ‘there is a part of the individual person that originates and exists outside the social conversation’ (Thursfield, 2007:937). Individual identity and learning at the level of the individual also therefore remain part of processes of collective learning.

Learning at an individual level is expanded on in development literature as empowerment and agency building. In the context of combatting social inequalities, economist and philosopher Amartya Sen (1985: 203) defines agency as freedom and ‘what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important’. He also understands capabilities as freedoms and as ‘the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve’ (Sen 1992: 40). Nussbaum (2000, 2003) further refines the concept of capabilities by creating a list of core capabilities linked to agency to include individuals’ rights to political participation. Political participation is then understood as one aspect of empowerment which is also conceived of as a measurable expansion of agency and capabilities (Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007).

In the context of organisational learning, intra- and inter- organisational or group relationships and collective learning can also be understood through the concept of communities of practice (COP) mentioned above. ‘Communities of Practice’ came out of
organisational theory and knowledge management (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and are described as ‘groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger circa 2007, online). In COPs, learning is perceived as a social phenomenon which does not necessarily take place within the confines of a single organisation. The focus of COPs is on the trajectory of learning which takes an apprentice who is learning new skills from the periphery to the heart of her community of practice, where a shared identity is developed (Wenger 1998):

The community aspect refers to the development of a shared identity around a topic or set of challenges. It represents a collective intention – however tacit and distributed – to steward a domain of knowledge and to sustain learning about it (Wenger-Trayner, 2021).

Theorisations about learning within communities (Wenger, 1998) and wider networks of practice (NOPs) (Brown and Duguid, 2001; Oreszczyn et al., 2010) see organisational learning not just as managed processes within individual organisations but also as mutually beneficial processes of social participation and capacity building through more informal knowledge gathering. However, Johnson (2007) critiques the idea of communities of practice in development and suggests that, because there are power relations and inequalities in most/all ‘communities’, conceptualisations of communities of practice also need to be accompanied by other conceptual insights; these would include understanding communities of practice as action learning spaces which capture the ‘often complex social relations and dynamics of learning and knowledge production for development’ (Johnson, 2007:1).
Action Learning, another concept which originated in organisational learning and management literature, is a way of addressing and analysing organisational problems and implementing proposed solutions in generally more informal, but not always, experiential learning processes (Revans, 1982; Pedler, 2012). While there is no agreed definition of action learning or of what kind of organisations it can take place in, Pedler and Bourgoyne (2017) expand on action learning to include:

- the requirement for action as the basis for learning
- profound personal development resulting from reflection upon action
- working with problems (no right answers) not puzzles (susceptible to expert knowledge)
- problems being sponsored and aimed at organisational as well as personal development
- action learners working in sets of peers (‘comrades in adversity’) to support and challenge each other
- the search for fresh questions takes primacy over access to expert knowledge

(Pedler and Bourgoyne, 2017: 58)

Wenger (1998) highlights the concept of action learning and the process of learning in communities of practice as ‘practice’ where learning is both action learning and reflective practice. This ‘practice’ involves engaging and participating in developing an ongoing reflective practice. Furthermore, the concept of ‘practice’: 
does not fall on one side of the traditional dichotomies that divide acting from knowing, manual from mental, concrete from abstract. The process of engaging in practice always involves the whole person, both acting and knowing at once (Wenger, 1998: 47).

In the context of both organisational and social learning, all mechanisms for organisational learning are ‘situated’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and have meaning in different contexts. For example, Cook and Yanow (1993) present an approach to organisational learning whereby the collective learning which takes place is specific to its cultural context. Thus, the individual and collective learning which takes place as part of organisational learning is always specific to its environments. This underlines the situated nature of organisational learning, where learning is a social process, and social and cultural context affect both how and what people learn.

In this thesis conceptualisations of organisational learning are based on social and critical constructivist approaches to the role of learning, born out of relativist ontological assumptions which do not see the world and the truth as fixed but rather as constructed and changing (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). Here organisational learning, as an individual, collective and shared experience, is understood as a social phenomenon where learning is very much part of ‘our lived experience of participation in the world’ (Wenger, 1998: 3). This is an epistemological position where I am not interested in attempting to measure the social world and organisational learning or to hold up OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS as examples of idealised learning organisations. I am, however, interested in trying to capture some of the ways in which learning is experienced in and between the
organisations, and might be considered impactful within a context of conflict and attempts to promote peacebuilding and political change. This approach, which focuses on individuals, organisations and inter-organisational relationships, contributes to and expands on theorisations of collective learning.

Ideas and thinking about organisational learning and the learning organisation, although originating in managerial literature, have expanded to include many avenues of thinking about how learning takes place within and between organisations, and between the organisation and its context (Wang and Ahmed, 2003). These spheres range from the unit of the individual within organisations to the unit of the organisation itself, as well as within wider networks of relationships. The research builds on recent organisational literature which suggests that although the learning organisation is a well-established idea which has been the object of empirical management literature and other studies, the concept of organisational learning or the idealised idea of the learning organisations might also be thought about as serving a ‘wider purpose’ in social and political contexts (Hsu, 2020; Ortenblad, 2019; Pedler and Hsu, 2019) and as aiming for political change, rather than ‘mere adaptation’ for increased productivity (Dodgeson, 1993: 381).

How individual and collective learning take place as part of organisational learning as specific to its environments will also be evidenced in this research by the ways in which organisational learning takes place differently in each context. As similarities in organisational learning also exist between each of these organisations, those similarities will be highlighted. Organisational learning will also be seen to manifest itself in different ways, as processes, mechanisms, outcomes and sites of learning.
I distinguish between processes and mechanisms in that processes of organisational learning are understood to be made up of a series of events and include different mechanisms or tools for learning. However, these categories are not necessarily shared or articulated in this way in organisational literature. For Kozlowski and Bell (2017), individual learning processes and mechanisms are, for example, one, and expressed as ‘learning process mechanisms’ which are distinct from their outcomes in the context organisational learning. Team and organisational learning, they believe, is a dynamic and emergent consequence of a dynamic interplay across the level of individuals and groups over time. I argue that processes and mechanisms are also sometimes simultaneously outcomes of learning. In chapter 6, for example, I explore how narrative formation is used as a mechanism for learning, and demonstrate how the outcomes of that learning, in the shape of new narratives, is simultaneously acted upon by the organisations in this study. I also discuss sites of organisational learning not only as the physical spaces where organised activities or tacit or action take place, or the virtual spaces where learning takes place through social media or other digital platforms, but also as sites which are safe spaces and accommodate a wide range of views.

2.4 Learning in Social Movement Literature

In social movement literature, learning is understood to take place through framing processes which provide perspectives on how social movements learn and then communicate ideas about what they want to change and how. Collective action frames
(Benford and Snow, 2000) are used for examining the processes through which meanings are debated and challenged and through which new meanings are then articulated (Snow, Vliegenthart and Ketelaars, 2018). Collective action framing is also a way of understanding how movement participants build a shared understanding of a problem or injustice, how they then articulate and make understood those ideas and how to solve them. Social movements and the people within them are, in this conceptualisation, viewed as ‘signifying agents’, ‘actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists and bystanders or observers’ (Snow and Benford 1988: 198). The learning through collective meaning production and this way of understanding the world is described as framing in ways that are ‘intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists’ (Snow and Benford 1988:198).

In social movement literature, another way in which learning is understood to take place is through collective identity construction (Polletta and Jasper, 2001) linked to framing. Social theories of identity construction are based on the premise that identity is produced and changed, at least in part, through a person’s learning and interaction with the world around them, and that identities can be multiple and fluid to accommodate a variety of possible contexts and narratives (Taylor, 2015). Social movement literature on identity construction also links in with socio-psychological discussions of ‘othering’ (2.2) which, from a conflict and peacebuilding perspective, analyse the processes by which some people come to be seen as ‘others’, and how representations of particular groups or categories of people are communicated, contested and reinforced (Adwan et al., 2016; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1986).
Concepts of collective identity, identity formation and politicisation through learning are, however, debated in the literature and there is no agreed definition (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). Curnow et al. (2018) argue that ‘politicization is a sociocultural learning process, not merely a process of conceptual development or cognitive change, but a simultaneous process of conceptual, practical, epistemological, and identity development’ (Curnow et al., 2019: 716). Polletta and Jasper (2001) locate collective identity within the individual and define it as ‘an individual’s cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution’ (Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 285). From a social movement perspective, collective identity is understood as something which is generated and created between individuals in a shared space and explicitly links to collective agency (Snow, 2001).

Melucci’s (1995) work on identity in social movements defines collective identity more as a ‘learning process that leads to the formation and maintenance of a unified empirical actor that we can call a social movement’ (Melucci, 1995: 49). His conceptualisation of collective identity places self-reflective learning at the heart of the way in which social movements develop a sense of purpose and understanding of what they represent and do:

A social movement recognises itself through a reflexive understanding of its relation to the context or environment in which it develops, including an awareness of the opportunities and constraints it faces in a given field of action (Melucci, 1995:47).

In social movement studies, thinking about how people and organisations negotiate identity often bridges psychological and sociological approaches and has focused on how concepts of identity bear on social movement recruitment, activism and maintenance (Stryker et al.,
Here identity formation helps determine what a social movement looks like, fights for and how well it survives, but is not linked to political outcomes. From a socio-psychological perspective, theories of social change not only ask how individuals mobilise together to challenge inequality, but also question how individuals might come together to challenge their own differences (Dixon et al. 2016). This questioning takes place in the context of societal beliefs which can help prolong intractable conflicts such as in Israel and Palestine (Bar Tal, 1998, 2007), and may also be part of the emergence of new identities from collective action (Drury and Reicher, 2000). Examining the role of emotions within the contexts of conflict and conflict resolution also adds another dimension to those discussions (Halperin, 2015).

Recent studies of Israeli and Palestinian adolescents in peacebuilding programmes provide stories of the creation of collective identities as individual transformations which ‘contribute to the gradual re-scripting of master narratives of collective identities’ (Hammack, 2006a: 259), but do not focus on the role of the organisations which implement those programmes. Hammack’s studies (2006a; 2006b) nonetheless illustrate the complexity of processes of identity formation, construction and intervention and highlight how these processes are rarely linear. This kind of social identity theory adopts a social psychology approach which expands on concepts of individual identity construction as derived from membership of social groups (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Religious and national narratives also inform identities, beliefs and behaviours (Geertz, 1993 [1973]; Nye, 2008; Wright, 2012) and, as Lederach (2005) argues, can be reconstructed through learning for peacebuilding. Studies that examine the role of religion and religious identities in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict highlight the complexity of
different, often intersecting, factors that can contribute to the creation, maintenance or resolution of conflictual situations and violence. Mayall and Sylvestri (2015) argue that there is no clear-cut theory or model of the relationships between religion and peacebuilding or for promoting peace or avoiding war, and that there is always a ‘complex interplay and specific articulations of religion in each individual context’ (Mayall and Silvestri, 2015: 70). They also highlight the overlaps between politics and religion where:

Even in those conflicts where religion appears to be a strong causal element, research shows that political manipulation of it rather than bodies of doctrine are what matters most. Quests for power and authority by opportunistic religious and political leaders are often behind their strategic mobilisation of community identities to aid them achieve their aims (Mayall and Silvestri, 2015: 72).

This builds on Nye’s (2008: 5) human-centred approach where religion is studied as a ‘human practice’, where one ‘cannot fully distinguish religion and culture’ and where religion is part of everyday life, as an aspect of culture:

Religion is what people do on a day-to-day level. To put this in another way, religion is nearly always both a set of ideas and beliefs that people can engage with (to some extent or other), and also the framework for their lived experiences and daily practices (Nye, 2008: 3).

From an anthropological perspective, Webster (2020) observes how religion is often entangled with politics and is part of the way in which individuals experience the world, particularly where there are contestations over what are ‘good’ or ‘politically toxic’ social groups. Nye (2008: 14), however, suggests that although the Israeli Palestinian conflict is
sometimes regarded as a struggle between Judaism and Islam, even given the growth of political parties affiliated with religious groups in both Israel and Palestine, many of the tensions between the Israelis and the Palestinians are not primarily or exclusively about religion. Fundamentally political issues about Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlers, disagreements over water, governance and power are not, for example, about religion.

Khatib et al. (2018) also highlights how perceptions about the role of religion in conflict differ between Israelis and Palestinians. Kunst et al. (2019) question whether the acknowledgement of the shared Abrahamic roots of Jews and Muslims may have the potential to reduce inter-group bias in Israel and Palestine and serve as a tool for conflict resolution.

Conceptual links between learning in organisational learning and social movement literature are all based on critical constructivist approaches, where learning is understood as a social phenomenon. Organisational learning literature which links learning and identity more explicitly (Jorgensen and Keller, 2008) argues that processes of learning involve negotiating meaning and identity. It does not, however, address learning as part of identity formation or as a political process which might have political outcomes, something which this research aims to address more fully. Social movement conceptualisations of learning, which include thinking about narratives as ways to strengthen collective social and political action for change, will go further to helping me to achieve that.

Social movement theorisation of collective identity (Melucci, 1995, Polletta and Jasper, 2001) as framing (Goffman, 1974; Benford and Snow, 2000) and narrative construction
(Fine, 1995; Polletta and Gardner, 2015) provide helpful approaches to examining the context of learning within OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS and the ‘structure of the subjective involvement of individuals’ (Adams, 1979: 601 on Goffman, 1974), or how individuals engage with that learning in the context of peacebuilding. This research builds on these approaches to understand how producing a shared understanding of a problem through narrative-making is one of the important ways in which learning takes place in hybrid NGO/SMOs and is specific to each of those organisations (chapter 6). Narratives, which frame different groups’ outlooks and underpin national identities in Israel and Palestine, are understood to impact on how people see themselves and others. Identity construction is therefore an important aspect of writing and rewriting individual and social narratives. Because it involves the contestation and challenging of power, I also see collective identity formation as a key intra and inter movement process of organisational learning which is political.

I therefore use the concept of collective learning as it is understood in social movement literature. I explore how organisations and organisational learning might serve wider social and political purposes, beyond organisations’ and/or the individuals within organisations own growth and change, which takes place in ways specific to organisations’ and individuals’ broader social and political spheres. Addressing ‘the other’ is then understood as an implicit process of politicisation through learning which links to collective identity formation. These ideas provide a useful approach to understanding collective learning in the context of intergroup relations and contributes to organisational learning literature which does not fully address the social and political context of organisations.
These are all useful approaches which help me examine organisational learning within the context of both Israel and Palestine, where peacebuilding efforts challenge established national narratives, born out of, and often held intact by, how the history of the state of Israel and the Palestinians has been framed and opposing national identities formed (Al Khalidi, 1997; Rogan and Shlaim, 2001). However, these are complex and sensitive learning processes since, within Israeli and Palestinian national narratives, additional layers of complexity are present in how religious narratives/identities are often intertwined with ethnic/national narratives and identities (Bar-Simon-Tov, 2010; Boudreau, 2014; Fox and Sandler, 2004; Gunning, 2009; Sprinzak, 1991, 1998; Mayall and Silvestri, 2015).

While the role of religion is not a central focal point of my research, as part of a ‘human centred approach’ to religion (Nye, 2008), this thesis takes into consideration how participants perceive their religious identities, within and separately to their national identities. I also take into account their views on how religious narratives, beliefs and practices might be relevant to some of the learning which takes place within and between OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, and is related to political activity. Notions of religion and religious identity will therefore be seen to intersect and be conflated with political, ethnic or cultural identities in ways which inform social narratives and identities which the hybrid NGO/SMOs in this research challenge and sometimes, I argue, reconstruct through organisational learning.
2.5 The Political Dimensions of Organisational Learning

So far, I have reviewed literature which conceptualises organisational learning in several ways, including organisational learning in its more traditional sense as a ‘process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding’ (Fiol and Lyles, 1985: 803). In order to understand organisational learning in a different sense where it includes its possible political dimensions, I turn to literature which debates the meaning of politics and how it is theorised and enacted in and through organisations.

Conceptualisations of politics and of that which is political includes a range of interpretations, including narrow ones. They posit that politics is only that which concerns the state (Pierre and Peters, 2020) - politics as being where power is exerted and contested in many kinds of changing relationships (Dahl, 1957), or as power which determines distributions of resources and of who gets what, when and how (Lasswell, 1936; Laswell and Kaplan, 2017 [1950]). A more encompassing interpretation by Leftwich (2004:103) incorporates ideas about resources and power and sees politics as:

All of the activities of co-operation, negotiation and conflict, within and between societies, whereby people go about organising the use, production or distribution of human, natural and other resources in the course of the production and reproduction of their biological and social life.

For Leftwich (2004: 209), relationships of power and the use, production and distribution of resources are central to processes of devising and applying rules and ideas through
organisations and in other spheres of co-operation, in ways which make those co-operations profoundly political activities. He notes: ‘Whether directly productive, or social, [they] in some way involve activities with organising the use, production or distribution of resources. That’s political’.

Politics as power advocates that politics takes place more specifically whenever power as agency or authority is exerted, and is an aspect of all social relations (Leftwich, 2004). It is also Foucault’s belief that power is in every relationship (2006) and that in these relationships power lies as a force, not solely as ‘an institution [or] a structure, nor an individual capacity, but rather as a complex arrangement of forces in society’ (Foucault, 1990:94).

Power in relationships is integral to many different approaches to understanding and theorising politics. Feminist writer, Kate Millett (2016 [1970]) sees politics as power-structured relationships, where one group of persons is controlled by another. Dahl (1957) also claimed that politics is the influence over the actions of others. Lukes (2005 [1974]), however, sees power in politics as potentially less overt. He also argues that there are other, less observable ways of manifesting or exerting power. This less observable power manifests itself through shaping political agendas as well as in the ways in which power becomes sedimented in structures, so that ways of doing things and behaving become normalised and hegemonic narratives go unchallenged. Although there are many theories of power which conceptualise power in terms of the relationships or the transfers of power (Foucault, 2006; Gaventa, 2006; Gaventa and Cornwall, 1980), Gaventa (2006) provides a practical framework designed for exploring conscious and unconscious exercises of power in
relationships in context specific learning, and as a tool for understanding power relations in development efforts to bring about social change.

Gaventa’s (2006) ‘power cube’ representation of ‘how spaces for engagement are created and the levels of power (from local to global) in which they occur’ (Gaventa, 2006:25) provides a framework for thinking about where there are relationships of power, and the possibilities of transformative action or change in these relationships in various political spaces. The three-dimensional Rubik’s cube-like grid illustrates how ‘transformative action’ for social change takes place at personal, local, national and international ‘levels’, in closed, invited and claimed ‘spaces’, or in hidden and sometimes invisible forms. More precisely, Gaventa’s framework conceptualises the different kinds of places or spaces where power lies, the transient and mobile nature of the power that actors can hold, where that power is negotiated, as well as how institutionalisation and sedimented power, as understood by Lukes (2005 [1974]), might be shifted. Gaventa (2011) and Gaventa and Mayo (2009) also emphasise how globalisation has produced new spaces for mobilisation on an international
scale, where power resides in different places, power relations are intertwined and where change needs to happen at different levels.

‘Political spaces’ are variously theorised as the ‘policy spaces’ where citizens and policymakers can come together to effect change (Brock and McGee, 2004), as ‘democratic spaces’ where people develop ‘political capacities’ and are able to engage to claim citizenship and to affect governance processes (Cornwall and Schatten-Coehlo, 2006), or as the institutional or political channels through which individuals and organisations can pursue poverty reduction (Webster and Engberg-Petersen, 2002). In 1942, Barnes (1942: 29) described institutions as ‘the social structure and machinery through which human society organizes, directs and executes the multifarious activities required to society for human need’. In this sense, family, education, legal, religious, economic or cultural institutions are all structures of conventions and social norms that regulate social activity and govern particular aspects of social life, including in organisations. As political spaces, institutional logics therefore reflect norms and values which may or may not be subscribed to by everyone and may be challenged (Thornton et al., 2012).

Relationships of power exist between actors, organisations and local and state level politics in Israel and Palestine, as they do in all other contexts. And while local and national level politics heavily inform the context of the work of civil society organisations (Pierre and Peters, 2019), it is a conceptualisation of politics as exercises of power at individual, organisational and local and national political levels which most informs my approach to understanding and conceptualising organisational learning at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. This is an understanding of politics and power as existing potentially, but not
necessarily, in all relationships in a way which is also dependent on context and interpretation (Czajka, 2022). I am concerned with power in relationships between individuals and within and between hybrid NGO/SMO organisations. I am also concerned with how organisational learning helps change those relationships as well as influence politics/political processes in wider society. I therefore add to Gaventa’s power cube by suggesting that rather than power being limited and contained in the cube structure in such a way that power can only be redistributed in a zero-sum fashion, each power cube sits within a specific context where the exercise of power is also dynamic and unlimited in a positive-sum way that offers new possibilities for change. Additionally, political spaces, as sites of learning within the cube, are explored within organisations as simultaneously conflictual, in that ideas are debated and challenged there, while also being safe and accommodating political spaces.

A definition of politics as the exercise of power opens up the possibility of understanding and analysing political processes at the level of the individual and also within and between organisations and their wider political context. Importantly, understanding politics in this way also helps me understand some of the connections between the personal experiences of those included in my research and the larger social and political structures which they are seeking to change. This is in terms of the relative power that is expressed or exercised by individuals and organisations, and might sometimes change as a result of organisational learning. It is also how organisational learning can impact on how power relations are played out and reshaped in the politics of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Measuring the expansion of agency and capabilities at the level of the individual (section 2.7), for example, provides one measure of political change.
The exercise of power exists in relationships within all organisations. However, the specific nature of organisational learning in hybrid NGO/SMOs is that they also have to address their own internal power relations - the power relations between the organisations, and power relations as they occur - in trying to promote peacebuilding and political change, particularly for the organisations in this study. In this sense, then, organisational learning as processes, mechanisms, sites and as outcomes of learning for peacebuilding and political change, takes on multiple political dimensions, both in addressing power within and between organisations as well as in wider societal power relations.

Foucault’s belief, that power is in every relationship (2006), underpins an exploration of the broad and complex web of relationships and the impacts of power. This is particularly relevant in the context of Israel and Palestine, fractured societies with quickly shifting power dynamics at a state level as well as within local communities. Lukes (2005 [1974]) informs my understanding of how learning at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS might be influenced by specific local, national and international structures and ideas, in ways in which staff, activists and stakeholders may or may not always be aware. Gaventa’s (2006) ‘power cube framework’ also helps me to conceptualise and visualise the dynamic interrelationships between the different levels, spaces (as arenas for participation in bringing about change) and forms (some visible and some hidden) where power is exercised at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. Gaventa’s conceptualisation of spaces as arenas for participation where power is exercised also importantly adds to ideas of organisational learning as potentially complex meaning-making arenas (2.4) which can provide safe and accommodating political spaces (chapter 6.3, chapter 7.3.3) where ‘people with diverse
interests take account of others’ perspectives without compromising their own core interests’ (C lint, 2022) and where learning and change can take place. Although in themselves these spaces might not have the capacity to effectively address inequalities (Day and Brodsky, 1996) and can also be conflictual, they provide important formal and informal arenas for dialogue and debate as well as the formulation of ideas which drive political change.

2.6 Conceptualising the Relationships Between Organisational Learning, Politics and Change and Transformation

In section 2.5 I discussed a definition of politics as the exercise of power in relationships at multiple levels which are negotiated and can change. A review of how change is theorised in organisational learning, social movement, development and political science literature helps build a theory of how organisational learning relates to change in the context of the kind of politics discussed in that section. However, change is often also referred to as transformation and the terms ‘change’ and ‘transformation’ are used interchangeably in that literature. Distinctions between change and transformation are not always clear therefore, particularly where discussions are mostly focused on how to achieve transformative change rather than on describing the exact nature of that transformation. By emphasising the mundane aspects of incremental change and the extraordinary in peacebuilding as the more fundamental transformations which can take place at individual, organisational and in wider political arenas, I will conceptualise the two terms differently and make distinctions between them when discussing my data in chapter 8.
Social movement theory emphasises different explanations of why and how people demand change and highlights the role social movement organisations play in these processes (Horn, 2013). From a Marxist perspective, social movement theory sees those processes as class based and addresses their struggles to transform social, economic or political orders (Berberoglu, 2019). Transformation in social movement theory also refers to the social movements themselves and the process of transformation which they sometimes undergo as a response to changing events and environments and the risk of becoming obsolete (Giugni, 1998). This approach touches on learning in that it refers to moments when social movements undertake a complete revision of their goals and change their movement structures, approaches or aims, or indeed when movements become incorporated into other organisational structures (Giugni, 1998).

Ideas about ‘conflict transformation’ add an additional dimension to learning and transformation which sees the latter as a way of reimagining and then creating a different non-violent future (Galtung, 2004; Autesserre, 2014). This includes:

- changing attitudes, behaviours, relationships, systems and structures that cause violence and, where necessary, it also means intensifying nonviolent resistance (Coventry, online, 2022).

Here conflict transformation and the transfers of power involved are conceptualised as positive sum outcomes where there are no winners and losers (Spangler, 2003).
Learning is closely aligned to change in organisational learning theory in how organisations and the individuals within them use knowledge and learning to create and respond to change within their environments (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2011). Change is also discussed in terms of how organisations are themselves restructured or made to function differently through, for example, technical innovation (Kretschmer and Khashabi, 2020). However, transformation tends to be thought about in terms of what kind of leadership can guide organisations to transformational or more fundamental or extraordinary change (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

Recent studies have also started to examine the relationship between organisations, power and change. Bristow, Tompkins and Hartley’s 2022 study of a UK police force asks what implications organisational learning has for how power is exercised within organisations. However, the political nature of organisational learning that I am concerned with and the transformative political change which it can potentially generate, both within and beyond organisations, is not fully addressed in organisational literature (Hsu, 2020; Pedler and Hsu, 2019; Ortenblad, 2019).

In the political sciences, while transformation is often conceived of as the critical junctures where political change takes place (Collier and Collier, 1991), some literature has questioned if changes in government represent the only critical junctures for transformation, how important these changes actually are in the short, medium and long term, and how else critical junctures or transformations might be gauged (Mahoney, 2000; Soifer, 2012). Scoones et al. (2020) provide a multiple level field where change and transformation are, from a sustainable development perspective (as Galtung and Autesserre argue for
peacebuilding), bottom-up as well as top-down and include learning processes. Scoones et al. (2020) also suggest that transformation is political, remaining subjective and only valid in the eye of the beholder: ‘No matter how specific the context there is never one viable path [to transformation]’ (Scoones et al., 2020: 70).

What then might transformation look like where NGO/SMOs are seeking political change? Does transformation for NGO/SMO organisations only occur through elections won or lost, or might transformational politics also be understood through the different arenas in which the everyday practices and organisational learning take place? In this research these different arenas will include individual transformations, the learning that leads to transformation within social movement organisations and the ways social movements may be part of transformational politics more widely. In all these arenas, transformation is understood as the extraordinary and fundamental rather than mundane, incremental changes.

Different lenses have been used for articulating what different kinds of transformational politics might look like for social movements. With affect theory, where affect is emotions or subjectively experienced feelings, Brennan (2004), Sedgwick (2003) and Massumi (1987) suggest that transformation also occurs in moments which shape how people experience themselves in the world. They highlight these moments of encounter, transmission and response to ideas as spaces of ‘possibility’, where transformation occurs, when individuals react and respond by behaving in different ways or by ‘producing new ways of being’ (Kouri-Towe, 2015: 31).
Affect theory shifts the focus on social movements from the ultimate political goals and victories of activism to different kinds of more everyday shifts and transformative practices:

Thus, we might re-imagine the victories of social movements as those points of unsettling disruption in the status quo, rather than the achievement of some form of liberation. Shifting focus to transformative moments, rather than revolution, changes not only the scale of assessing social movements, but also opens new possibilities for movement building. What would it look like to cultivate our social movements by focusing on those encounters, resonances, dissonances, and twists of transformative potential instead of those victories, achievements, liberations, and utopias (Kouri-Towe, 2015: 32)?

Agathangelou, Bassichis and Spira (2008) have argued that new tools are needed for thinking about transformational politics. They argue that a conceptual reliance on dualistic thinking, which relies on zero sum outcomes of winning and losing, and is based on inclusion and exclusion, or moving from being the oppressed to the oppressor, does not allow for a full understanding of how change through the attainment of agency, as discussed by Nussbaum (2000), can happen. Nussbaum (2000) argued that for human life to reach its highest potential, there is no fixed formula with a single obtainable goal but that it must include a threshold level of several different capabilities, including different kinds of well-being and the right to political participation, as discussed in chapter 7. Sedgwick (2003) also suggests that instead of thinking dualistically, it is more useful to think about the moments, practices (including learning practices) and transformations that move people into different configurations of social relations.
Kouri-Towe (2015) uses affect theory as it relates to social movements and activism to suggest that:

we deploy new models for imagining transformation that do not fall back on narratives that only chart the progress of activism through the singular and idealized transition from repression to liberation. My suggestion here is not that we should abandon claims of subjugation or the call for liberation, but that we might reconsider these claims as points of encounter for engaging in transformative processes, rather than as conclusions, goals, or the sole destinations for social change. This may seem abstract—and, indeed, the thought experiment of thinking non-dualistically is a difficult abstraction—however, to think through the middle ranges is to turn our attention to the more mundane victories of social movements (Kouri-Towe, 2015: 25).

Although the mundane is here associated with the more day-to-day outcomes of change, mundane as a term qualifies the organisational learning on which I am focused, in that it helps produce and is also the result of those outcomes.

An adult education tradition of ‘emancipatory learning’ conceptualises learning at the level of the individual in the ways in which it relates to transformation as:

how learning, knowledge and education can be used to assist individuals and groups to overcome educational disadvantage, combat social exclusion and discrimination, and challenge economic and political inequalities - with a view to securing their own emancipation and promoting progressive social change (Thompson, 2000: abstract).
‘Transformational learning’ links individuals to societal change and is understood to take place when individuals change their perspectives, as part of a process of critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and then consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds (Mezirow, 1978a, 1978b, 1991, 2009). In social psychology, where social change begins with change at the level of the individual, these are complex transformational processes which involve changing thoughts and feelings (Taylor, 2000) in a way which impacts not only on ‘what’ people know but also on the cognitive processes of ‘how’ individuals know (Kegan, 2018). These ideas link back to Melucci’s (1995) arguments about the changing frames and narratives which inform individual and collective identities, while feeding political action. Transformational learning therefore helpfully provides a theory of learning which links the individual to the collective by identifying the journey of individuals from learning to collective action.

This thesis argues that there is a relationship between organisational learning, politics and change or transformation. By conceptualising mundane change and extraordinary transformation through the multiple lenses of organisational learning, social psychology, political science and development literature, I am able to examine some of the relationships between learning, change and transformation and how they relate to politics and power internally at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, as well as externally.

This inter-disciplinary approach expands on an organisational literature perspective which views learning and transformation more simply as ways for organisations to adapt through learning in order to cope with change. It includes approaches from development and social movement literature where learning and knowledge for individual and collective
development are also seen as potentially enabling structural societal change (Johnson and Wilson, 2009; Roper and Pettit, 2002), of the kind that OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS are aiming to achieve in Israel and Palestine.

This approach suggests that multi-level organisational learning helps drive broader social and political change and transformation. I also suggest that evaluating individual, organisational and wider political change and transformation might help organisations better reflect the range, depth and impact of their work in different contexts where politics is conceived of as the exercise of power.

However, a comprehensive framework is yet to be developed which can provide multi-level measures of political change needed to measure how individual political agency and capabilities expand, how organisational learning enables organisations to adapt and respond to change, and how learning can enable organisations to challenge and sometimes successfully change or impact on local and national politics. So, while evaluating how and what political change and transformation has been achieved through organisational learning remains problematic, an exploration of these issues nonetheless provides me with the opportunity to explore aspects of the relationships between them.

Emphasising the mundane aspects of peacebuilding in the title of this thesis highlights the importance that I place on the slow, incremental and sometimes small changes which I will also argue happen through organisational learning and, in turn, these changes feed wider, more fundamental and sometimes structural transformations. These processes will be seen
to be political in the ways those changes impact on the exercise of power in different domains.

**Conclusion**

Literature on organisational learning, development, social movement, peacebuilding, social psychology, politics and religion and the way they intersect, is referenced and provides complementary routes to understanding the nuances of the local context, the issues which the organisations in the case study address, how they address those issues through learning and how the outcomes of those processes in turn relate to national and organisational politics and change. Out of this interdisciplinary approach, new conceptualisations of organisational learning as processes, mechanisms and sites for learning within political contexts and with political goals and outcomes emerge.

This literature review encompasses the wide range of social science literature which addresses the key concepts underpinning this thesis. This includes literature which has helped me understand organisations in the context of peacebuilding, organisational learning, politics as power, and change and transformation. Because concepts such as learning, politics and change are all potentially ubiquitous, I analyse learning, politics and change in ways which help me to answer my research questions within the context of the organisations included in the case study.

The literature referenced includes conceptualisations of peacebuilding and conflict transformation (Lederach, 1995) as part of top down as well as bottom-up approaches to
peacebuilding (Gawerc, 2006; Autesserre, 2015) where changed perceptions of ‘the other’ are key for social change (Bar-Tal and Halperin, 2011). Conceptualisations of learning focus on social (Bandura, 1971; Vygotsky, 1978, Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Schwandt, 2003) and collective learning (Kilgore, 2010). However, I also highlight literature and conceptualisations of learning which allow me to explore political dimensions of organisational learning and politics in hybrid NGO/SMOs. These include conceptualisations of collective learning which move beyond managerialist approaches to organisational learning towards encompassing narrative, framing and identity construction (Melucci, 1995; Snow et al. 2013; Snow et al., 2018; Polletta and Gardner; 2015) as routes to political change and transformation at individual, organisational and national levels.

My research is based on an understanding of politics as the exercise of power in relationships (Dahl, 1957; Foucault, 1986, 1990; Lukes, 2004; Gaventa, 2006) within the context of peacebuilding, with the extra dimension of organisational learning where divergent interests and relationships of power are addressed (Roper et. al., 2003; Pettit, 2010; McGee and Pettit, 2020; Bristow, Tompkins and Hartley, 2020). This discussion addresses organisational learning processes in different organisations and contexts of conflict as inherently political and as part of development processes (Pieterse, 2001; Thomas, 1996; 2000; Johnson and Wilson, 2009; Roper and Petit, 2002), broadly conceived as explained in chapter 1, and whose outcomes impact on political change.

Foucault (1986, 1990), Lukes (2004) and Gaventa (2006) all address politics as the exercise of power, and Gaventa (2006) provides a practical framework for interpreting them, where multiple levels, spaces and forms of power interact. This is a particularly useful framework
for understanding not only some of the dynamics of organisational learning which, I argue, can challenge power in different ways, but also the levels of power which the outcomes of that learning help organisations address.

Key literatures on change and transformation, and theorisation about how they relate to learning and politics also come out of different research areas. From a development perspective, Scoones et al. (2020) highlight how transformations are required for sustainable development and provide a multiple-level field where change and transformation are political and include learning processes. Learning theories about emancipatory (Thompson, 2000) and transformational (Mezirow, 1978b) learning inform ideas about the ways in which learning might also inform organisational learning in organisations whose purpose is conflict transformation (Galtung, 1969, 2004) resulting from structural and institutional change.

In the subsequent chapters, where I discuss the findings of my fieldwork, I draw on my primary research to explore these ideas further. I discuss some of the ways in which I see organisational learning taking place (chapter 5), how these processes feed changing individual and collective narratives (chapter 6), and how organisational learning processes may be perceived as political (chapter 7) and as part of change and transformation, individually, organisationally and as part of broader political change in Israel and Palestine (chapter 8). In chapter 3, I first provide historical detail about the context of this research in Israel and Palestine, while in chapter 4, I discuss how that context is relevant to the methods I have used to carry out the research.
Chapter 3 – A Case Study in its Context: The Israeli Palestinian Conflict

Introduction

This chapter introduces some of the historical dimensions of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, ways in which civil society operates in Israel and Palestine, and how organisations understand their roles in these local contexts. The chapter serves to introduce the organisations my research focuses on and to place their activities within a timeline of events in Israel and Palestine. It also highlights the importance of context when analysing organisational learning in particularly complex conflict environments. Understanding how context helps shape organisational learning and the importance of context in politicising organisational learning is a running theme throughout this thesis, it also helps me answer my second research question about who and what impacts on organisational learning at OneVoice (US), Darkenu (Israel), Zimam (Palestine) and Solutions Not Sides (UK). Although OV and SNS are not based in Israel or Palestine, they are part of a transnational network where their work is shaped on a daily basis, but in different ways, by the course of events in Israel and Palestine. Understanding organisational learning in those organisations, therefore, also benefits from contextual and historical analysis. This chapter also provides background and context for the next chapter, chapter 4, on research methodology.

Historical dimensions of the Israeli Palestinian conflict are contested but help contextualise complexities and challenges faced by the organisations. The social constructivist approach, taken in this research, also requires an exploration of the multiple narratives constructed
around the conflict, including those which organisations work to deconstruct and reshape for peacebuilding (see chapter 6). Civil society organisations in the shape of hybrid NGO/SMOs such as Darkenu, Zimam, OV and SNS, which promote solutions to the conflict (i.e., two state solution or coexistence in other forms) through advocacy, protest work, dialogue, capacity building, education and political engagement, face particular challenges establishing and legitimising their work in each of their own contexts. As a way of understanding how OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS continue to evolve through their own protest work for social justice and political change, I situate their work within the context of Israel and Palestine and the Israeli Palestinian conflict, and analyse some of the attitudes of the state and society towards civil society and hybrid NGO/SMO organisations. Gaining an understanding of context therefore helps to start answering the questions which have guided this research.

In this chapter a timeline of historical events situates the organisations within their historical context (3.1). The much-debated historical dimensions of the Israeli Palestinian conflict and the resulting national narratives are also discussed (3.2). In section 3.3 peacebuilding and the role of civil society organisations in addressing peacebuilding, are analysed, introducing OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and Solutions Not Sides (SNS) (3.4).

### 3.1 A Timeline of Events

The following timeline covers a span of nearly 160 years and provides an overview of major historical events in the creation of Israel and the history of Palestine, including periods of war and conflict (in bold), highlights of the Israeli Palestinian peace process (in bold italic
font) and key dates for OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS (in italics). The timeline is primarily intended as an illustration of the environment in which these organisations have come into being and operated. The timeline is constructed from secondary sources about the history of the Israeli Palestinian conflict (Abu-Lughod, 1971; Cohn-Sherbok and El-Alami, 2015; Gelvin, 2021; Tessler, 2009) and, for the most part, includes undisputed events. It also includes the events of the Palestinian Naqba (Catastrophe) which, though acknowledged in Israel by its New Historians (Morris, 2008; Pappe, 2014; Shlaim, 2015), is yet to be officially recognised at a national level to have taken place as part of the founding of the state of Israel. Events which have been experienced as pivotal for activists and organisations, together with those which have emerged from my interview and focus group data, though less historically important moments, are also included in each of the different fonts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>Publication of <em>Rome and Jerusalem</em> in Leipzig by Moses Hess where Hess argues for the return of Jews to the land of Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882-1903</td>
<td>The First Aliyah marks the first influx of approximately 25,000 Eastern European and some Yemeni Jews motivated by nationalism to Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td><strong>Palestinians protest against Jewish settlers in Palestine.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-95</td>
<td>The anti-Semitic reaction in France against false accusations of treason against Alfred Dreyfus informs Theodor Herzl’s vision of a land for the Jews and Zionism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Publication of <em>The Jewish State</em> by Theodor Herzl proposes a Jewish state for the Jewish people in Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-1914</td>
<td>Second Aliyah sees the migration of approximately 35,000 mostly Russian Jews escaping Russian pogroms to Ottoman-controlled Palestine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908-1909</td>
<td><strong>Arab and Palestinian opposition to Zionist settlements intensifies.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-1918</td>
<td>First World War.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1915-16 The Sykes Pigot agreement between the UK and France agrees spheres of influence and control for an eventual partition of the Ottoman Empire and Palestine.

1917 Balfour Declaration – Statement by the British government announcing support for the creation of a Jewish homeland.

1920-21 Arab anti-Jewish riots in Palestine.

1947-1949 The Naqba also known as ‘The Palestinian Catastrophe’. Massacre of villagers at Deir Yassin (April 9, 1948) and the displacement of approximately 750,000 Palestinians out of British Mandate Palestine.

14 May 1948 Ben-Gurion Declaration of the State of Israel and termination of the British Mandate.

Dec. 1948 Congress of prominent Palestinian families request that the Jordanian King incorporates the West Bank into Jordan.

1949 Prime Minister Ben Gurion declares Jerusalem the capital of Israel.

1950 King Abdullah of Jordan formally annexes the West Bank.

The Law of Return gives the right to settle in Israel to every Jew worldwide.

1956 -1959 The Sinai War between Israel and Egypt. Israel eventually withdraws.

1958 US Israel relations strengthen as US replaces the UK in becoming the pre-eminent Western power in the Middle East.

1964 Founding of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO).

1967 6 Day War sees the conquest of the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) including Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Holy sites are now under Israeli control.

1968-1970 Egypt commences war of attrition against Israel.

1973 Yom Kippur War - Egypt and Syria launch war against Israeli forces occupying the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights and are defeated.

1980 Palestinian Islamist Jihad movement founded as Muslim Brotherhood/Islamic Collective splinter and attracts activists away from Fatah, a Palestinian political party and member of the PLO.

1982 Israel invasion of Lebanon in offensive against PLO – PLO establishes new headquarters in Tunis.

1987 - 1993 First Palestinian Intifada begins in West Bank and Gaza involving largely peaceful demonstrations.

1988 Hamas founded as Islamic Collective front organisation but then replaces the collective as the primary Islamist movement; declaration of the state of Palestine at the Palestine National Council Meeting in Algiers.


1993 Israel and Palestine sign the ‘Declaration of Principles – otherwise known as the Oslo Agreement in Washington.
1994 Jewish settler kills Palestinian Muslims worshipping in Hebron Mosque.

1994 Peace Works, promoting peace through business in conflict zones, founded by Daniel Lubetzky in Israel and Palestine.

1995 Rabin assassinated by Jewish extremist at peace rally in Tel Aviv.

1995 Oslo II Accords splits the West Bank and Gaza into Areas A, B and C.

1997 Hebron Protocol divides West Bank city of Hebron into Israeli and Palestinian areas.

1998 Wye River Memorandum political agreement negotiates implementation of the Oslo Accords.

1996-1999 Netanyahu becomes Leader of the right-wing Likud Party and PM of Israel.

2000-2005 Camp David Summit - Second Intifada - Following the abortion of the Permanent Status Negotiations at Camp David as well as provocations and incidents from groups and individuals on both sides, the Second Intifada breaks out and lasts until 2005. 1,036 Israel and 3,592 Palestinian casualties.

2002 Arab Peace Initiative – The Arab League and Saudi Arabia offer normalisation of relations between Israel and all Arab League members on condition of an end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories, recognition of an independent Palestinian state and a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue. The Israeli government does not accept the plan.

2002/3 OneVoice International founded by Daniel Lubetzky after the failure of the Camp David Summit and peace process and the beginning of Second Intifada.

April 2003 US President George W. Bush suggests Road Map for Peace which was backed by the Middle East Quartet (UN, US, EU and Russia).

Dec. 2003 Alternative peace plan, known as the Geneva Initiative, is launched after two years of secret negotiations led by former Israeli minister Yossi Beilin and former Palestinian Authority minister Yasser Abed Rabbo providing blueprint for a Permanent Status Agreement but is never adopted by the governments of Israel and Palestine.

2004 KIND nutritious snack company founded by Daniel Lubetzky, which helps fund Peace works and eventually OneVoice’s charitable work.

2005 After Arafat’s (leader of the PLO) death in November 2004, newly elected PA President Mahmoud Abbas and Israel’s Prime Minister Ariel Sharon meet to declare a mutual ceasefire. In August the Israeli disengagement from Gaza is carried out, however, Israel maintains military control over the Gaza Strip.
2006
Parliamentary ballot Palestine (surprise win by Hamas) widens an internal political rift that leads to the group’s seizure of the Gaza Strip in 2007 and contributes to a long delay in setting further elections.

Hamas wins PA election - The international community refuses cooperation with the elected government and asks for recognition of three “Quartet principles.” This is the beginning of a deep Fatah-Hamas divide, leading to violence in 2007 and the establishment of two separate PA governments. Ehud Olmert is elected as Israeli Prime Minister, promising again to reach a final settlement with the Palestinians. In July, war breaks out with Lebanon, killing more than 1,200 Lebanese, 16 Israeli soldiers and 43 Israeli civilians.

2007
One Million Voices – OV International Program - largest ever simultaneous gathering of Israelis and Palestinians, announcing the people as critical actors in the conflict resolution process, and demanding progress from elected representatives toward an end to the conflict.

2007
Hamas truce with Israel ends. Gaza under Israeli blockade, Hamas movement starts controlling the enclave.

2008-2018
John Lyndon Chief Exec OV.

2008
Petition of 1 million to build peace in Middle East – OV Israel and OV Palestine.

2008-2011
Imagine 2018 Essay competition OneVoice Israel and OneVoice Palestine.

2009-10
Do the KIND Thing - Rapid expansion of Lubetzky’s business empire.

2010
Obama Administration orchestrates direct negotiations between Abbas and Netanyahu for their first face-to-face meeting in two years. Leaders agree to work towards a peace deal within a year. No further negotiations are held as Israel refuses a renewal of its settlement freeze unless the Palestinians recognise Israel as a Jewish state.

2012
Amman Talks and Palestinian UN Initiative- negotiators Yitzhak Molcho and Saeb Erekat hold talks to explore resumption of final status talks. On November 29th, the United Nations General Assembly pass Resolution 67/19 according Palestine Non-Member Observer State status at the UN. One hundred and thirty-eight states vote for the resolution and nine against it, with 41 states abstaining.

2013
Kerry Initiative- Direct Israeli-Palestinian talks are facilitated by US Secretary of State John Kerry. After 20 years of negotiations, summits and declarations, the parties remain sceptical regarding a breakthrough and no agreements are reached.

2013-14
Wake Up What is your Role – OV Palestine campaign which asks participants: ‘what are you willing to do to end the conflict?’
2015  
*Elections – the V15 social movement partners with OV Israel to campaign against extremism in Israeli elections.*  

**Early 2016**  
*Darkenu, Zimam founded.*  

2016  
Review of US State Department grant to OV.  

20 Feb 2017  
V15 law passes in Israel- seeking to prevent civil society organisations influencing elections.  

2017  
Israeli parliament passes a law which retroactively legalises Jewish settlements built in the West Bank.  

**June 2017**  
Work begins on new Jewish settlement in the West Bank.  

**December 2017**  
US President Trump formally recognises Jerusalem as capital of Israel.  

**March 2018**  
US President Trump recognises Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.  

**May 2018**  
Inauguration of US Embassy in Jerusalem – Trump later admits decision to move embassy from Jerusalem was made largely for Evangelical Christians, a community staunchly supportive of his presidency (The Independent, 2020).  

19 July 2018  
Knesset passes controversial Nationality Bill into Law which enshrines Israel as ‘the national home of the Jewish people’. Netanyahu celebrates new law as ‘pivotal moment in the annals of Zionism and the state of Israel’. Jerusalem is declared the capital of Israel.  

**July-Nov 2018**  
*Rise in violence on the Gaza border- UN and Egypt broker a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.*  

2018  
*Darkenu Rabin rally attracts 80,000 people. Darkenu launches the Charter for Discourse, Yes to Separation Caucus, and Anticorruption campaign.*  

**April 1919**  
First of four Israeli elections to take place between April 2019 and March 2021  
Netanyahu wins a record 5th term presenting himself as guarantor of Israel’s security and saying that a leftist government would allow the creation of a Palestinian state. Arab voters and communities are intimidated at polling stations.  

**May 2019**  
*Solutions Not Sides (SNS) registers as an independent entity from OneVoice Europe.*  

18 Sept. 2019  
Second Israeli election in a year. Intimidation tactics and law suits filed by Likud party against Darkenu during anti-corruption campaign. Netanyahu promises to unilaterally annex Jewish settlements and other territory in West Bank if he is returned to power.  
*Darkenu accused by Likud Party and Hanan Melcer, a supreme court justice, for doing illegal election work and of being connected to the Blue and White Party – based on four-year-old accusations. Darkenu and election work and messaging is severely restricted and monitored. Darkenu GOTV campaign continues. (I conduct interviews, participant observation and spend time in Ramallah in the West Bank).*
28 Jan. 2020  Trump Administration peace plan, Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of Palestinian and Israeli People, is rejected by both West Bank Settlers and Palestinian Leadership.

2 March 2020  Third Israeli elections in 18 months- Likud (right wing) and Blue and White (centrist) parties form coalition agreement. 

In lead-up to the elections, Darkenu does GOTV campaign. New Darkenu Director is appointed. I conduct Darkenu focus group.

10 March 2020  Israel starts to close borders and impose lockdown in Israel and Palestine due to outbreak of COVID pandemic. 

I return to UK on 11 March unable to get to West Bank with fieldwork incomplete. 

OV Europe office in London closes and goes into hibernation during pandemic.

March-Sept 2020  I conduct 50 online interviews and an online focus group with Zimam in West Bank and Gaza.

April 2020  Launch of DemocraTV by Darkenu. 

SNS transfers schools training programme online. 

OV conducts strategic review, creates a digital platform and closes campus programme.

Zimam continues online training.

Vaccination programmes get under way, first in Israel and then internationally.

Aug. 2020  The United Arab Emirates is the first Gulf state to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

Jan. 2021  Darkenu campaign for March 2021 election gets underway – Fourth election in less than two years.

May 2021  10-day exchange of rocket attacks and violence between Gaza and Israel.

March 2021  Palestinian general and legislative elections planned for 22 May 2021 and presidential election on 31 July 2021 cancelled (Fatah and Hamas have been publicly calling for elections for more than 10 years, last election in 2006, 15 years ago, but have never been able to mend their rift or agree on a process for holding them.

Following the 2006 polls, clashes between Fatah and Hamas raged for more than a year, culminating in Hamas’s 2007 takeover of the Gaza Strip, where it still reigns despite an Israeli-Egyptian blockade and three wars with Israel).

May 2021  Unrest over forced evictions of Palestinians in east Jerusalem leads to conflict with Hamas and communal violence in Israeli cities.

June 2021  Naftali Bennett of the Jewish nationalist Yamina party forms a broad coalition to oust Benjamin Netanyahu. It is the first time that an Israeli Arab party, the Ra’am Party under Mansour Abbas, is part of a governing coalition in Israel.
This timeline illustrates how since the founding of OneVoice and then Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, these organisations have adapted to a changing context where for Darkenu and Zimam, violence and conflict is often the norm and peacebuilding only takes place sporadically at a national level. A historical timeline is not able to bring to life how events have been experienced by individuals or organisations, nor how organisational learning takes place on a day-to-day basis. A timeline does, however, help to illustrate some of the multiple forces at work and the complex challenges individuals and organisations face in working to bring about political change. In subsequent chapters I will argue that organisational learning helps to facilitate this.

3.2 The Historical Dimensions of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict

The history of the Israeli Palestinian conflict includes contrasting and disputed perspectives which inform organisations and organisational learning working in those contexts. In this section I do not recount every detail of the history of the conflict, or acts of violence between Israel and Palestine; instead, I focus on how the historical dimension of this conflict, so far intractable, contextualises the activities and ambitions of the hybrid NGO/SMOs.
As Black (2018) notes, the Israeli Palestinian conflict is one of the world’s most closely studied conflicts and has been intensely analysed since the arrival of Jews escaping persecution in Europe in the 19th century and seeking nationhood, through to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the displacement of Palestinians, up until the present day and the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. That history of Israel and Palestine and the conflict between them has, throughout this time, been punctuated by the international community’s declarations of support for statehood for both Israel and Palestinians, sporadic conflict, all-out war, frameworks for peace treaties and many other agreements and disagreements between Israel and Palestine which have all been scrutinised and debated (Black, 2018).

The historical national narratives of Israel, Palestine and of the Israeli Palestinian conflict are equally contested and typically reflect fixed Israeli and Palestinian positions (see, for instance, Hertzberg, 1959; Shindler, 1991 as examples of Israeli perspectives; and Al Khalidi, 1997, 2006; Carey, 2001 as examples of Palestinian perspectives). Palestinian and Israeli ways of recounting these historical events mostly diverge and are for the most part dismissed by each society (Scham, Salem and Pogrund 2005; Scham, Pogrund and Ghanem, 2013). Scham describes these national narratives as ‘the story which a nation tells itself about itself’ (Scham, 2006: 58). This research does not justify or present one historical narrative over the other, but instead points out some of their differences and what these national narratives might mean for civil society organisations working with and within them.

Israeli and Palestinian national narratives differ in fundamental ways (Aurbach, 2010; Scham, Salem and Pogrund, 2016). For Zionist Jews, the legitimacy of Jews returning to the
land of modern-day Israel is based on their descent from ancient Israelites, and their inherited right to the land. This perspective sees Zionism as a response to the persecution of Jews and the ideas of 19th century thinkers such as Hess and Hertzl, who promoted the idea that Judaism is a national as well as a religious affiliation (Hess, 1935 [1896]; Herzl, 1997 [1896]; Koltun-Fromm, 2001) and advocated for a Jewish state for Jewish people. This approach does not see Jews coming as colonisers, but instead as pioneers who legally bought and paid for land in Israel (Stanislawski, 2017). For Palestinians, Zionism was instead a late 19th century European expansionist, colonialist enterprise focused on robbing Arabs of their ancestral land. This approach sees the creation of Israel imposing European ideology on the Middle East. El-Alami (2015) argues that the creation of the state of Israel was at the expense of the Palestinian population which has been denied its own nationhood, systematically discriminated against since the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and which has become a dispossessed and marginalised people (Cohn-Sherbok and El-Alami, 2015).

From a Zionist perspective, the Zionist movement accepted in good faith the partition of the land and the UN partition resolution of 1947 (Stanislawski, 2017). The Zionist movement then justified holding onto land that had been allotted to them in order to hold off attacks on Israel. From a Palestinian perspective, the UN partition resolution of 1947 was illegitimate. The UN had no right to give away the homeland of the Palestinians, who are distinct in nationality and identity to their Arab neighbours, and they continue to try hold on to what is theirs (Scham, 2013).

Ongoing key points of contention between Israelis and Palestinians attempting to seek peace and reconciliation include the Palestinian refugee question. These points of contention are, however, dominant Israeli and Palestinian narratives and attitudes which
are not necessarily accepted by all Israelis and all Palestinians. One of these points of contention concerns the ongoing negotiations about the right of return of Palestinians who fled as a result of the *Naqba* (the Palestinian ‘Catastrophe’ of 1948 which saw the displacement of the majority of Palestinian people) and subsequent conflicts when their land has been and continues to be appropriated by Israeli settlers and the settler movement (Gorenberg, 2006). For Israel, the issue of these approximately 7 million Palestinian refugees (BADIL, 2021) is seen as a negotiating tool kept alive by the Palestinians and the Arab states and, according to a S. Daniel Abraham Centre for Middle East Peace report, Progress is Possible (Daniel Abraham Centre for Middle East Peace, 2018), many Israelis believe that the real reason for the continuation of the conflict is the refusal of the Arab states to recognise Israel’s existence. The Israeli government also sees itself as having repeatedly offered peace, but not at the price of the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state. For many Palestinians, Palestinian people will never cease to protest against their expulsion, and will continue to fight for their right of return:

There can never be a settlement without Israel recognizing its guilt and providing appropriate redress (Scham, Salem and Pogrund, 2005: 10).

One manner in which the Israeli and Palestinian national narratives are kept alive is through the stories and history told and retold by Israeli and Palestinian historians. In Israel, since the 1990s, there is a group of Israeli historians (the New Historians) who have challenged traditional versions of Israeli history, including Israel’s role in the Palestinian Exodus in 1948 and Arab willingness to discuss peace (Karsh, 2000). In Palestine, Palestinian and non-
Palestinian Arab academics and writers are also sometimes divided on how their history should be told (Massad, 1997).

For the New Historians in Israel, new and strongly disputed perspectives (Karsh, 2000) about the founding of Israel were informed by the release of classified documents 30 years after Israel was founded, which questioned some of the foundational myths of the state. Benny Morris, Ilan Pappe, Avi Schlaim and Simha Flapa, amongst others, identify with this approach which acknowledges the *Naqba*, for example. On the Palestinian side, Massad (2006) believes that as far as Palestinian intellectuals and historians are concerned, the Camp David Accords and the Oslo Peace agreements gave way to what he describes as a new group of ‘realist-pragmatist’ Palestinian intellectuals:

who stress ‘nation-building’ as opposed to national liberation, and liberal democracy as opposed to anti-colonial revolution and accommodation as opposed to resistance (Massad, 2006: 105).

Like Palestinian scholar, Edward Said, Massad castigates this kind of Palestinian intellectual for, in his view, their subservience to an Israel supporting American influence which does not acknowledge independent Palestinian statehood and represents a reconciliation with racism (Massad, 2006). In Palestine, these intellectual debates continue to inform and impact on organisations like Zimam as they work to equate notions of capacity building and political awareness in youth and ‘nation building’, but where, according to the CEO of Zimam, capacity building is often critiqued and perceived as being at the expense of national liberation (ZS1, 2020). For Zimam Director of Policy and Public Relations, ZS2 (2020), he
believes that countering accusations of ‘normalisation’ such as these within Palestine, continues to rely on keeping informed and up to date on what the changing boundaries and possibilities for their work might be.

An acknowledgement of the role of the ‘New Historian’ in both Israel and ‘realist-pragmatist’ intellectuals in Palestine is important in understanding how an intellectual space opened up in the 1990s for conversations in Israeli and Palestinian society. Their questioning of the status quo in both societies has gained some popular support and has helped create an environment where organisations such as OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and Solutions Not Sides are able to operate and attempt to promote moderate and non-violent narratives for the future. Former Director of OneVoice believes that for organisations like Darkenu and Zimam, this opening up of dialogue has also allowed them to work within transnational networks including OneVoice and SNS, which are focused on peacebuilding and acknowledge both Israeli and Palestinian historical perspectives (ES1, 2019).

Until recently, written and published ‘shared histories’ or ‘bridging narratives’ which outline different perspectives of the same and contested historical events discussed above, have usually concluded that both sides’ versions of history have very little in common with each other and can never be acceptable to both sides (Rotberg, 2006). More recent attempts at discussions about those narratives, or attempts at creating bridging narratives, are in the form of exchanges or conversations where different scholars or voices representing different religious or other groups debate the differences and commonalities of their beliefs and experiences. Literary works such as Yossi Klein Halevi’s Letters to my Palestinian Neighbour (2019), Amos Oz’s Dear Zealots (2018) and Ghassan Kanafani’s Return to Haifa
(2000) provide personal accounts of their observations, encounters and conversations amongst and between Israelis and Palestinians. These literary examples better reflect approaches taken by civil society organisations, such as those included in this research, where bridging narratives are explored through the dialogue which takes place amongst and between them, as well as amongst and between Israelis and Palestinians, and where the dialogue process takes discussions off the page and becomes a dynamic action learning approach and experience. The importance of the role of dialogue in organisational learning where Israelis and Palestinians sometimes create and co-create new narratives (Pilecki and Hammack, 2014) at grassroots, local and national levels, is discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Although the Israeli Palestinian conflict is sometimes regarded as a struggle between Judaism and Islam, and even given the growth of religious political parties in both Israel and Palestine, many of the tensions between the Israelis and the Palestinians are not primarily or exclusively about religion (Nye, 2008: 14). And yet, through the attitudes and experiences of my interviewees, it is clear that Islam, Judaism, Christianity and other religions remain important in the lives of many of the activists, staff and other stakeholders of organisations functioning in societies where religion matters both as an important political aspect of the institutions (as organisations and norms) which they deal with and of behaviours which are expected of them. In this research therefore, an analysis of organisational learning in the context of the Israel Palestinian conflict, requires understanding religion as it concerns people and cultures at individual, organisational and social levels (Nye, 2008).
3.3 Peacebuilding and Civil Society in Israel and Palestine

As highlighted in the timeline of events (3.1), peacebuilding in the context of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine has been through various iterations and at different times has taken distinct approaches (both top-down and bottom-up) to address different issues. Civil society organisations for peacebuilding continue to navigate the political realities of current day Israel and Palestine in order to address those issues.

3.3.1 Peacebuilding

Many options for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been proposed at various stages of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, all reflecting different definitions of what peace might be or look like. To date, these include one, two- or even sometimes three-state solutions or ‘confederal’ approaches. A one-state solution would create peace through the creation of a federal Israeli Palestinian state which would include all of present-day Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights (Mavroudi, 2010; Loewenstein and Moor, 2013). A two-state solution, long promoted by all the organisations in this research, would allow for the creation of an independent state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel (Susser, 2012). A three-state solution would return control of Gaza to Egypt and of the West Bank to Jordan and a Confederal approach would involve two independent states, with an open border between them (Scheindlin and Waxman, 2016). The paradigm of ‘shrinking the conflict’ (Goodman, 2022) which would involve Israel taking steps to improve Palestinian economic life, security and self-governance in the West Bank is another approach which was debated by the coalition government that came to power in 2021, but without Palestinian
input (Zilber, 2021), and after the success of the right-wing coalition in 2022, seems at the
time of writing to have been abandoned. For most Palestinians, however, peace basically
refers to respect for their fundamental rights and freedoms, whatever the political structure
finally chosen (Nabulsi, 2004), while most Israelis would like to ensure their security and
well-being in the state of Israel (Marchetti and Tocci, 2011).

In 2020, a joint Israeli Palestinian survey was commissioned by the umbrella organisation for
all cross-border peacebuilding organisations in Israel and Palestine, Alliance for Middle East
Peace (ALLMEP) (2021a). In the report it is clear from the attitudes among Israeli and
Palestinian youth, aged 15-21, that unaligned goals and an absence of peace have entered
the status quo in both Israel and Palestine, and that attitudes towards ‘the other’, and to
coexistence and peace, have also hardened (ALLMEP, 2021a). Given these attitudes, how
then do civil society actors and organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS (all,
except SNS, members of ALLMEP) take productive steps towards peace, and according to
which and whose definition of peace? The ALLMEP report concludes that despite the fact
that the majority of young people in both Israel and Palestine are cynical about peace and
sceptical of each other, there is a role for civil society to play in highlighting points of
commonality which are also identified in the report. These commonalities include an
openness to engaging in new activities and modes of thinking which could disrupt and
reshape existing modes of thinking over time (ALLMEP, 2021a). Such analysis underlines the
importance of civil society organisations in enabling young people to change narratives and
attitudes around the conflict and the potential for peace.
3.3.2 Civil Society in Israel and Palestine

Like peacebuilding literature, civil society literature is firmly grounded in the West and to many has become a metaphor for Western liberalism (Seckinelgin, 2002). This ideology, it is claimed, has also entered the policy language of international development agencies which sometimes help fund civil society organisations (Glasius et al., 2004). Glasius et al., for example, ask if ideas about civil society are:

simply part of a neo-imperialist project of imposing Western hegemony? Or does the ever-increasing talk of civil society instead reflect important and progressive trends in the radicalization of democracy and the redistribution of political power? Does the Western bias implied in the formulation of the civil society idea as secular and formally organized prevent recognition of local but different forms of civil society? (Glasius et al., 2004:3).

This argument asks whether civil society organisations simply provide Western liberal guiding principles and ways of working which are not always compatible with local context (Glasius et al., 2004). For Glasius et al. (2004), civil society is also understood as a ‘normative concept that embraces notions of non-violence, solidarity and active world citizenship’ (Glasius et al., 2004:3).

Ideas about the nature of civil society are relevant to this research in that Western-developed concepts and ideas can always be accused of being misplaced and irrelevant for the analysis of non-western cultures such as Palestine and even Israel, which is a context and environment unlike any in the West. Questions about the nature of civil society and civil society organisations will emerge, for example, in chapter 7 when I discuss relationships
between the organisational learning which takes place within the sphere of civil society organisations and power. Studying organisations such as Zimam and Darkenu in their local context also requires acknowledging the Western (US and European) influences from which they have evolved, and for OV and SNS, the influence which they may continue to exert. This echoes a critical development perspective of civil society (Howell and Pearce, 2001) which challenges US influence on civil society thinking in mainstream development and donor organisations playing a role in shaping service provision in civil society. But while it is through this lens that I understand organisations working as part of civil society in the context of activism in and around the Israeli Palestinian conflict (OS1, ES1, 2019), I also allow for descriptive and explanatory data from my research to emerge. This data does not support the idea that civil society organisations always work in ways which are incompatible with local context or that the direction of influence and power is only ever one way. These ideas are supported by Pearce (1996: 141) who makes a distinction between ‘the normative discourses on civil society’ and the ‘empirically researchable civil society’. Blakeley (2002:103) also argues from a Habermasian perspective (Habermas, 1991) that the formation of a specific civil society allows for an awareness of the normative dimensions of the concept, combined with an empirical analysis of civil society within a given social and historical context.

Civil society is also not homogeneous (Marchetti and Tocci, 2009), and civil society organisations such as the hybrid NGO/SMO included in this research differ considerably because of the contexts in which they work, although they might share ideals for peace. Considering Israeli and Palestinian civil societies together and comparing the organisations which operate in these milieux is thus a challenge, given their different characteristics and
the fact that they are subject to their own internal tensions and conflicts, which also have an impact on their relationships with one another. Fourest (2011) notes that the asymmetry of the situation in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza entails major differences of structure and content of civil societies. One of the main structural differences lies in the fact that the Israeli civil society organisations develop their activities and operate in an environment structured by the state, whereas the Palestinian ones do not (Fourest, 2011). However, Fourest’s view of Israeli civil society does not fully take into account the challenges which Israeli civil society organisations face when they question the unequal status of Palestinians or the broader political status quo. The relationship between civil society and political parties in Israel and Palestine is also important and impacts on the organisations and organisational learning in their different contexts. This is further explored in relation to OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Civil society in Israel is deeply divided between conservative nationalist groups which receive support from right wing politicians who seek to discredit and delegitimise more liberal camps, and those civil society organisations and groups which have been involved in defending the rights of Palestinians living in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza (Jamal, 2018). For example, in 2015, the Israeli civil society organisation, Im Tirtzu, which works to ‘strengthen the values of Zionism in Israel as a Jewish and Democratic state’ (The Movement, 2015) published its ‘Foreign Agents Report’ in which it publicly decried 20 Israeli Human Rights Organisations as:

- politically-motivated propaganda organizations operating from within Israel (with the help of vast amounts of foreign funding) against Israeli society, IDF soldiers, and
the state’s ability to defend itself in its ongoing war on terror (The Movement, 2015: 5).

Through political and media campaigns, organisations such as *Im Tirtzu* use tactics of naming and shaming other civil society organisations (CSOs), pressuring educational, cultural and media institutions which support them, and lobbying donor countries to stop their funding to them (Jamal, 2018). Jamal (2018) describes these processes which delegitimise and operate in Israel as ‘bad’ civil society and ‘good’ civil society organisations and civic activism, as those which seek to promote democracy and liberal values. An emphasis on these kinds of distinctions highlights some of the ways in which norms are embedded in civil society and how those norms also define civil society (White, 1994) in Israel:

**Bad civil society is not marked by opposition to the liberal worldview or criticism of liberal opponents, but mainly by the combination of advancing chauvinistic nationalist or religious ideals and targeting the legitimate existence of liberal opponents through various means, especially shaming, stigmatizing, silencing, and lobbying tactics that are aimed at outlawing or shrinking the financial resources of their opponents (Jamal, 2018: 2).**

Distinctions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ civil society aside, civil society in Israel which promotes democracy and liberal values has been targeted and restricted by conservative Israeli coalitions which promote them as a threat to nationhood. The NGO Law, which enforces the state’s supervision of CSO activities and financing, has seen various amendments by the Knesset as far back as 2007. In 2008, Amendment 36a required CSOs to
reveal their sources of financing. Amendments were again proposed in 2010 and 2011 which now prevent associations in Israel from receiving donations from foreign governments and institutions (the UN, the EU) since, according to the bill, the ‘human rights organizations’ were acting provocatively in their attempts to influence Israel’s political discourse, its nature, and policies (Jamal, 2018). In 2017 the Knesset also approved the ‘V15’ Law (named after OneVoice Israel’s partners in the 2015 elections) limiting campaign contributions specifically after OneVoice received funding from the US State Department for programming and campaigning during the Israeli 2015 elections campaign (DS3, 2019). V15 was founded for the 2015 elections in Israel by Nimrod Dweck and Itamar Weizman with the aim of helping to challenge the right-wing camp in government. V15 subsequently merged with OneVoice Israel in 2015 and helped lay the foundation for campaigning work in Israel based on volunteer canvassing work used by the US President Obama’s Campaign Manager, Jeremy Bird (DS4, 2020). In 2016 Darkenu was founded and absorbed OneVoice Israel and V15, which ceased to exist as entities.

OneVoice Israel, V15 and Darkenu have previously worked- and Darkenu continues to work- in an environment where, despite the formation of a more liberal coalition government in 2021 (replaced soon after in 2022 by a right-wing government), any questioning of the status quo can draw strong critiques of anti-Zionism or anti-nationalism. This critique is linked to accusations of terrorism and making Israel more vulnerable to attack, either violently from terrorism, economically through the boycott of Israeli goods, or verbally through the diminishing of Israel’s reputation. Civil society has historically been, and continues to be, largely dependent on the state. But the nature of the relationship between civil society and the state in Israel is not just defined by the strong state structures which
control civil society, such as, say, through the V15 law, but also in the ways in which political and religious norms are intertwined and are sometimes challenged as part of those relationships. The ways Darkenu invites religiously conservative voters to consider options beyond supporting right wing parties is one such challenge.

Palestinian society is also divided, but CSOs which promote democracy and liberal ideals are promoted and restricted in different ways. Palestinian author Sahliyeh (1987) describes the context for civil society and how in the West Bank, politics has historically been the domain of elite and prominent Palestinian families who were used by the Ottomans, British and then Jordanians to control local politics. With the consolidation of the Communist Party in Palestine in 1982, when it was renamed as the Palestinian People’s Party (Lybarger, 2018), the radicalisation of the student population and a resurgence of Islam presented a new challenge to the PLOs previously undisputed power base, giving more power to mass-supported local politicians (Sahliyeh, 1987). Palestinian social relations and forms of social capital nonetheless continued to revolve largely around agriculture, village and the extended family, and local networks (Robinson, 2009; Migdal, 2014: 56), which until now remain hard for independent politicians or civil society to influence. Migdal also argues that a resurgence of nationalist sentiment in the mid1970s contributed to the rise of a new more activist local leadership within the Palestinian Territories. In addition, and in contrast to the traditional Palestinian elite, a new generation of leaders has sought to mobilise unarmed resistance to Israel and as a result, avenues for participation broadened and civil society has grown (Migdal, 2014).
Early in the 1980s, CSOs in Palestine emerged and local communities, and people within these new networks, became more coordinated and widespread (Migdal, 2014). To date, Palestinian civil society activists also continue to use social welfare provision to build relationships with (and to sometimes substitute for) state institutions and local communities, which they subsequently sometimes deploy for political purposes (OS5, 2020; Migdal, 2014). This can be seen, for example, in some of the ways in which Hamas, Fatah and small, politically moderate NGO/Social movement organisations such as Zimam work to gain popularity and influence. However, while political parties such as Hamas and Fatah actively promote civil society organisations which come under their auspices, independent Palestinian civil society organisations are vulnerable to criticism and attack, either from those who believe that their agendas are informed by Western funders, or from those who see any kind of engagement or cooperation with Israel as an attack on Palestinian nationalist aspirations (ZS1, 2020; BDS, 2021).

3.4 OneVoice (US), Solutions Not Sides (UK), Darkenu (Israel) and Zimam (Palestine)

Motivated by his father’s experiences of persecution as a Jew in WW2, and his ability to nonetheless continue to see the good in people, the successful Jewish Mexican American business entrepreneur and activist Daniel Lubetzky founded OneVoice International in 2002 (Lubetzky, 2020). OneVoice International included OneVoice Israel (Tel Aviv), OneVoice Palestine (Ramallah), OneVoice US (NY) and OneVoice Europe (London) but separated in
2016 into four independent advocacy organisations (ES1, 2018). This separation followed the success of OneVoice Israel’s involvement as ‘V15’ in Israel’s 2015 national elections and their subsequent desire to maintain the momentum and dramatic rise in membership which resulted from their promotion of moderate politics in Israel during those elections (DS1, 2018). OneVoice Israel and V15 subsequently merged to become a single independent Israeli social movement organisation called Darkenu (translated from Hebrew as ‘Our Path’), and OneVoice Palestine registered independently in Palestine as Zimam (translated from Arabic as ‘Reins’ or ‘Taking the Initiative’). In 2017, Solutions Not Sides (SNS), originally conceived as OneVoice flagship schools’ programme in Europe, also separated from OneVoice in order to become an independent entity and to pursue a less overtly political agenda around peacebuilding, through discussions about racism in UK schools. OneVoice International remained a US based hybrid NGO/SMO focused on US lobbying, anti-racism programmes and a supporter of peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine.

Before the 2019 Covid pandemic, OneVoice was active through its OV OnCampus programme on 18 US university campuses with 972 registered supporters, reaching over 1,700 students (OV OnCampus, 2018). Subsequent to the Covid lockdown of 2021 and the temporary closure of educational institutions, OV transferred all of its activities to online platforms and to its Everyday Voices podcast series. OneVoice in Europe originally worked in 37 schools through the Solutions Not Sides (SNS) schools programme, reaching 2,843 students and delivering anti-racism and anti-extremism education programmes (ES2, 2018). During the pandemic SNS became dormant, but since 2021 has continued its now independent work both online and back in-person in UK schools, now reaching 187 schools
and approximately 8,000 students (SNS, Spring, 2022). Like OneVoice International, OneVoice (in the US and UK) support Darkenu in Israel and Zimam in Palestine through advocacy and fundraising work and, while not alone in occupying a space which supports both sides, are unusual in promoting both Israeli and Palestinian agendas (Cobbold, 2018).

Through campaigning for a moderate majority in Israel’s national elections, Darkenu has over 400,000 activist members and is the largest non-partisan civil society movement in Israel (Darkenu, 2019a). In 2020, Darkenu launched a crowd funded online independent television station, DemocraTV, to promote social justice and democratic values, currently attracting over 2 million viewers (Darkenu, 2021a), with 19 million views of content on Facebook and YouTube, and supported by over 8,000 monthly donations (Darkenu 2022).

Self-described as a social movement rather than a political party, Darkenu has so far avoided breaking political campaigning laws by not campaigning for or against any particular party or candidate. Right-wing critics of Darkenu, however, say that their efforts have always been thinly disguised efforts to defeat President Netanyahu’s right-wing coalition and to elect a Centre-Left government in Israel (JPostcom, 2019).

Zimam has 1500 registered youth leaders in 22 chapters, or local subsidiaries, in the West Bank and Gaza and between 2017 and 2018 attracted over 10,000 participants to peaceful Zimam events and protests (ZT1, 2018; Zimam, 2018). In 2022, with over 3.4 million views, Zimam has one of the widest social media reaches of civil society organisations in Palestine and in 2021, their Election Online campaign in 2021 reached 3 million Facebook accounts (Zimam, 2021). At the ‘vanguard of liberal values’ (ES1, 2018) and as one of the most
progressive peacebuilding organisations in Palestine, Zimam’s work promoting non-violence is not without its critics in the PLO and Hamas (ES1, 2018; ZT0, 2018; ZT1, 2018). In 2018, alumni of Zimam’s youth leadership programme nonetheless held 12 of the 14 seats in the previously Hamas-controlled Nablus Student Union, the largest university in Palestine, demonstrating a swing away from student support for Hamas ideology in the West Bank. Twelve Zimam activists also won Fatah seats at local municipal elections in the West Bank in 2018, demonstrating a gradual move into local government and a growing presence of Zimam-trained activists in the PLO political party, Fatah. Zimam also supports independent political candidates, such as ZE2, who have been successful in local elections (ZE2, 2020). Zimam has also been invited by Fatah and the Palestinian Authority to deliver anti-extremism programmes and to help the PLO to maintain support for a two-state solution. So, despite its critics and as a result of its growing legitimacy built on its earlier incarnation as OneVoice Palestine (ZT0, 2018), Zimam, like Darkenu in Israel, has become part of a ‘political conversation’ in Palestine which is challenging norms by building a community and providing a platform for youth leaders promoting non-violence (ES1, 2018).

Although historically, civil society organisations have played very different roles in Israel and Palestine, everyone interviewed for this research has had direct experience of working or engaging with NGOs and SMOs and of being active in civil society, either as routes to their involvement with, or simply as part of their involvement with, OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. For activists, staff and other actors associated with these organisations, civil society organisations represent both a training ground and an accommodating political space (see 7.3.4).
3.4.1 Working ‘In and ‘On’ Conflict

Civil society organisations such as OneVoice, Darkenu and Zimam are born out of different political and cultural contexts. In order to help situate them within the historical events of the last 100 years, the timeline included at the beginning of this chapter charts major periods of conflict, attempts at peacebuilding and activities of OV, Darkenu and Zimam in Israel, Palestine and internationally. An analysis of any one of the historical events included on this timeline could serve to illustrate how this contextual complexity impacts on the work of and learning at organisations like OV, Darkenu and Zimam. I will, however, focus on one series of violent events which took place in and around May 2021 to illustrate their impact.

By late March 2020, the Covid pandemic had reached Israel and Palestine, with Israel, the West Bank and Gaza in lockdown and the borders between them even more tightly controlled than usual (ZS3, 2020). Although Israel would be a global leader in distributing vaccines to its population, the West Bank and Gaza were relying in large part on donations of vaccines in the form of aid from other countries (Amnesty, 2021). By May 2021, both Israeli and Palestinian economies and individuals continued to suffer under the weight of the pandemic which would continue throughout the intense 10-day Israel Gaza conflict (10\textsuperscript{th}-21st May, 2021), which left 256 Palestinians and 13 Israelis dead from fighting rather than from Covid (Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, 2021).

The violence between Israel and Palestinians escalated rapidly in May 2021, initially as a result of clashes at the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem in early May. Soon after, Hamas launched rocket attacks on Israel and Israel carried out airstrikes on Gaza. There are, however, several reasons why tensions escalated. One of those concerned growing
Palestinian protest which had been sparked by a ruling on six Palestinian families who had been threatened with eviction in the neighbourhood of Sheiq Jarah. The eviction notice was connected to a lawsuit brought by Israeli settlers and protestors as part of an effort to drive Palestinian families out of East Jerusalem (Baconi, 2021). As a result of the threats of eviction, there were clashes with police at the Damascus gate in Jerusalem old city after police erected barricades to protect ultra-nationalist Israelis marching nearby.

Politically, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was under pressure after the March 2021 election as his rivals were in the process of trying to form a new government (Staff, 2021). Palestinian politics also continued to be deeply divided. With Hamas controlling Gaza and Fatah controlling the West Bank, and Palestinian elections which had been postponed since 2006, there was growing frustration and internal discontent in Palestine. More broadly, Palestinians were feeling marginalised after the Americans brokered the Abraham accords which normalised relations between Israel, the UAE and Bahrain (Chatham House, 2021). This conflict was therefore serving political purposes on both Israeli and Palestinian sides.

For OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS this period is an example of events which interrupt and sometimes redirect their work. The differences between working ‘in’ and ‘on’ conflict (Goodhand et al., 2006) also become more apparent here as OV works from afar and Darkenu and Zimam work within the reality of war. For Goodhand (2006) staff, trustees and activists working successfully ‘in’ conflict through organisations such as Darkenu and Zimam means acknowledging the war, mitigating war-related risks and minimising the potential for their programmes to exacerbate violence. Working ‘on’ war with transnational partners such as OV and SNS involves presenting programming that addresses conflict prevention,
management or resolution and a focus on human rights issues (Goodhand, 2006). In this context of conflict and war, Goodhand warns against the limitations of planning tools such as logical frameworks and other management systems which may create an illusion of control in rapidly changing circumstances but which may also, paradoxically, undermine their capacity to operate responsively in a situation of violent conflict, especially if they lead to rigidity and a growing focus on internal processes, rather than the external environment. For the Director of OV, OS1 (2020), for example, operating responsively from afar during periods of war and violent conflict in Israel and Palestine included reallocating time and resources to check on the welfare of staff on both sides at both Darkenu and Zimam, adapting communications to reflect the severity of the conflict, and understanding and communicating the reasons for it. (This kind of impact on organisational learning will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.)

Darkenu is in a different position. In Israel, military service is mandatory for men and women at the age of 18. Every Darkenu staff member, activist, board member or external stakeholder of Darkenu has therefore completed military service and sometimes fought in war. They also continue to serve as reservists. When violence erupts and Israeli soldiers are at war, there is rarely an appetite in Israel and Darkenu, regardless of political positions, to criticise soldiers. Darkenu’s position is therefore always to be respectful of what soldiers are going through and to never directly critique them (DS3, 2020). At times such as these, Darkenu nonetheless sees its role as promoting debate about the broader, fundamental and structural issues which surround the conflict. DemocraTV therefore continued to play an important role for Darkenu during the May 2021 conflict by focusing its online debates on democracy and social justice. For Darkenu, the conflict also underlined an
urgency in promoting and supporting the creation of a coalition government which included more moderate parties and would be less likely to fuel conflict as a political tactic or response to internal political tensions (DS2, 2021).

During the May 2021 conflict (Zimam, 2021a), Zimam’s priority was ensuring the safety of its staff in Gaza, providing support and leadership to their activists through regular and ongoing communications, trying to get an accurate understanding of what was happening on the ground and gathering facts in Gaza. They also prioritised communications with OneVoice, ensuring joint communications properly reflected their positions, and continued to promote non-violence in Palestine. In May 2021, Zimam also worked to remain relevant in Palestine with messages reflecting its understanding of the mood of their Palestinian partners while also focusing on providing alternative solutions through peaceful means (Zimam, 2021a).

During this period, the challenges of gathering and disseminating impartial information for UK schools’ newsletters became even more important for SNS. Not only did information from a balance of reputable news sources need to be found and edited but, according to SNS Director of Communications, heightened sensitivities of diaspora Jews and Palestinians also needed to be understood and accommodated through sensitive reporting (NSS, 2021).

During periods of violent conflict such as these, business as usual stops for all four organisations. Staff, board members and activists respond in different ways to the needs of their staff as they work to adapt their messaging and activities around the issues of the day which are most relevant to them. At the end of each period of conflict, the outcomes are also different for each organisation. Some events may, for example, prompt major shifts in
public opinion, often hardening attitudes between Israel and Palestine and impacting on OV’s ability to promote cooperation between Israel and Palestine. The May 2021 clashes provided, for example, clear evidence of the internal and mounting conflict between Hamas and Fatah in Palestine, something which then needed to be addressed at programmatic levels at Zimam, in the way that they promote non-violent and non-partisan capacity building programmes. The relationships between the four organisations, who also work independently, are illustrated in all of these activities.

Although the political context of the Israeli Palestinian conflict changes on a daily basis, with events such as the May 2021 clashes requiring immediate responses from OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, major global and regional political trends over the period of this research (September 2019 to December 2022), also impacted on the organisations and how organisational learning takes place within and between them. In Israel there were five elections in the space of three years (2019-2022) and in the West Bank and Gaza, there have been no legislative elections during this period. It is only after the Israeli March 2021 election which resulted in a power-sharing government between leftist, centrist, far-right and Arab parties, that the status quo in the balance of power shifted after 20 years in favour of a more inclusive coalition government. As this thesis is written, in the wake of the November 2022, elections have seen a swing back to a right-wing coalition government; it remains, to be seen how possible it will be for civil society to retain hard fought for legitimacy and currency in a country still focused on prioritising securitisation issues which do not answer Palestinians needs. Ongoing rounds of elections also continue to take up Darkenu’s time and resources as it participates in Get Out to Vote campaigns and
strengthens its media platforms where it debates issues of social justice and democracy (DS2, 2021).

In Palestine, the intensified power struggle between Hamas and Fatah, which first became most apparent with the success of Hamas in the 2006 elections, is at the time of writing still stalling legislative elections in both the West Bank and Gaza and preventing democratic political participation of the young leaders emerging from Zimam capacity building programmes. Programming is therefore adapted and changed on a regular basis to respond to the changing needs of those young activists.

Internationally, the Presidency of Donald Trump (2017-2021) pushed forward a US political agenda which favoured the expansion of settlements, declared Jerusalem the capital of the Jewish State of Israel and also provoked violence which OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS all responded to through their activism, lobbying and the issues which they chose to discuss. At the time of writing in 2022, US President Biden’s approach to the conflict is in marked contrast but nonetheless requires close scrutiny by OV, Darkenu and Zimam as they navigate US politics in their attempts to continue to garner US support for their work.

The ongoing threat of Covid 19 in 2022, climate change and some of the challenging and sometimes rewarding effects of globalisation, such as the way in which all of the organisations are able to use social and other media platforms to promote their work, also help determine day-to-day agendas and more long-term planning for organisations which prioritise democracy, justice and sustainability (Zimam, 2021; OV, 2021; Darkenu, 2021d). The examples which I have given above are just some examples of the contextual changes in
local and geopolitics which affect what the organisations do and the relationships between them, and this is part of an ongoing process of learning within and between them.

**Conclusion**

Understanding some of the historical dimensions, the role of civil society organisations and how they participate in peacebuilding, helps situate OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS within the context of the broad sweep of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. The ongoing and constantly shifting dynamics on local, regional and world stages all provide different challenges for organisations working in those contexts. These challenges include some of the ways in which organisations have to adapt to changing circumstances. Understanding this context allows me to help answer my research question about who and what influences organisational learning in these organisations. An analysis of context also highlights the ways in which organisations face different challenges and adapt in their own contexts, where armed conflict is ongoing in the case of Darkenu and Zimam. Contesting deeply embedded national narratives, fighting for legitimacy as civil society organisations and challenging the status quo, remains a challenge for all of the organisations operating in environments where that questioning, particularly for Darkenu and Zimam, is often construed as disloyalty to their national and individual Israeli and Palestinian identities. Although these organisations are united in working towards a two-state solution, their political focus is also on broadening attitudes, encouraging debate and strengthening new voices to join those debates. In the subsequent chapters, an empirical analysis will evidence
how these hybrid NGO/SMOs learn separately and together to challenge and reflect the norms in which they work.

In order to answer my second research question and to understand more specifically how organisational learning takes place, who and what impacts on it and how, it is also necessary to understand some of the more micro level challenges of the cultural and political contexts in which the organisations operate. In chapter 5, I explain how learning through relationship building, action learning and managed processes takes place within and across the organisations. In the following chapter 4, I first provide an overview of the methodology which I have used to carry out this research, also shaped by the context of the ongoing Israeli Palestinian conflict.
Chapter 4 – Research Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I highlight the philosophical underpinnings of the research. I also outline the research design and methodology choices made in order to answer the research questions which seek to understand relationships between organisational learning and politics. I discuss conducting field work in Israel, Palestine, the UK and the US, as well as the impact of the global Covid 19 pandemic (March 2020 – January 2022) on the research. Reflection on the methodologies chosen for the research includes an analysis of ethical questions, research design and data analysis.

4.1 Epistemological Perspective

The research conducted for this thesis is based on a critical constructivist approach to the role of learning, both in and for peacebuilding born out of ontological assumptions which do not see the world and the truth as fixed but rather as constructed and changing (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). This is an epistemological position which is less interested in measuring how organisational learning takes place at OneVoice, SNS, Darkenu and Zimam, and more interested in capturing some of the ways that learning is experienced and can have impact. I also build on longitudinal studies (Gawerc, 2012; Lazarus, 2011; 2017) and other literature which analyse peacebuilding organisations in Israel and Palestine and unpublished reports in the US (OneVoice, October, 2019) and the UK (SNS and Lewis, 2020).
I pursued this approach to gain additional insights into how individuals and organisations learn and apply their learning to their efforts to bring about change. The implications of this approach across four organisations are that, not only do I consider everyone’s experience as equal in an environment where power is exercised in multiple ways, but I am also able to observe different and sometimes shared examples of organisational learning as a way to understand the political nature of organisational learning in hybrid NGO/SMOs working for peacebuilding in conflict situations. On a practical level this means that I do not pursue an agenda which favours either Israeli or Palestinian perspectives, but instead work to incorporate and accommodate all of the research participants’ historical claims, political positions and personal experiences.

Research in peacebuilding, social movements, organisational learning, development and political and religious studies can draw on a wide variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. I have used qualitative ethnographic research methods, which Ploder and Hamann (2021: 3) describe as the product of many practices:

> It is an assemblage of seeing and looking, hearing and listening, handling objects, describing, interviewing, recording, reading, documenting, and working with data—transcribing, storing, transforming, sharing, labelling, coding, sequencing, comparing, interpreting, visualizing, and quoting—as well as many other practices).

Due to the limitations imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic, I immersed myself physically and then virtually in communities and organisations in order to observe the people that inhabit them and the fields of influence in the wider social and political contexts in which they
operate. This included participant observation, interviews, focus groups as well as a review of documents produced by the four organisations at the centre of my research.

I had built up relationships with staff members and activists for peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine over several years prior to the research. Research completed as part of my MSc thesis (Teller, 2018) meant that I came to this PhD with prior knowledge of the organisations and of the contexts within which they work. I was therefore able to employ a focused ethnographic method for gathering data which, contrary to conventional ethnography where a researcher is expected to spend longer periods in the field, involves short field visits to the site of inquiry (Andreassen et al., 2020; Knoblauch, 2005). Focused ethnography assumes that researchers have prior knowledge or familiarity with their sites of study as well as the activities of the group or groups which are being studied. During periods of one to three weeks at a time, I gathered data intensively for this research. (See Appendix A.)

In the absence of guidelines for this specific research problem, and in a way which is also characteristic of ethnographic research (Ploder and Hamann, 2021), I was able to select the methods which I thought could help me answer my research questions listed below. Through the use of ethnographic research methods, I was able to embed myself within the organisations for short periods of time and follow leads which emerged from my fieldwork as an incremental process.
4.2 Research Questions, Design and Methods

I first developed a research methodology in 2019 as a means to implement the research design, thus ensuring that the data which I have obtained answers my research questions. An overarching and secondary research questions provided the starting point and the design of the methodology for this research and have informed the data, data sources and methods required to answer these questions. These questions have remained relevant, despite the interruptions and changes to methods for data collection, caused by the Covid 19 pandemic.

4.2.1 Research Questions

The overarching question of this research asks: ‘How do international hybrid NGO/SMOs learn to create political space for change and transformation in the context of the Israeli Palestinian conflict?’

Secondary research questions include:

1. Who and what influences organisational learning at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and Solutions Not Sides?
2. How does organisational learning take place at personal, intra and inter organisational levels; who participates and how?
3. How does organisational learning impact on the thinking and activities of internal and external stakeholders (staff, activists, board members, donors, external partners)?
4. How can learning in organisations be understood to be ‘political’?

5. What are the relationships between organisational learning and political change?

I developed these questions in light of ones that remained unanswered in my MSc pilot study and considerations of how best to approach an analysis of what politics and political change might mean in the context of organisational learning in peace-building organisations in Israel and Palestine.

### 4.2.2 Research Design

As a form of ethnographic research which aims to observe people within their environments and to answer these questions of who, what, when, where, how, the research was originally designed to have access to a wide range of individuals from several organisations, each within their own organisational settings and environments, and in a way which highlighted similarities and differences between them. I planned to spend time conducting participant observation within each organisation, where I would be included in activities and be able to observe first-hand how people interacted and how systems and programmes were implemented. By spending time in Israel and Palestine, on university campuses in the US and in secondary schools in the UK, I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of how organisations work and how learning takes place in different environments. This research was therefore originally designed using a qualitative method framework for gathering data which included plans for in person, face to face interviews on location, focus groups and participant observation with each of the organisations in Israel, the West Bank, the US and the UK.
While some participant observation, one focus group and preliminary meetings and interviews did take place in person on location in Israel, Palestine, the US and the UK, the Covid 19 pandemic meant that much of my research work had to be conducted at a distance and moved online. My approach was therefore adapted (see Box 1 Scenario Planning - March 2020) to include investigation through observing people and speaking directly with people online at a distance, as well as reviewing existing research and data, and analysing documents.

Fieldwork undertaken between October 2018 and March 2020 took place in person on location, while fieldwork undertaken between March 2020 and January 2022 was also in person and in real time but conducted at a distance via digital platforms such as Zoom (predominantly), Skype and WhatsApp. (See Appendix A – for Pre-Covid Fieldwork Schedule.) Despite these disruptions and adaptations, the qualitative framework nonetheless continued to provide the flexibility that I needed to concurrently analyse four different organisations in four different countries, some conflict torn, during a global pandemic. This approach has included participant observation, a total of 71 semi-structured interviews in person and online, an in person focus group in Israel, an online focus group and evaluation questionnaire in Palestine, and analysis of OneVoice, SNS, Darkenu and Zimam organisational documents and data.

Multi-sited ethnography, a term first coined by Marcus (1995), where ethnographic fieldwork takes place in more than one geographic place, continues to be debated and critiqued as part of ongoing methodological discussions (Falzon, 2020); nevertheless, proved
a useful approach for working with the four organisations, located in four different locations. The implications of researching multiple spaces, both geographic and virtual were not, however, limited to the challenges of working in different physical and virtual spaces.

For this research, the challenges of undertaking ethnographical engagement with complex large-scale problems across different geographic sites also included working to ensure that individuals’ experiences were not minimised, or that portrayals of their lives or the complexities of the problems which they face were not skewed. This approach has involved addressing logistical as well as ethical issues, such as working to ensure full and equal representation and participation in each place, whether in person or online. Although I have worked to address these issues by interviewing an equal number of people in each place, questions of the complexities of equal representation, particularly online, are discussed in more detail in section 4.2.7.

From an organisational perspective, Akemu and Abdelnour (2020) add to an analysis of multi-sited ethnography to point out that observations of face-to-face interaction and rich description of the field is an inadequate approach to capturing organisational life, which is sometimes made up of multiple geographic settings as well as virtually-sited, digitally-mediated encounters (e.g., through online technology and platforms such as e-mail, Facebook, Messenger and Skype). Multi-sited ethnography also then provided a means of helping to analyse the four organisations which all also use digital technology for everyday communications.
This approach did not include a day to day recording of the minutia of each organisation, of every e-mail or important meeting or change of staff, instead, it involved using various methods to capture the experiences of different groups of people who make up the organisation or who are stakeholders in them. I tried to capture some of the critical junctures where either the organisations as a whole, or the individuals within them, pivoted or gradually adapted to changed circumstances or direction. I tried to understand the formal and informal learning processes which might have led to these changes and which result from them. This process did not involve controlled testing which can be replicated, but instead captured emotions and thinking across the four organisations. This included capturing experiences of personal growth, realisation or protest activity, observations of strategic and operational meetings which took place in offices, board rooms and online, youth leadership training programmes, as well as changes in attitudes, behaviours and norms, beyond organisations in other spheres such as the media and local and national politics. This approach provided ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of how change happens within individuals as well as within organisations whose ultimate goal is peace and social justice in Israel and Palestine, and of how those changes might illuminate the relationship between organisational learning and political change.

The analysis and consideration of organisational data, such as meeting minutes, strategic direction reports, planning documents, evaluation reports, research projects undertaken by organisations, annual reports, programming proposals and marketing materials have helped identify whether or not there is consistent and systematic learning within and across all four organisations. Reports not produced in English were translated by professional translators in Israel and Palestine. Qualitative data collected from in-person and online interviews and
focus groups have helped to investigate plausible associations, such as links between
organisational and individual learning and drivers for change in the political arena. This
research has gained Open University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) approval
(reference number 3317).

While all interviewees and focus group participants in all four organisations (with the
exception of three people) signed consent forms and agreed to be identified, I have
anonymised all of my data and coded participants when they are referenced. (See Appendix
B.) The coding system identifies participants as staff, activists, trustees or external
stakeholders and other actors. While senior staff in each organisation remain identifiable,
this ensures consistency in the way in which interviewees, focus group participants, board
members and external stakeholders are referenced. It also provides anonymity for youth
activists for whom I do not want to cause any unintentional exposure or harm.

4.2.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

The scope of the semi-structured interviews has covered all four organisations as well as
external shareholders and contacts. (See Appendix C -Interview Questions.) The interview
process started with a purposive sampling (Etican et al., 2016) of five interviewees from
each organisation identified by myself and the Director of each organisation who acted as
gatekeepers and ensured access to interviewees. This included interviews with one
Director, one staff member, one activist, one board member and one external partner from
each organisation, totalling 20 interviews. In this purposefully selective sample, as everyone
other than external stakeholders, who I contacted independently, was known to the
Executive Director of each organisation, there was undoubtedly potential for bias and/or a limited range of viewpoints reflective of particular circumstances and contexts. However, in building an additional list of approximately 30 internal and 20 key external stakeholder informants for interviews, including academics, politicians and former associates or organisations, I had a free hand in selecting interviewees and have throughout the interview process I aimed to address possible bias by covering a broad spectrum of opinion.

This selection of interviewees was representative of internal and external stakeholders in each organisation in terms of age and gender. The preliminary selection process which took place with senior representatives from each organisation reflected, and may have even served to increase those gate keepers’ relative power in terms of deciding who to put forward to speak on behalf of the organisation (Crowhurst, 2013). That process nonetheless allowed me access to staff, activists and board members. In the initial interview stage, I progressively identified approximately five key informants associated with each organisation, from either within each organisation or as external contacts. The key informants added either first-hand or specialist knowledge on the topic. The final number of interviews for the research comes to 71 and the final sample of interviewees and focus groups participants is representative of the wide range of opinions, views and experiences of members and stakeholders of those organisations.

Through the process of interviewing, I gathered different viewpoints from stakeholders within and outside of the organisations to build a picture of social, political and religious differences, similarities and interactions. I drilled down into each organisation to get a sense of where, how and by whom power is exercised in ways which impacts on
organisational learning. I also looked at other factors such as context, political and religious attitudes, beliefs and behaviours which might impact on organisational learning and gathered data on some of the different processes and outcomes of learning for individuals as well as for organisations. Not all of the interviews, however, had the same function and depth. In some of the interviews with staff and board members, interviewees were able to provide organisational as well as individual perspectives on learning. Senior staff, board members and external stakeholders also sometimes helped provide a broader understanding of the organisations and learning within a wider social and political context. Each of the semi-structured interviews, either on location or online lasted approximately one hour and was held either in English or Arabic or Hebrew and, where necessary, with a translator (see also section 4.2.4). Questions were sent to board member interviewees beforehand (as requested by senior staff) and all of the interviews followed a semi-structured script. (See Appendix C.)

This was an iterative snow-balling (Noy, 2008) approach which included interview, ‘questions and topics tailored to different informants, and different stages of the enquiry’ (Woodhouse, 2007: 171), which helped provide a nuanced and triangulated understanding of the research questions from different perspectives. In Israel, for example, I was able to speak with a former Israeli government minister. He shared insights into the impact of social movements on Israeli politics, and the role that organisational learning plays in that process. In Palestine, I interviewed former Zimam activists who have gone on to hold political office as well as religious leaders who are engaged with the work of Zimam. In the US and the UK, I interviewed academics and experts in conflict resolution and peacebuilding who helped me situate my own work within the field of academic study. As potential ‘key
informants’, interviewees such as these have been able to ‘throw light on new issues brought up by previous informants’ (Woodhouse, 2007: 166) as well as point me towards other interviewees. Through the use of this ‘snowballing’ technique (Noy, 2008), I was able to add new lines of enquiry throughout the interview stage of the research.

The in-person interviews which took place in the UK, Israel and Palestine and the US between September 2018 and March 2021 were held in a variety of locations such as the OV, SNS, Darkenu and Zimam offices, cafes, bars, and public spaces, while online interviews took place in private homes, gardens and cars. This range of venues reflected some interviewees’ desire for privacy away from their colleagues and office spaces, which are noisy hubs of activity during campaigns and projects. Additionally, some activists spend very little time in the office headquarters of the organisations that they are affiliated with. Online interviews during Covid 19, when I was in lockdown the UK, provided its own particular challenges and rewards. (See section 4.2.7 Conducting Ethnographic Research Online.)

In drawing up the initial list of questions for the semi structured interviews, I formulated both ‘closed’ and ‘open’ questions. This approach allowed respondents to answer open questions critically and qualitatively in their own words as well as providing a few basic quantitative indicators such as their role in the organisations or how long they had been associated with these. Combining open and close ended questions, and carefully expanding on close ended questions, meant interviewees were able to avoid or not expand on sensitive questions if they wanted (Adams, 2015). Interview questions were clustered around each of the overarching research questions, in a way which made it easier to focus
on each particular topic and on how they then related to each other. The responses also
helped answer and refine the research questions and topics. I tested the research tools
through test interviews as well as through ongoing discussions and consultations with the
Directors of OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. The in person focus group which I was
able to conduct in Israel at Darkenu was also piloted with Open University (OU) researcher
colleagues in the UK and was adapted. One notable outcome of that pilot study was the
openness and the enthusiasm with which participants discussed some of the ways in which
their religious beliefs impact on their individual approaches to learning. These
conversations made me less hesitant to ask interviewees and focus group participants to
speak about how their religious identities, beliefs and practices impacts on their lives.

For this research I developed a style of interviewing particular to the context of my
interviewees. In Israel and Palestine, interviewees are occasionally cautious about speaking
about their personal, political, religious and other identities and activities. In the US and the
UK, I also found that many of the people most drawn to these organisations or their youth
programmes often already feel themselves to be outsiders or in vulnerable minority groups.
I therefore tried as far as possible to ask questions which allowed for the interviewees to
offer only the information which they felt comfortable sharing. If, for example, youth
activists had been incarcerated for their activism, I did not ask about the details of their
incarceration unless they offered it. Although interviews sometimes prompted emotional
responses, several interviewees held back tears or cried as they spoke about painful or
meaningful issues, informal feedback from several of the interviewees suggest that the
interviews often offered important opportunities for reflection and a therapeutic
experience (Shamai, 2003). At the end of his interview, ZS3 said, ‘that was great, it felt like a
good therapy session’ (ZS3, 2020), underlining the cathartic effect sometimes experienced by interviewees where in the ‘retelling of any life experience, the individual has the opportunity to reconstruct and reevaluate it in another context’ (Bourne and Robson, 2015:105). However, with this kind of value given to being heard and understood in interviews and focus groups came an additional level of responsibility for me, as researcher, to be aware of and respectful of sensitive topics and issues and the ways in which the interviews were experienced as interventions in interviewees everyday lives (Nicolson, 2003; Shamai, 2003).

4.2.4 Focus Groups

Critics of focus groups say that they are not appropriate for all research questions and that the analysis of data which comes out of them is sometimes used in non-rigorous ways (Webb and Kevern, 2001; Stewart et al., 2007). However, for the purposes of this research, focus groups successfully brought together people for discussion in a moderated setting and helped me answer my research questions through collecting a range of activists’ perspectives. Creating a social and collective space for discussion also seemed an apt way to observe and discuss some of the characteristics of collective learning in organisations, the subject of the thesis. Both the in-person focus group in Tel Aviv at Darkenu (March, 2020) and the online focus group which included participants joining from Nablus, Gaza and Ramallah in Palestine and the UK (September, 2020), helped me to understand people’s experiences of collective learning. Those experiences were also sometimes characteristic of broader issues to do with organisational learning, such as the exercise of power where some participants are advantaged over others. As there is little prior research on the relationship
between organisational learning and politics, I was also keen to use focus groups to gain a sense of how participants understood these concepts. Both the in person (Tel Aviv, 4 March, 2020) and online focus group (Nablus/ Ramallah/Gaza/London, 19 September, 2020) followed the same format, with the exception that in Palestine, six youth leaders from Nablus, two from Ramallah and three youth leaders from Gaza, dialled in to join the focus group online. Both focus groups were three hours long with a break for lunch. (See Appendix D – Focus Groups Format and Content.)

Some of the challenges of working in a foreign language were overcome by the presence in both focus groups of translators who were also activists and familiar and interested in the work of Darkenu and Zimam. At Darkenu the focus group was held primarily in Hebrew, with participants sometimes lapsing into English, while at Zimam, I had been asked if the focus group could take place in English in order for participants to use the rare opportunity to practise their English. At Darkenu, the translator a young peace activist, sat next to me and provided simultaneous translations from Hebrew to English. At Zimam, the translator who I had used for my online interviews with Palestinian Arabic speakers, a Zimam alumnus and activist, served as both facilitator of the focus group and a translator when required. All the Zimam activists spoke English and were keen to practise in this group setting, and the translator was able to help out if one of the participants had problems expressing themselves. This approach also reflects the way in which opportunities for learning seem, as a rule, to be generally seized by Zimam. Conducting focus groups in different languages is challenging and I was aware that there was much information that I was missing through either the translations or difficulties of communicating in English. The data which I was able to collect was nonetheless extremely useful in helping me to answer my research questions.
and in particular to help me understand the kinds of relationships which activists have with Darkenu and Zimam.

The Darkenu focus group included 10 activists aged 21 to 35 who, in the run up to the Israeli general elections on the 2nd of March 2020, had all recently participated in a two month Get Out to Vote (GOTV) campaign. At my request, the Director of Darkenu Volunteer Activists sent a WhatsApp message to all their Darkenu volunteers asking if they would like to participate in the focus group and the research. Participants self-selected to participate in the focus group. All of the participants read information sheets and signed consent forms in Hebrew.

I had been concerned that the participants might find the activities I had planned too childish. The activities included the use of Play Doh and coloured post it notes. I had chosen these activities as fun and creative ways which might help keep participants engaged, relaxed and focused. The Play Doh activity in particular was used to make more tangible activists’ thoughts about the identity of Darkenu as an organisation and how it accommodated their own identities. I had also decided that Play Doh provided an easier and possibly more light-hearted approach to discussing potentially sensitive subjects to do with the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

Using creative methods in social science research has benefits as well as limitations (Brooks et al., 2020), such as participants’ sometimes negative responses to its use or the different levels of ease with which participants are able to express themselves creatively. It was,
however, a successful kinaesthetic method (Lace-Costigan, 2017) which managed to serve as an ice-breaker, enthuse focus group participants to express how they felt about Darkenu, how they experienced learning as part of those organisations as well as how they conceptualised organisational learning. (See Appendix D - Focus Group Format.) The activities, particularly in the first half of the day, proved to be ideally suited to this group of participants who became a bit fidgety and lost some focus in the second half of the day, when there were no longer activities and charts to focus on. The Play Doh continued to be played with or used as a stress reliever throughout the sessions, but did not seem to distract from any of the conversations.

The flip chart notes, made by the facilitator, provided me with the opportunity to focus on the group. This was a group not used to spending three hours sitting down in a meeting room but they seemed to enjoy the various activities and the relatively fast pace of the proceedings - at least in the first half. In the second half, when each person was given the opportunity to speak at more length about their personal stories, concentration faded. Because I was aware of rising levels of slight agitation and time-keeping, and in order to ensure that everyone was able to tell their stories, I became more directive and asked people to keep their answers short which, with the exception of one or two people, everyone found difficult. The use of personal narratives as a learning tool therefore clearly required more time to explore stories in more depth, and the use of other techniques to engage and involve participants listening to others’ stories.

The translator did an excellent job throughout of translating between Hebrew and English, either after every few sentences or simultaneously when people were telling longer stories.
about themselves. The importance of personal narratives (see analysis in chapter 6) as a tool for individual learning was highlighted as each participant was fully engaged and keen to answer in full rather than give abridged versions of their own personal stories— even when they knew time was running out, and they were not so engaged with listening to each other. Translations also added more time than I had anticipated to the session, which meant that I had less time and was unable to do a proper recap of the day and about how the various activities sat together. It was also a mistake to ask people to tell their story and then not to have the time to finish them. Nonetheless, I felt that participants came away having enjoyed the opportunity to talk about their work at Darkenu. I gained important insights into the importance of timing, planning and ensuring that participants are able to cover focus group topics without being rushed. This process also helped me to start thinking about how individual learning takes place as part of organisational learning.

The day after the focus group, I provided the Darkenu’s Director Operations with notes on the session and shared recommendations with him. The Volunteers Director asked if I would also agree for my notes and recommendations to be sent to the participants. I agreed and sent them to all the participants, thanking them for their time and their participation in the focus group and the activities. These kinds of interactions also informed my research through providing me with insights into an organisational structure where information and knowledge is shared easily at different levels of the organisation as part of democratising approaches to organisational learning (Edwards and Brannelly, 2017). From a methodological point of view, the distribution of my notes and recommendations also provided me with an additional means of engaging with the participants.
The in-person Zimam Focus group which had originally been planned to take place on 4\textsuperscript{th} April 2020 in the West Bank in Ramallah, but had been postponed due to Covid 19, took place online five months later on 19\textsuperscript{th} of September 2020. Five participants and the Palestinian facilitator and translator joined a call together from the offices of Zimam in Nablus. Three participants called in from Gaza and two participants joined online from Ramallah. I joined as the moderator from London and a Zimam staff member also joined online from London. It was with hindsight perhaps ambitious to conduct a focus group with a mix of participants, some participating in person together as a group and others joining online activities independently. Although participants were happy, as expressed in their evaluation forms for the event, and rich data was collected which helped answered my research questions, overall, the focus group did not run as smoothly as I had hoped.

With hindsight, I believe that I was naïve in trying to bring together Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank. I was so focused on the asymmetries of power between the Israelis and Palestinians that I had not considered inequalities between the Gazans and those in the West Bank. The implications of this for organisational learning becomes more apparent as I analyse asymmetries of power within relationships as part of my approach to understanding the relationship between organisational learning and politics in chapter 7. Although the focus group was centred on people speaking in the group rather than using online rooms and gadgets, Gazans were not able to participate fully as they had not been provided with the art supplies that I had requested and their internet connections were not reliable. They also watched a bit wistfully as the group in Nablus went together for lunch, and were too shy or reserved to chat in the same open and expressive manner that the West Bank participants did. The Gaza participants clearly had different needs which I should have been
aware of. However, their happiness at being included and speaking with foreigners and Palestinians in the West Bank overrode my disappointment that I was not able to make it a more equal learning experience for them. It did however expand my thinking about how learning experiences serve different functions. While I was collecting data, activists seemed most pleased with seeing each other after lockdown and being able to practise their English. Their being together in a group and meeting me, as evidenced in their feedback, was therefore important socially for them and in a way which supported their own learning and knowledge-building while they were doing the activities.

If I conduct future online workshops with Palestinians from both the West Bank and Gaza, I will think more carefully about ways in which these participants come together and participate in shared activities. While I had been told that all of the participants spoke English and the focus group sessions clearly provided a good opportunity for participants to practise their English, on reflection, I should also have provided questions in advance to help participants prepare answers in English. I also would have conducted follow up interviews with each of the participants in Gaza to ensure that they felt equally included in the process.

Despite these observations, all the Palestinian participants in the focus group nonetheless came across as more hopeful, focused and confident about their future leadership roles than their Israeli counterparts at Darkenu. As an organisation, Zimam also seemed to take up more of their time and came across as a more central part of their lives. This may be partly explained by the fact that Israeli activists inhabit a very complex world where they are trying to change things in Israel as well as address injustices for the Palestinians, so grounds for positivity may be messier.
4.2.5 Participant Observation

Participant observation is an embodied way in which to gather and analyse data (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011). I used this methodology in Israel, Palestine, the UK and the US in order to gain additional insights into how learning takes place within and between OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, particularly as each of these organisations operates in such distinct cultural settings. The smells of street food, the sounds of busy markets and calls to prayer, the feel of heat in the afternoon, or the warmth or animosity that one witnesses or feels between people, all added depth of feeling and understanding for the situations which I, as a researcher, was both participating in and analysing. Moments of true active participation, such as attending a synagogue discussion group or handing out flyers and chatting to passers-by in Tel Aviv as part of Darkenu’s Get Out to Vote (GOTV) campaign, attracting attention walking in the Ramallah midday sun down dusty roads with a young Zimam activist with her head covered with a hijab scarf, or attending a OneVoice staff retreat and participating in group activities in the US, meant that notetaking and diary entries had to be written separately. One of the paradoxes of participant observation is precisely that the researcher is involved and participates in activities while at the same time is distanced as an observer (Hume and Mulcock, 2004). This was highlighted for me in the way in which, due to language issues and my appearance as a middle-aged white woman, I stood out much less as a participant and as an observer in the UK and the US at board meetings, retreats and in schools programmes, than I did in Israel and Palestine, where I was fully included in group activities by young activists, but treated more as an observer.
Participant observation was another way in which I was able to observe and then analyse how learning takes place within and between organisations, and to ask questions about who participates in that learning and how, what impacts on learning and what the relationship between organisational learning and politics might be. Spending time with groups of people at a staff retreat on Long Island in the US, in team meetings and youth leadership programmes in Ramallah in the West bank, in schools programmes in Bradford in the north of England, in in-person and online board meetings in New York, in car rides through the West Bank to meet colleagues in Nablus or even joining the chat between colleagues with cups of mint tea and pastries in the office kitchens of Darkenu in Tel Aviv and Zimam in Ramallah, are all ways in which I observed how informal and formal collective learning takes place within social movement organisations. In addition to spending time in Israel in March 2020 conducting interviews and a focus group in Tel Aviv, I had already spent time in Israel (in September, 2019), Palestine (September 2019), the UK (June 2019) the US (June 2019) and online (April to September 2020) collecting data about the ways in which the organisations operate, and participating in person in learning exercises. (See Appendix A - Fieldwork Schedule.)

My strategy for participating in all these kinds of activities and events was to spend as much time as possible in each group, not only in order to collect data which would help address my research questions, but also to build relationships of trust which would ensure ongoing collaborations with each organisation when I was working at a distance from them. Trust building as part of participant observation proved key to my data collection (Robson, 2002). Indeed, once Covid travel restrictions were in place and I was not able to return to Israel or
Palestine or to spend time at the OV offices in the US, I relied heavily on the network of contacts which I had already established.

4.2.6 Organisational Documents

OneVoice, US and UK, SNS, Darkenu and Zimam all agreed to share research data which each one had produced for its own purposes. By demonstrating what the four organisations choose to focus on for research and evaluation purposes and how they present themselves and their work through the evaluation and research that they commission or participate in, these selected secondary/grey materials supplemented insights gained through the interview and focus group processes. Through this organisational data, and with Lukes (2005 [1974]) and the less obvious manifestations of power which he highlights in mind, I have explored what these organisations say (O’Laughlin, 2007) and do not say, about themselves in terms of the day-to-day challenges which I observed. I have analysed organisational histories, identity, values and strategies, systems and structures, finances (as far as possible), performance and relationships (Roche, 2007).

OV shared with me many documents produced to support their OV board meetings which took place between October 2019 and October 2020 (OneVoice, 2020). These meeting minutes, strategy papers, concept papers, reports, reviews, and financial documents all provide valuable insight into the workings of the organisations and how they have navigated important periods of change.
I also had access to the social media pages, including Facebook, of each of the organisations. Social media is an important learning, communication and public relations tools for the organisations in this study as well as a site for digital activism and protest (Margetts et al., 2016, Earl and Kimport, 2011). As new forms of protest, activism and learning increasingly go online, I do not go into extensive analysis of social media interactions and discourses. I do, however, examine social media and online content in the context of organisational learning and as another way for understanding the role of the organisations and organisational learning in relation to political change. In chapter 6, for example, I use my data to analyse how social media is used as a tool to help reframe and promote individual and organisational narratives in ways which can also expose individuals and organisations to criticism and attack.

4.2.7 Conducting Ethnographic Research Online – ‘You are on Mute’ or ‘The Summer of Zoom’

While challenging, conducting ethnographic research online in the way in which it was imposed on researchers during the Covid 19 pandemic opened up new and interesting ways of observing people in their environments. Although participants and I were all aware that conversing on online platforms in Israel and Palestine always runs the risk of being monitored by security forces (Priest et al., 2021), participants seemed honest and open, albeit sometimes measured in their answers. While technology and the online nature of the interviews and focus groups allowed me to reach people in a way which helped ensure the diversity of voices (Kellner, 2021), poor sound quality, technical difficulties in communicating online, and a language barrier made communications with Palestinians
more difficult, with the effect that they may not be as accurately or strongly represented. This reflects Kellner’s (2021) critical theory of technology which criticises uses of technology which simply further embed asymmetries of power and are used as ‘tools of domination’ (Kellner, 2021: 2). However, a critical theory of technology does not capture the rich data and the sense of discovery which online interviews nonetheless provided me with.

Between April and August 2020, I spent approximately 80 hours on Zoom conducting interviews in the UK, the US, Israel, The West Bank and Gaza. Although Zoom contains data management features that could have enabled a mixed methods approach where I could also collect quantitative data through polls and surveys, I used Zoom primarily as a way to replicate face to face interviews and focus groups through real time interaction involving sound, video and sometimes text. Despite the fact that digital ethnography is becoming increasingly important in our understanding of the social world (Pink et al., 2015) I had initially not anticipated that I would be using online platforms to conduct my ethnographic research, and had no previous training on how best to use online platforms for research purposes. However, conducting part of my research on online platforms allowed me to develop these skills. It also raised my awareness of the nuances of the not always democratising impact of online platforms, which on the one hand allow access to otherwise inaccessible participants (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014), but also reproduce and even exacerbate some of the limitations present in the non-virtual world.

In the initial stages of the pandemic, one of my concerns, particular to my research, was to identify a media platform which was also widely used and trusted in Palestine, where I felt participants might potentially be more vulnerable. Zimam staff in Palestine advised in
favour of communicating with Palestinian interviewees and focus group participants via Zoom. This was a platform which they were familiar with and trusted and which they had already used for training seminars. As early as end March 2020, cyber security advice (Schillings, March, 2020), also said that security concerns to do with access to Zoom meetings had in fact been quickly addressed by Zoom, and that if online meetings were password protected, they were no more vulnerable to security lapses than other platforms. Zoom therefore seemed to offer convenience and had also been able to address security concerns.

An additional ethical issue, particular to interviewees in Palestine, had to do with the confidentiality in terms of participants calling in to interviews or a focus group from home or other environments where they could be heard or did not feel comfortable to speak their mind freely. As far as in-depth interviews were concerned, this was addressed by Zimam staff contacting participants individually by WhatsApp, in advance of the interviews, to ensure that they were happy with the arrangements for the interviews and would be working from safe spaces. For the Zimam focus group, it was decided that participants would attend in person and although I would be joining the group online, participants would attend as a group from the Zimam office, where they were already confident and used to speaking their minds freely. Three participants calling in from Gaza were contacted separately to ensure that they felt safe joining the focus group online. Gaza residents are not allowed to travel to the West Bank and have never met their Zimam colleagues in person so are used to communicating with them online. For all of these issues I sought approval from the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).
Computer literacy and logistical needs, such as access to computers, are also identified as ethical issues to do with online research (Archibald et al. 2019). This was not, however, an issue for this research as all interview participants already had the equipment they needed and were computer literate (often more so than me). Each and every online interaction did, however, include minor technical adjustments such as, ‘can you hear me?’ or ‘you are on mute’.

The most important practical issues to do with conducting interviews online, was ensuring a strong enough internet connection for audio and video communications. Other issues such as the logistics of getting people in different time zones online at the same time sometimes involved a third or even fourth party and back-up technology. Connectivity issues are not, however, only problematic in places like Palestine. In July I was scheduled to interview a board member of OneVoice from her home on Long Island in the US. Although we had both logged in with the same Meeting ID number and password, we found ourselves in different online meeting rooms. Maintaining composure and focus while dealing with unforeseeable technical difficulties is always difficult; it added an additional layer of difficulty and complexity to conducting interviews online, wherever the participants were located.

Despite these and other technical and logistical challenges, many of the online interviews for this research saw both the interviewees and myself raising our arms in triumph or laughing about how successful we had been at overcoming technical challenges. For the most part, my experience supports Archibald’s (2019) suggestion that ‘the experience of overcoming technical difficulties facilitates rapport by building via collaborative problem-solving and by lengthening the initial bonding session’ (Archibald et al., 2019; 5). In a few
cases though, technical issues and the ensuing frustration, such as those which I experienced on the call to Long Island, either meant that the interviews did not happen at all, or seriously impacted on the mood and stress levels of those involved, resulting in a negative impact on the amount and the quality of the data which I was able to gain from those interviews.

Ease of access and reach to people in remote (Gaza and villages in the West Bank) and faraway places (US and Israel), as well as locally in the UK, allowed me to continue my fieldwork throughout Covid. However, the experience of interacting with people online is different to interactions shared in the same physical space. Online interviews were the closest thing to an in-person face-to-face encounter available to participants and me and we were all accepting of the technology’s limitations and opportunities. We worked hard to engage as fully as possible online, particularly when the audio or video connections were not stable. This effort was exaggerated further when a third-party translator was involved and interviews became a three-way conversation. Sklar (2020) suggests that intense and long term Zoom usage can lead to ‘Zoom fatigue’, due to the unconscious efforts required to communicate online and to respond to non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and hand gestures.

However, it soon became clear to me that tensions were always somewhat eased when interviewees and I built a rapport through finding some kind of commonality. This often happened as we introduced ourselves and inevitably discussed our shared experiences of the Covid 19 pandemic. It also happened in less intense conversations, such as when an interviewee in Palestine and I noticed that we were wearing the same striped shirt or when
a high-profile senior executive in the US and I discussed a shared interest in street art. Barratt (2012) argues that good rapport in online interviews produces good data. I also found that introductions which included personal discussions about family or lighter conversations about some other kind of shared experience or acquaintance, facilitated and often enriched discussions with my interviewees. Of course, rapport-building also happens when interviewer and interviewee are sharing the same space. However, in my experience of online interviews, rapport-building also happened in important ways when online interactions provided windows for me and my interviewees to look out beyond our own relatively difficult circumstances, into someone else’s environment, and to make new and meaningful encounters.

In the context of online interviews, it is not always clear who exerts power and agency. As the host of the interviews, I was aware of my administrative control over the proceedings. I issued the invitations for meetings with Meeting ID and Passwords for interviewees. I also granted access to the interviewees to join the meetings and had control in terms of structuring the interview and guiding the questions. I did not, however, have any control over what was happening in the interviewees’ space or what they chose to present to me, or if and when they chose to pause or to leave the screen or to momentarily disconnect.

Interviewees chose how they presented themselves to me on screen within their own environments which, during the summer or 2020, was mostly limited to people’s homes. In a Zoom call, the eye of the viewer can wander but only as far as the edges of the frame. Participants curate their own space and decide what it is that they want to show you of themselves or of their homes. Sometimes this space is neutral, a white wall, sometimes it is
fully concealed by, for example, a projected photographic wallpaper, and sometimes it is a less controlled space which other people, such as family members, also inhabit. Children and pets may wander in and out, activity sometimes happens outside the frame which distract interviewees or simply provides a backdrop or a soundtrack to the interview, such as the call to prayers in Qalqilya in the West Bank.

In-person ethnographic research is never simply about what is being said (Gilbert, 2015), as part of the research and the analysis of the data which I collected during online interviews I have been able to observe dimensions on access, agency, building rapport, and observations about the context and environment. The Zoom interviews which took place with audio and video within a static frame have also been a useful collaborative tool. I have been able to listen to what is being said and to observe what people revealed through their body language and actions (Davitti, 2019), how people have responded to problems and frustrations of communicating online and to think about what it says about them, how spaces were curated, and what else was happening on the audio and video in and outside of the frame. Questions about framing have been expanded through the use of Zoom. Through the use of Zoom for interviews, I also now think about what takes place within the Zoom camera lens frame and how that deepens my understanding about what is being said.

4.3 Data Analyses, Design, and Challenges

Analysing my interview and focus group data took place in three stages. In the first, I transcribed the interviews and focus groups which were all audio-recorded. Transcribing
the interviews allowed me to familiarise myself with the data. In the second phase of data analysis, I used NVivo qualitative data analysis software to organize my data by themes which emerged both from the data as well as from my literature review. Working across social science disciplines and theoretical frameworks, I used thematic analysis as a generic approach to interpreting the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and with NVivo I was able to organise my large volume of interviews in a way which also allowed me to cross reference them. I also added all my organisational documents to the NVivo system for ease of use and reference. Once this process was completed, I spent time reviewing the themes, subthemes and categories, and experimented with creating chapter structures for the thesis. This analytical approach combined focusing on themes which came out of existing literature in the inter-disciplinary literature review (chapter 2) as well as new themes which emerged from the data through grounded theory (Flick, 2018). Simultaneously collecting and analysing data through grounded theory, without having fixed ideas about the issues being researched, allowed me to work across disciplines and develop an interdisciplinary approach, while also following themes which have been of interest to me since the start of my research. In the third phase I organised my data into a final chapter structure, which developed through several more iterations throughout the course of the research.

However, as a result of the analysis of the data it became apparent to me that for the organisations in this research and in the context of conflict, organisational learning manifests itself as processes and mechanisms for learning which can also simultaneously be conceptualised as outcomes, and that it also takes place in sites of learning. An important challenge subsequently consisted of finding a chapter structure which provides a framework
for thinking about all these aspects of organisational learning, in a way which also illustrates that these different facets of organisational learning often overlap.

4.4 Issues of Objectivity and Researcher Positionality

Letherby et al. (2012) reject the idea that complete objectivity is possible because everyone has lived experiences that affect what and how they choose to research. I have nonetheless questioned whether my relationships with OneVoice, SNS, Darkenu and Zimam, which have grown increasingly close throughout the course of this research, as I observed, participated and developed those relationships, might present conflicts of interest for this research. Literature on researcher positionality suggests that researchers, particularly those using qualitative methods, are embedded in their research in ways which impact on the claims that they make (Corbin-Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Berger (2013) questions the effects of researchers’ social positions, experiences and beliefs on their reflexivity and quality control. Brannick and Coghlan (2007) question more specifically the effectiveness of research by members of organisational systems and the drawbacks of being too close to their research. Insider/outsider positioning with the groups that I have researched have therefore had positive and negative impacts on my research. Advantages to being an insider have been in the ways in which I was provided easier access to and been made more familiar with the different groups’ values and norms (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Disadvantages have included the ways in which I sometimes found myself questioning whether aspects of my own identity (female, Jewish, middle class, and including my personal values and convictions about the importance of peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine which no doubt informs my drive and commitment to these organisations) might also potentially blind me to their
failings or inconsistencies. While I was very familiar with the organisations, I was not, however, a staff member or paid consultant, and I worked hard to remain as objective and reflective as possible about my responses to what I saw. I have therefore concluded that since I have remained conscious of my position within these social groupings, there are no serious conflicts of interest or significant problems of impartiality in carrying out the research.

In order to remain as impartial and objective as possible while observing the reflexive capacities and processes of the organisations included in this study, I also developed reflexive processes of my own involving the use of diaries and field reports. During the protracted lockdowns notetaking became more focused on the online interviewing processes.

Throughout this research I gave thought to how interview questions, combined with my own role and agenda (Hanlon, 2007), were perceived in different cultural contexts. For example, might Palestinian and Israeli activists be concerned about the kind of questioning which I did, and how open were they really to sharing information about themselves and their learning in professional, social and personal networks in an environment where their peacebuilding work is often criticised and monitored by both Israelis and Palestinian authorities? Here I relied on Darkenu and Zimam staff in Israel and Palestine to review my lists of questions and to comment on the appropriateness of the questions in their cultural context. I invited informal feedback at an organisational level and from interviewees about how they perceived my line of questioning in interviews and about the potential impact of my research for both individuals and the organisations. I also relied on my Arabic translator...
for advice which ranged from asking about how to address religious leaders to how well received was my line of questioning for interviewees in Palestine.

Establishing trust with all interviewees was a key component of relationship-building and ensuring the validity of data collected (Lyon, 2015). Maintaining that trust over the course of the data collection also remained a priority, as the data which the interviews provided and the access which I was allowed to the organisations forms the crux of this research. Discussions and agreement reached in the early stages of the research process about methods and research protocols, such as data management and ethics (outlined in stage 2 of the HREC application), also helped provide a solid and transparent framework for ongoing collaboration and was an important element of that trust building.

I am confident that Stages 1 (HREC/3085/Teller) and 2 (HREC/3317/Teller) of my Open University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) application approvals, the details of which were developed with the organisations in the case study, combined with the trust built between myself and organisations and individuals, reduced these risks and threats to the research and to my own and participants’ safety and well-being in their involvement with the research.

4.5 Assessment of Research Methodology and Design

I believe that the overall design of the methodology and the changes which circumstances obliged me to make to it, provided the means to answer my research questions. Despite the
major disruption of Covid 19 to my fieldwork and the sometimes-experimental nature of conducting interviews and a focus group online, I also believe that rich data from online research answers my research questions. The research remains valid and opens up new and interesting lines of inquiry, which will I hope open up other areas for further research (see chapter 9).

I need not have focused on all four organisations and could feasibly have concentrated on one, two or three instead, as a way of gaining even deeper insights into their workings and the individuals associated with them. However, by focusing on four organisations, all seeded from OneVoice International, I have been able to track the directions, visions and missions which the organisations have taken in different cultural contexts and settings. I have also been able to observe the shifting relationships between the organisations and people, many of whom remain in the wider network of these organisations, even if they are no longer directly associated with them. This has allowed me insights into the ways in which the context of individual organisations within networks impacts on organisational learning in different ways. In deciding to focus on all four organisations in the exceptional circumstances of Covid 19, I am aware that there are countless activities, transactions, decision-making moments that I have not been present for and which would have also been relevant to my research. I have therefore sacrificed some depth for breadth in trying to understand a complex transnational peacebuilding network operating across different cultural contexts, through organisations with different aims and purposes tailored and appropriate for their own local settings and environments.
Establishing causality through qualitative social scientific research always involves a complex relationship of factors (Morgan, 2013). Where I have seen political change at a local or national level, I have as far as possible established plausible links and connections and analysed the relationships between political change and organisational learning at OV, Darkenu and Zimam. Although SNS works primarily in schools in the UK and does not seek to impact or engage directly with politics, I also track political changes, as the attainment of agency, at the level of the individual. I am therefore able to show how organisational learning drives and results from personal and organisational political engagement, which may not in and of itself be successful in creating peace, but which promotes values and purpose which can be seen to contribute to and help drive individual and collective change.

**Conclusion**

In seeking new ways in which to understand organisational learning in the context of hybrid NGO/social movement organisations in Israel, Palestine, the US and the UK, and its relationship with politics, the research considers the many voices expressed in discussions, meetings, encounters and interviews, and draws on a wide range of printed and online materials that organisations produce as well as on a wide array of academic literature. This methodological approach enables me to answer my research questions by capturing some of the ways in which learning is experienced as well as its outcomes. Balancing the wealth of original data from so many interviews, the focus groups and organisational materials, with a wide range of literature across disciplines, has indeed proved the most challenging task of this research. However, this process was facilitated by the use of conceptual maps.
as a methodological tool. While I used conceptual maps as part of the process of building a conceptual framework (see chapter 2 and Appendix F – Conceptual Map), that process involved many iterations as the volume of ideas applied from existing literature expanded, and new themes emerged from the data. Nonetheless, the challenge of considering so many perspectives that have been informed by different identities and values, in a context defined by an ‘intractable conflict’ but which is inhabited by many passionate people and fascinating cultures, has felt a privilege throughout.

In the following chapters, the data collected and analysed, and the literature reviewed and analysed through the multi-method approach outlined in this chapter, contribute to the new understandings of organisational learning and its relationships with politics, which this thesis proposes.
Chapter 5 – Processes and Mechanisms for Organisational Learning at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS

Introduction

In order to understand the range of different learning experiences which I term broadly as organisational learning, I analyse some of the ways learning occurs through or is supported by learning processes at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. A key element of learning in this context of conflict is learning about the ‘other’ and how meetings, encounters or new knowledge about ‘the other’ changes individuals and their organisations. Where organisational learning is described as the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding (Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Huber, 1991), meeting ‘the other’ is an example of a process for organisations to help improve or determine their actions. Meeting ‘the other’ is operationalised through formal learning mechanisms that aid learning processes such as planning, strategy, communications, formal activities (Lipshitz and Oz, 1996), and in more informal ways as part of action learning. The outcomes of that learning further emphasise the role of meeting, debating with, and understanding ‘the other’ as part of processes aimed at change.

In the first section (5.1) I focus on action learning as critical thinking and problem-solving learning processes (Pedler, 2012) which take place through prioritising and addressing ‘the other’ as well as in ways that learning comes out of a range relationships and experiences. Action learning is also discussed as a form of organisational learning where partnerships are built and collaborations take place beyond single organisations. In the second section of
this chapter (5.2) I examine managed processes which provide a structured environment for
and approaches to learning, where organisational learning is also seen to take place through
relationships within and across the four organisations. Focusing in this chapter on
organisational learning as processes and mechanisms, as well as outcomes of learning (see
chapter 2), helps me to answer my research questions and to begin to analyse how learning
takes place, who participates in that learning and how that learning impacts on the thinking
and activities of internal and external stakeholders (staff, activists, board members, donors
and external partners).

In discussing processes and mechanism for organisational learning, this chapter introduces
some of the individuals and organisations central to this research. It also analyses the
unique context in which they work, some of the ways in which they interact through
learning and how those interactions enable and sometimes disrupt learning. Subsequent
chapters will also focus on sites (chapter 7) and outcomes (chapter 8) of organisational
learning. Ideas discussed in this chapter are grounded in primary data collected through
participant observation, interviews and focus groups. In order to develop ideas in
subsequent chapters which build on conceptualisations of organisational learning to suggest
that organisational learning is political and can feed political change, this chapter focuses on
answering my second research question about how organisational learning takes place at
personal, intra and inter organisational levels, who participates and how.
5.1 Meeting ‘the Other’ and Action Learning as Processes of Organisational Learning

Relationships with, and understandings of the ‘other’ underpin key aspects of how learning takes place within and between the organisations in this study. These relationships extend to partnerships and collaborations where learning is not limited to meeting ‘the other’ but is also about reshaping narratives which include ‘the other’ (see chapter 6). Building these relationships takes place as part of action learning as well as some of the more formal aspects of organisational learning which I go on to address in section 5.2.

5.1.1 Meeting ‘the Other’

Addressing ‘othering’ and ‘the other’ is a key component of organisations’ work which seeks, as part of peacebuilding, to help address inequalities between groups and organisations working in areas of conflict (Lederach, 2001; Gawerc, 2006). As a concept, ‘othering’ applies to any process of alienating and subordinating those who are different, ‘the other’, or not within a particular group (Findlay et al, 1977; Said, 1978; 2018). Encounters and dialogue with ‘the other’ also provide important opportunities for action learning or ‘learning by doing’ (Pedler et al., 2005) which lead to change.

While there is no agreed definition of action learning (see chapter 2), action learning is one way of addressing and analysing organisational problems (Revans, 2016; Pedler, 2012). Though the term was originally coined in a business and management context, it has been expanded to include formal and informal individual and collective learning in other kinds of
organisations and context (Pedler, Bourgoyne and Brook, 2007). As an approach to organisational learning, action learning at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS encompasses different processes which include learning about, meeting, having dialogue and debating with ‘the other’. Such encounters take place face to face, online (social media) and on digital platforms (DemocraTV).

OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS facilitate encounters between Israelis and Palestinians as well as within each of those societies (via Darkenu and Zimam), providing activists and staff the opportunity to meet people outside of their own constrained spheres. Therefore, OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS address ‘in’ and ‘out’ group relationships (Bar-Tal and Halperin, 2011) not only as part of peacebuilding between Israel and Palestine as well as through how they raise awareness about and learn to address how othering takes place between different local groups within their own fractured societies.

The self-reflection that arises from this kind of action learning can result in profound, transformative personal development. Zimam activists ZA3 (2019) and ZS5 (2020) give the example of Palestinian refugees in camps in the West Bank or Palestinians in Gaza and speak about learning that ‘the other’ also resides in their own communities. They also describe how Zimam provides them with opportunities to meet other Palestinians online in, for example, Gaza, and to engage with them virtually. According to activists and staff, these meetings have reshaped activists’ thinking about tolerance, diversity and peacebuilding in ways which have been personally and professionally impactful (ZA3, 2019; ZS5, 2020). Head of Zimam’s Nablus chapter, ZS5 (2020) explains how little he knew about other Palestinians who lived outside of Nablus in the West Bank, including Palestinian refugees in refugee
camps close-by. He is now more focused on engaging a wider range of Palestinians in Zimam activities in Nablus. Activist ZA3 (2020), from Ramallah, acknowledges how little she understood about the lives and the experiences of young people living in Gaza because it is not possible for them to meet. Zimam has therefore opened up opportunities for both in-person and online encounters between Zimam activists in the West Bank and Gaza, allowing activists to think more deeply about the issues related to the conflict - this well before the Covid pandemic in 2020, when more of Zimam’s work went online in order to help build those bridges. These are examples of organisational learning as both processes of encountering ‘the other’ and outcomes of learning, where attitudes are changed and new directions are taken.

Action learning which helps to work with problems where there are no single answers (Pedler, 2012) also enables organisations to find direction and purpose to try to address complex problems related to ‘the other’, including political and religious ones. While a degree of ignorance of the lives of others is common everywhere, within the context of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, assumptions and stereotypes are often made about the cultural and political unity and uniformity of Palestinians within the West Bank and Gaza, and Israelis within Israel, stereotypes which become further entrenched with each round of conflict (Bar-Tal and Labin, 2001). This is evidenced in media reporting about each other in both Israel and Palestine, and referred to by activists in all four organisations as views which they previously held before they gained more nuanced understanding of the ‘other’ through their engagement with organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS (ZA1, 2020; DFG, 2021; EB2, 2020; NB2, 2020). SNS’s 2020 commissioned study in the UK (SNS and Lewis, 2020) also found that the experience of meeting other young people born into prejudice
and conflict produced attitudinal changes in British students, including increased empathy and an ability to embrace complexity, diversity and ‘the other’.

Religion also comes into these processes of ‘othering’ in how religious, ethnic, national and political identities are often conflated. For many inside and outside Israel and Palestine, ‘Palestinian’ is intrinsically linked to Islam and ‘Israeli’ to Judaism which helps harden positions against ‘the other’ outside as well as within Israel and Palestine. Different groups within each religion, such as say, the ‘national religious’ and the ‘ultra-orthodox’ in Israel and the fundamentalist and liberal Muslims and non-Muslim groups in Palestine, are all ‘in-groups’ of people who identify with each other and exclude others (Bar-Tal and Halperin, 2011). Secular Arabs and Israelis who identify with Muslim or Jewish or other religious cultures, but do not fit into any practising religious groups, also experience this process of othering by more observant believers (NS4, 2020).

The conflation of religious with ethnic or national identities (Nye, 2019; Meer; 2013), as part of processes of othering, is complex, particularly as considerable internal diversity exists, for example within Judaism, Islam and Christianity as well as within different secular approaches. Additionally, ethnic or national identities often don’t map onto religious identities as neatly as political discourses suggest when processes of othering are instrumentalised and amplified in order to drive forward political agendas. These political discourses present religious groups and traditions in stereotypical, simplified ways which neglect the internal diversity that exists within and between these groups and do not do justice to the complexity of lived religion in everyday life. This illustrates Nye’s (2019) point that the power of racialisation lies in ‘the power to represent and ignore the racialised
objects’ own self identities’ (Nye, 2019; 214), including the complexity of their religious or secular identities.

However, research of 15–21-year-old Israelis and Palestinians conducted by the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP, 2021) concludes that hardened attitudes about ‘the other’ are often not based on perceptions of different religious identities or reflected in the lived experiences of communities. In fact, a majority of those interviewed in both Israel and Palestine as part of this 2021 study claimed that they respected different religious beliefs. The research participants felt that conflict was driven by political leaders rather than the general population (ALLMEP, 2021). My own observations support these findings, through focus groups conducted at Darkenu and Zimam of activists’ respect for a wide range of religious beliefs in both societies (FGD, 2020; FGZ, 2020).

These are the kinds of complexities which I argue are accommodated and made sense of by organisations through narrative formation (chapter 6) in what I later describe as safe and accommodating political spaces (chapter 7). According to staff at Darkenu and Zimam (DS3, ZS1), learning processes such as narrative-making produce outcomes which then inform organisations’ work, not only in order to reach wider more diverse audiences (DS3, 2019), but also in a way which acknowledges differences more knowledgeably and respectfully (ZS1, 2020) within Palestine and Israel as well as between those two places.

Former Director of Darkenu, DS1 (2020), underlines that since its inception in 2016, Darkenu’s goal has been to acknowledge and deconstruct ‘the other’ within Israel by bringing together the more moderate factions of all its communities to create a new and
tolerant moderate majority ‘in group’. Learning about ‘the other’ has involved processes of organisational learning such as encounters, discussion and debate which inform programming and strategy on an ongoing basis, including the creation and ongoing development of DemocraTV in 2020.

In 2015, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin gave a speech where he referred to the ‘four tribes’ of modern Israel – secular, national-religious, ultra-orthodox and Arab (whether religious, Muslim, Christian or other) (Rivlin, 2015). Lamenting the tensions and divisions between these tribes (although failing to acknowledge Arab ‘tribes’), Rivlin was calling to the people of Israel to heal these rifts and to learn to live together in mutual respect. Since that speech those divisions have not only become more marked, but in 2022 include even more subdivisions of once coherent groups. The ‘national religious’ now have a whole range of centre and right political allegiances which conflate religious, ethnic and political identities in various ways. There are, for example, different groups of orthodox religious Haredi Jews who are non and even anti-Zionist and who do not believe that the state of Israel has any religious significance (Finkelman, 2014). For Darkenu, this means acknowledging and trying to appeal to moderate secular as well as religious Palestinians and Jews in each of these groups (DS1, 2020).

In general, research-based decisions are strategic aspects of organisational learning which both impact on and result from engagement with ‘the other’. Former Director of Strategy and Campaigns (DS4, 2020) said that, as a small organisation with limited resources, Darkenu chooses which voters and which demographics they will target with Get Out to Vote (GOTV) campaigns (Darkenu, 2022). Darkenu therefore makes decisions based on the
outcomes of this research about which communities to engage with and where their campaigns are likely to have the most impact (Darkenu, 2018/2019). In previous campaigns this has meant moving away from traditional left wing and Palestinian voter areas to try to appeal to moderate right wing voters in their neighbourhoods in and around for example Tel Aviv and Haifa. Although Darkenu volunteers enjoy the relationship-building that comes with reaching out and recruiting other volunteers and supporters, in a 2020 Darkenu focus group they voiced that they faced criticism about this strategy, which they felt left out Palestinian Israelis (DFG, 2020). Within the organisation there was a perceived lack of diversity in employees and recruits when no Arabic speakers were employed during the 2019 GOTV campaigns. Campaign activists recruited to work on the 2019/2020 campaigns, wanted to see more of ‘the other’ and diversity within their own ranks (DFG, 2020). Through self-reflection and critique, raised in a research focus group (DFG, 2020) and voiced in other Darkenu meetings, activists and colleagues challenge each other in the form of dialogue and debate to tackle these issues.

The outcomes of this learning were subsequently addressed by Darkenu through the launch of DemocraTV in 2020. Hosted by the Israeli Arab journalist, Lucy Marwesh, the crowd-funded online news station aims to address issues of diversity in terms of staff and journalists as well as in its content (DS2, 2020). By throwing the net wider to audiences via DemocraTV’s online television broadcasts (DS4, 2020), Darkenu broadened its exposure and influence as an advocacy organisation. This is evidenced in Darkenu’s reporting both in terms of the broader diversity of the audiences which the organisation now reaches through DemocraTV, and in terms of strengthening support for new legislation promoting coexistence between Israeli Palestinians and Jews in Israel which it lobbies for (DS2, 2020;
Darkenu, 2022). With the launch of DemocraTV, Darkenu has also helped to broaden the organisation’s exposure to and engagement with ‘the other’ in terms of reaching a larger group of audiences with a wider range of different religious and political affiliations. For example, DemocraTV presents programmes in Arabic as well as Hebrew, and promotes values and discourse around the importance of anchoring the value of equality in basic laws (Darkenu, 2022). With DemocraTV, Darkenu has also expanded its influence as an advocacy organisation which interacts and contributes regularly to discussions with the coalition government elected in March 2021 (DS2, 2021). According to Darkenu staff, all these achievements result from learning-based decisions which included prioritising meeting ‘the other’ through ensuring diversity and equality which has resulted in strategic decision-making (DS2, 2021; Darkenu, 2022b). This kind of action learning, evidenced here through self-criticism and complemented by in-depth research and data collection, has helped Darkenu ensure that they enact their values as a way to strengthen their organisation (DS4, 2020).

Learning about the ‘other’ also takes place through the sharing of information and cultural experiences within organisations between staff. These activities lead to organisational learning by informing and shaping views which affect decision-making. OV CEO, OS1 (2020) said that Jewish, Arab and other staff already come to the organisations with a certain level of understanding and interest in the conflict and often with a range of language skills as well. They also tend to come with an interest in the culture of Israel and Palestine and often attend cultural events together. The mixed staff at OV, where there are Jews, Palestinians and non-Jews and non-Arabs, take an interest in each other’s cultures, share reading materials, visit exhibitions and events and seminars together and in the course of their work...
are exposed to people from different family backgrounds, ideas, values and with different narratives (OS1, 2019). The close relationships that are formed sometimes over long periods of time, embed and highlight shared attitudes which inform their work on an ongoing basis and ensure that ‘the other’s’ perspective is taken into account as part of decision-making. As observed at an OneVoice staff retreat in the US (9-12 June 2019), staff may not, for example, agree on what equality might look like for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza (one or two state-solution) but all agree on the values and guiding principles (non-violence, respect, tolerance for ‘the other’) which are necessary as part of learning to reach those solutions.

5.1.2 Individual Experiences of Action Learning as part of Organisational Learning

Individual and collective learning is impactful at the level of the individual and my data has shown that action learning (Pedler, 2012) is the most powerful learning experienced by individual staff and activists associated with all four organisations. Individual experiences of action learning are a fundamental aspect of organisational learning and although the differences and relationships between individual and organisational learning are not always clear or delineated, learning at the level of the individual helps drive organisational and, I will later argue in chapters 6, 7 and 8, wider change.

In the previous section, I evidenced how the self-reflection that arises from action learning which centres on encounters with ‘the other’ can result in profound personal development experienced as transformation. Action learning also, however, takes place as part of day-to-
day and iterative collective learning. While, for example, Darkenu provided former Director of Research, DS3 (2020), with many opportunities to invest in and initiate formal research projects, she acknowledges how learning at Darkenu and in a wider network impacted on her most forcefully through having access to key actors in the sector, through field work for her research, and through the daily exchange of ideas with her colleagues and volunteers. She believes that she gained more out of these collective learning experiences than through, for example, professional development training or the reports which she commissioned and wrote (DS3, 2020; Darkenu, 2018/19; Darkenu Sept. 2018). Former CEO of Darkenu, DS1 (2020) describes how in the first years of building Darkenu, although moments of reflexivity and strategy-making were built into extremely busy and varied activity, her most important learning came out of shared incremental processes of action learning and reflection which happened ‘naturally’ as a result of so much quick-paced activity within Darkenu and its community.

For OV activists in the US, OA1 (2020), there are some things which can only be learned through experience within a community. She describes how young activists get to know the students on their campuses and how to best engage with them by picking up information particular to the context of each campus. Some activists who are students also acknowledge the importance of action and collective learning alongside their formal studies as a way to complement their formal education, gain confidence and help achieve their political goals (OA2, 2020). For ES2, Deputy Director at SNS and previously at OneVoice, these organisations have been a supportive community. Through delivering training she feels she has been through her own voyage of self-discovery, gained confidence, learnt skills from her colleagues and has also been able to meet and learn from a wide range of
international contacts. Self-knowledge is nurtured through collective action learning and staff engage regularly with formal and informal collective practices as a way of reflecting on their work and activities and the wider political issues of the day. I observed weekly staff meetings at all of the organisations which provide opportunities to discuss and reflect on their learning more formally. More informal interactions within and between the organisations where staff and activists socialise also provide opportunities for sharing knowledge. In Palestine, Zimam convenes ‘politics cafes’ where staff and activists meet in local cafes to discuss issues of the day. At Darkenu, open and unstructured but explicit processes for reflection in the form of weekly meetings also take place and are an opportunity for staff to reflect on their work (DS5, 2020). At SNS, that reflection takes place primarily during daily online conversations with colleagues (NS2, 2020). None of these examples are formal meetings with agendas beyond exchanging thinking and ideas fundamental to action learning but staff underline how the impact of that kind of learning is no less important for professional development and growth (NS2, 2020).

Questions nonetheless remain about what the impact of transformative as well as more mundane individual experiences of learning are on organisations, and potentially more widely. In subsequent chapters, I address this question by arguing that a political dimension exists in the personal change and transformation which results from these learning experiences and directly links individuals to the organisations that facilitate this learning.

In the following section, action learning is also seen to take place in the sharing of information and research between OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, as well as through
external partnerships and collaboration. Through these processes, trust is built which further facilitates organisational learning.

5.1.3 Organisational Partnerships and Collaborations

Collaborations and partnerships between OV, Darkenu, Zimam, SNS and a range of other organisations in the peacebuilding sector or with similar goals, also help illustrate how learning takes place. These organisations range from civil society to government, academic and business organisations. Sharing knowledge and expertise between organisations through partnerships and collaborations characteristic of communities and networks of practice (see chapter 2) includes some of the ways in which skills are shared, as well as how ideas and key driving themes are borrowed to build strategy and define purpose. Partnerships are understood as more formalised relationships which ‘pursue a common activity or interest where risks and benefits are shared’ (Bendell, 2017), and collaborations as more open and inclusive relationships which bring together diverse entities to leverage resources, increase impact and visibility (Backer, 2003). However, both partnerships and collaborations have the same goals and in the context of OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, organisations come together as a way of finding solutions to issues and problems and to question the status quo in Israel and Palestine.

For OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, partnerships and collaborations take many forms. Different collaborations exist beyond OV and its network, mirroring the kinds of collaborations which also take place between OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. These include joint research, PR and marketing and promotion of activities, skills sharing, joint production
of events, programmatic cooperation, borrowing speakers for events, access to and
meetings with contacts, mentorship and advice and joint political organising. Ongoing
contact between former employees, who are now in other organisations in the same sector,
mean that overlap in professional networks, membership and board members is also
common (Lyndon, 2020). While shared PR activities, research and programmatic
cooperation may not seem to be learning activities, participation in them feeds into
organisational learning. At OV’s April 2019 New York board meeting, OV, Darkenu and
Zimam Directors and team members attended sessions, shared reports and updates and
socialised with colleagues. Informal chats, walks and meals also allowed participants to
share information which was not included on formal agendas.

In the UK, SNS has been able to build strong communities and networks of practice in cities
such as Bradford. There, SNS board members and local government officials have provided
introductions which have resulted in different kinds of collaborations either with city
councils, charities or schools (NS1, 2019; NE2, 2020). A staff member of Bradford’s local
council, for example, introduced the Executive Director of SNS to the local NGO, The Linking
Network, which in turn introduced SNS directly to teachers and schools within their own
networks who were also interested in developing anti-racism programming in schools.
According to NS1 (2020), those introductions engendered new partnerships and
collaborations which subsequently provided access to and strengthened SNS’ relationships
with the schools in which they already work and allowed those schools to then share
teaching practices (NS1, 2019).
Partnerships and collaborations are vital to the establishment of Zimam in Gaza. Building a strong community and network of practice through community-based partnerships and collaborations are what have, according to activist ZS5, allowed Zimam to establish itself in Gaza and to build a strong constituency of young people and volunteers (ZS5, 2020).

Zimam helps bring targeted informal activities and formal programmes of skills training and content to partner programmes. It is in this way that Zimam has been able to grow its volunteer base and activities, and to gain legitimacy in Gaza where it is difficult for non-political and non-party-affiliated civil-society organisations to gain traction. As one of my interviewees stated:

In terms of the partnerships in Gaza, most of the civil society organisations are community-based organisations. They have their own constituency of young people and volunteers. But what they lack most of [the] time are programmes to provide these young people with training or activities, and in many of the cases of course, they are lacking funding. So, for example with the farmers, sometimes in order to support them and to show support, Zimam would organise one or two days of volunteering where the young people for example go to a certain farm and they help the people cultivate the land or they support them with the work first (OS5, 2020).

For Zimam Director, ZS2, he describes how: ‘we took this opportunity to partner with new communities to make new friends’ (ZS2, 2021).

Although this example illustrates how Zimam’s work is sometimes less focused on formal training, using alternative approaches to building networks and developing shared practices
helps Zimam build a support base and influence wider communities. Through collaborations and partnerships, Zimam and Darkenu are both learning about their different constituents and their needs and about how to adapt to often quickly changing circumstances and political landscapes. They are also learning how best to formulate strategy and planning, implement programming that addresses those needs and to evaluate their success (ZS2, 2020).

Darkenu also works with other civil society organisations to share expertise and knowledge (DS3, 2020). Darkenu probably has the largest reach of any civil society organisation in Israel (Darkenu, 2019). Working in partnership with organisations such as the Combatants for Peace or the Institute for Democracy testifies to that reach and to being part of a busy community and networks of practice where organisations and the individuals within them are part of ongoing processes of enhancing learning capability beyond a single community by exchanging information and expertise. During Darkenu’s anti-corruption, Charter for Discourse Campaign (Darkenu, 2018; Wootliff, 2018), Darkenu was, for example, able to distil messages from the Institute for Democracy’s long policy documents and distribute key messages more widely as part of their own campaigns, and in a way which strengthened their own messaging. In addition to working on their own GOTV campaigns, advocacy and media projects, and as a way of promoting their ideas and activities, Darkenu also shares their organisational learning tools and techniques. Darkenu’s campaign with community-based organisations in March 2020, for example, involved sharing materials and providing training on how to encourage participation in elections through Get Out to Vote campaigns, including in the Israeli Arab population (Muslim, Christian and Druze). Former Director of Research, DS3 (2020) emphasised how this was an effort to help embolden other civil
society organisations at a time when many felt powerless and under-resourced in their attempts to counter legal rulings which attempted to limit civil society organisations’ activities. In 2022, Darkenu and DemocraTV again worked on a media campaign which focused on encouraging Israeli-Arab citizens to be changemakers by voting in the November 2022 elections.

There are also unintended consequences to decisions and directions taken by organisations, which learning through experience and collaborations brings to light. For example, by attempting to shake off delegitimisation by the right wing in Israel and not wanting to be exclusively affiliated with left wing politics, Darkenu somewhat alienated itself from left wing organisations (DE1, 2020). Additionally, like SNS’s relationship with OV in the UK, some potential civil society partners in Israel did not want to collaborate with Darkenu because Darkenu is perceived as being too tainted by politics. As a former CEO of Darkenu explained in her interview with me:

Women Wage Peace is a frustrating example because when they had their big march, we shared it on Facebook and wanted our supporters to go to their march and we saw it is an obvious cooperation- we want to do things together but they will not do things with us. They are very determined not to have any partners in their work who are tainted by politics because they want to stay clean- once they bring in another organisation maybe they will say no, this is too militaristic or this is too right or left wing (DS1, 2019).
A board member at Darkenu, (DB2, 2020) believes that collaborations and partnerships between Darkenu and other organisations and innovative and contemporary thinkers must also not be underestimated. Many of Darkenu’s key driving themes, approaches and concepts are borrowed from think tanks (Institute for Democracy), academics, philosophers and writers such as social psychologist academic, Eran Halperin (Director of aChord, a non-profit organisation based at the Hebrew Jerusalem University that specialises in the social psychology of inter-group relations) or writers such as, reporter and writer Ari Shavit (2014). Darkenu board member, DB2 argues that:

These are the fountains of knowledge and Darkenu is good at disseminating and using that knowledge and turning it into campaigns (DB2, 2020).

However, at OV, Board Co-Chair OB2 (2020), believes that while at a senior executive level there has been good collaboration between organisations in the OV community and wider network, these collaborations have not been sufficiently cemented or operationalised and that there remain many more opportunities for collaboration to explore.

Collaborations between organisations vary and take place for different reasons. Some collaborations and partnerships are also stronger than others. Former OV Director of Communications, DS6 (2020), believes that information flows more easily within communities and networks, and that partnerships and collaborations are stronger when the values and the goals of organisations and individuals are already shared (DS6, 2020). This applies equally to organisations which are not part of the original OneVoice family but who work within the same sector and network for peacebuilding. Darkenu and Peace Now,
Israel’s oldest peacebuilding organisation, have, for example, had their disagreements but still share mutually useful information and research (DE1, 2020). OV staff in the US regularly meet and share information and research with other organisations such as Seeds of Peace or the Fund for Israel (OV1, 2020). At Zimam, consultations take place between Zimam and local and national politicians and foreign embassies (ZS2, 2020; ZS3, 2020). SNS also works closely with and regularly shares information about the conflict within their UK network of local organisations, schools and students (NS1, 2020). Although not necessarily focused on the Israeli Palestinian conflict, these organisations and schools share an interest in and the values that come with working with SNS to reduce anti-Islamic hate and anti-Semitism in their schools in the UK. The regular sharing of information between OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, and sometimes adapting it for different audiences within their own communities, also becomes a way of forming stronger partnerships and trust around some, if not all, shared values between Israelis and Palestinians associated with those organisations.

ALLMEP Director, John Lyndon (2020) observes first-hand how ‘collaborative, action learning certainly builds trust and cross pollination between Israeli and Palestinian organisations on a daily basis’.

However, the nature of collaborations within close networks can also change and, for example, OV moved away from funding Darkenu and Zimam, and OV asked itself what OV was to that new relationship (OS1, 2020). One board member suggested that there should be a continued commitment from OV to build capacity within those organisations, while others offered different approaches. However, funding organisations can also be collaborators and partners, and some funders seek closer relationships than others. For example, SNS’s main funder, the Pears Foundation, encourages all of their grantees to learn
from each other, as well as for there to be a strong relationship and exchange of ideas
between Pears and SNS (NE1, 2020). Despite the challenges of moving from being a unified
single organisation to one based on more funder/grantee relationships, OV’s ongoing
relationship with Darkenu and Zimam nonetheless aims to do the same (OS1, 2020).

US management consultant, OE1 (2020), believes that managing these kinds of changing
partnerships and collaborations requires strong and trusting relationships in order to be
able to navigate different styles of leadership and management in each organisation. This
places personal relationship-building at the heart of collaborations and as a form of
organisational learning which relies on information gathering, an up-to-date awareness and
understanding of what is going on in the sector and other organisations and the ability to
act on initiating, maintaining and repairing relationships (OE1, 2020).

In the first part of this chapter, addressing ‘the other’, examples of individuals’ experiences
of action learning, and relationship-building through partnerships and collaborations, are
described as processes and outcomes of organisational learning. In the following section of
this chapter, in order to understand both the informal and formal aspects of organisational
learning, I analyse some of the more closely managed mechanisms for organisational
learning at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS.

5.2 Mechanisms for Organisational Learning

Consciously applied constructivist approaches underpin all the organisations in this study
and their managed approaches to learning and to their work (Peleg, 2020). In believing that
their realities can be reframed and remade, the organisations use different management tools and pedagogies to try and achieve that change alongside improvising, adapting and incremental and informal learning. Iterative learning is, for example, pronounced in the ways in which Darkenu built on knowledge acquired through campaigning in five elections in the space of three years, to gradually expand its data base, influence and support. In this section I focus on formal mechanisms, including strategy, planning and evaluation, through which learning can also, but does not necessarily, occur within organisations as part of their structured day-to-day business. These mechanisms differ and are prioritised in different ways within different organisations and contexts. In this formal, managed context, organisational learning, as characterised in chapter 2, is understood as consultation, reflection, evaluation, the production, sharing, critiquing and exchange of knowledge (Healy, 2019).

**5.2.1 Strategy and Planning as Mechanisms for Organisational Learning**

Within an environment of changing circumstances, priorities and relationships, US academic, Ned Lazarus (2020) underlines that ‘for the long-term survival of peacebuilding organisations, they require organisational learning strategies which can be adapted, or parts of which may stay the same, for ongoing strategy adaptations’. Strategy, planning and implementation are mechanisms for organisational learning which are regularly adapted and reformulated in response to external and internal circumstances at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. In the context of Israel and Palestine, many of these adaptations and changes result from outbreaks of violent conflict or directives at the level of local or national politics, which can be dramatic and sudden and require quick responses, and decision making about
strategy reformulation is therefore more challenging at an organisational level. Elections in Israel and Palestine (at the time of writing there have been five legislative elections in Israel in the space of three years and in Palestine, there have been no Presidential elections since 2005, although local elections have taken place) also provide important markers, particularly for funders eager to see government rather than incremental change. The results of those elections also impact on strategy and planning. Each phase of strategy, planning and implementation is reliant on more or less sophisticated management tools, such as log frames and theories of change, as well as more informal and creative decision making. This section outlines some of the challenges associated with strategy and planning and the selection of evaluation tools, and argues that organisational learning might also involve organisations taking a critical approach to both.

Organisations founded and led by social entrepreneurs are often characterised by strong direction and purpose, the pursuit of new opportunities, and the use of innovation and bold action to overcome resource limitations (Dees, 1998; Peredo and McLean, 2006), but like any organisation, they also need to adapt when their purpose is no longer clear. What started out at OV as a clear strategy to bring together Israelis and Palestinians to work together for peace has, since the organisation’s foundation and then eventual separation into independent organisations more focused on their own particular contexts, meant that each organisation’s strategy has changed in line with its own goals and needs. As peacebuilding has become increasingly delegitimised in Israel and Palestine, solutions for peace are also increasingly thin on the ground. Political opposition and the introduction of legislation such as the V15 Law in March 2017, a law targeted specifically at Darkenu which caps donations to NGOs advancing political initiatives during elections (Staff, 2016), limits
and monitors all civil society organisations’ activities. But while Lubetzky (2020) openly admits ‘I don’t even know what the solution [to the Israeli Palestinian conflict] is anymore frankly’, he continues to support innovative organisational strategies which attempt to influence social and political arenas in ways which might help bring about change and peace.

OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS all have different strategic approaches and formulate those strategies in different ways. When strategies fail or do not prove to be effective in terms of helping sway elections, this not only means challenges and adaptation in approach but also impacts on staff and activist morale. In 2021, Darkenu activists, for example, expressed strongly their disappointment and demotivation after campaigning in four national legislative elections in less than two years (9 April, 2019; 18 September, 2019; 2 March 2020, 23 March 2021), something which they had hoped would dramatically change the political status quo (DFG, 2020) and which didn’t happen.

Deciding on direction, purpose and strategies to meet goals can also create tensions and conflicts. This was illustrated in 2016 in the ongoing tensions between OV Israel, OV Palestine and OV US/UK, about the directions which OV needed to take. These tensions were resolved through many hours of formal and informal debate and discussion which eventually led to the separation of OV into independent organisations keen to focus on their domestic audiences rather than problem-solve via a joint peacebuilding process which no longer served their different constituencies (ES1, 2020). Once the organisations had separated, OV, as a funder of each of those organisations, continued to work to help coordinate those different approaches. More recently though, shifts have seen OV distance
itself from each organisation not only in order to continue to provide support in a less
directive way, but also in order to develop its own strategy and theory of change for activity
in the US. This has resulted in the development of an OV online platform which has moved
much of its activity off US campuses to an online platform where podcasts, seminars and
other educational materials are disseminated (OS1, 2020). At the time of writing OV is also
set to launch a new cross-border training initiative with Darkenu and Zimam and other
partners.

For Darkenu, Darkenu board member, DB3 (2020), strategy-making, together with the
learning for and from it, never happens in a quiet space because ‘the noise surrounding
politics in Israel is deafening’. A determined strategic focus on branding campaigns has
nonetheless helped Darkenu create a public profile and impact on the political landscape in
Israel (DS3, 2020). That strategy was not popular amongst the electorate on the Israeli left
or right. However, it was according to former Darkenu Director of Strategy and Campaigns,
effective in influencing the moderate Blue and White party in the March 2020 campaign and
the coalition which won the March 2021 election- this in terms of some of Darkenu’s values
which the parties within the coalition promoted, and the language that they used to
promote them (DS4, 2020).

Through its strategic campaigns and communications, DS4, believes Darkenu has been
effective in providing language and new ideas to new centre left parties and coalitions.
Words such as ‘moderate’ and ‘separation’ instead of ‘two-state solution’ (the term
traditionally used in Israel to suggest independence for Palestine) or ‘occupation’ (a term
which Israelis resist using to describe the current situation in the Palestinian territories)
were introduced by Darkenu into the political language and have since been used extensively by centrist parties. When I interviewed him, DS4 argued that:

The change is beginning, you can see it with Kachol Lavan or Blue and White Party. You can see it with all those forces. We see the language. The language they are using is Darkenu’s language (DS4, 2020).

That strategy continues to be adapted in order for Darkenu to continue challenging the status quo by trying to position itself in the Israel political landscape, not as a political party but as an influential voice helping to shape the national political agenda and political change (DS4, 2020). During the March 2021 elections, Darkenu created DemocraTV in order to focus on issues rather than on electioneering (DS4, 2020) and for the first time did not do a Get Out to Vote (GOTV) campaign. In the November 2022 elections, Darkenu resumed GOTV campaigning. In its latest iteration Darkenu is positioning itself as a campaigning organisation as well as having a policy and research department, a strategy and innovation department, and a digital arm which, amid growing support in 2022, is seeing DemocraTV move from being a crowd-funded social media project to a mainstream television company (Darkenu, 2022). Darkenu hopes that all these strategic approaches, supported by a majority of Israeli funding (Darkenu, 2022), will influence more long-term thinking, debates and new Israeli legislation more in line with Darkenu’s values (Darkenu, 2022).

Since Darkenu’s incarnation as OneVoice Israel and its partnership with V15 (the campaigning organisations focused on the 2015 election campaign) there have followed five elections where Darkenu has not only changed its name from OneVoice Israel to Darkenu (in
2016) but also struggled to accommodate its central strategic tension between being an election campaigning organisation and being non-partisan, and having a moderate agenda in Israel. Although it has prioritised these two distinct goals in its long-term strategy, it is still to some extent caught between the two different aims of being a campaigning and a lobbying organisation. Former CEO of Darkenu, DS1, describes how finding a single focused strategic direction has always been a challenge for Darkenu (DS1, 2019) and former CEO of OV Israel, DE4, points out that this tension has existed since the creation of OV in Israel. In part, he believes it is:

because of Daniel’s (Lubetzky’s) desire to embrace the right and the left, which was part of his early theories of peace. You can transcend these differences in economic terms, but is more difficult to do politically (DE4, 2020).

In 2020, 2021 and again in 2022, this duality was accommodated in the way that the internal structure of Darkenu was made up of distinct campaigning, lobbying and influencing, and research and innovation silos (DS2, 2020).

In this way Darkenu’s strategies and duality of purpose has been and continues to be understood and shaped by different forms of organisational learning. This includes understanding the political context of its work in Israel, as well as its organisational history, where Darkenu has not been fully able to shake off what it represented historically (as OV15 and OV Israel before it), before its relatively new found independence as Darkenu and as a representative of moderate values for all Israelis. This learning has also been shaped by the individual values and approaches of its different leaders. This has been seen in the way
former CEO, DS1, focused on targeting right as well as left wing moderates. More recently, it can be seen in how CEO, DS2, prioritised introducing technical innovation in the form of DemocraTV, promoted his identity as a religious Jew and Darkenu as an organisation which respects religious Jews. The focus of former Director of Strategy and Campaigns, DS4’s, focus on disrupting the status quo in Israeli politics, and the ways in which he incorporated learning into formal and informal learning mechanisms, also left their mark on Darkenu.

At Zimam where there is, according to staff, a less proactive board (ZS2, 2020) than OneVoice, there is a more bottom-up approach which sees youth leaders feed into and inform strategy by reporting regularly on their activities to staff (ZA1, 2020). But as Zimam seeks to further support youth leadership in political engagement, they are facing similar dilemmas as Darkenu. As Zimam’s profile rises in Palestine, tensions are appearing as the organisation continues to straddle being an SMO and an NGO type organisation with a long-term strategy to create non-partisan infrastructures for political change, where they do not want to be seen as ‘being political’, while also campaigning on political issues and supporting independent, but no less political, candidates. Leadership styles have also impacted on these developments in the ways in which, for example, current CEO, ZS1, has a history of grassroots organising at Zimam and OneVoice Palestine. Here there are similarities between Darkenu and Zimam in that they both experience this duality which is in part temporal and caused by a clash between the short-termism of the electoral cycle in Israel, or at least the promise of elections in the case of the West Bank and Gaza, and their long-term political visions. This is a dilemma which Darkenu and Zimam have not yet been able to resolve.
Managing change and adapting strategy implementation is a complex process of operationalisation. As Darkenu and Zimam have adapted their strategies, OV continues to support both organisations financially and organisationally. However, OV has also had to adapt and update its strategy to fit an overall narrative and change of strategic direction which no longer necessarily prioritises Darkenu and Zimam over its own goals. After a formal period of consultation and reflection between April and November 2020, which included commissioned research by management consultant, OE1, and staff and board retreats, OV CEO, OV1, and the OV team implemented a new OV strategy. For OV1 (2020) ‘it was like, ok we have this new strategy, now and we need to go back and redo everything’. The OV strategy was operationalised through planning, budgeting and implementation, including work flows, funding applications, project development, staff recruitment, producing annual reports, communicating with funders and stakeholders, ongoing strategy calls with Darkenu and Zimam, producing communication content and updating language.

‘Redoing everything’, was an incremental process, where decisions needed to be made which allowed for further adaptation:

You might not have the answers to big questions but in the meantime operational questions need to be answered and you need to ask yourself, how do we try to set ourselves up for the next few years (OS1, 2020).
5.2.2 Evaluation and Monitoring as Mechanisms for Organisational Learning

Evaluation, through formal processes, complemented by less formal approaches to ongoing reflection, is understood in management literature as a key aspect of organisational learning which allows for and enriches the kind of strategy adaptation discussed above (Russ-Eft and Preskill, 2009). However, critics argue that evaluation as part of advocacy work is too limited in its focus on policy change and has ‘coalesced around frameworks and approaches that largely define the efficacy of advocacy work as professionalised advocates and organisations abilities to achieve specific policy wins’, and that evaluation is ‘too narrow and limited to understand the transformative potential of power building’ (Fox and Post 2021: 68). Fox and Post (2021) argue for different conceptualisations of evaluation which would allow for advocacy organisations to develop their own frameworks for measuring multiple levels of success. An analysis of the data collected for this research also points to a reliance on processes and frameworks of evaluation which do not reflect the multiple levels of success that are specific to each local context, nor do they provide an understanding of the range of a transnational social movement’s work.

Despite the variety of processes and mechanisms for learning which I have already covered, all of which I understand to be part of organisational learning, in organisational and management literature, the ‘learning’ in ‘organisational learning’ is still generally understood to be based on reflexive processes for evaluation first developed by Argyris and Schön (Argyris and Schön, 1978). While evaluation processes used by organisations have developed to become more sophisticated (both qualitatively and quantitatively) to include participative evaluation approaches (Torres and Preskill, 2001), these processes of
evaluation are in practice often ill-defined. Formal evaluation processes nonetheless differ from some of the more informal reflective practices which I have described earlier. In this section, I define evaluation as the formal managed processes which organisations use to measure processes and outcomes.

At Darkenu in-depth and professional research is, staff say, used as an evaluation tool to help identify and to target electorates and to measure exposure to Darkenu campaigns (DS1, 2020; Darkenu, 2022), attitudinal changes and recognition levels of Darkenu as an influencer in Israeli society. However, Darkenu researchers acknowledged that in-depth analysis and research about what voters are doing is not the same as an analysis and evaluation of how Darkenu is or is not achieving its goals:

We’ve done big evaluations after every campaign so we have in-depth studies after the last elections in April and most of them have base lines as well so each campaign had started with base line research and ended with base line research comparisons and specific reporting in every campaign. I have to admit in terms of more general reporting on progress in terms of overall goals of Darkenu it has been quite a while since the last one has been issued (DS3, 2019).

To date, the usefulness of these evaluations and research for learning has therefore been limited to Darkenu’s short and medium-term goals. Unlike Zimam in Palestine, Darkenu has access to electoral rolls and some of the information contained within them, but is also legally limited by the kinds of political questions which it can ask interviewees in its surveys. As noted by former Director of Research DS3:
We are quite limited in evaluating impact on our data base mainly because we want to ask political questions. Our targets are often electoral although we are not allowed to do direct electoral activities. And so, our ability to monitor political impact is very limited legally about what we can ask our data base about, which questions we can present and our ability to do longitudinal research with our data base (DS3, 2020).

Having to work quickly to adapt to changing environments also impacts on the scope and quality of the research which feeds evaluation:

Another thing that is very characteristic of our work is that it is often very responsive to the developments in the environment - of its political developments, news cycle, legal changes, which means that we often have to work very quickly to start a campaign from today to tomorrow which is also quite limiting when you want to add research as a meaningful, impactful component in the work (DS3, 2019).

Nonetheless, in October 2022, analysis and evaluation of its ‘deep canvassing’ campaign for the November 2022 elections, involved in depth conversations about attitudes, values and behaviours with large numbers of targeted voters, which Darkenu hopes, will provide them with more long-term data on its success in building a moderate voting majority in Israel (Darkenu, 2022).
For Zimam, evaluating focuses on recording qualitative and quantitative data including dates and numbers of attendees at events as well as trying to track how the levels of social and political engagement of the people who have trained in the leadership programme, may change over time. These statistics, which I have drawn on to understand the ways in which evaluation is used for organisational learning purposes, are presented in annual and evaluation reports which are circulated to donors and funders (Zimam 2020, 2021b).

According to staff (OS1, 2020) that data has never been interpreted or used in studies or research beyond internal reporting. However, from a Zimam management perspective (ZS1, ZS2, ZS3), there is an interest in how individual activists’ lives have changed in terms of the new options and possibilities available to them through their work with Zimam. While it is difficult to establish causality between individual action and broader social change management, consultant, OE1 (2020), who has worked with Zimam, also believes that it is important to try to articulate through formal evaluation processes how an individual or an organisation impacts on society. In 2022, Zimam Director of Advancement, DS3, discussed with me the commissioning of work from a Palestinian social impact research firm, to help Zimam measure attitudinal changes and a deeper understanding of how psychology influences political behaviour in Palestine. This research (Zimam, 2022) will, it is hoped, help Zimam better understand the messages it needs to deliver to strengthen their work.

At SNS an evaluation framework exists which records events and attendees as well as feedback received from students and teachers in UK schools. Detailed reports for the SNS board and funders are prepared by SNS’s Executive and Managing Directors, NS1 and NS2, and staff who present and analyse figures and the feedback which SNS has received. At SNS, possibly because it relies on a small number of funders and has closer relationships
with them (NE1, 2020), this feedback is generally taken extremely seriously. More long-term research focused on attitudinal changes is also conducted by SNS board member and academic, NB2 (2020), whose work is based on in-depth interviews with secondary students who have participated in SNS work (SNS and Lewis, 2020).

At OV, evaluation has to date has consisted primarily of collating data provided by Darkenu, Zimam and the OV programme in the US, to try and measure its effectiveness:

A lot of the conversations used to be about reporting back and was about what Zimam and Darkenu had done, or what they were planning to do and the bulk of the conversation was based around programming in the Middle East. Those conversations have very much changed to conversations around governance, our role and how we can be helpful, how we as a team are better organised to play roles as regards fundraising, planning and brainstorming (OS1, 2020).

OS1 feels that OV reporting and evaluation has since improved and better reflects OV’s role and activities and better engages donors. For example, in 2019, OV conducted an in-depth survey of staff and stakeholders which informed its strategic review. This information was collated into the OV 2019 annual report and distributed to funders and stakeholders.

Measuring what takes place as part of grassroots activism can also be difficult to capture and reflect in reporting. For example, one Darkenu focus group participant and activist underlines how she sees shifts in attitudes every day in her work:
I would be more optimistic and I would say that I see the change that we do in Darkenu every single day when we talk to people on the streets (DFG1, 2020).

Activists also feel the impact of their work on attitudes and actions of family and friends, something which is also not measured:

I feel that I have impact on my immediate surroundings but also in general. I come from a right-wing family and think that I have helped change not only their mindset and discourse but their practice [behaviour] itself changed because I am involved with Darkenu (DFG, 2020).

Director of OneVoice, OS1, notes that while there is a trend for NGOs to become more data-driven they all use data in different ways and have different evaluation strategies. As OV, Darkenu and Zimam also use and collect data in different ways and standardised evaluations do not exist between the organisations, it is not therefore possible to present clear findings across the organisations:

I don’t think we have done a lot of work around big picture impact, to say how are all these different components working together. What is the big picture – how does our percentage of time and resources and overall capacity – you know we need to – are we spending time in the right places? (OS1, 2020).

It is also difficult to gather reliable data or to know how to interpret data from social media where much of Darkenu and Zimam's work takes place. A former OneVoice board member
does not, for example, believe that high numbers of Facebook followers for Zimam in Palestine and for Darkenu in Israel are necessarily understood or interpreted in meaningful ways (NB1, 2020).

As far as OneVoice, Darkenu and Zimam are concerned, OneVoice CEO, OS1 (2020), suggests that Darkenu might rely too much on research and data and that Zimam, which pays more attention to qualitative data and the richness of people’s experiences of participating in programmes and activities, might also look to collect different kinds of data. At OV, OB1 believes that OV in Europe and SNS have a better record of tracking students than in the US and that:

> For young people participating in programmes in the US, [the] focus should be on tracking and identifying what learning has taken place and how it has been applied and this would involve some level of pre-testing of participants (OB1, 2020).

As a result of these different approaches, OS1 does not believe that OneVoice yet has a standardised or consistent way to measure the outcomes of the organisations which it supports.

> When we are challenged by big organisations and funders where their decision making is based on the numbers, we struggle to be able to put together uniform numbers. We could in fact be more disciplined and have cross-cutting matrix regardless of what the audience is (OS1, 2020).
Discussions take place about whether or not to gather qualitative or quantitative data, or to develop methodologies which combine the two approaches to measure the success of programmes (ES1, 2020). One of the bigger and even more complex questions regarding the evaluation of the work of OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, and which can also apply more broadly to any other organisation and its multiple partnerships and collaborations within the peacebuilding sector (Lazarus, 2020), is about what it actually means to work for democracy and a two-state solution in a context that clearly isn’t actually moving towards peace and what is feasibly measured to illustrate progress in that way:

the more complex and long term your outcomes are the harder it is to evaluate and attribute causality. And it is hard to imagine something more complex than trying to have a just resolution of peace in the Middle East. So, we are all guessing (OE1, 2020).

When interviewed, Lazarus (2020), who regularly evaluates peacebuilding organisations on behalf of UN and global foundation funders, suggests the Most Significant Change Model (Dart and Davies, 2003) provides a useful question to ask in this context and in terms of evaluations and is ‘what exists, that did not exist before, because of this project or organisation’. But here too, methods such as these relatively easy to use evaluation techniques are critiqued (Willetts and Crawford, 2007) for not being able to address multiple layers of complexity.

By contrast, ALLMEP Regional Director in Palestine, ZE1, believes that the most important challenge of measuring change in a peacebuilding context is in measuring long-term
structural change in Palestine. Long-term structural inequalities in Palestine are however slow to change and difficult to demonstrate without longitudinal studies and resources to fund that work:

So, we need to also focus on what makes impacts more communal rather than individual. We see the impact on an individual level. You see more what I call success stories of people who are being very active in changing the dynamic of the conflict, beyond dialogue. You know, it would take a huge amount of money and a huge amount of time to see the impact on a communal level for the next coming years (ZE1, 2020).

From a purely management perspective, ZE1 underlines that organisations need resources of time, money and staff familiar with management tools, such as the use of log frames or the ability to apply goal setting and outcomes to planning, sometimes but not always required by funders for evaluation (ZE1, 2020). She also believes that unequal and much lower levels of skills and financial resources available to organisations in Palestine to deliver evaluations, further embeds those inequalities (ZE1, 2020).

Although Darkenu and Zimam are increasingly important civil society actors, measuring their impact and success remains difficult. At its foundation, Darkenu said it would help move the political dial. And although it continues to work on a model which as an extra parliamentary organisation combines media, think tank, lobbying, activism tactics and GOTV campaigning, the outcome of its political works still remains difficult to measure. Zimam continues to carve out a space for itself in the West Bank and Gaza where it can measure what it has
achieved by tracking Zimam activists who have entered politics or are influencers in growing networks, but understanding the full impact of its work through evaluations also remains problematic.

As standardised evaluation and data collection are not available across organisations, measuring the impact of these organisations as a network is also challenging for OV as it attempts to communicate how its goals are met across organisations. As new granter/grantee relationships develop between OV and Darkenu and Zimam, reporting by Darkenu and Zimam to OV will be required in more consistent and standardised ways than before (OS1, 2020). Receiving standardised data from Darkenu and Zimam may, however, impact on the relationships which OV develops with the two organisations, from what were once more trusting and informal bonds and relationships, to more formal accountability between organisations. Since Darkenu and Zimam receive increasingly important funding from a wider range of sources, OV’s authority may also dissipate and there may come a time when OV funding and input is no longer solicited. Regardless of the nature of these relationships, OneVoice CEO, OS1 (2020) underlines that there will always be challenges in measuring the big picture of the progress of the network, as opposed to capturing different individual organisations’ programmes. In terms of organisational learning, all of this suggests that sharing monitoring and measurement matrix between organisations is even more problematic when evaluation frameworks extend beyond a single organisation. When those matrices have not been jointly developed, it is more difficult to allow for complexity and difference in each context and to acknowledge for what and whose purposes evaluation is taking place.
In this section I have analysed some of the ways in which evaluation, in the sense that organisations measure or articulate what they have learnt and the impact that they have made, takes place. Within the context of NGOs becoming more data driven, OV, in particular, is making efforts to standardise its data so it can interpret what is happening across their funding network. Darkenu, too, is using new online tools with new measurement matrix to try and capture the impact of its work online (DS4, 2020; Darkenu, 2022). The data collected by organisations during this research period does not, however, provide a clear picture of how exactly activism takes place and what individual activists feel is the impact of their work. Absent also from this data provided by OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, which tries to measure change in a peacebuilding context, are the structural changes required for that peace. Whether or not this kind of formal evaluation best demonstrates the range of organisational learning which takes place in each of these organisations is therefore questionable. As I analyse in more detail some of the relationships between organisational learning and politics in subsequent chapters, I will be returning to evaluation as a form of organisational learning which does not yet capture the multiple levels of relationships between organisations and politics, particularly important for organisations working with agendas for political change.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, as a way of answering my second research question, I have presented an analysis of processes and then more specific mechanisms which contribute to organisational learning at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. I have also described and provided examples of
who participates in these learning processes and mechanisms and how. Processes are described as either the relationships and action learning with ‘the other’ or in and between organisations, or the more formal managed processes which take place within organisations. I have also analysed how these processes produce and are shaped by learning outcomes. In 5.1, I demonstrated how relationships and relationship-building as it relates to encountering ‘the other’, provide important opportunities for action learning in the context of the Israeli Palestinian conflict and peacebuilding, particularly within and between organisations. Other kinds of individual experiences of action learning at OV, Darkenu, Zimam, SNS and in communities and wider networks of practice are also characterised as organisational learning. Partnerships and collaborations are understood as facilitating organisational learning through the sharing of knowledge and expertise between organisations, where different forms of learning include some of the ways in which skills are shared and ideas and key driving themes are borrowed to build strategy and define purpose.

In 5.2, I discuss how strategy and planning and monitoring and evaluation are used as more formal and closely managed mechanisms for organisational learning. Consciously applied constructivist approaches underpin these managed approaches to shaping and fulfilling organisations’ strategies and agendas. Strategic planning and implementation are also understood as collective learning processes which are regularly adapted and reformulated in response to external and internal circumstances. However, an analysis of formal evaluation processes, though an important aspect of organisational learning in management approaches, concludes that these organisations’ evaluation processes do not seem to generate the levels of organisational learning required of them. These mechanisms for evaluation are in practice often ill-defined and, I argue here and in subsequent chapters, fail
to capture and understand the outcomes of their work in a nuanced way and in its entirety.

When politics as the exercise of power is discussed in chapter 7, a different conceptualisation of evaluation frameworks will, however, begin to take shape through the lens of politics, focusing on changing and multilevel exercises of power, within and between organisations and between organisations and local and national political institutions where sedimented ideas and behaviours are challenged.

In this chapter I have analysed a range of activity understood as ‘organisational learning’ and identified some of the similarities and differences in the complexities of organisational learning at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. I have also used this chapter to anchor new insights and contributions around themes which I analyse in the following chapters. These include some of the different ways organisational learning can be understood as processes, mechanisms, outcomes and sites for learning, sometimes simultaneously. In the following chapter organisational learning is analysed through the use of narratives in reframing, and sometimes creating new organisational and individual political identities (chapter 6).

Chapter 7 then provides an analysis of how power is exerted, challenged and negotiated through mechanisms and processes of organisational learning, in spaces or sites and in ways which can be understood as political. And finally in chapter 8, outcomes of organisational learning are examined through the lens of political change and transformation and are characterised as the mundane and the extraordinary in peacebuilding.
Chapter 6 – Organisational Learning and Narratives

Introduction

Chapter 6 focuses on the use of narratives as both processes and outcomes of organisational learning at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. Like the organisational learning which is carried out through action learning, relationship building, and the managerial processes and mechanisms described in the previous chapter, narrative formation takes place through formal and informal processes and as outcomes of learning. An analysis of the nature and use of narratives as a framing mechanism in organisational learning draws on the theoretical and conceptual areas outlined in 2.4, and expanded on below in section 6.1, as well the interviews, focus groups and observations from fieldwork. It argues that organisational learning is informed by and shapes the evolving stories and narratives that people tell about themselves, their communities, and their organisations. It also argues that the reframing of narratives not only shapes individuals’ and organisations’ rationales for political action (Poletta and Gharrity-Gardner, 2015) but also shapes and strengthens organisations’ strategies and capabilities for achieving political change. Narrative formation serves as an example of organisational learning which, as a learning process, produces outcomes of change and sometimes transformation. In this way I answer my research question which asks how organisational learning impacts on the thinking and activities of internal and external stakeholders and organisations themselves.

In order to create new narratives, individuals act collectively in OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS to deconstruct, disentangle and then reweave the many narrative threads which make up
individual, organisational and national identities in Israel and Palestine. The narratives which leaders, staff, activists, board members and other stakeholders both consciously and unconsciously reformulate include what they hope will be mobilising stories about secular states in Israel and Palestine which provide tolerance, acceptance and freedoms for ‘the other’. In this chapter, I discuss conceptualisations of narratives (6.1) and then focus on how narratives are constructed in specific political contexts (Polletta et al., 2011) by outlining some of the dominant political and religious narratives in Israel and Palestine and the complexities of challenging them (6.2). I then explore how individual and collective identities and their political and religious narratives are expressed, challenged and sometimes reframed through organisational learning (section 6.3). Finally, I analyse how narratives, expressed more specifically as personal and organisational stories which support peacebuilding, accommodate and sometimes challenge existing religious and political attitudes, values and agendas (section 6.4). This approach lays the foundation for subsequent chapters, which ask what the relationships between organisational learning and politics are and how learning in organisations can be understood as ‘political’ in nature and in its consequences.

6.1 Conceptualising Narratives

Conceptualisations of how narratives, as stories, are meaningful, are considered differently across social science subjects. In chapter 2, social movement literature about narrative and identity formation as framing devises was discussed. Narratives were understood to reflect and shape individual and collective identities and either challenge or reinforce power expressed within those stories (Polletta and Chen, 2012).
At an individual level, Ricoeur (1984) argues that narratives are central to all human
dependours, and that we constantly author and reauthor our lives. (The transformative
nature of ‘re-authoring’ also highlighted by Ricoeur is further discussed in chapter 8.) In
organisational studies, collective narratives can help improve practice (Lämsä and Sintonen,
2006) and organisations are ‘described and redescribed through the ever-changing
narratives which organisational members inherit, generate and reauthor’ (Drummond,
1998, p. 94). These stories are understood as a means of learning that communities use
collectively and contextually to change and improve practice (Brown and Duguid 1991) –
although they may not always achieve this. Czarniawska (1997: 5-6) links narrative making
directly to learning and argues that the stories which are produced are ‘the main source of
knowledge in the practice of organizing’.

As part of conflict and peacebuilding, collective narratives provide the frameworks and
motivation to take action for change (Polletta, 1998; Nasie et al. 2014). In social movement
literature (Polletta, 1998), conceptualisations move beyond thinking about narratives as
helping establish principles of organising within organisations to providing frameworks for
broader social and political action.

Bourdieu (1990) sees hegemonic narratives which impose order as sites where power is
exerted. I understand these as also sites for learning. Bourdieu underlines the ways in
which social and cultural practices, such as story or narrative making, reflect the workings of
power and the unequal power relations, which are embedded in systems as well as in those
cultural practices (Bourdieu, 1990). For Foucault (1979) also, dominant narratives emerge
which organise participants’ actions and relationships in particular ways and hierarchies,
both within and beyond institutions. Cultural theory suggests that power can change when
stories are rewritten (Gramsci, 2006 [1929-1935]; Polleta et al., 2011). Gramsci and his theory of hegemony (Gramsci, 2006 [1929-1935]) is particularly relevant for how civil society organisations challenge the state by providing alternative narratives.

These approaches all inform an understanding of narratives in the context of organisational learning as helping shape individual and organisational identities and agendas. These narratives inform strategies, attitudes and activity for broader social and political action, not only helping to improve performance, but also serving as sites where power exists and is negotiated. Within the broader context of Israel and Palestine this sometimes includes contesting the foundational stories (discussed in chapter 3) of what is defined by Anderson (2006 [1983]) as, ‘imagined’ communities. In the following section, I evidence and analyse the ways in which political and religious narratives as sites for learning also inform mechanisms and outcomes of organisational learning. In sections 6.3 and 6.4, I then discuss how OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS incorporate new narratives for peacebuilding into their political activities.

6.2 Religious and Political Narratives and Identities in Israel and Palestine

In Israel and Palestine, foundational national as well as extremist and other political narratives help to shape identities, norms and networks and either help to build trust or to further alienate ‘the other’ in whatever religious, political or cultural forms ‘the other’ or ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups take. In peacebuilding between Israel and Palestine, organisational learning, as the intentional outcome of the dialogue which people within organisations
promote and the generation of a discourse which they use to critique the status quo, helps to disentangle and reweave some of the narrative threads that link religion and politics. This all takes place while the politically moderate organisations resist placing religious narratives at the heart of peacebuilding.

In Israel and Palestine, as well as regionally and internationally, extremist and fundamentalist groups draw on religious identities and narratives for political purposes (Mathew and Tay, 2021). The political right in Israel and the US (orthodox Jews and evangelical Christians), Hamas as well as other Islamist parties in Palestine and the region, have, for example, claimed that the conflict for statehood is a ‘religious’ one, and that any lasting peace between the two sides is impossible (Scham et al., 2005). This rhetoric which promotes the sanctity of holy sites and presents the destiny of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as central to their faith (be it Judaism, Christianity or Islam) does not allow room for political compromise (Gorenberg, 2002; Newman, 2005).

In these discourses, ‘religion’ is often perceived as a generator of animosity and violence, and social and political taboos are born out of those animosities. However, in more moderate political discourses for peacebuilding, religion tends to be conceptualised in terms of religious teaching and its healing abilities as well as in the ways religion can be used as a tool for reconciliation through interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance (Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Whelty, 2007). All of these narratives inform individual, organisational and national political identities in different and sometimes conflicting ways.

Jews and Muslims in Israel and Palestine have extremely limited opportunities to meet and mix in any meaningful way. The opportunities which OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS provide
for encounters between people with different religious identities (not just Jewish and Muslim) is an important part of their learning activities (OE4, 2020; ZS3, 2020; OS6, 2020; NS2, 2020). OA1, a young OV activist, claims that this also extends to the US on university campuses, where Muslims and Jews rarely mix and have ‘often never really met’ (OA1, 2020). The lived experience of everyone I interviewed for this research was that preconceptions and ignorance exist, either as a result of these limited encounters and/or the extreme religious and political voices which denounce the other side. This prejudice is directed at how people live their lives and the political and religious opinions which they hold – either about secular, Islamic or Jewish Zionist beliefs about the religious meaning of statehood, or in the day-to-day expression of their beliefs which comes through cultural manifestations of, say, wearing a hijab, or a kippah (religious garments used to express devotion to Islam and Judaism).

In the interviews, it became apparent that Muslim and Jewish activists, staff and stakeholders were unanimous in stating that if the Israeli Palestinian conflict were to become primarily thought of as a religious conflict, it could never be resolved. Because of their own or others’ unwavering commitment to particular religious beliefs or cultures, or due to concerns about potential regional or global implications, OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS activists, staff and board members are careful not to make religion a central theme in narratives for peacebuilding. However, religious beliefs and practices undoubtedly inform politics and activism. Although Darkenu and Zimam occasionally use religion as an organisational or tactical resource (ZS2, 2020; DS4, 2020), rationales for peace or drivers of conflict are rarely framed in religious terms by OV, Darkenu, Zimam or SNS. For SNS, the history of the conflict in their educational videos for schools nonetheless includes
description of a strong sense of place as part of religious identity for Muslims, Jews and Christians, particularly linked to religious sites such as Jerusalem, Nazareth, Hebron and Bethlehem (SNS, 2019c).

One of the many challenges in understanding the role of religion in political narratives in Israel is that, in its foundational story, the State of Israel defines itself as a ‘Jewish state’ and as ‘the nation state of the Jewish people’. Jewish identity is therefore not just religious but is also perceived as an ethnic, cultural and political identity (Wright, 2012). In Israel, religion is an intrinsic part of politics where the right wing, and the allegiances which they have built with religious Jews in Israel and internationally, have set the political agenda for the last 20 years (Hirsch-Hoefler and Mudde, 2020). These political and religious leaders regularly use faith-based initiatives to promote annexation and the building of settlements to advance their positions (Gorenberg, 2006). However, the coalition (2021-Dec. 2022), which in June 2021 ousted PM Netanyahu and his right-wing coalition from power, also ousted the two main Haredi (ultra-orthodox Jewish) parties, which had been part of most coalition governments this century. For the first time an Arab Islamist party (Raam) was part of the process of forming a government in Israel (Winer, 2021). For Haredim (ultra-orthodox Jews), this new coalition was of concern and they accused the Israeli state of being anti-Jewish (Rascon, 2021). In Palestine, Islamist political parties also fight for political centre stage in the West Bank and Gaza against the continuing postponement by the Palestinian Authority of elections there (The Jerusalem Post, 2021).

In this context SNS coordinator in Israel, NS3 (2020), argues that religious narratives and discourse in peacebuilding in Israel have for a very long time been largely absent, precisely
because the extremist religious and political right have joined forces. Managing Director of SNS, NS2, claims that more extremist political parties have positioned themselves as having a monopoly on the relationship between religion and politics and do not feel that compromises required for peacebuilding are in their interests (NS2, 2020). In order to disrupt this status quo, Darkenu is trying to reimagine the relationships between religion and politics (DS4), which I discuss later in this section.

Additionally, although all Israelis interviewed for this research identified as Jewish and Palestinians identified as Muslim or Christian, at an individual level, it became apparent that Jews and Muslims alike are navigating and trying to figure out what kind of Jews and Muslims they are in such a diverse and historically laden religious landscape. Jewish and Palestinian society is also scattered globally and diaspora Jews and Palestinians do not necessarily share the same experiences as Israeli or other Jews in Israel, or of Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza. For Jews, ‘in the Diaspora there is a progressive and ongoing process of enquiry about how Diaspora Jews are to identify themselves culturally and politically in the age of Israel’ (Baron, 2014: xiv).

For generations of Palestinians born outside of Palestine:

the homeland has remained central to ideas of identity, home and belonging, but the vast majority have no lived experience of Palestine. For members of these generations their relationship to, and familiarity with, the homeland has been passed on for the most part through ‘acts of memory’ and mnemonic links to Palestine (Mason, 2007: 272).
Differences and tensions between individual and collective narratives, are always therefore being played out.

Notions of Jewish and Muslim identities are complex and diverse. For Jewish staff, activists, board members and external stakeholders, working or being associated with OV, Darkenu, Zimam or SNS implies both a questioning of the status quo in Israel and a commitment to wanting to make it a better place. For Jews these positions are informed by the Holocaust and the creation of Israel which resulted from it, or from their religious historical narratives. Daniel Lubetzky, for example, first and foremost identifies himself as the son of a Holocaust survivor and an American, Mexican Jew (Lubetzky, 2020).

Questioning Israel’s actions can also be driven by a sense of duty born out of being descendants of Holocaust survivors and an obligation to make sure it doesn’t happen again (Lubetzky, 2015, 2020). Critiquing Israel nonetheless makes many Jews (Israeli and diaspora) feel like outsiders (OB3) and over the years, as events in Israel and Palestine have unfolded, many Jewish people’s support for Israel has wavered, including OV and Darkenu supporters and activists. Like OV board member OB3, US activist OA3 withdrew for a time from supporting Israel when she became conflicted about Israel and government actions and what it meant to be a Zionist. She told me that she finds her Jewish identity an ongoing struggle and constantly questions her own beliefs and education, either when Israel is attacked or her own activism is attacked by pro-Palestinian campaigners trying to shut down engagement with Israel or Israeli issues. This is a profound struggle which many Jewish peace campaigners share, none more so than Israeli Jewish peace campaigners whose
desire for dialogue and negotiation with Palestinians is seen by some as being un-Jewish and driven by perverse self-hatred and self-loathing for being a Jew (NS3, 2020; Finlay, 2007).

While US and UK diaspora Jewish identities are bound up in Israel and its future, the diaspora experience of Israel is often very limited, as observed by OV board member, EB2 (2020). In Israel, when diaspora Jews are visiting Israel, contact between them and Palestinians is unlikely to happen. If it involves contact with Palestinians in the West Bank, that contact needs to be managed by a third party as Israelis cannot travel freely to the West Bank (EB2) and entry to Gaza is forbidden. In the same way Palestinians are not allowed to travel outside the West Bank or Gaza into Israel without permits. For staff, board members and donors, OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS facilitate visits to the West Bank and function as safe bridges for individual Jews who want to visit the West Bank and Palestinians. Board members and staff who have experienced visits to the West Bank organised by OV and Zimam describe how transformational meeting and speaking with Palestinians on these visits has been. For OV board member, EB2, once she experienced these kinds of encounters facilitated by OV, and gained insights into people’s worlds and challenges, there was no going back, and her own story as a Jew and a supporter of Israel changed when she was able to understand a different kind of narrative:

Look you can go to Israel on holiday as many Jews do and you can look at the sea and enjoy the food, and you don’t come across, you might not even see the wall. You could be in Herzliya [wealthy Tel Aviv suburb] for two weeks and never ever see anything of the Occupation. You will never encounter a Palestinian, never exchange a word with a Palestinian unless you happen to have a Palestinian or an Arab Israeli
taxi driver. It is quite easy to shut your eyes to what is going on the other side and, look, a whole nation practically does so. But once you have had your eyes open you can’t really shut that out (EB2, 2020).

OV board member, EB2, observes how in her UK diaspora community, Israel exists as an ideal type state for many Jews (Israeli and diaspora) which may not reflect the realities of Israel today, and that this sometimes result in tensions between politically moderate and secular diaspora and Israeli Jews over disagreements about what Israel should be or has become (EB2, 2020). For some diaspora Jews remaining ardent Zionists allows them to hold on to these ideals, without necessarily having to engage with the day-to-day social, economic and security issues of living there. For example, many liberal Zionist diaspora Jews cannot believe that the occupation is not foremost in Israeli Jews’ minds every day when they wake up (OE2, 2020). DS6, a US self-described religious Jew who has made aliya (immigration of Jews to Israel), argues that from a religious perspective these liberal and secular diaspora Jews, who are so used to thinking of themselves as being Jewish in cultural instead of spiritual terms, may have lost sight of how important a spiritual religious approach is in imagining futures for religious Jews.

OV’s, Darkenu’s, Zimam’s and SNS’s inclusive narratives provide a community for individual diaspora Jews, like consultant, OE1 (2020), who because of their ideas about social justice have struggled to find a like-minded community and continue to find the Israeli Palestinian question painful to deal with. This idea of safe and politically accommodating space, where difficult questions can be investigated, is explored in more depth in the context of Israelis and Palestinians in chapter 7. Like SNS activist and youth leader, NA5 (2020), many activists,
staff and board members have grown up with strong narratives about ‘the other’ and her engagement with OV and SNS has been a part of her changing perspectives. She appreciated being in a setting as part of SNS’s Leadership programme where she could go beyond very highly charged emotions to understand where those feelings came from. She is now part of a community where she continues to explore these ideas. This is, it seems, a community of practice which in addition to sharing skills, works to problem solve through narrative formation.

For Israelis and Palestinians, it is often traumatic events from violent conflict, such as the death of fellow peace activists or their experiences of fighting in war, which trigger similar kinds of questioning. Organisations like Darkenu and Zimam, other peacebuilding organisations such as Peace Now, or cross-border initiatives which bring together Israelis and Palestinians, provide a safe space and community to explore those issues (NS3, 2020). According to Israeli Jewish peace activists (DFG, 2020; NS3, 2020), organisations like OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS allow Israeli Jewish activists who were brought up to believe in social justice, to be of service to a cause which works to make Israel a better place without ‘betraying their homeland’. NS3, was born into the conflict (during the Second Intifada, 1987) which his parents and brothers also experienced as soldiers. His peacebuilding and activism are a response to the complexities and struggles of war which he entered as a soldier with ideals of defending his country but where he was mostly interacting with civilian Palestinian populations. Feeling that the Israeli government was sending young soldiers to be killed and not being mindful of their futures made him question his uncritical allegiance to Israel. This is not an unusual driver for peacebuilding activists, who have seen the horrors of violent conflict and war in combat (Moser, 1996). For ES2 (2020), formerly with OV and
now Deputy Director at SNS, her involvement with OV is about exploring her Jewish identity, which as well as being emotional and intellectual, is about feeling that she is doing something worthwhile. OV Board Co-Chair, OB1, is also driven by ideas of social justice which he believes sit well within Jewish values and which he insists do not stop him from questioning injustices in Israel.

As one aspect of organisational learning, all of these kinds of experiences influence processes of narrative building at OV, Darkenu, and Zimam which affects what those organisations aim to do and achieve politically. At SNS, although the organisation does not have political aims, its own research (SNS and Lewis, 2020) highlights that students value a safe-space atmosphere and the confidence that it engenders for participants to ask difficult questions of each other and of schools’ speakers. Debating, understanding, and creating or sometimes recreating narratives in a ‘safe’ and accepting school environment helps shift individual identities as well as organisational ones. For OV, Darkenu and Zimam, these safe spaces include formal and informal physical meeting spaces in schools, universities, offices, cafes or in people’s homes, where participants feel confident that their ideas and opinions, which are possibly unconventional in that they promote peaceful coexistence, will not be attacked. According to Zimam Director of Advancement, ZS3 (2020), virtual spaces such as social media and digital platforms such as DemocraTV are less easy to safeguard against criticism and attack, but also demonstrate to activists that they are not alone and that their ideas are shared. The new narratives which come out of these narrative formation processes and sites for learning also aim to impact more widely on the political status quo.
New political narratives which question the political status quo, call, for example, for a two-state solution. A separation of religion and the state is also supported by organisations like OV and Darkenu in a way which many Jewish staff, activists and board members hope might go some way to reclaiming Judaism for liberal Jews in Israel. Where Israeli national identity has been hijacked by more conservative Jews and fails to take into account Palestinian perspectives and experience (NS3, 2020), encounters and dialogue can change narratives.

Through her involvement with SNS, SNS Board Chair NB2, for example, realised that her personal narrative and Holocaust education as a young child was very similar to the Naqba (Palestinian Catastrophe of 1948) education of Palestinians, which in itself was equally traumatic for young people, and that her preconceived ideas about Palestinians were similar to Palestinians preconceived ideas about Jews (NB2, 2020). This realisation confirmed for her the importance of the collective narratives promoted by SNS in schools which acknowledge the Holocaust and Naqba experiences as equally valid and painful.

In Palestine, Zimam similarly disputes religious narratives which have been reworked to fit political agendas. Political identities as they relate to religious identities are constantly evolving in Palestine where, since the 1980s, when the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement was founded (as a Muslim Brotherhood /Islamic Collective splinter group) and started to draw Palestinians away from Fatah (secular group founded in 1959 by Yasser Arafat and others), religious and political identities have become more conflated. Since the legislative elections in 2006 and subsequent military victory of Hamas over Fatah in Gaza in 2007, there has also been competition between the Islamist movements (Hamas, Islami Jihad, Tahrir) and the secular-nationalist factions associated with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (P.L.O., Fatah) (Lybarger, 2018). After the emergence of Hamas in Palestine in
the 1980s, a process of ‘conflating military resistance with social change and Islamization’ (Hroub, 2008: 97) began. In Palestine, as in Israel, where political identity has become increasingly bound up with religious identities, political activism can be critiqued by Islamist parties as being anti-nationalist, anti-religious or as ‘disobeying God’ (Hroub, 2008, Lybarger, 2018). In this context, social pressures to conform and to believe that political dissent is the equivalent of religious dissent, are considerable. These pressures are felt particularly strongly by women staff members and activists whose behaviours as well as their ideas are more carefully monitored by family and society (ZA2, 2020; ZA3, 2020; ZS4, 2020; ZE1, 2020; Allabadi, 2008). Activist and Zimam staff member, ZA2 (2020), talked about how she was loved and respected in her family as the eldest grandchild. However, within religious and political spheres her experience as a politically curious and inquisitive woman has been more difficult. She has had to work hard to convince her family that, as a woman, she would be safe and would not behave ‘inappropriately’ campaigning on behalf of Zimam. Through university education and engagement with Zimam, she believes that she is building her own identity, while remaining faithful to her Palestinian identity by teaching young people about their history. Palestinian and Israeli activists’ religious and political identities do not therefore always conform to the current status quo where moderate politics are not embraced as mainstream.

Head of the Nablus chapter of Zimam, ZS7 (2020), talks about how teaching skills through Zimam, without asking for religious or political loyalty in return, is key to helping young Palestinians explore, debate, discuss and build identities and a sense of themselves. ZE1 (2020), Regional Director at ALLMEP, identifies primarily as a Palestinian interested in protecting Palestinian women’s rights. Zimam activist ZA3 (2020), who has experienced
political conflict within her own family where different groupings support different parties, has always struggled to understand conflictual political affiliations in families and communities which have all experienced hardship as a result of the conflict with Israel, but which are also divided politically in Palestine. Zimam, she says, has allowed her to understand these different narratives and to find her own political identity. Like ZE1, ZA3 sees finding political voice for women in Palestine difficult, and Zimam is somewhere where she has found likeminded people where she can fight for social justice and gender equality. Through working on women’s programmes at Zimam, staff member, ZS4 (2020), has also gained an understanding of how people need to have a stronger sense of their own identity before they can start to conceptualise what peace is.

The relationship between activism and religion is different for each individual person. For some, activism is tied to their religious commitment and values which they see as an expression of their political ideals which prioritise social justice (DS6, 2020). For others, their religious life and identity remains deeply personal and private and they do not see it as linked to or informing their politics (OB4, 2020). For some young female activists, OV, Darkenu and Zimam and the politics of equality which they promote, provide a form of protection against the ultra-orthodox and conservative Jewish or Muslim patriarchal societies, which they inhabit and find threatening (NA5, 2020; OA1, 2020). In Palestine, this is something which is, according to Palestinian female activists, particularly difficult to address (ZA3, 2020). For some activists, staff and other stakeholders, relationships between moderate and peaceful political activism and religious identity relate to the organisations with which they are affiliated, and the training, opportunities, models for engagement and dialogue which those organisations provide.
At an organisational level, peacebuilding organisations like Darkenu and Zimam are trying to
reimagine the relationships between religion and politics and work to present inclusive
narratives where different religions coexist peacefully. While OV, Darkenu and Zimam
promote religious tolerance as a central component to all of their work (DS6, 2020; ZS4,
2020), SNS teaches everyday practical skills in secondary schools for learning about the ways
in which Muslims and Jews can discuss peaceful coexistence, in whatever form that may
take (NS1, 2020). Organisations such as OV, SNS, Darkenu and Zimam all provide a safe
place and community for individual diaspora Jews and Muslims to explore those narratives
and to shape their own (see 7.3.3). These processes of, sites for, and outcomes of
understanding and recreating narratives are, I argue, aspects of organisational learning
which affect what organisations are able to achieve politically.

In this section I have discussed how extremist and fundamentalist political narratives draw
on notions of ‘religion’ by mobilising religious identities in politics and how in these
narratives, religion is often perceived as a generator of animosity. Violence and social and
political taboos have been born out of those animosities, resulting in Jews and Muslims
having limited opportunities to meet and mix in meaningful ways. However, to date,
references to religion have been largely absent from the narratives of peacebuilding that
have been adopted by the organisations which I have studied, and the narratives created by
the extremist religious and political right, who have joined forces, remain the dominant
narratives. Shifting individual and organisational narratives have nonetheless been seen to
involve understanding and sometimes challenging political and religious identities, in ways
which I argue are part of organisational learning. As part of this process, organisations have
also learnt to respect and to accommodate the many different individual stories which emerge as part of challenging national political narratives. In the following section, I analyse some of the ways in which organisational learning mechanisms are used to operationalise the challenging and creation of new narratives.

### 6.3 Challenging and Creating New Narratives as Part of Organisational Learning

In the previous section I argued that organisational learning includes the examination and sometimes rewriting of national, organisational and personal narratives as part of peacebuilding agendas. In this section I evidence the mechanisms for learning which help facilitate challenging different perspectives as well as recognising, acknowledging and accepting difference. As mechanisms for organisational learning, the provision of alternative discourses and skills training and the modelling of behaviours and attitudes provides activists with the skills and language to tell their own stories and to listen to others. The provision of safe places allows staff, trustees, activists and external stakeholders to debate sensitive issues which accommodate different political and religious identities in expanding networks and new alliances. Skills, language and narratives are developed not only in order to be able to tell stories or to understand and then possibly reconceptualise how, for example, religion informs political action, and vice-versa, but are also a prerequisite for being able to respond to the criticism and even social exclusion of organisations and activists which sometimes comes when political and/or religious views are challenged.
Until relatively recently, religion was not publicly debated, critiqued or discussed by OV, Darkenu, Zimam or SNS activists or by staff as part of promoting their organisations or mobilising support for action (DS6, 2020; ZA1, 2020). Although Zimam activists are proud that Zimam provides a safe space to discuss many still ‘taboo’ subjects such as the two-state solution, the status of Jerusalem or women’s rights, or religion, religion remains out of bounds for discussion in university and other Zimam community programmes (ZS2, 2020). At Darkenu a similar approach meant that, until June 2021, religion was not discussed in the context of their work, other than as part of promoting the organisation as one which appeals to moderates from every religious group. There are, however, some examples where Zimam and Darkenu promote their narratives by borrowing language, symbols or tactics of religious groups.

For example, at Darkenu, there was a push by some staff and board members in 2020/21 to engage more with religion and religious language. This is something which has traditionally been strongly contested by secular politically leftist and centrist Jews who resist an approach that uses religious discourses, narratives, culture and/or identities for communication and propaganda purposes, but which is now being argued by senior Darkenu staff, as something which might help create new narratives to reclaim Judaism for liberal Jews and the Left (DB2, 2020).

Throughout my research, religious concepts, discourses and symbols have emerged in new ways into these organisations’ narratives. For example, Clause 11 of Darkenu’s Requirements for the June 2021 Coalition Agreement, tabled by Darkenu as part of its
involvement in the building of a new coalition government in June 2021, explicitly includes demands for policy reforms to do with religion and the state, where Darkenu is lobbying for the:

Promotion of reforms in the field of ‘State & Religion’ that will promote Jewish pluralism in Israel, such as: the enactment of the Western Wall compromise, the advancement of limited public transportation on Shabbat, the increase of Women’s representation in the various Halakhic institutions [institutions promoting individual and communal Jewish practices], and the dismantlement of the Rabbinate’s monopoly in the fields of Kashrut [dietary laws about the foods that Jews are permitted to eat and how food must be prepared] and Marriage (Darkenu, 2021, online English version translated from Hebrew).

References to religious narratives, culture and/or identities have been used in the past by Darkenu. Former Director of Strategy and Campaigns, DS4, notes, for example, that:

one of the first big campaigns that we had, we used a quote that said, ‘without a vision the people will be dispersed’. It was a biblical quote and my position as strategic manager was that we need to use the cultural motifs of Judaism as part of our propaganda (DS4, 2020).

However, the appointment in March 2021, of a religious Jew, DS2, as CEO at Darkenu, also pointed towards a softening of these delineations for Darkenu in Israel. The CEO of Darkenu (DS2, 2022), subsequently reintroduced religious discourse into Darkenu’s messaging and is
interested in where politics, religion and civil society meet. For example, in his biography he quotes religious text and says:

Darkenu plays a critical role in the building of a model society here in Israel. I believe in the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the vision of the Prophets of Israel, and I believe that it is our duty to ensure the continued existence of a Jewish and democratic Israel. If we are able to organize and mobilize the moderate majority, we will be able to succeed in bringing about the change we believe in so deeply. ‘It is not in heaven’ (Deut. 30:12). I would love for you to join us (Darkenu, 2020).

Certain attitudes to religion and behaviours are promoted across OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, most notably the tolerance, acceptance and respect for all denominations of non-violent religious life (OS1, 2020; DS6, 2020; DS2, 2020; ZS3, 2020). These attitudes and behaviours contribute to and result from organisational learning, which for these organisations means promoting diversity as a recruitment criterion at activist, staff and board level; the articulation, acceptance and tolerance of certain kinds of organisational behaviours; and the accommodation of a wide range of political and religious attitudes. These approaches emanate from deliberate and planned cycles of organisational learning, for example, a two-hour session at an OV staff retreat (June, 2019); Zimam leadership programme sessions which focus on organisational behaviours and values; the disciplinary action and dismissal taken against OV staff using racist language; and the values which DemocraTV promotes by giving equal airtime to a politically and religiously diverse range of speakers.
While moderate, centrist political organisations tend to attract secular staff and activists, diversity is encouraged at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS and there are examples of Orthodox and conservative Jews and Muslims and Christians in each organisation (ES2, 2020). At OV and SNS, there is a mixture of staff, activists and board members that identify as Jewish, Muslim and Christian. Zimam, is made up of Muslim and some Christian staff, activists and board-members (ZS2, 2020). Darkenu is predominantly Jewish with a minority of Israeli Muslim activists. They include the main anchor and face of the newly launched DemocraTV, Lucy Aharish, an Israeli Palestinian who, previous to DemocraTV, was the first Muslim Arab news presenter on mainstream Hebrew language Israeli television.

Activities and training are available to activists from all religious denominations and there is sensitivity and respect for individuals’ religious lives. For example, Israeli and Palestinian SNS speakers are all trained in the same way regardless of their religious backgrounds. Exceptions are made to accommodate some religious practice (such as I observed at the UK SNS Youth Leadership meeting, August, 2018, where, depending on individual requirements, time and space was provided for prayer). But the content of the training programmes is not modified for different religious groups or levels of religious practice (NS1, 2020). Participants in Zimam programmes and the SNS leadership programme are instead warned about any aspects of their training which might offend some participants’ religious sensitivities (ZA2, 2020), for example, the joint participation of men and women in workshops or activity which involves physical contact, when men and women touch hands during trust building exercises.
While the religious commitment of staff and activists tends not to be discussed within the organisations, there are nonetheless subtle clues about respecting religious holidays and customs in both Israel and Palestine, as well as physical symbols of religion on display. A small mezuzah (a small box containing verses from the Torah which is placed on the right doorpost to Jewish homes) has always hung above the front entrance at Darkenu, the CEO of Darkenu wears a kippah (a skull cap worn by observant Jews), and personal pendants and hijab (a head covering worn by some Muslim women) are worn by some staff and activists at Zimam, demonstrating a fundamental respect for Judaism at Darkenu and Islam at Zimam.

Skills development and training contributes to organisational learning by helping activists and staff understand the nuances in behaviour between different cultural and religious groups. All of the organisations help activists, staff and stakeholders develop skills which help them articulate and critique their own and others political views, as well as become more aware of their religious and political differences, and indeed the distinction between religion and politics. Zimam staff member and activist, ZA2, is always aware of political/religious sensitivities when she is presenting workshops in Palestinian universities and ZS4 gained skills of persuasion to reassure conservative religious mothers about their daughters’ safety when participating in Zimam activities. As a result of her engagement with the OV OnCampus programme in the US, OV activist, OA2, is developing confidence and a critical voice within her own community, and has started questioning the religious teachings she was brought up with. This sometimes makes her unpopular in her Afghani Muslim community in Chicago where it is difficult for Muslims to question religion (mainly because they are not deemed qualified to do so as they do not speak the ancient form of
Arabic of the Quran). DS6, as a Reform Jew who has worked with both OV and Darkenu, has a growing awareness of the importance of being sensitive to orthodox Jews in order to understand their perspectives.

Public speaking and negotiating skills taught by OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS help staff and activists stand up to criticism or social exclusion from religious groups who are unhappy about their activities. Here too, in an environment where some political parties such as Hamas have strong fundamentalist religious identities, the line is often blurred between whether critiques stem from political or religious offence. Activists in Palestine are never quite sure if their activities will be criticised for religious reasons and if conservative political parties might target them personally. Zimam staff member, ZS5, for example, organised a trade fair in Nablus where Zimam held a stall promoting their work, which included cultural activities where men and women danced together. As result, he was personally targeted and named as an ‘infidel’ in public announcements which accompany the call to prayer from the Nablus Mosque (ZS5, 2020).

For non-religious, secular Muslims or Jews within the organisations, exposure to practising Jews and Muslims can also challenge preconceived ideas or stereotypical assumptions. Broadening ideas about ‘the other’ takes place through working together and action learning as well as through formal education programmes in schools and on campus. For example, former OV board member EB3, a Catholic with left wing political views, has, through action learning and meeting a different community of activists, moved from being exclusively pro-Palestinian, to having a better understanding of Israel and Zionism. OV has
helped her make sense of her new thinking and why she has broadened her allegiances to include Palestinian peacebuilders (EB3, 2020).

For individuals and organisations, rethinking political and religious identities and alliances is an ongoing learning process which comes out of the continuous questioning, reflection, adaptation to changing context, and growing networks. For OV, Darkenu and Zimam, building new political identities for their organisations has required experimenting with articulating values, including religious ones, in different ways until they are able to get to a point where new narratives reflect what they want to be saying and also resonate with the public (DS4, 2020). This is a self-conscious and organised process of building a collective narrative which takes trial and error and which is arrived at iteratively and incrementally, through organisational learning which includes research, reviews, focus groups, meetings and conversations (DS4). Once arrived at, new narratives either continue to be critiqued or themselves may become hegemonic. This was the case, for example, when the term ‘separation’ instead of ‘two state solution’ was used by Darkenu when promoting the need to address the possibilities of Palestinian independence. The term entered mainstream Israeli political vocabulary and was adopted by Israeli political parties across the political spectrum (DS1, 2019). However, the use of this word had unintended consequences, which I discuss further in chapter 7.

For Zimam CEO, ZS1, accepting different narratives in Palestine also extends beyond peacebuilding with Israel and opens people up to accepting and confronting other differences. He suggests that if people accept one different narrative, it opens their mind to accepting other political, religious and cultural differences and the possibilities of change:
The tools that you learn about understanding the other narrative at some point in a political context will also affect your understanding to other issues that could be unrelated but aren’t really different – so more understanding of political, religious and cultural differences, things that I used to not agree with or accept before – many of them I still don’t agree with but I have an understanding of why people would think this way. So, I think first you could say that I have more acceptance of many things that I used to reject before (ZS1, 2020).

Part of rewriting the Israeli political narrative has also been to reimagine the political and religious alliances which Darkenu builds (DS4, 2020). In 2020, DS4 described how since working in partnership with V15 as OneVoice Israel during the 2015 elections, Darkenu has continued to adapt:

We won’t be able to win using the same tactics over and over again, so we have to reimagine the camp and reimagine politics and we have to reimagine the alliances we build (DS4, 2020).

Building these alliances became strategic at Darkenu, as it lobbied and reached out across religious and political lines for support:

If you want to win elections in Israel you have to go to the moderate camp and you have to know how to talk with the centre and the moderate right. And it wasn’t easy
but I think that this new government is a very big achievement for people who believed that we could rebuild the moderate camp here in Israel (DS2, 2020).

Director of Darkenu, DS2, believes that it is for this reason that Darkenu’s profile rose in 2021 and why it was the only civil society organisation in Israel involved in March-June 2021, in helping produce policy recommendations for the formation of the new Israeli coalition government, which included leftist, centrist, far right and an Arab party:

That is a very big achievement for the moderate camp and also because Darkenu is a centrist movement, we are the only movement in the last ten days in Israel that are working together with the right moderate movement for this change and a united government. We are organising stuff together with them. We are the only organisation that they want to work with (DS2, 2021).

This is also the case for Zimam, where attempts at shifting religious/political narratives also involves creating different kinds of alliances. By, for example, inviting religious figures, such as a representative of the Sharia Law (Religious Law) Society to the board, or a female Imam to run Zimam’s workshops, Zimam is creating different kinds of religious and political alliances. At SNS, Jewish, Muslim and Christian religious leaders also sometimes lead workshops in the SNS Leadership Programmes, serve as advisors to the board and not only speak with young activists but also sometimes comment on the content and have influence on programming and materials (NS1, 2020). A rabbi consultant at SNS, for example, suggested that there was not sufficient content on disputed Jewish, Muslim and Christian
sites included in SNS’s introduction video for students in UK schools. SNS duly edited the video in order to include more in-depth discussion about them (NS1, 2020).

In Washington, OV activist, OA1, organised an on-campus Muslim and Jewish interfaith dinner where the topic for discussion was ‘What does Jerusalem mean to me?’ and attendees found commonality through their discussions about faith and place. At the dinner OA1 felt it was important to provide kosher and halal meals (food permitted by religious dietary laws) as a show of respect for each religion and as a way to build trust. In this instance, a form of interfaith activity which allowed people to find commonality between themselves and people of other religions was used as a way to help shift narratives of intolerance and hate (OA1, 202).

In this section I have demonstrated some of the ways in which the mechanisms and outcomes of organisational learning are both informed by and address religion, politics and activism in the four organisations, albeit in different ways. Extremist and fundamentalist as well as more moderate political narratives and discourses in Israel and Palestine draw, for example, on notions of ‘religion’ by mobilising both individual and collective religious identities in politics and using religion as an organisational or tactical resource and as a tool for activism. I have demonstrated how the creation of new organisational and political narratives includes capacity building and the development of skills, not only as a way of changing how religion informs political action in Israel and Palestine but also as a prerequisite for helping activists respond to criticism and sometimes even social exclusion for challenging political and/or religious views. I have also considered how creating new narratives, which resonate with rather than alienate a widely diverse public made up of a
multitude of political and religious affiliations, sometimes includes rethinking existing or creating new alliances, at an organisational level.

Through organisational learning, civil society organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS provide a safe space which helps to disentangle the many narrative threads that link religion and politics, in order to build their own collective identities and stories. These inclusive narratives, which do not always conform to the status quo, acknowledge that both Israeli and Palestinian historical narratives and experiences are painful and valid and provide routes to peacebuilding and to change. In the following chapter, 7, I expand further on this idea to conceptualise safe as well as accommodating political spaces as important sites for organisational learning.

6.4 Interpreting and Reframing Narratives for Peacebuilding

In section 6.3, Israel and Palestine national foundational narratives as well as the multitude of narratives appropriated by different internal factions, were seen to create challenges for individuals and organisations seeking compromise and reconciliation. In this section, I analyse how organisational learning helps create narratives for peacebuilding and the political change required for it. I ask how narratives are expressed as personal and organisational stories which support peacebuilding activism. I conclude that processes of shaping individual and organisational narratives for peacebuilding are forms of organisational learning which help influence different types and levels of political
engagement and activity which can also feed into national narratives in a way which can lead to change.

A recurring theme in data collected from interviews is that the ‘othering’ narrative which Jewish children grow up hearing is that Palestinians are bad people who want to kill them, while the narrative that Palestinian children grow up with is that Jews, and Israelis in particular, are bad people who want to kill them (NA5, 2020). Activists, staff and stakeholders who have grown up with and experienced these one-sided narratives, whether as Israelis, Palestinians or as part of diaspora communities, have all been drawn to OV, Darkenu and Zimam by a curiosity to learn, to expand their own horizons, to hear a multiplicity of views and to understand multiple narratives beyond these simplistic and traumatic stories (OS1, 2020).

For, NA5, a SNS activist:

I grew up going to Israel every year and I come from a very one-sided family. I grew up hearing the narrative of the Palestinians they are terrible and are bombing us, they are terrorists. My dad was in the army for a bit in Israel and he spent two years living on a Kibbutz. I come from a very intense family in terms of Jewish identity and also kind of being tied into quite ideological Zionism and also left-wing Zionism. So, I think I grew up having this preconceived notion of the narrative (NA5, 2020).

For Zimam activist, ZA1, in the West Bank, learning about other people’s narratives not only provides insight into other people’s stories, but into the nuances of his own understanding
of Palestine and its history, as well:

Our history and our narrative that we learn in schools or from our parents is just about ‘this is our land, somebody from Israel, they came, they stole it and we have to take it back’. That’s it, that’s the narrative. But then when I studied the Palestinian history, I found that even the word Palestine, the state of Palestine, it came with the British when the British had control of this area. So, it’s complicated. (ZA1, 2020).

For Palestinian Zimam staff (OS5, 2020) and activists (NS4, 2020), there is power and freedom in simply being able to tell your own story in your own way. As a Programme Director at OV and Zimam, OS5, helped bring young people from Israel and Palestine together to tell their stories (OS5, 2020). He emphasises that people can’t tell each other’s stories – which in turn requires face to face encounters.

For SNS Palestine Coordinator, NS4 (2020), telling your own story, being the master of your own story and being able to tell it how you want, ultimately gives you an empowering freedom (expressed by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000) in chapter 2 as ‘agency’), and that this requires skills and training in public speaking which can also serve you well in other aspects of your life:

You get the freedom to tell your own story. It’s important to be able to be the master of your own story. For me it was. People learn political speaking skills, so we have a framework, public speaking skills are essential, not just in peacebuilding or
like advocacy for the region or whatever, you go to a business meeting, you need to
know how to sell yourself, your cv, we all do that (NS4, 2020).

In activism and peacebuilding, personal stories place the personal experiences of activists at
the centre of facilitating and humanising encounters. However, formulating and processing
those individual stories also requires skill sets. Once honed those stories are incorporated
into organisational narratives and organisational learning as tools for reflection. As an
Israeli activist, NS3’s (2020) narrative or personal story is, he believes, his most powerful
tool for engagement with people who see him as the enemy, for recruitment, and for
promoting peacebuilding. He speaks about finding his voice as an activist and how his voice
and personal narrative has also been informed and strengthened by organisational learning
in the form of research, data, different approaches, influences and ideas which he has
gained through social movement and other civil society organisations.

Through sharing personal stories activists, staff and stakeholders learn and gain insight into
areas which they weren’t familiar with, while also promoting debate and dialogue around
those stories. NA1 and NA2, Israeli and Palestinian speakers, who worked together on a SNS
tour of UK schools in Bradford 2019, had sometimes intense discussions about the realities
of war for Palestinian families, whose homes are used by Israeli soldiers as ‘observation
points’. As a result of hearing NA2’s story about Israeli soldiers stationing themselves in her
childhood home in the West Bank, NA1 asked her Israeli army friends for more details about
what happens in war and how Israeli soldiers behave:
it is interesting from which eyes you see the situation and I am happy that a lot of my friends don’t do that. But they said, yes, someone in my group did it. That’s a hard truth. But I needed to hear it from my friends (NA1, 2020).

NA1 retains the belief that soldiers are not bad people but need to maintain dignity and respect for civilians and that they are sometimes put in impossible situations. From her interactions with NA2, who also became her friend, she says ‘every time you talk about the conflict, it’s hard, but you learn new things’ (NA1, 2020).

Like Palestinian activist NS4, Israeli activist NA1 also underlines how storytelling skills are as important as the content of the story in presenting a good story. Of NA2’s story and presentation in Bradford schools in the UK, NA1 said:

She was like super prepared, and it was amazing, I can study a lot from that. She had a really a good story to tell. It is sad story but it is a really powerful story and it was well told (NA1, 2020).

SNS Executive Director, NS1, claims that personal stories as part of conflict resolution are part of complex and multi-layered discussions which require experience and skills and that speakers in schools must have evolved to a level of understanding of the other side in order to present their stories most convincingly side by side (NS1, 2020). By NA1 maintaining a security narrative (i.e., bad things happen in war) as part of her interaction with NA2, who was saying that her human rights had been violated, their conversation had become more difficult. That conversation nonetheless provided a key learning experience for NA1, who is
now rethinking her own narrative about what the experience of war means for Palestinians (NS1, 2020).

For Communications Director at Darkenu, DS6, communication professionals’ roles in organisations are about elevating individual stories such as these and making them representative of the narratives which organisations are creating. For Darkenu that is about ensuring that both religious and secular narratives are heard:

   We have our narrative we have our national story and the Zionists and Jewish Israelis they have their national narrative and they have their national story. These are two parallel lines. They must listen to us and we must listen to them. We cannot make their story and they cannot make our story (DS6, 2020).

Individual stories of hardship, although shared, are exclusive and give credibility and weight to testimonies and commitment to political activism.

In Palestine, ALLMEP Regional Director, ZE1, also believes that imagining futures by telling personal stories and helping construct narratives that promote transformational non-violent visions of unity and purpose is a key role for peacebuilding organisations: ‘we need a vision in Palestine. We have always had one and it has been compromised and we need to create another vision’ (ZE1, 2020).

However, Zimam Director, ZS2, believes that by taking students when they are young to join organisations such as the US leadership development organisation, Seeds of Peace, and
attending conflict resolution youth camps in the US, or even when they are a bit older to join Zimam, is not enough. He believes that getting young people involved in dialogue, telling their stories and changing their narratives, can also lead them to be even more disappointed when they realise that sharing stories and dialogue alone was not sufficient to make things better in Palestine. This disappointment, ZS2 suggests, has to do with the inequalities which exist in the types of young people who are able to attend these camps, as well as in the ways in which dialogue sometimes fails to lead to political activism or inadvertently leads to violent activism (ZS2, 2020). Common to other critiques of deliberative democracy (Mutz, 2006) ZS2, Deputy Director of Zimam, suggests that dialogue and deliberation for peacebuilding does not always take into account how authentic or unequal dialogue or deliberation might be, when, for example, it only tends to be English speaking Palestinian activists from middle-class families who are able to attend international peacebuilding activities, or when young Palestinians remain powerless to address injustices when they return home.

Palestinian activist, ZS6, is also critical that today Palestinian speakers at SNS all have personal stories but that these are no longer necessarily political narratives, proposing political solutions, and the speakers are not necessarily very politically mature. In this instance narratives are, he believes, becoming less overtly political (in terms of political messages) and storytelling is only a vehicle for self-promotion and opportunities for travel rather than social change: ‘Today, speakers are more apathic about politics, but they want to travel. And this is a problem for me (ZS6, 2020)’. 
Developing skills as a first step to telling your personal story and experience of being a Palestinian is not therefore sufficient for activist ZS6 (2020), who believes that more informed and active political engagement and participation are required. Definitions of what is political and what is not, at an individual level, are not however defined or articulated by the four organisations, beyond a refusal to promote extremist positions. The organisations in the study which aim to build the infrastructure for political change through skills and training programmes, but who do not promote those skills and training programmes in tandem with specific political goals or agendas, may not be transparent in what they are aiming to achieve. While at an individual level that kind of story telling is empowering, at an organisational level, the outcomes may also therefore be diluted in terms of what organisations are able to take from it and achieve politically in a state arena. Nonetheless, organisational learning builds on the individual empowerment which comes out of processes of narrative making by creating a cohesive organisational narrative out of individual narratives, that challenges the political status quo. This is, I argue, a political process with political outcomes.

At Zimam, staff member and activist, ZA3, for example, believes that developing programming such as ‘Palestine 2030’ is part of building a more overt national and political narrative. ‘Palestine 2030’ includes monthly town hall meetings and conferences across the West Bank and Gaza and encourages people to speak up for their rights to ‘build a fresh Palestinian narrative that speaks of freedoms, democracy, non-violence and respect for ‘the other’ (Medium, 2022).
A less political approach by schools’ speakers at SNS, aligns more with SNS’s approach which is required when working in a schools’ environment in the UK.

Zimam staff member, ZS4, also says that activists in Palestine are sometimes just happy to share their personal stories and to feel validated and that this too is meaningful in a society where you are not always free to tell your story and where women in particular do not feel heard:

> These women are coming from a very conservative community. Even meeting with international people, for them someone who is coming from outside from US and UK to hear their personal stories and to be and to feel with them is amazing (ZS4, 2020).

How deeply these different kinds of attitudes are discussed at organisational level is not fully clear to me, but I do have a sense that storytelling has become the main currency of activists in the peacebuilding sector and that organisations’ political legitimacy and grassroots credentials, particularly in Palestine, rely on those personal accounts of endurance and hardship. In this way the ‘personal’ and personal stories have become political at an individual and organisational level, and, as I evidence, can also draw criticism for not involving more direct engagement with politics. That kind of criticism suggests that ‘deliberation’ through dialogue, story-telling and narrative formation promotes a false consensus by trying to gloss over conflict and structural inequalities (Ryfe, 2005; Gutmann and Thompson, 2009). Palestinian activist, ZE1’s (2020), conceptualisation of stories and narratives as ‘conduits for education’ where the personal becomes political, supports a different argument outlined in the next chapter. That argument suggests that it is within
those narratives and stories and as part of their creation that power is challenged in a way which feeds broader political and structural change.

The ways in which OV and SNS present stories from both sides of the conflict and reframe the conflict, an in which Darkenu and Zimam rewrite Israeli and Palestinian narratives and articulate new futures in the context of state politics, remain challenging. Additional questions related to politics about when a personal story becomes political and when individual and organisational stories become part of a pattern or a structure, are addressed more fully in chapter 8. In chapter 8 individuals find ‘strength within’ and hope in the reframing of narratives, as part of processes which are considered in the context of the relationships between organisational learning and politics. These organisations’ contributions to political transformation, through the ways in which they participate in transfers of political power at multiple levels through the creation and promotion of new narratives, as outcomes of organisational learning, are also explored.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have focused on the reframing of narratives as an important process and outcome of organisational learning which impacts on internal and external stakeholders (research question 3). Narrative formation is seen to be particularly relevant for organisations operating in and working to impact on environments where positions are hardened around national, political and religious perspectives, in ways which regularly lead to violent conflict. I have considered examples of some of the complex ways in which
religion and politics inform each other in Israel and Palestine and have argued that reframing narratives through organisational learning involves understanding and sometimes dismantling and recreating individual, organisational and national narratives in ways which challenge entwined religious and political identities. This kind of organisational learning includes capacity building for activists to help them respond to criticism and even social exclusion for challenging particular political and/or religious views, as well as creating new narratives at an organisational level which resonate with rather than alienate a widely diverse public with a multitude of political and religious affiliations.

Organisational literature on narratives and organisational learning has tended to focus on the challenges for organisations of ‘making themselves more sensitive to the diverse perspectives of different groups of people working within them’ and on how ‘participatory narrative’ as an organisational learning technique can enable an interplay between these different perspectives within organisations (Lämsä and Sintonen, 2006: 106). I have demonstrated how organisations also challenge and shape dominant narratives as an organisational learning mechanism for broader social and political change. How personal and organisational narratives become part of politics is explored further in the next chapter and adds to organisational learning literature which does not necessarily consider the context within which organisations are working and their political aims and objectives, or the ways in which organisations challenge or support the status quo through the construction of narratives. I also therefore, add to social movement theory about narratives, by evidencing how narratives, religious, political or other, are reconstructed through organisational learning.
Chapter 7 - Politics and Power and Organisational Learning

Introduction

In chapter 5 I asked how organisational learning takes place at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, as well as who participates in that learning and how. I discussed some of the ways in which organisational learning takes place either as managed processes, such as strategy, planning and evaluation, through more informal social learning. I considered all of these as mechanisms for organisational learning. I then demonstrated in chapter 6 how organisations and individuals also use narrative making as a mechanism for organisational learning to challenge and create new narratives which reframe political and social issues. The outcomes of that learning, in the form of new narratives, were then seen to become the building blocks for individual and organisational identity construction and change.

This chapter argues that organisational learning can also be understood in the ways that it aims to address asymmetries of power and, for these organisations, takes place in safe and accommodating political spaces which serve as routes to political change and transformation. I evidence how the challenging of power which is part of learning and struggles (Freire, 2005 [1970]) at individual, organisational and policy levels, is facilitated by organisational learning processes. Indeed, as part of their missions for social justice and peace in Israel and Palestine, OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS work to challenge the status quo and address power inequalities in wider society. They seek to do this through capacity building, lobbying, creating and communicating narratives, influencing and funding, managing internal struggles and systems, strengthening networks and supporting
individuals – processes all outlined in chapter 5. I see all of these activities, where skills and knowledge are acquired, honed, shared and constantly adapted, as political.

An important theme which was discussed in the literature review (chapter 2), and which has also emerged from the data in previous chapters, is to do with politics in various forms – politics which provide the context for individuals’ experiences and for organisations’ work, and politics as the exercise of power which is challenged and negotiated. In this chapter, I address more specifically my research questions which ask how learning in organisations can be understood to be ‘political’ and what the relationships are between organisational learning and politics. While power is present in all relationships, and not all relationships are political, I answer these questions with a recognition of the power present within all relationships and an understanding of the potentially political nature of relationships dependent on context and interpretation (Czajka, 2022). I conceptualise politics ‘in’ and ‘on’ peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine primarily as a questioning of how power is exercised and who holds it. This is evidenced by the ways in which hybrid NGO/SMOs challenge power from within by providing accommodating political spaces as sites for learning, and by taking the learning produced in those spaces to promote political change and transformation external to the organisations.

Political spaces are generally understood as areas in democratic societies where ‘unconstrained articulation and organisation can occur and where political authority using the structures of the state cannot arbitrarily control or inhibit the will of the people’ (Tkacheva, 2013:4). In this way political space can be ‘the avenues, opportunities and entry points available for citizens to express their voice and influence political processes and
outcomes’ (NDI, 2022). These spaces are understood as conflictual and sites of struggle as well as productive (Mouffe, 2011 [2005]: 20). Hajer (2003) describes new political spaces as those that are formed when there are institutional voids, where more conventional policy mechanisms are unable to resolve problems and where different actors define and articulate policy problems and epistemologies. Social movements and ‘contentious politics’ (Tarrow, 1998) are often associated with these ‘spaces’ where political struggles and experimentation take place, and which are also understood as empowering emancipatory tools for people seeking political participation (Boudreau, 2007). Boudreau (2007) points out however that although these new political spaces ‘may be able to create the conditions for political exchange, they do not guarantee emancipation, democracy, and justice’ (Boudreau, 2007:2593). In this research, I expand on these ideas to define accommodating political spaces as physical and virtual spaces which the organisations studied provide, where power is exercised internally through the accommodation of conflicting beliefs. This allows for exploration and engagement in external political arenas by a wide range of people holding different political and religious views (see section 7.3.3).

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first, 7.1, describes a conceptualisation of politics as the exercise of power within the context of organisational learning. Section 7.2, analyses the multi-level asymmetries of power which exist within and between the organisations in my case study and between the organisations and larger political institutions in their specific contexts. Addressing those asymmetries will be seen to involve organisational learning. The focus of this section is primarily on Palestine and Zimam, because this is where my data shows that the greatest asymmetries exist. In section 7.3 organisations are examined through the ways in which leaders, staff and activists challenge
the exercise of power by addressing their own individual and organisational struggles and articulating new visions for politics and peacebuilding as part of organisational learning. These processes take place in safe and accommodating political spaces which serve as sites for that learning.

### 7.1 A Conceptualisation of Politics as the Exercise of Power

Chapter 3 explained the local and national political systems which provide the political context for the work of OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. In this chapter, that which is political is understood as the exercise of power, where individuals, organisations and institutions exert power over each other through, for example, decision making, or in responses, say, to donors, funders or regulatory systems, in coercive as well as less obviously coercive ways (Lukes, 2005 [1974]). It is further argued that organisations experience, manage and sometimes help reshape the balance of power in relationships through organisational learning in a way which can be understood as political. Organisational learning literature suggests that paradigms for organisational learning must recognise that learning takes place within relations of power (Pedlar and Hsu, 2019; Ortenblad, 2019; Pettit, 2021), and further explores those relationships within organisations in different ways (Bristow, Tompkins and Hartley, 2022). Organisational literature about how organisational learning might impact on broader political change is not yet fully addressed. By focusing on how exercises of power are exposed, explored, negotiated and contested as part of the learning which takes place within and between individuals and organisations, as well as within the wider context of conflict, the thesis adds to organisational learning theory.
Dahl’s (1957) definition of observable power centres on the premise of the power of A to get B to do something they would not otherwise do. In this definition, power is relational and shifting and the gatekeepers of power are also changing. Politics as power also advocates that politics potentially takes place whenever power as agency or authority is exerted within contexts which realise that potential (Leftwich, 2004; Foucault, 1979, 1982). So, rather than confining politics to a particular sphere like the state or the government, my understanding of politics also explores aspects of the exertion of power between individuals, organisations and politics which manifest themselves in different ways and are central to all collective social activity (Leftwich, 2004; Foucault, 1979; 1982).

In *Sexual Politics* (2016 [1970]), feminist writer Kate Millett also sees politics as power-structured relationships, where one group of persons is controlled by another. In *Power, A Radical View*, Lukes (2005 [1974]) sees politics as less overt, in that there are several faces of power and that there are other less observable ways of manifesting or exerting power and shaping political agendas (Lukes, 2005 [1974]). Gaventa’s (2006) conceptualisation of the ‘Powercube’ (see chapter 2) highlights the multiple levels, spaces and forms of power and how they interact with each other, as a tool for advocacy and change making. In all these approaches, it is understood that the exercise of power in relationships (including within and between organisations and their wider context), can change. The ‘Powercube’ also, however, provides me with a structure for thinking about how multiple processes, mechanisms, sites and outcomes of organisational learning each also contain relationships of power within them. These can also form a three-dimensional puzzle where parts are connected but move independently without the entire structure falling apart.
A development management perspective discusses power in the context of social change through the lenses of individual agency and of broader structural systems and norms. It looks at the ways in which these different levels of power:

- continually interact, or indeed work holistically to sustain or subvert systems of power; and power can be destabilised or created anew through collective awareness and through the articulation and enactment of alternatives (McGee and Pettit, 2020:6).

From this perspective, power and empowerment in the interaction of individuals, organisations and institutions are routes to social change (Leftwich and Sen, 2011: 320). Organisations are therefore part of political processes of negotiating power. This happens at an individual level through empowerment and agency building, and at a social structural level through the contestation of state level politics (Hayward and Lukes, 2008).

Pettit (2010, 2021) builds on Gaventa’s conceptualisation of power and ideas which explore power in and through learning in terms of how aid organisations and activists can develop individual agency and capacities which ensure wider and equal participation in addressing social inequalities:

Many organisations, practitioners and activists now identify power relations as an obstacle to achieving their aims of tackling poverty and inequality....

There is a growing appetite for getting to grips with power, what it means, how it operates, and how to be more strategic about it in processes of development and
social change. There is an interest not just in understanding power, but in strengthening capacities to manage and shift it. Responding to power and building alternative sources of power is a central preoccupation in organising, awareness-raising, campaigning and advocacy by civil society groups (Pettit, 2010: 25).

Here, developing a deeper understanding of power in the work of organisations through learning is one way of helping to bring about equitable social change. Pettit (2010; 2021) offers a learning framework for NGO organisations, through the experiential ‘Learning Trajectory Approach’, which helps organisations develop capacities for understanding power. Rowlands (2016) and Petitt (2010) both argue that these learning frameworks need to be developed in context specific and non-instrumental ways which can question existing systems. For activists and organisations, Miller et al. (2006: 4) argue that, ‘[h]aving a conversation ... about how power and change operate in light of real-life politics and organizing experiences [is] absolutely necessary [and] is in itself an organizing and empowerment strategy’. From a feminist activism perspective, a power analysis clarifies context and helps shape strategy:

It clarifies our points of leverage and influence: where political space for our concerns exists and where it does not; who our allies are; what the defining narratives are on our issues; and the inevitable resistance and hostility to our agendas we will face. Navigating and building power in this way takes time, skill and sustained work. It demands coordination between advocacy efforts and grassroots organising, short- and long-term efforts (Bradley, 2019: 103).
Rowlands (2019: 153) also underlines the importance of the ways in which these kinds of frameworks help individuals understand and challenge power in their own lives. In this approach to power analysis in organisations, Lukes’ (2005 [1974]) ‘multiple faces of power call for multiple faces of learning and capacity’ (Pettit, 2010: 26). This is an approach which I adopt in chapter 9 where I argue that creating change requires changes in the exercise of power, which in turn means ‘understanding it, navigating it, challenging it and transforming it’ (Bradley, 2019: 115). I also argue that organisational learning can be part of the processes which lead to that change. For the purposes of this research, but missing from Gaventa’s Power Cube and Pettit’s power analysis, I also emphasise the idea that relationships are not only characterised by the exercise of power but that the outcomes of challenging those relationships as part of peacebuilding can be positive sum. Thus, the total sum of power, if and when it is reshaped, is not fixed and can be expanded on.

Additionally, approaches which acknowledge how inequalities of power can be addressed through organisational learning to inform and to improve planning, strategy, monitoring, evaluation, build alliances and partnerships (Pettit, 2010; McGee and Pettit, 2020; Eyben, 2020), do not yet fully address the research questions which I ask about the relationships between organisations with political agendas for peacebuilding and politics in Israel and Palestine. Asking how individuals and organisations navigate the exercise of power in ways which are understood as potentially political (at individual, organisational as well as within wider state political contexts) will I argue, require a fuller conceptualisation of how organisational learning as processes, mechanisms, outcomes and sites of learning, can help address those questions. This involves moving beyond thinking about how power in relationships is exerted, to understanding how those relationships are challenged,
negotiated and reshaped through processes and mechanisms of organisational learning in accommodating political spaces.

7.2 Asymmetries in the Exercise of Power

Organisations working in the context of the Israeli Palestinian conflict operate environments where state power is hotly contested and always changing. In this section I highlight where asymmetries and abuses of power exist for organisations operating in these contexts (7.2.1), some of the ways the organisations in this study and other civil society organisations negotiate those asymmetries of power (7.2.2), and an exploration of the inter and intra organisational asymmetries of power which also exist (7.2.3).

7.2.1 Asymmetries in Power in the Israeli Palestinian Conflict

In 1995 the Oslo II Accord, divided the Israeli-occupied West Bank into three administrative divisions: Areas A, B and C. Each area was given different status, pending a final status accord, which has so far not been agreed. Area A is administered by the Palestinian National Authority, Area B is administered by both the Palestinian Authority and Israel, and Area C, which contains the Israeli settlements, is administered by Israel. However, overall military control of all of these areas remains in Israeli hands and is an example of how initial power distributions have become deeply structurally embedded. Palestinians and many outside Israel refer to these territories as ‘Occupied Territories’ and to the current status quo as ‘The Occupation’ (Makdisi, 2018). While the Palestinian Authority nominally controls areas of the West Bank, power is manifest and negotiated with Israelis in everyday
life for Palestinians, in ways which it is not for Israelis. Additionally, within Israel and Palestine, for example in Gaza as opposed to the West Bank (which I observed first hand when conducting a focus group) or for Palestinian as opposed to Jewish Israelis in Israel, power is negotiated and manifest in different ways. For individuals and organisations like Zimam this means having to negotiate power in ways which OV in the US, Darkenu in Israel and SNS in the UK also do not have to.

When Zimam activists and staff travel to events in the West Bank, they pass through road blocks and delays (ZA1, 2019). When Zimam staff travel internationally, travel permits need to be obtained from Israel (ZS2, 2020) and they face additional visa restrictions based on their nationality (Cesarz, 2018). The West Bank and Gaza do not have airports or ports which mean that Palestinians wishing to leave the country need to seek permission from Israel to travel via a third country such as Jordan. Zimam staff and their children routinely go through military checkpoints, to get to work, school or to visit family and friends (ZS1, 2020). The Palestinian energy and water supply is also controlled by Israel (Wessels, 2015) and communications between staff and activists, particularly with colleagues in Gaza is unreliable and often disrupted due to power cuts (ZS2, 2020). Some Palestinians who live abroad and work with OV and Zimam are unable to return to Gaza or the West Bank to visit their families (OS5, 2020).

Palestinians who live in Gaza, as opposed to the West Bank or within Israel, negotiate power in even more complex ways. While the Hamas authority govern Gaza, religious as well as political compliance is required by Hamas’s Islamist and militant political party (OS5, 2020). Zimam, and OV Palestine before it, operate in a difficult environment in Gaza, where staff
and activists’ lives and the organisation are under surveillance and at times threatened (OS5, 2020). The current Head of Zimam in Gaza, ZS7, describes how Zimam as an organisation in Gaza has less agency and independence as compared to Ramallah and is much freer to operate in the West Bank (ZS7, 2020). Like the original founder of OV Gaza, the current Head of Zimam in Gaza is subject to regular questioning by the Hamas authorities about Zimam activities (OS5, 2020; ZS7, 2020). When OS7 ran the OneVoice Palestine office in Gaza, it was ransacked and shut down by Hamas’s militants, and OS7 fled to the West Bank with his family. Decisions by the Israeli authorities, who would not subsequently allow OS7’s wife to move with him to Ramallah, have now resulted in OS7 emigrating to the US. OS7 now works with OV in the US and continues to act as a close advisor and mentor to the current Zimam Director, ZS7, in Gaza (OS7, 2020). In terms of formal as well as action learning, Gaza staff and activists have more limited opportunities than their colleagues in the West Bank to mix, share and develop ideas and programmes of activity (OS7, 2020).

Within both Israel and Palestine, while political factions compete for domination, Darkenu and Zimam work in a fractious environment and try to reshape balances of local and national power in order to help shift extremism to more moderate non-violent approaches. In Palestine the secular party, Fatah, and the Islamist party, Hamas, fight each other politically, in sometimes violent ways, for domination of both Gaza and the West Bank. Violent events, for example, took place in May 2021 when Hamas attacked Israel in an attempt to make local political gains over the Palestinian Authority and Fatah (AL-Monitor, 2021). In 2021-2022 an Israeli coalition which aimed to represent a broad spectrum of political and religious opinion, replaced far right-wing minority coalitions which have
dominated Israeli politics and excluded centre, left and Israeli minority groups (Arabs, Druz, Bedouin etc.) from political power since the 1990s. In November 2022, political power in Israel was restored to a right-wing coalition which is likely to lead to more hard-line policies towards the Palestinians. In this context, there is in 2022 still no political consensus or push for peace. In both Israel and Palestine, internal political struggles for power also impact on and play into the conflict with each other. Organisations operating within these contexts are hyper-vigilant, responsive to, and aware of the local and national power struggles which affect their abilities to operate effectively (ZS2, 2020; DS4, 2019, 2020).

Shifting power away from extremists to moderates has been OneVoice, Darkenu and Zimam’s driving agenda since they were founded (ES1, 2019). The nature of the Israeli Palestinian conflict and Israeli politics, which gives disproportionate power to a far-right wing Israeli minority, has similarly been the main driver for Darkenu and OV. Other peacebuilding organisations in Israel and Palestine and internationally also work for these goals to reshape the ways in which power is exercised. The Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) has, for example, been working towards attitudinal changes as a way to protect against human rights abuses (ES1, 2020) and, like Darkenu and Zimam and other civil society organisations working in this space, faces challenges particular to this environment.

7.2.2 Negotiating Asymmetries of Power: NGOs, SMOs and Civil Society and the State

In Israel and Palestine, organisational learning involves how organisations learn to address challenges which asymmetries of power present. As ongoing reflection and adaptation of
strategy and programming, Darkenu and Zimam, in particular, learn to navigate and negotiate complex political terrains where asymmetries of power play out between civil society and the state. Asymmetries of power are manifest in the ways in which civil society organisations seeking peacebuilding or democracy in Israel and Palestine are often ostracised and delegitimised by extremist political and religious groups. Asymmetries of power and the influence of aid, particularly in Palestine, also impact on civil society organisations in how they are perceived and managed.

In Israel, activists, and some academics (NS3, 2020) believe that the work of civil society organisations promoting peace and democracy clearly touches a nerve in the Israeli psyche, because it brings into question narratives about Israeli identity:

I can see why Peace Now and Breaking the Silence touch this nerve and create strong negative reactions from a lot of Israelis, because those organisations expose the moral deficiency or suggest that there is a stain on our moral fibre, if we justify or continue to do this (NS3, 2020).

This is not without consequence and the Director of Peace Now believes that with the delegitimisation of peacebuilding, through accusations that peacebuilding itself delegitimises Israel, has come a more general disempowerment of civil society as a whole:

Lately, since the 2015 election and the legislation of the V15 law (law preventing the participation of ‘non-political’ entities in elections), and especially since the 2019 election, I see organisations limit themselves. They don’t want to be too outspoken
about political issues, because they are afraid, they might be charged because of that law.

But I do see other organisations compromising on their messages in order not to be caught or charged within this law. It has a cooling effect on civil society (DE1, 2020).

Former CEO of OV, ES1 (2019), also believes that sustaining delegitimization of peacebuilding and of peacebuilding organisations includes sustaining dehumanisation as a way of keeping ‘the other’ separate and of staying in power. This means that at a strategy and programming level, approaches to peacebuilding, agency building and efforts to bring about structural change are heavily tailored to include many encounters and dialogue-based programmes. For Zimam these kinds of programmes, outlined in chapter 5, take place more at a local level, whereas at Darkenu, digital platforms such as DemocraTV are allowing those conversations to take place at a national level.

In chapter 5, I also noted how delegitimation and ostracization led to activists seeking out organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, where their ideas are accepted and could be heard and explored. But while hybrid NGO/social movement organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS help champion the interests and the values of their members outside of political parties and state institutions which support the status quo, strong relationships also exist between these organisations and mainstream politics. The organisations also become more or less powerful depending on who is in political office and their affiliations and connections to those parties and individuals.
An important aspect of organisational learning which helps address asymmetries of power between Israelis and Palestinians involves building extensive networks of contacts and partners and learning from these relationships. Being tapped into centrist, Arab, leftist as well as right-wing parties meant that Darkenu was well placed in 2021 to promote their values through advising and collaborating with the 2021 coalition government which also spanned leftist, centrist, Arab and right-wing parties. (Some more left wing Israeli political parties and activists nonetheless believe that Darkenu is not outspoken enough and does not use its power and privilege to properly address issues around the Israeli Palestinian conflict (NS3, 2020)). For Zimam, a wide network of contacts in the Palestinian Authority means that they operate relatively successfully within the political sphere in the West Bank at least. For OV in the US, their fortunes also changed with the success of the Democratic party in 2020 which meant that their lobbying activities were supported in Congress (OS1, 2020). In this way, the ways in which organisations work to negotiate power through their relationships are directly linked to national and international politics.

Partnerships between civil society and political institutions are historically different to each other in Israel and Palestine. In Israel, political sociologist and founder of OneVoice Israel, Samuel Peleg (2020), believes that a traditionally narrow version of Israel politics does not value participation from civil society and only sees decision making and power at the top. He also believes that there has been little meaningful connection between political parties and state institutions and civil society in Israel over the last approximate 20 years, which has resulted in politicians demeaning the activity and values of civil society and delegitimising peacebuilding as being anti-Zionist. This view of democracy where knowledgeable elites rule society (Shumpeter, 1942), is not mirrored in Palestine, where NGOs are viewed by
some to serve as a ‘connective tissue’ (Zeira, 2019: 173) between Palestinian institutions and individuals opposed to Israel, and are also deemed to play an important role in providing social welfare provision (Zeira, 2019). In such contexts, organisations such as Zimam can also be understood as substituting for a weak state by providing social welfare. In Palestine, and contrary to literature which looks at stable states as necessary for the success of civil society (Gramsci, 2006 [1929-1935]), an unstable state structure is seen by some as having strengthened rather than weakened certain civil society organisations. Critics however claim that, in the West Bank at least, civil society has become a globalised elite made up of NGO organisations and individuals, is disconnected from the Palestinian people and leads to unsustainable NGO projects (Salem, 2012). My experiences as a researcher in the West Bank and the data which I have collected, which points to staff and activists building non-violent leadership capacity in a complex and dangerous environment, does not corroborate those conclusions.

Nonetheless, in Palestine, where power shifts between political factions, it is not always easy for civil society organisations to know where power lies. In a society where civil society and the services they provide have for the most part been co-opted by political parties such as Fatah and Hamas, organisations such as Zimam, which want to challenge Palestinian authorities but are non-partisan, navigate power dynamics which are not always overtly clear, such as when different political factions gain or lose authority. The ongoing nature of learning in this environment is reflected in the changing nature of Zimam’s board where, for example, allegiances reflect changing centres of power. PA officials are no longer deemed to be able to offer the protection that they were once recruited to the board for, as observed by Zimam Director, ZS3:
In Palestine there might be a board that looks like it could protect you but once you need the protection, it is likely they are going to throw you under the bus and the board that really cares about you might not have as much power (ZS3, 2020).

For Zimam, there is a growing reliance on its own networks at municipal and state level which keep the organisation tapped in to local and national developments and, it is hoped, make it less prone to political attack:

It’s the big network because we are everywhere across Palestine and because we have all of these relationships. The CEO of Zimam is the librarian of all this stuff, creating the network and making sure things are done in a certain way. Also, through the partnerships, we know the municipalities in different places, we know the ministries that we work with well, so there are very good relationships, but they don’t guarantee anything in term of, oh we have a powerful board member who can get things done for us or who can stand in the way of any future danger (ZS3, 2020).

As ‘the librarian’, the well-respected CEO of Zimam, ZS1, closely manages, oversees and has built these relationships over time, in a way which helps ensure Zimam’s ongoing legitimacy.

For civil society organisations in Palestine, power is also negotiated as part of a culture of aid dependency. This refers to the disproportionate amount of funding that is given by foreign, as opposed to local, donors (Phillips, 2013). In Palestine, this is a phenomenon affecting both civil society organisations and government institutions (Tartir, 2017). Aid
dependency is relevant to organisational learning in that the receipt of aid is dependent in large part on an organisation’s capacity to account for that funding through evaluation processes set by donors (which, it can be argued, do not necessarily lead to organisational learning). Zimam is therefore focused on ensuring that staff have the accounting and other financial management capacities required by donors (ZS2, 2020). For Zimam, aid and international donor dependency present a complex picture, where organisational learning in the form of the acquisition of administration and financial management skills also takes place in order to ensure that their funding is secure.

In Palestine, there are approximately 1400 NGOs (PIJ.ORG, 2021). Organisations like Zimam operate principally from what is sometimes called (ZE1, 2020) the ‘Ramallah bubble’ (Naylor, 2012) where they ‘get status from being able to pull out a cheque book’ (EB2, 2020) in a way which is only made possible by funding from foreign donors. In this context, for organisations which receive foreign funding, no matter how local and legitimate their activities, financial authority and control ultimately lies elsewhere. The consequences of this are twofold. While Zimam funders maintain oversight of spending, organisations such as Zimam are never able to be fully independent in their decision making. ZS3 describes the current intense level of financial oversight at Zimam more broadly:

In Palestine the Zimam board has less financial oversight than boards internationally because they don’t have so much power, the law does not give them so much power and also because we have so much oversight from elsewhere. With UN funding, it’s from the UN, with OneVoice funding it’s now massive oversight and we also have oversight through our own audits (ZS3, 2020).
Accountant and OV board member EB2 does not however believe that foreign funders always exert that oversight, control and power effectively and that failure to demand accountability and transparency can also leave room for, or encourage, fraudulent activities. This unfortunately reinforces stereotypes that Palestinian organisations are not to be trusted (EB2, 2020). In 2019, for example, a former CEO of Zimam was found to have been taking ‘loans’ from Zimam. Following investigation by Zimam and OV in the US, the CEO was dismissed. Since that period, multiple financial reviews, audits and overhauls of financial systems have taken place, with those processes being led, controlled and facilitated by the OV board. With this level of oversight and control, questions remain about how possible it is to have organisational independence and control (ES1, 2020) or to ‘facilitate transformative outcomes’ (Banks, Hulme and Edwards 2015: 710), when important aspects of organisational learning agendas, such as financial management, are set by foreign funders.

There are particular sensitivities for peacebuilding organisations working to redress asymmetries of power external to them. For example, one such Jewish organisation (anonymous) works primarily in the US and lobbies for US policy which supports a Two-State-Solution. Because of the historic and current inequalities of power which exist between Palestinians and Israelis, that US charity Director, OE2, observes how in making efforts to address those imbalances, foreign and Israeli organisations sometimes find it difficult to ask hard questions of Palestinians in the same way that they try and hold Israelis accountable. OE2, believes that failing to ask difficult questions of the Palestinians, due to a hyper sensitivity to their lack of ‘power’ and ‘agency’, is not a useful or productive approach:
I feel as if we hold Israelis more accountable for the deterioration of the situation on the ground than we do Palestinians and we feel uncomfortable pointing out where Palestinians might have some sort of responsibility, because we understand the asymmetry of the conflict. I think for everyone this can be a disservice for really understanding the crux of the issues on both sides (OE2, 2020).

Asymmetries of power external to organisations are addressed in different ways by different organisations through organisational learning. In chapter 5, countering dehumanisation of the ‘other’ takes place through encounters, debates and other programmes of activity, including on online platforms such as DemocraTV. By staying informed through research and sharing information within their networks (5.1.3), the organisations in this study are part of ongoing processes of reflection which help them navigate complexities of local and national politics and to identify points of local, national and international political leverage and influence.

Although relationships between civil society and political institutions such as political parties and local municipal councils are historically different from each other in Israel and Palestine, asymmetries of power play out in both places in the ways in which social movement organisations seeking social justice or peacebuilding are, as already mentioned (chapter 3), often ostracised and delegitimised by local and international political and religious groups. Understanding and addressing these asymmetries of power has required organisational learning by the organisations in this study which includes ongoing reflection, analysis, and in the case of Darkenu, a significant amount of research (DS2, 2019) and ‘a history of using
data and research to determine next steps and learn best practices’ (Darkenu, 2022).

Building local capacity, to ensure that Zimam is not reliant on foreign expertise as part of cycles of aid dependency, goes some way to ensuring their local success (ZS2, 2020). Understanding and dealing with the influence of aid, particularly in Palestine, involves an ongoing awareness and reflection about how agendas are set by foreign donors, and the implications of that (ZS2, 2020). Understanding where power lies, through building strategic networks and alliances which include knowledge exchange in changing political landscapes, also strengthens all of these organisations’ capacities to protect themselves and others, regardless of where that power lies. In all of these ways, civil society organisations can be seen trying to address asymmetries of power, which exist external to them and are political at local and national levels, through organisational learning. The following section explores how organisational learning helps to address asymmetries of power in and between organisations in ways which can be understood as political.

### 7.2.3 Inter and Intra Organisational Asymmetries of Power

In this section organisational learning describes the ways organisations learn to address internal challenges which asymmetries of power present. As ongoing reflection and adaptation of strategy and programmes of work, organisational learning helps organisations navigate and negotiate political terrains where asymmetries of power play out within and between organisations. Literature concerned with the concept of power in the analysis of organisations and organisational learning acknowledges that power operates in different ways in an organisational context and that power is ‘at play in individual relations of conflict and cooperation, in the operation of rules, in administration, cultural norms and practices
and in the strategies, techniques and technologies employed by the organisation’ (Rye, 2015:318).

Inter and intra organisational asymmetries of power are theorised in different ways. In organisational literature questions are asked about how organisations maintain productive relationships between organisations when power inequalities exist (Nicholls and Huybrechts, 2016). On the other hand, in development literature, there is a different focus on how competing logics and ideologies often underpin relationships between NGOs, aid agencies and other civil society organisations and their funding institutions. That literature critiques the ways in which those organisations must adapt to more dominant management logics and discourse (Mowles, 2010). Understanding competing institutional logics and discourse (O’Laughlin, 2007) (see chapter 2.2) in hybrid organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam, which have characteristics of both grassroots social movement organisations as well as funded NGO entities, is relevant here in terms of how inter-organisational asymmetries of power are managed.

On a practical level, inter-organisational asymmetries of power are sometimes addressed at governance and board levels within OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, but asymmetries of power also result from different kinds and levels of representation in boards (Cornforth, 2012). The makeup of boards determines the approaches which are taken and priorities which are made. OV board member EB3, for example, believes that prior to the separation of OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS the OV US and European boards which were dominated by diaspora Jews, more focused on collaboration between OV Israel and OV Palestine:
OV as it used to be was really a Jewish way of viewing collaboration with Palestine. The board is predominantly diaspora Jewish and they are always looking for collaboration with Palestinians and the separation of the organisations now means that Darkenu and Zimam don’t necessarily have to stick to that script (EB3, 2020).

Now that Darkenu and Zimam are independent entities, with independent boards of their own, she believes they are better placed to gain legitimacy in their own local contexts:

Their independence is key to them becoming organisations that can ultimately wield power and have the legitimacy to make the changes that are needed within their societies (EB3, 2020).

Organisational governance structures, such as boards, can work to address internal inequalities of power as well as the external social inequalities, which civil society organisations are usually more vocal about. The OneVoice Board Co-Chair, OB1, is, for example, seeking to address inequalities at OV board level where representation of Palestinians has over the years diminished, but where the board hopes to address the issue with the creation of an ‘American Friends of Zimam’ as a way to attract more US Palestinians:

One of the strategic efforts that we have that I am hoping will help with this issue is in creating an American Friends of Zimam and an American Friends of Darkenu. I am
hoping we identify some Palestinian Americans who will be prepared to move on to the OneVoice board in this important moment of time (OB1, 2020).

This is a process which may produce shifts which can potentially create other asymmetries of power. Trustees with a more pro-two or single state solution attitude could, for example, influence the board differently and shift the current balances of power at board level.

In Israel, Darkenu board member, DB2, believes that Darkenu’s main funders have a certain level of control over the organisations that they fund and that this is both a funding and a learning challenge for organisations:

We tend to do what our funders want us to do. For a couple of years, we had strong Israeli funding because we had a very committed Chairman who was willing to fund and help fundraise. I don’t think that is going to be repeated and there are some serious fundraising challenges ahead (DB2, 2020).

Staff are also able to consolidate power inside organisations but not always in positive ways (OS1, 2020). At Zimam, leadership is currently shared at the senior executive level between the CEO and his two Deputy Directors. The CEO of OV, OS1 believes that the former CEO of Zimam (unlike the current leadership) consolidated power by holding on to knowledge and information. She now, for example, understands that there was manipulation in the ways that logistics were changed last minute to cut off her access to other local staff during her visits to Zimam, how weekly calls with OV were also monopolised and communications with other Zimam staff limited. Similarly in Israel, a US management consultant who has worked
for OV, OE1, had a sense that some Darkenu staff were not getting the ‘interactive juice’ (OE1, 2020) that a previous Director was benefitting from, as most interactions between OV, Darkenu and Zimam were mediated through her (OE1, 2020).

These are examples of how asymmetries of power are both created and sometimes, but not always, addressed at governance and management levels. Asymmetries of power also mean that when individual activists and staff have different needs in different contexts, their pursuit of agency and the exercise of power at an individual level will manifest itself in different ways. In order for these asymmetries of power to be effectively addressed by organisations, these are sometimes acknowledged and addressed through some of the processes discussed in chapter 5. At SNS, Israeli and Palestinian activists are provided with support as they develop their storytelling skills, such as writing in a foreign language or the presentation of sensitive personal stories. At Zimam support includes formal skills and leadership training programmes as well as informal, sometimes daily, support through a strong community of like-minded peers and friends. Darkenu provides a platform and a voice for a community of activists who come together online and in person, particularly during election periods. OV provides a way for activists outside of Israel and Palestine to explore the issues of the conflict, and SNS works in a school environment to introduce these issues in the context of anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic hate.

Israeli activist NS3 underlines how the individual psychological needs in an asymmetrical conflict are different:
In Palestine bringing about structural change first involves giving people voice – in Israel it means helping strengthen that voice (NS3, 2020).

In a lot of Palestinian stories, you can hear that they speak a lot about, ‘I want to vote, I never voted, I want to speak, I have never spoken. My voice is not heard’. So, the pursuit of agency is really, really important in an asymmetrical conflict (NS3, 2020).

But here too there are differences between Palestinians in the West Bank and Israeli Palestinians, as Israeli Palestinians are often conflicted about participating in Israeli politics (which unlike Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza or East Jerusalem, they are able to do) because when they ‘don’t vote, they see the Arab parties lose the very little power they have, and when they do vote, there is no change’ (NS4, 2020).

In order to try and help address fundamental issues such as these, the organisations in the study adapt their strategy and activities to accommodate the different needs and attitudes arising from the various ways in which power is exercised in different contexts. DemocraTV produces videos in Hebrew and Arabic aimed at Israeli-Arab citizens which stress the importance of voting and the effects of voting on their everyday lives (Darkenu, 2022). In Gaza, where legislative elections have not been held since Hamas took control in 2006, Zimam activist, DFG (2020), hosts a radio programme version of a ‘politics café’, where she encourages young people to call in and to comment on and debate political issues which they feel affect them but which are beyond their control.
As each organisation regularly adapts to changing circumstances and the different needs of its staff and activists, they are informed by the formal and informal organisational learning outlined in chapters 5 and 6. These organisations address asymmetries of power through organisational learning by raising questions about national identity and by providing safe places and communities for dialogue, where ideas which question the status quo are accepted, and new political narratives are created. In doing so, the organisations help champion the interests and values of their members who might currently operate outside of formal political systems. Research conducted by Zimam in 2022 (Zimam, 2022) identified that 39% of Palestinians disagree with and are not affiliated with any political parties. Moving forward, it is this section of a mostly young population that Zimam will target with their messaging (Zimam, 2022) in order to build a moderate base in Palestine.

The organisations also navigate changing political landscapes by learning through lobbying and relationship building and by building and maintaining their own networks. Although they are subject to oversight and sometimes interference from funders, the organisations nonetheless work to maintain credibility within their local contexts by remaining as independent as possible within their own governance structures and decision-making processes. Within the organisations, governing bodies in the shape of boards are implicated in inequalities of power either by acknowledging and addressing them or in perpetuating them. I have also demonstrated how, in failing to ask difficult questions or holding individuals or organisations accountable, organisational learning approaches are not always successful in addressing inequalities.
In this section, informed by Gaventa’s power cube (2006) which conceptualises how levels, forms and spaces of power interact, I have analysed how asymmetries of the exercise of power occur at different levels and how challenging and addressing them takes place in different ways for each organisation. I go on to analyse how these processes are political, both as activities, where power exists, and in their potential consequences, where balances of power can be challenged and reshaped.

### 7.3 Reimagining Power and Politics

This section argues that where there exist asymmetries of power, organisations working for social and political change challenge the status quo by reimagining internal and external power and politics, as well as adapting and changing organisational structures and management. In earlier chapters, I have demonstrated how organisational learning is not a single purposeful process and takes place both through formal learning mechanisms as well as through informal and tacit social learning. I now discuss how a reimagining of power reshapes politics. This ‘reimagining’ includes the use of organisational learning mechanisms such as strategy and planning which help rethink organisational structures and internal relationships of power by building on past experiences (7.3.1). These mechanisms are analysed as part of learning processes which help organisations remain alert to changing context and conditions and the changing relationships of power, and to strengthen the development and implementation of political tactics (7.3.2). The reimagining of power also, I argue, includes the creation of ‘accommodating political spaces’ as sites for learning.
(7.3.3), which contain and accommodate differing viewpoints, politics and religion and encourage creativity and innovation.

### 7.3.1 Reimagining Organisations

Another running theme through this research has been the ongoing adaptations to change accompanied by internal power struggles which took place within and between OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, the learning which has both informed and resulted from these internal organisational struggles, and the directions which those organisations have chosen to take as a result of them. Once executive and board decisions were taken in early 2016 for Darkenu and Zimam to separate from OneVoice International and to become local and independent organisations, power shifted in important ways in terms of how those organisations managed themselves, sought funding and chose new strategic directions. These struggles and the resolution of and sometimes ongoing tensions within and between organisations did not, however, happen overnight and have been a part of continuing organisational learning processes in the form of dialogue, debate, formal reviews and strategy making, which have taken place since the founding of OneVoice in 2002 and have continued when each organisation became independent in 2016, through to the time of writing in 2022.

At Darkenu, former CEO, DS1, was surprised by the intensity of the process of organisational change. She described to me how different factions, which emerged once the social movement V15 and OneVoice Israel merged in the run up to the 2015 Israeli elections (see
section 3.4), struggled and negotiated over a 10-month period over what directions the newly formed organisation would take (DS1, 2019):

The thing is it was so big and there were so many people invested and as shareholders and everyone had a say about what should happen to V15 and OV the day after. There was this whole camp of people that thought that we should go back to being OV - take all the assets (a data base of 15,000 people, and 15,000 volunteers in 11 chapters all over Israel) and use them to promote the two-state solution. .... There was another big camp that from the beginning came to V15 to continue the social protest of 2011 [social protests in Israeli and globally opposing the rising cost of living]. These people thought that V15 should now become a [bigger] movement that should do social protest in a more systematic professional way that the people did in 2011. So, for it to be about social economic issues.

It was close to tearing apart - everyone was pushing very, very hard - it took ten months, a long process, to soften and change people opinions where people realised that if we are going to choose one over the other, we are going to lose a lot of the assets we are going to lose a lot of the authenticity that was there (DS1, 2019).

The challenge of merging of V15 and OneVoice Israel into one to raise the vote in the centre left camp in Israel, subsequently involved moving away from OneVoice Israel's original peacebuilding agenda to focus more on Israeli social and economic issues. Organisational learning, as ongoing reflective practices in the form of meetings, workshops, mediation, the use of external professional consultancy services, research as well as strategy and planning,
took place as part of managing these struggles first within existing and then within new organisational structures and resulted in changing organisational hierarchies and redistributing power. These learning processes ultimately resulted in power transferring from the Chief Executive of OV International, based in Europe, to the Chief Executive of the now independent Darkenu. This process was mirrored at OneVoice Palestine, which became Zimam. Darkenu and Zimam then independently went on to manage new power relations within their own organisations, as well as with each other. In chapter 8, I go on to suggest that these changes in organisational and governance structures have impacted on the local (Zimam) and national (Darkenu) political environments of which those organisations are part.

For social movement organisations, where learning is traditionally thought of as the fallout from struggles (Choudry, 2015; Choudry and Kapour, 2010), the use of processes and mechanisms for organisational learning, described in chapter 5 and illustrated above as part of internal struggles, is another way to conceptualise learning within those organisations. Here, I argue that organisational learning is about the processes, formal and informal, which guide change, and have political outcomes.

Absent, however, from the examples of learning processes described above, which were related to changing organisational structures, was an analysis by organisations themselves of how power was reshaped at individual, organisational or national political levels, so crucial to the formation of the newly independent organisations. Former CEO of OneVoice suggests that this no doubt reflects the sensitivities and challenges surrounding these kinds of changing relationships within and between organisations (ES1, 2020).
7.3.2 Reimagining Political Tactics and Campaigns

In the previous section, I noted that civil society organisations focused on peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine had had little political impact. In response, these organisations reimagined politics. Since the end of the peacebuilding process, the second intifada and the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, civil society organisations and particularly the peacebuilding sector in Israel and Palestine have been subject to state actions, such as the introduction of legislation to limit their activities (DE1, 2020). The loss of power of the political left in Israel, which pushed through the Oslo Peace accord, was accompanied by a delegitimisation of peacebuilding (DE2, 2020), as right-wing coalitions put peacebuilding on a par with anti-Zionism. This was one of the main drivers for establishing Darkenu as a centrist Israeli organisation whose main concerns are not solely to do with peacebuilding (DS1, 2020) but are also with redressing the balance of power at the level of state institutions in Israel.

The change of government and swing to the right after the Oslo Accords has been reflected in the way that the profile of the OV board has changed over the years. When the peace process was active:

OV was strengthened by a range of policy hawks and others at board level who also believed that they could make a difference. They were the hawks in the Likud and they were on our board along with the people from the religious parties. We had people across a spectrum of politics. Left, Centre, Right, on the Israeli side and from the Palestinian side. Our movement was about moderate voices and about
transcending those differences and unlocking a solution to the conflict (Lubetzky, 2020).

In 2022, more than 20 years after the failure of the Peace Accord and the participation of politicians in peacebuilding, politicians previously associated with peacebuilding, but currently in power in ministerial and other positions, also still fear being too closely aligned or associated with organisations seeking rapprochement with Palestinians (ES1, 2020). Policy hawks are no longer present on the OV board as they were before the Oslo agreement. Legislation such as the V15 law (see section 5.2.1) and a litigious and aggressive Likud Party have also discouraged civil society organisations from being vocal and dissenting.

Former Director of Strategy and Campaigns at Darkenu, DS4, describes how he believes the politics of peacebuilding, and the political fight around it, needed to be reimagined in terms of which issues were being addressed:

One of the things we talk about is reimagining the peace politics. Instead of reimagining the politics, most of the time the peace camp is saying that we need peace as a whole, two states, programmes etc... All the while the radical right is taking small steps to mess up the idea to do this. They build settlements and roads and so on and I think we also need to reimagine the political fight around it [peacebuilding] taking smaller issues. Green issues could for example be relevant for it (DS4, 2020).
In Palestine, Zimam is also reimagining the politics of peacebuilding, as well as politics more generally, by engaging youth in centrist politics and helping to empower independent candidates in Palestinian politics (ZS3, 2020). By not asking activists to take political sides, ZS2, Director of Zimam believes that Zimam is successful in bringing new people with peacebuilding agendas into political arenas. For young activists in Gaza not being asked to take political sides when they join Zimam activities and training programmes, allows them to participate without provoking Hamas or Fatah and allows them to work towards having an active role in politics and to influence peacebuilding (ZS7, 2020).

At OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS understanding nuances about how power is distributed, or how to mobilise collective power within these contexts, is facilitated by many of the staff who have existing political affiliations. Some come with experience of working with political campaigns or political parties (OS1, DS1, DS2, DS4 etc., 2020). This experience sometimes informs their current, more innovative approaches to campaigning or programming. Darkenu’s former Director of Strategy and Campaigns, DS4, has seen from previous experience working with left-wing Israeli parties that there is a generational clash in Israeli politics and that part of the challenge of reimagining and changing political structures and the ways in which causes are addressed involves questioning the power of older elites in politics in Israel. At Meretz (left wing Israeli party), DS4 worked for two years trying to implement a new strategy which would encourage grassroots participation:

I became very, very frustrated mostly because when I finished the elections I handed in a summary and recommendations of what to do and basically, I said build your power as grass roots from below to the top and I gave them a booklet of 30 pages
and they put it on the shelf and no one looked at it. Because it required them to make crucial changes in the way power is happening in the political structure (DS4, 2020).

In 2015, prior to his work with creating Darkenu, DS4 had already joined forces with like-minded colleagues, disappointed with established political parties, to found the social movement organisation V15. V15’s campaign focused on encouraging centre left voters in targeted neighbourhoods in Israel to go to the ballots. V15 was founded in two weeks and focused on starting to build their own community. DS4’s (2020) account of V15’s creation, and then joining together with OneVoice Israel, highlights V15’s early days of organising and the formal and informal, non-professional and professionalised aspects of beginning to organise activists into working groups.

X brought people in, I brought people in, we put in 700 shekels [approx. $200] so we had some money to brand ourselves. We did this first event we expected 80 people and in the end about 200 people turned up and we arranged them in circles and it was a very powerful statement - in working groups – groups of activists people working in graphic design, people from the Obama campaign, field managers and so on, and we did like a communication team – and one of the guys who was there was one of the employees of OneVoice and I knew OV because we did a project for them in 2012 ... and he told me you have to meet with the CEO of OneVoice because I think you will find common ground to work with (DS4, 2020).
From this encounter with OneVoice International in 2015, V15, as previously described (see chapter 3), went on to join forces with OneVoice Israel and continued to build on their experience and to use the campaigning tools that they had developed, including extensive database research and the data itself. After a narrow defeat for the Israeli centre and left by a Netanyahu led coalition, V15 and OneVoice merged to become Darkenu. DS4 continues to put his experience and knowledge, gained from that early campaign and subsequent Darkenu campaigns and lobbying, into practice at Darkenu, and still believes that politics and power in Israeli politics can be further reimagined in terms of campaigning, lobbying, and the use of new technology to encourage political participation.

For DS4 (2020), the accumulation of experience that was gained, combined with ongoing action and formal learning through campaign organising and organisational strategy formulation, informed creative thinking in all areas of his professional life (including marketing, film production and academia). The learning has also extended to Darkenu’s collective attempts to redefine and reimagine the relationship between Judaism and more centrist politics in Israel today:

It is also about reimagining the power threads between politics and religion. For me as the campaign manager for someone responsible for propaganda, I was never hesitant to use quotes from the bible, bring rabbis to talk about issues, to build coalitions with rabbis and so on. As a secular person, it is a bit cynical, but I think it is important. We won’t be able to win using the same tactics over and over again, so we have to reimagine the camp (parties) and reimagine politics and we have to reimagine the alliances we build (DS4, 2020).
In the previous chapter the ways in which religious and political narratives and identities are often intertwined in Israel and Palestine was discussed. Here too, processes of organisational learning which draw on religious discourses as part of reimagining different futures for Israel and Palestine are part of a tentative, though important, reclaiming of power by more politically moderate civil society organisations from far-right wing political parties and their affiliated religious orthodox groups.

7.3.3 Providing Safe and Accommodating Political Spaces as Sites for Learning

At OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, the management of organisational struggles and change is facilitated by organisational learning as processes and outcomes as well important sites for learning. These processes include formal and informal dialogue and debate (discussed in chapter 5), where a wide variety of political positions are held, heard and accommodated, in what I call accommodating political spaces. Accommodating political spaces facilitate the formal and informal mechanisms for organisational learning which both support individual capacity building for political participation and underpin the organisations’ abilities to collectively influence and lobby for policy change. The decisions made, strategies formulated and values articulated in these spaces also inform activists’ actions, and help managers at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS manage organisations and learning for social and political change. These political spaces are also where imbalances of power are addressed through narrative construction (see chapter 6). This conceptualisation of political spaces, where ideas and narratives are accommodated and contested, is based on data from interviews with activists and staff from all four of the organisations in this research. They
describe the organisation with which they are affiliated as predominantly safe spaces for debate around ideas which are not always shared or even yet clear, and from which new ideas and thinking and drivers for action emerge (ZS6; ZA1, ZA2, ZA3, OA1, OA2, OA3, DS5, DS6, NS1, NS2, NA5, 2020). Where activists are deterred or intimidated for speaking out about their activism and face racist and religiously framed criticism for their social media posts and activities, it is, also according to former CEO of OneVoice ES1, ‘really hard to know where risks are and where the line between social exclusion or embarrassment bleeds into actual danger’. There is therefore a role for organisations and the peacebuilding network ‘in defending other entities or individuals when they are under attack’ (ES1, 2020). The concept of safe and accommodating political spaces which are non-violent, where conflicting attitudes and opinions are exchanged with civility (Arao and Clemens, 2013), adds to organisational learning literature which highlights organisational spaces where learning processes take place (Pallett, 2018; Amin and Roberts, 2008; Beyes and Steyaert, 2012) but does not focus on those space potential political outcomes.

For management consultant OE1 (2020), safe accommodating spaces are also more mundane places where ideas about organisational strategies, evaluations and activities can either be challenged or justified in a constructive way:

If organisations don’t feel safe, they don’t evaluate. The more that you can create safety so that they (staff) can share what their frustrations are and what the difficulties are and the real data, without feeling they are going to get punished, is critical (OE1, 2020).
Safe political spaces are, more specifically, where a whole range of ideas, including political ones, can be discussed without fear of retribution or exclusion. The provision of these safe spaces which accommodate multiple perspectives can also attract donors to these organisations. NE1, Director at the Pears Foundation which supports the work of SNS in the UK, described to me how their foundation is particularly interested in creating spaces for difficult conversations:

We are very interested in how you create safe spaces to really discuss what is going on in Israel Palestine and we hadn’t seen anything else. Half the reason we funded this programme is because it is the only one. There is nothing else like it that we had seen in the UK that wasn’t partisan (NE1, 2020).

Zimam staff member ZS7 (2020), points out that, in Palestine, Zimam are not unique but are certainly unusual in providing organised and informal spaces to discuss politics without pledging allegiance to any particular political party:

Zimam doesn’t focus only on let’s say, political education in the sense of factions and organisation, which is normally what people are exposed to in the West Bank and Gaza, rather it focuses on all the generalities, all of the issues from various perspectives and allows the people the space to track these issues and see how they can work and think about them (ZS7, 2020).
In Israel at DemocraTV, Darkenu takes a similar approach by including as wide a spectrum of political views in their broadcasts as possible, and by providing the same amount of air time to each (DS2, 2020).

In this section organisational learning has been examined through how individuals and organisations contest power by articulating new visions, tactics and campaigns for politics and peace-building which also sometimes involve changing organisational structures. These processes are seen to take place in safe and accommodating political spaces which serve as important sites for learning which may also have political outcomes.

**Conclusion**

Through an examination of politics as the exercise of power at individual and organisational levels and within the Israeli Palestinian conflict more generally, I answer my research questions which ask how learning in organisations can be understood to be ‘political’ and what the relationships between organisational learning and politics might be. I have explored how the processes and outcomes of organisational learning can help organisations actively address asymmetries of power by contesting as well as reimagining power relations and the structures that underpin them. I have demonstrated how understanding and addressing power between national politics and civil society organisations, as well as within and between organisations in safe and accommodating political spaces, are important aspects of organisational learning. Organisational learning processes and mechanisms include strategy and planning, organising and communications which allow organisations to
adapt to local context and challenges as well as to the individual needs of staff, activists and board members. Through the provision of safe and accommodating political spaces reflection, dialogue and debate can take place. The consequences for organisations of these organisational learning sites, has been increased support and acceptance for the organisations and what they represent in their local context in terms of profile, representation and discourse around moderate politics. An analysis of these processes, their outcomes, and of sites for learning, reinforces the argument that organisational learning is political in its contestation and challenging of power, particularly in the context of a conflict environment.

Gaventa’s power cube (2006) and Pettit’s power analysis (2021) suggest that understanding and analysing how power operates and shapes problems helps to identify what strategies can be used to achieve change. I go further in suggesting that a stronger emphasis on conceptualising politics as positive-sum power might also help individuals and organisations understand the dynamic and fluid nature of change which organisational learning can help generate.

In the next chapter, I explore notions of change and transformation. I expand on how individual and organisational empowerment, based on a new and broader understanding of the relationship between organisational learning and politics, might drive change and sometimes transformation, at individual, organisational, and local and national political levels.
Chapter 8 - Organisational Learning, Change and Transformation

Introduction

In this chapter I investigate how changes and transformation are experienced by individuals and organisations interviewed for this research. I explain how those experiences are characteristic of organisational learning which both results from and can help generate individual, organisational and wider societal and political change and transformations. In this way I continue to explore my research questions which ask how learning in organisations can be understood to be ‘political’ and what are the relationships between organisational learning and change. Understanding some of the processes and outcomes of change and transformation associated with organisations and organisational learning is not only central to this research, but is, I also argue, key for organisations and their organisational learning focused on political change.

At the level of the individual, I focus on how change and transformation can take place and is characterised by individuals acquiring intangible assets (Dieffenbach, 2006) such as a new sense of agency through gaining ‘power within’ and ‘hope’ (8.2). Both action learning, and formal skills development and training, are shown to facilitate and help make that possible for activists as well as for staff, donors and board members. At an organisational level, change and sometimes transformation is shown to involve organisations adapting to changing contexts (8.3) and promoting new visions of the future of Israel and Palestine. In section 8.4, I analyse examples of how learning takes place in OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, of the new knowledge which the organisations produce and disseminate as a result
of that learning, and of actions taken which then inform and facilitate change and
sometimes transformation in wider political spheres, such as through policy, laws or the
media. Discussions in chapter 2, and 5 about evaluation as a mechanism for organisational
learning which maps relationships where power is exerted, are then expanded on to
highlight some of the theoretical and practical challenges for organisations of measuring
and evaluating change and transformation related to organisational learning, its political
nature and its political consequences (8.5).

Although I demonstrate some of the connections between organisational learning, change,
transformation and politics, providing evidence of direct causal links between these
phenomena remains challenging. I investigate what change and transformation mean for
individuals and organisations, whether or not change and transformation are
interchangeable, and why they are important in the context of organisations working for
social justice and peace in Israel and Palestine and against anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic
hate in the US and the UK. I am thereby able to probe more deeply into and provide
evidence of some of the relationships between organisational learning, politics and change.

### 8.1 Conceptualising Change and Transformation

Change and transformation, as explained in chapter 2, are sometimes understood to be
synonymous, but for the purposes of exploring the relationship between organisational
learning, politics and change and transformation, I distinguish between them and explain
how I am going to use these concepts in this chapter. Change is here understood as the
more mundane and incremental changes which occur as part of adaptation. Transformation is characterised as the extraordinary and the more fundamental shifts which take place when individuals change their mind sets or decide to behave differently, when organisations change shape or direction, or when societies decide to change tack and address problems through their institutions and policies in fundamentally different ways. I draw my understanding of the differences between change and transformation from the data collected through interviews and from interviewees language. I also understand these differences between change and transformation from social science literature as processes which are rarely unidirectional (Scoones et al., 2020), and where there are ‘multifaceted usages of the concept of transformation’ which are used and framed differently across different societies (Linnér and Wibeck, 2020: 221).

Change as alteration or modification is conceptualised differently across social science subjects. In global development change can mean large scale change in global or local systems or individual gain or loss of agency (Chambers, 1997); in social psychology, changing perceptions and identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1986); in politics, the critical junctures when change happens (Collier and Collier, 1991); in organisational literature, innovation at an organisational level which drives societal transformation (Krlev et al., 2020); and in peacebuilding, changes in beliefs, attitudes and behaviours within individuals and groups. (Lederach, 2005). In all of these study areas, change has the potential to be but is not always extraordinary or transformational.

In development studies, one way in which transformation is understood, is as a way to achieve climate change adaptation and as a ‘revolution in socio-political processes of
development’ (Few et al., 2017: 2) which can help address that and other development challenges (Patterson et al., 2015). Scoones et al. (2020) suggest that in order to achieve sustainability, transformation can be achieved through complementary top-down as well as bottom-up approaches. These are systemic and structural at a societal and institutional level systemic and enabling at individual and community levels. For Scoones et al. (2020: 66), ideas about transformation which ‘reflect distinct but overlapping understandings of social processes that generate transformative change’ for sustainability, include fostering human agency, values and capacities as well as steering groups of actors and systems towards collective goals around structural change and how societies are organised.

This approach helps me to conceive of how transformation or incremental change happens at different individual, organisational and societal levels and how they can originate in different top down or bottom-up ways. It also has its limitations for this research. Scoones’ argument does not take into account where some of the precise intersections between organisational learning, transformation, and politics might be. This is the more specific topic of this research. I therefore add to Scoone’s argument by exploring how mundane change and/or extraordinary transformation can happen at individual and organisational levels as outcomes of organisational learning. I also expand on an organisational learning perspective discussed in chapter 2 which views learning and transformation more simply as ways for organisations to adapt through learning in order to cope with change, to suggest that through multi-level learning, organisational learning might also help contribute to broader social and political change and transformation.
8.2 Individual Transformation

In previous chapters, I argued that OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS provide safe and accommodating political spaces within which individual growth is encouraged and where agency, understood as personal empowerment (Sen, 1985, 1992, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000, 2003, 2007), is the first step to political change or transformation at the level of the individual and the organisation. This approach is well articulated in OneVoice’s 2017 mission statement which states that OV works with Darkenu and Zimam in order to support individual empowerment as a way to ‘build the infrastructure for peace’ (OneVoice, 2018b).

In the first section of this chapter, I analyse individual transformations which take place through empowerment. I expand on literature reviewed in chapter 2 where empowering outcomes are described as the result of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1978a, 1978b) and emancipatory learning (Thompson, 2000) to suggest that empowering outcomes, related to organisational learning where individuals find ‘power within’ and ‘hope’, are also transformative in a political sense, within and potentially beyond the organisation.

The route to gaining ‘power within’ and ‘finding hope’ is not the same for every individual. Transformation happens at different times and in different contexts and circumstances, and is accompanied by different actors processing different implicit and explicit political messages (Freire, 1981). Within organisations, the route to gaining ‘power within’ is also impacted on by individual constructions of realities that involve different feelings, beliefs, and experience which are sometimes managed and enabled (Von Krogh, Ishijo and Nonaka,
Additionally, as I have observed in fieldwork and interviews, where people are in a more or less continuous process of change (for good or bad and in non-linear ways), change, as part of a potential route to transformation, has often started to take place before they have come into contact with organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam or SNS or have been part of organisational learning in those contexts. Despite each individual’s unique experiences, discussing profound individual transformation nonetheless helps me to explain some of the political dimensions of processes and outcomes of organisational learning.

8.2.1 Agency as gaining ‘power within’

I argue that individuals gain agency and power within through informal and action learning as well as through formal skills and training programmes. Rowlands (1997) looks at the individual as change maker. In her Four Powers Model, ‘power within’, a person’s sense of self-confidence and of the rights and entitlement, forms the basis on which individuals move on to organise (power with) and demand a say (power to). Veneklasen and Miller, (2007: 45) describe power within as:

a person’s sense of self-worth and self-knowledge. It includes an ability to recognise individual differences while respecting others. Power within is the capacity to imagine and have hope; it affirms the common human search for dignity and fulfilment.

From interviews and focus group discussions, finding power within, in ways that are experienced as transformational, has been different for each individual. It sometimes
results from new experiences which open people’s eyes to other worlds, from gaining skills and confidence or from having ambition nurtured. It can also result from political engagement around issues which individuals are passionate about, where they address social issues or are breaking free of societal, cultural or religious expectations. Encountering the other, learning how to tell their own story and to be open to listening to others’ stories, addressing taboo issues and reframing issues, can all be experienced as transformative in the sense that the course of individuals’ lives or their general outlooks are fundamentally altered.

Engagement with organisations and organisational learning through formal training, encounters and debates, can embolden people such as Zimam Director, ZS3, to do something more active about the directions and change which they are seeking. ZS3 speaks about how Zimam has crystalized the journey that started with his experience of studying in the English Department at university in the West Bank where:

people come in and with a little bit of traditional views and they come out with much wider perspective, they see things differently through literature and the introduction of a new language (ZS3, 2020).

West Bank activist’s, ZS6, self-described change and then transformation started to happen when as a teenager he joined the Seeds of Peace encounter programme in the US. He believes that he was then able to continue his journey towards fundamental shifts in his perspectives and values, which he has experienced as transformational as a result of his engagement with Zimam:
As a 17-year-old Palestinian who suffered a lot in the Second Intifada... this was the first time going outside of the country and it was really challenging at that time. But I learnt from this experience and it motivated me. I became more open minded and I now know from my experiences with Zimam how to deal with important subjects, especially when people accuse you of ‘normalisation’ (ZS6, 2020).

For Zimam Gaza focus group participants, ZFG3 (2020) and ZFG4 (2020), gaining skills is their most important marker of progression and transformation and is helping them to realise their personal and political ambitions:

I was simply a student from secondary school and I didn’t have any skills, no skills, no work, no skills for business or any kind of skills. Today, I can say I am a writer and blogger (ZFG3, 2020).

For ZFG5, his affiliation with Zimam and participation in their training programmes has instilled confidence and nurtured ambition:

Ten years ago, I would describe myself as immature and with limited aspirations for the future. Now, I would describe myself as an influencer and an ambitious guy despite the fact that the current situation in the Palestinian Territory is so depressing and terrible, and it puts a lot of hindrances in my way and in the way of the Palestinian youth in general (ZFG5, 2020).
Transformation also means different things in different contexts and in Palestine, interviewees state that engaging with the world, having ambitions for the future, gaining skills to fulfil those ambitions, living in the moment, having the confidence to live in your world and having the space to dream are all experienced as transformational for many young activists. Both ZFGI and ZFGM2 emphasise the importance of having a calm space where they can, as young Palestinians, both gain skills and imagine themselves realising their dreams:

I was literally afraid of everything and was an over thinking person and I just lived in my fantasies and was not realistic. Now I am not an overthinking person still and a more realistic person. After five years I hope to be a strong woman and to live in the moment and to have adventures (ZFGI, 2020).

As in Palestine, individual transformations for individuals in Israel, the US and the UK, are specific to their context and circumstances and to each individual person. Not all Israeli activists such as NS3, who takes on leadership roles through his activism, see themselves on a hero’s journey to political activism where they respond to a calling to help bring about social change by taking up leadership roles (NS3, 2020). Some Darkenu, OV and SNS staff may simply value the personal learning, new ideas and action learning which they experience each day as a result of exposure to new people, thinking and ideas (NS5, 2021).

Some young women such as Zimam activist (ZA2, 2019) may also be breaking free of societal, cultural or religious expectations in a way which they experience as transformational:
They expected me to stay that religious, to stay quiet, to finish school and go to medical school but I was involved with politics, I am the one who wants to study policy which is not common here. I believe breaking society’s expectations makes you define yourself differently according to your own values (ZA2, 2019).

For others, such as Zimam activist ZA1 (2019), encountering ‘the other’ in the person of Israelis, is transformational in that he has learned to understand the enemy as people with lives that he can relate to. This also allows him to conceptualise peace and change in a way which he hasn’t before:

I have never visited Israel and I have never imagined what life is there. I just imagined that everyone is a soldier just like how I see them when I cross the borders at the check points. I only see the soldiers or the settlers. I never see someone riding a bike or walking their dog or someone walking with their kids. So, I had a huge stereotype about that. It makes sense back then because I didn't have any contact with them. Now today it is not just about having contact with someone from Israel. It’s also the way of thinking that these people also have families, these people also have lives… So, I believe I would have never had these thoughts before, never had any activism in Palestine without Zimam (ZA1, 2019).

As discussed in chapter 6, changing perspective and narratives as an instrument for challenging the status quo (Benford and Snow, 2000) means that at an individual level activists and stakeholders are engaged in learning where they must be prepared to accept many sides of every story. Israeli and US activists DFG1 and OA1 claim that this also involves looking at oneself and first accepting change in oneself. For OV activist OA1, this meant
looking at her own values and accepting a change in those beliefs. She experienced this process as a kind of personal transformation about what she is prepared to see and accept:

I feel that I wasn’t ready to listen to both sides. So, after a while I realised how I was so closed to many things. It really helped me to improve my understanding, improve my working skills, understanding both sides, but it was really like a moment, like you are inviting people in, but you are not ready. Let’s face your own problem first. So, it was an important point for me to realise myself too (OA1, 2020).

Addressing taboos is another form of transformation which takes place through organisational learning (discussed in chapter 6 as part of challenging political and religious narratives) where activists move from not expressing or discussing what is ‘unsayable’ to openly discussing and debating issues. In Palestine ‘taboo’ political and social topics for discussion, which Zimam addresses in dialogue forums, include such topics as the status of Jerusalem, the right of return of Palestinian refugees, women’s rights, sexuality and LGBT rights (ZS1, 2020). In Israel, traditionally politically taboo subjects which the New Historians address by challenging national foundational narratives (Hirsch, 2007) include discussions about Israeli morality as well as responsibility for the exodus of approximately 700,000 Palestinians during the 1948 war (Hirsch, 2007).

For OV activist OA1, who became engaged with addressing political taboo issues and learned methodologies for discussing sensitive issues, addressing Israeli Palestinian issues has given her permission to address her own taboos. As a Turk, openly discussing the Armenian genocide, although not related to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, is a major step.
For refugee activists such as OV activist OA1, Zimam youth leader ZA1, staff, activists and board members of OV, Darkenu, and Zimam, most of whom are either descendants of refugees or have also experienced displacement themselves, transformation has already been experienced in surviving war and in creating new lives in different countries. OA1, an ethnic minority Hazara from Afghanistan, says that this transformation through learning is even more profound for her as she has moved from living as a refugee, where she felt she had little control over her life, to living independently from her family, to becoming interested in learning about the politics of Israel and Palestine through OV, to then taking major steps towards developing ambitions to enter politics and become a policy and change maker in the US and Afghanistan:

I was deprived in my country of all of my rights my entire life. So that is why I have decided to be a politician, and always thinking about if I can go and fix my country so the many people who flee can go back to my country (OA2, 2020).

For Zimam staff member and activist, ZS5, the son of a blacksmith, who now has ambitions to become the President of Palestine, it is through Zimam that he has acquired skills and ‘once in a lifetime experiences’, which have transformed his mindset and are, he believes, key to his current success as a local political figure in Nablus. For ZS5, the most important transformation is of his mindset:
It is important to realise that if you keep on going with the same kind of mindset you will never actually achieve anything new and you will never be able to break into the aspiration that you have (ZS5, 2020).

Each organisation in this case study works to support individual transformations, certainly with their own political agendas, but also in providing non-violent political choices which are not necessarily mainstream in Israel and Palestine. What organisational learning processes at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS all promote, and which I evidence, is an understanding that personal transformation can lead to political engagement, and that when individuals find agency as ‘power within’, it can lead to broader political and social change.

Individual transformations which have had an impact on organisations can be seen in the ways in which those transformations lead activists and staff to enact incremental change at an organisational level. A new generation of empowered female activists at Zimam such as ZA2 and ZA3, have over time taken on more senior positions within the organisation and redressed the balance of a previously male dominated organisation. At Darkenu, DS4, founder of V15, and former Director of Strategy and Campaigns, has honed campaign strategy and tactics adapted over five elections in Israel which have resulted in Darkenu’s survival and growth. Individual transformations have seen Palestinian member of staff at OV Palestine leave Gaza and build a new life in the US where he is able to continue to help provide a Palestinian perspective at OV in the US and a US perspective for Zimam. Zimam Director of Advancement, ZS3, has also been able to transfer skills developed with OV in the US to his current work with Zimam, creating content and developing strategy.
Individual transformations can also lead to incremental change outside of organisations. Examples of individual transformations which have been able to influence politics or political change outside of the organisations in this study are evidenced in the ways in which all of the organisations have helped strengthen leadership in the peacebuilding sector and beyond. At OV, former staff and Director (ES1) have been instrumental at ALLMEP in lobbying Congress for funding for civil society organisations in Palestine. Other staff have gone on to create and develop SNS (DS1, DS2) and its innovative schools programming. At Darkenu, former CEO, DS2, ran as a Labour party candidate in the November 2022 Israeli legislative elections. Former Director of Strategy and Campaigns at Darkenu, DS4, continues to develop and teach innovative campaigning and PR methods in Israel. In 2022 he was also leading content development and innovation at a major film production company in Israel. At Zimam, activists, such as ZE2, have succeeded in local elections and are participating directly in local politics.

Individual activists’ engagement with peacebuilding and politics beyond their engagement with peacebuilding organisations have been studied by Lazarus (2011) and Ross and Lazarus (2015). These studies have been commented on by Bar-Zohar (2012) and Kalman (2014) who both question if people-to-people peace programmes which focus on the development of individuals have made any difference to the conflict. The studies trace individuals who have engaged with civil society organisations focused on peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine, as they progress through life and continue to engage with politics once they have left these organisations. Lazarus’s (2011) longitudinal study of 824 Israeli and Palestinian graduates of Seeds of Peace programmes concluded, for example, that one fifth of Seeds’ alumni continue to actively engage with politics beyond their time with Seeds of Peace.
How levels of individual political engagement links Seeds of Peace to broader societal change, remains, however, unclear in Lazarus’ research. What is also not clear for each of the organisations in Lazarus’, and in this study as well, are the exact moments when individual transformations contribute to wider political structural changes (beyond moments when candidates are elected to public office), and how exactly to identify, manage and measure those occurrences. For organisations in need of short-term metrics to measure the impact of individual transformations, this remains problematic (Lazarus, 2020).

In section 8.5, and then in chapter 9, I seek answers to these questions by conceptualising politics as exercises of power, and questioning organisations’ as well as individuals’ roles in challenging multiple level relationships of power through organisational learning.

### 8.2.2 Agency as Finding Hope

Another transformation which staff, activists, board members and stakeholders report as being part of their association with organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS is to do with the hope and motivation which they gain as change makers. Hope can be understood as socially constructed as well as biologically rooted in individuals (Webb, 2007), and in this section hope is also related to political hope (Stahl, 2020) and learning (Giroux, 2004a, 2004b). Zimam activist, ZA1, highlights the incremental and sometimes mundane change which feeds this hope:

> You know that this conflict has been running since tens of years and that no real change has happened, but if you can [enthusiasm in voice] as a person, as an activist, if you can apply a change in your own society, in your own community, in the people...
that you hang out with and that you see every day, then you have solved a part of the conflict in your own area, where you are. So, I really find it, yes, I think I have seen a change happening and around me since I joined Zimam (ZA1, 2019).

At OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, hope, though not always explicit, drives staff, activists and donors to remain engaged with working towards peace. For Lubetzky (2020), OV was originally born out of the hopelessness he and others experienced after the death of Rabin and the Oslo Peace Process: ‘The years 1993 to 1995 were characterised by overwhelming hope, the years after Rabin’s assassination, were characterised by a lot of uncertainty and despair and hesitation and then after 2000 when violence broke out there was despair and hopelessness and sadness and violence’. With the creation of OneVoice at such a despairing and violent time, Lubetzky was seen to provide inspirational leadership. Peleg, the founding Director of OneVoice Israel, still views Lubetzky’s ideas and peacebuilding initiative as ground breaking:

When Oslo was coming apart at the seams (2002-2003), Daniel, although still a young and poor activist, not yet one of the richest men in America, as a leader was relentless and ground-breaking in filling a void in the peacebuilding world and setting up a different kind of organisation which was affiliated with both Israelis and Palestinians. Here was one of the first initiatives to have a single organisation, OneVoice for Israelis and Palestinians, to be affiliated with the same organisation and the same ideology (DE4, 2020).
Regional Director of ALLMEP, ZE1, underlines the importance of hope in peacebuilding: ‘We don’t take hope for granted. It’s the fuel that keeps us going on as Palestinians and Israelis’ (Project Rozana, 2022). Finding hope plays an important role in finding ‘power within’ to address the conflict as well as being key to agency and empowerment. My research questions which ask how organisational learning impacts on internal and external stakeholders, and what is the relationship between organisational learning and political change, have therefore produced further questions for future research projects. These ask, what role does organisational learning play in generating hope? What role does hope play in organisational learning? How can this be understood to be transformative and what might be some of the political consequences of hope? ZE1 (2020) believes that while ‘the forces against hope in Palestine are immense, these organisations provide alternatives and unite people to create some sort of a vision so that they can survive, and for the story of the Palestinians not to end entirely’.

For peacebuilding organisations working in Israel and Palestine:

  Generating hope is in taking practical, tangible steps on the ground that speak to people’s needs from both sides and find a way to create a vision that does not discriminate against anyone and includes everyone (ZS1, 2020).

For Darkenu, generating hope is a key aspect of their November 2022 election campaigning which includes media messaging focused on Darkenu’s values ‘to unite the moderate majority, instil hope, create a sense of urgency, and motivate them’ (Darkenu, 2022).

At the level of the individual, the positive psychological effects of hope are well documented and suggest that hope helps protect individuals from stress, anxiety and the effects of
negative life events (Snyder, 1996). The role of emotions has also been studied from a socio-psychological perspective as engines for political action (Cohen-Chen, Crisp and Halperin, 2015; Leshem and Halperin, 2020a, 2020b, 2021). Cohen-Chen et al., (2015) have, for example, studied the effects of hope on information processing and conclude that hope is conducive to acquiring information and seizing opportunities for conflict resolution. Leshem and Halperin (2021; 2020a; 2020b) also highlight hope’s positive role in facilitating support for peacebuilding and compromise as part of political processes. Former Director of OV in the UK, ES2, witnesses hope in the ways in which activities and direction are embraced by activists in the US, UK, Israel and Palestine: ‘once we have decided what we are doing and feel good about it, if they have seen it in action, it gives them that spark which helps them carry on’ (ES2, 2019). For the Board Co-Chair of OneVoice, OB1, (2020) it is the ‘very dynamic smart people who want to build a nation’ in Palestine that is encouraging and instils hope. Although hope is difficult to maintain through disappointing election results, it is what motivates the activists who participated in my focus groups at Darkenu in Israel and Zimam in Palestine, and staff and board members observed in all of the organisations, to continue in their commitment to work for political change.

From a learning perspective, Bozalec et al. (2014) discuss the crucial role that formal and informal education and learning play in fostering critical hope. Critical pedagogist, Giroux (2004a), suggests that critical or educated hope (informed hope generated through learning) is a subversive political force when it pluralises politics by opening up a space for dissent, makes authority accountable, and becomes an activating presence in promoting social transformation. For hope to be consequential it also has to be grounded in a ‘project’ that has some hold on the present. My data and understanding of hope strongly support
Giroux’s conceptualisations of hope, where ‘projects’ are sites for learning where ‘identities are formed, subject positions are made available, social agency enacted, and cultural forms both reflect and deploy power through their modes of ownership and mode of public pedagogy’ (Giroux, 2004b:32). In these sites of learning, which I have argued in chapter 6 and 7 can be safe and accommodating political spaces, hope becomes meaningful in that:

- it identifies agencies and processes, offers alternatives to an age of profound pessimism, reclaims an ethic of compassion and justice, and struggles for those institutions in which equality, freedom, and justice flourish as part of the ongoing struggle for a global democracy (Giroux, 2004a: 63).

In psychology, where hope is defined as ‘the perceived ability to produce pathways to achieve desired goals and to motivate oneself to use those pathways’ (Rand and Cheavens, 2009:323), hope is closely tied to concepts of agency. For Zimam activist, ZA3:

Zimam is the station/platform where I view where I want to be in the future. At some point I was really hopeless about my country and where it is going but with Zimam I saw that everything can be optimised, and we can always work things out. It even changed my vision. I really want to be running for a Nablus community ballot in ten years. I really want to come back here and I really want to improve my country (ZA3, 2020).

For OneVoice Board Co-Chair, OB1, generating hope is also an important means of attracting support for the work of Zimam:
the work that we do and the work that we see Zimam engaged in makes one hopeful that there are still some very dynamic smart people who want to build a nation and that is encouraging (OB1, 2020).

In relation to organisations, ideas and expressions of hope are evidenced in the ways Zimam is able to draw activists out of despondency about their futures. Hope therefore needs to be conceptualised in relation to organisational learning, politics and change.

From an organisational learning perspective, hope and other forms of ‘psychological capital’ such as efficacy, resilience and optimism (Luthans et al., 2004; Luthans et al., 2007) are thought about in terms of how they impact on individual and organisational performance (Tefera and Hunsaker, 2021). US psychologist Snyder’s hope theory (2002) addresses more specifically how hope can be generated through learning and how levels of hope reflect individuals’ levels of agency and access to pathways for change within groups and organisations. This understanding of hope does not fully take into account the resilience and agency required for maintaining hope in the context of ongoing conflict. However, it does help explain how hope can be conceptualised as part of organisational learning through the ways in which it can be ‘learned and strengthened through interventions targeted at augmenting agency and pathways thinking’ (Cheavens and Ritschel, 2014: 407). This is particularly relevant for organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, where engendering and strengthening hope through ‘augmenting agency’ has been evidenced as a facilitator for working in and on an ongoing conflict.
The instrumental role of hope can also be related to Sen’s (1987) ideas (see chapter 2) about converting capabilities into realising ‘functionings’ (the ways people make use of what they have). Additionally, where hope is ‘a ‘positive motivational state’ (Snyder et al. 1991: 287 which helps capabilities to be created and realised, capacity building programmes which help build a sense of community and purpose for peacebuilding in NGO/SMOs in Israel and Palestine, might also be understood as an important aspect of organisational learning for political change.

The role of hope in organisational learning literature suggests that understandings of hope as an intangible motivational asset drives individuals to achieve their own and their organisations goals. Hope is expanded on here and understood in relation to the capacity building through agency and political engagement which organisational learning promotes. As an outcome of learning, hope is also linked to transformation. I have evidenced hope as motivational hopes for change and as strengthening capabilities through organisational learning to reshape the ways power is exercised.

I have given examples of how individual transformations have taken place in the lives of individuals who engage with OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS through formal and informal learning. At the level of the individual, power has been seen to be contested/challenged and sometimes reshaped, primarily in the ways that individuals perceive and express themselves. Individual transformations are understood to help create the possibilities for more structural political ones. At Zimam, a reshaping of power has been evidenced by men and women gaining confidence, skills and hope, within Zimam and as independent political candidates supported by Zimam and promoting moderate politics. At Zimam, Darkenu and
OneVoice, a reshaping of power has also taken place through non-violent activists’ abilities to change dominant narratives through collective action and successfully strengthening and promoting now more main stream agendas for peaceful coexistence. However, it is unclear exactly how impactful that individual and collective learning is, and it remains a challenge both for organisations and for researchers to articulate and measure this in future research.

Where, precisely, individual learning stops and collective learning begins, or how individual and collective learning are intertwined and parallel processes, are also less clear. The journey from gaining individual agency and hope to collectively expressing that new found agency is, I argue, a political process which although complex, has political outcomes which can be understood and potentially measured in more nuanced ways (see 9.4).

As a way of understanding how individual learning benefits development organisations, Johnson and Thomas (2007) model an action learning frame which combines individual and organisational learning, and asks how individual learning might be part of organisations’ efforts to bring about wider societal transformation and change. This framework shows how individual and organisational learning are linked through ‘learning cycles’, which relate to both formal and informal, codified and tacit knowledge, and how the type of organisational change which can be brought about as a result of these learning cycles is affected by each individual’s position within an organisation. Although this approach has merit for this research, and may inform future research, tracing how individual learning impacts on or strengthens organisations in this way was not possible to operationalise due to the large number of participants in this research.
Additionally, what is not accounted for in development or organisational literature, but is indirectly referred to in social movement, critical pedagogy and psychology literature, and more directly in my data, is the idea of hope as a mobilising force for good which may result from learning and lead to political participation. I have discussed how finding hope has emerged from my data as an emotional response to formal and informal aspects of organisational learning in the shape of skills training and development, dialogue and debate.

I have discussed the engagement of individuals with organisational learning and how that has been conducive to transformation. In some cases, this has led to personal transformations and in others it has led individuals to influencing their organisations or leadership beyond their organisations. In these ways, I have expanded on conceptualisations of organisational learning by arguing that one of the ways in which organisational learning helps create political space for change appears to be in nurturing transformation in individuals through capacity building which helps them move from fear to gaining ‘power within’ and ‘hope’, and facilitates political engagement within and beyond their organisations. Examples of how organisational learning has helped individuals gain power within and self-confidence to protect their own and others’ rights, generates hope, and amplifies and channels voices for political participation, are all evidence of how individuals learn to address asymmetries of power which they have experienced or perceive, in association with organisations.
8.3 Incremental Organisational Change Leading to Transformation

This section helps to answer research questions 4 and 5 which ask how learning in organisations can be understood to be political and what the relationships are between organisational learning and political change. Organisational learning as formal and managed processes, including the formulation and articulation of vision and missions, operationalisation of organisational structures and strategy, and attempts to measure change and transformation, are all considered as part of social and political processes of change. I discuss the role of organisational learning in the mundane change and sometimes extraordinary transformation of organisations themselves, as part of their efforts to bring about political change. This section also highlights how organisational learning has helped OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS to pursue political change in Israel and Palestine through promoting behaviours, norms and values for peacebuilding, influencing government policy and providing non-partisan media coverage in Israel.

8.3.1 Organisational Vision and Mission

In order to understand change and/or transformation and how it happens at organisational levels, I analyse organisational responses to changing political context as they are reflected in the organisations’ evolving vision and mission statements. At OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, planning processes, which include the formulation of vision, mission and strategy, provide road maps to change, both organisationally and in a wider political context in Israel and Palestine. In chapters 5, 6 and 7, I demonstrated how, in order to keep working towards meaningful social and political change, learning mechanisms such as strategy and
planning are adapted by organisations, while learning processes such as narrative formation link individual transformations to organisations and social change. These sometimes mundane, incremental adaptations in strategy, planning and delivery happen repeatedly in response to changes in the external and internal political context and as part of those organisations’ attempts to drive change.

In 2017, before Darkenu, Zimam and SNS had formally become separate organisations, OneVoice International stated their vision and goals as:

> to empower politically moderate Israelis and Palestinians to pressure their governments towards a two-state solution and to provide the centrist mainstream on both sides with the opportunities and tools to build momentum for a peace agreement (OneVoice International, 2018a).

By 2021, that vision was substantially modified, and, while continuing to support Darkenu and Zimam and an independent Palestine, OneVoice no longer explicitly stated that this would be through supporting a two-state solution:

> We are driven by a vision of an independent and viable Palestine and a secure Israel free from conflict, where Palestinians and Israelis are able to realize their national and individual aspirations, building a future upon principles of security, justice, dignity and peace (OneVoice, 2020).
In Israel and Palestine, Darkenu and Zimam’s ‘vision’ statements describe working for change within their own societies and, while Darkenu’s statement doesn’t really propose transformation, Zimam’s does:

**Darkenu** - Darkenu works to strengthen Israel’s democratic and Zionist character. We believe that the State of Israel should act in line with the values expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the spirit of the Prophets of Israel: justice, equality, peace, and mutual respect. (OneVoice, 2020).

**Zimam** - An independent and thriving Palestinian state free from occupation, defined by a democratic and tolerant society, and empowered by a politically engaged and active civil society. (OneVoice, 2020).

Mission statements set out organisations’ approaches to achieving their visions and objectives. At OV, Darkenu and Zimam, they set out how they will work practically towards their visions. These statements all express shared values about the importance of democracy and respect/justice:

**Mission Statements:**

**OneVoice** - The OneVoice Movement is a global initiative that supports grassroots activists in Israel, Palestine, and internationally who are working to build the human infrastructure needed to create the necessary conditions for a just and negotiated resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
**Darkenu** - Darkenu is the largest non-partisan civil society movement in Israel. We organize, amplify, and empower the moderate majority of Israelis, both Jewish and Arab, to exert influence on government policy and on the public discourse, ensuring our nation acts in line with the wishes of citizens, the spirit of Zionism, the principles of democracy, and that it remains grounded on a foundation of mutual respect and responsibility.

**Zimam** - To educate, train and empower the leaders of tomorrow to build a more democratic, actively engaged civil society and to inspire the general public to endorse our vision.

(OneVoice, 2020)

The change and the societal transformation, which these vision and mission statements allude to, are expressed in different ways for each of these organisations. In each case they are the result of many hours of deliberation over content and language (OS1, 2020; ZS2, 2020). This is another instance of where organisational learning manifests as processes, mechanisms and outcomes of learning. Mechanisms for learning, such as strategy formulation, are used as part of processes for learning, such as working to strengthen democracy in Israel, the outcomes of which, media strategies, for example, are also applied in continuous learning cycles (Argyris and Schôn, 1996). For organisations which have broad social and political agendas for change in Israel and Palestine, OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, transformations can be seen in the ways in which they have moved beyond adaptation for change, by adopting new visions and missions which respond to context and environment.
This was particularly well illustrated when Darkenu, Zimam and SNS separated from OneVoice in 2016 in order to pursue their shared goals, but in their own context specific ways.

As already noted in chapter 2, organisational literature also focuses on the leadership which is required for the production and realisation of grand visions for change. The ideal leader both adapts incremental change and drives more fundamental transformational change. Leadership figures continue to play an important role at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS in this regard. Observers of OV acknowledge Daniel Lubetzky’s visions, and processes have been adapted along the way:

I think that the dream hasn't changed but I think he realises that the means of getting there was not going to happen in the way he originally envisioned (Lazarus, 2020).

Visions and processes are also adapted by local leaders of each organisation, particularly at Darkenu and Zimam, where rapid change requires new ideas and skills to manage ongoing adaptation. At SNS, this involved separating financially from OV and developing vision and mission statements which no longer included an association with OV (NS1, 2020).

Vision and mission statements are part of social and political processes of change and transformation. Clearly thought out and negotiated vision and mission statements help organisations respond to changing context by adapting their own priorities to ensure that they remain relevant and impactful in highlighting and challenging exertions of power.
While vision and mission are regularly adapted and are for the most part illustrative of iterative and incremental mundane change, they can also be, as illustrated by the separation of OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, transformational.

**8.3.2 Organisational Structures and Strategy**

At Darkenu, Zimam, OneVoice and SNS, new organisational structures have been created since 2016 to fulfil visions for change. Ongoing adaptations to Darkenu’s organisational structure in 2020 involved embedding technology more centrally. Darkenu’s former CEO, DS2, outlined his approach:

> We will have two very strong branches. One is the lobby branch to try and to bring the voice of the moderate majority into the Knesset and I want to bring people who have a lot of experience in the political arena to work for Darkenu. The second main branch is the branch of innovation. I think that a vital and strong democracy needs technology that bridges the person that lives in the north or the south of Israel who is Arab or is Jewish or whatever, with politicians in Jerusalem. That is the structure that I want to build in Darkenu (DS2, 2020).

By November 2022, two years after this conversation, Darkenu’s use of technology has advanced to the creation and expansion of DemocraTV towards becoming a terrestrial TV news station. It has also introduced the ‘Democrator App’ phone application which gave users ‘three minutes and three clicks’ to encourage people they know, through personal messages, to vote in legislative elections in November 2022 (Darkenu, 2022).
Within debates on development, Papaioannou (2014) underlines how innovation can be linked to removing political constraints:

Innovation and development are interrelated concepts. The former refers to developing new ways of doing things by mixing up ideas and/or combining technologies; the latter refers to changing people’s conditions by removing various types of socio-economic, political and natural constraints, which leave them unfree to enjoy equal social relations and pursue the kinds of life they value (Papaioannou, 2014:187).

Innovation and change which rely on learning and experimentation, have been evidenced by Darkenu and the success of DemocraTV in opening up political conversations in Israel, and has proved to be transformational in Israel in terms of what gets discussed and by whom. In 2022, Darkenu’s viewing figures reached 2 million (Darkenu, 2022). Where well-established and overtly right-wing media platforms give religious nationalist politicians and speakers with populist agendas disproportionate airtime, DemocraTV has introduced a platform for a wider range of political views to be debated in Hebrew and in Arabic (Darkenu, 2022). This achievement, which has taken place through strategy, planning and implementation as mechanisms of organisational learning, is deemed by senior Darkenu staff to be strongly ‘political’ and related to challenging power, (DS4, 2020). Audience figures reflect this achievement (Darkenu, 2022).
For OV, achieving the kinds of political transformation on which it focuses has involved a shift in how it defines itself though its vision and mission statements. The nature of the relationships that it supports with Darkenu and Zimam are also the result of long processes of strategising and review (OS1, 2020; OE1, 2020). Once Darkenu and Zimam became independent, this included acknowledging where the differences between the organisations lie. Director of OV, OS1, for example, notes that:

Zimam more than Darkenu is focused on transformative change in individuals and maybe what we need to do more now is to harness the knowledge, skills, attitudes which then have to be put into practice – it’s personal change but we are also after societal change so it’s taking that transformation of self and organisation and then transformation of society so that we are moving from a to b to c so that we don’t get stuck in one because our actual goal is societal change (OS1, 2020).

Additionally, the ability of organisations to determine new strategies for transformation is key to survival, particularly in an environment where there are ongoing and considerable pressures to prioritise and respond to the external environment and the ongoing conflict there, but also where internal struggles are concerned. As noted by Lazarus when interviewed about his own research on peacebuilding organisations:

Some of the organisations are in crisis generated by the external environments or by the conflict itself and the pressures of that environment are obviously an everyday challenge for these organisations. But I also found that there were periods of internal crisis, periods in which organisational internal management was an equally
important factor. For the organisations to last, they have to survive all of these and build strategies for organisational learning (Lazarus, 2020).

OV, Darkenu and Zimam are not alone in civil society or the peacebuilding sector in having to rethink strategy, direction or in having to initiate change in order to both reach their goals and/or justify their spending to donors. Other organisations such as Seeds of Peace also:

- go through a lot of turmoil. They are also going through a very intense debate and process of questioning, and there are debates within the organisation about what is the best way to go forward and how that should change or not their programming (Lazarus, 2020).

What I describe in the thesis title as the mundane changes which lead to transformation do not just happen for organisations. Decisions about changes are not taken lightly and for the organisations in this research are informed by long processes of incremental organisational learning including reviews, planning, evaluation, formal and informal discussions and meetings. Decisions and directions are articulated, support and finances recruited, action taken and the safe, accommodating political spaces, which I describe in previous chapters, are created. Former CEO of Darkenu, DS1, spoke about how personally painful these processes can nonetheless be when friendships and close working relationships are, as a result, broken. Former CEO of OV, ES1 (2020), acknowledged that strategic and other decisions are sometimes taken which with hindsight might not have been right. He, for example, believes that the use of language in 2019 by Darkenu which emphasised ‘separation’ between Israel and Palestine as a way to open up conversations about a two-
state solution, continued to help dehumanise Palestinians. Palestinian activist and OV staff member, OS5, spoke about how dramatic the surrounding circumstances which sometimes prompt change are, and co-Chair of OV, OB1, about how leadership needs to acknowledge the challenges of changing direction without changing values and priorities.

Mechanisms for organisational learning include creating, adapting and changing vision, mission and strategies, learning through dialogue, narrative, story-telling and skills development and training. These have all been evidenced in this and previous sections, and provide examples which have facilitated mundane and extraordinary change at individual and organisational levels. Of his 2011 study of Seeds of Peace, Lazarus notes how so much of his data referred to individuals discussing personal and political transformations which failed to influence the wider context of the conflict. Where once, for example, activists were unable to even conceive of dialogue or political solutions which involved ‘the other’, either Israeli or Palestinian, their outlooks and identities were transformed but peace has not been achieved:

I had seen so many individual transformations and truly powerful transformations and understood that what we were doing and the methodology was very potent on an individual level and I thought very valuable and at the same time we obviously were unable to influence the large context, almost at all, which had in fact gotten much worse (Lazarus, 2020).
Still then, the question remains about how organisations address the paradox of powerful individual and organisational transformations which still have not achieved peace in Israel and Palestine.

### 8.4 Organisational Learning’s Impact on Politics

I have evidenced how learning experiences at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS have been change making or transformational at individual and organisational levels. How individual and organisational change and transformation relates to local and national politics is, as I have already suggested, more problematic. While there have, for example, been gains in opening up some areas of debate and influencing politics, there are limits (so far) to what the organisations have been able to achieve in addressing and shifting asymmetries of power. It is however possible to link some activity which has direct links to organisational learning at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, to national political levels.

In the previous chapter I outlined how providing accommodating political spaces, using knowledge as power, gaining power in learning, activism, managing organisational struggles, and strategy, governance, coalition building, lobbying, technology and innovation, can all be understood as mechanisms for organisational learning which have the potential to reshape political power. This was evidenced in the ways in which power was challenged and reshaped at individual, organisational and national levels sometimes with political consequences. Organisations gained legitimacy, carved out new moderate political spaces in Israel and Palestine and have become opinion makers. At a national level, organisations and individuals influence language, debates, election outcomes and policy making.
In 2022, Darkenu’s influence means that political leaders and political parties in Israel, such as the Blue and White Party, have borrowed themes, language, messaging and branding from Darkenu (DS4, 2020). Get Out to Vote Campaigns for national elections have also ensured voting in key areas (DS3, 2019). Influence at a national level can be seen in the ways in which Darkenu continues to set agendas in terms of topics for public debate via their online news platform, DemocraTV, (DS2, 2020) and for policy discussion and debate. Darkenu’s Charter for Discourse, for example, promoted civil discourse in Israeli politics and was adopted in 2018 by the Knesset, the Israeli parliament (DS1, 2019). These are also examples of how what is possible politically has been reimagined, and of what is actually political, as discussed in chapter 7.

Zimam also provides examples of political outcomes of organisational learning. For Zimam, participation in on-campus student politics via their student leadership programmes, and support of non-violent peace activists on student councils in 2019, redressed the balance of Hamas and Fatah dominated student politics which feeds directly into local and national politics in terms of representation (ZS2, 2020). Their nurturing and support of independent candidates in local elections and their representation in local politics is growing (Zimam, 2021c). Like Darkenu, Zimam’s role in presenting new ideas for public debate on previously taboo topics influences wider public opinion as access to their social media and digital presence grows (ZS3, 2020; Zimam, 2022).

Although not working directly on the ground in Israel and Palestine, OneVoice’s financial support for programming and professional development at Darkenu and Zimam has helped
those organisations to achieve their objectives (OS1, 2020). OneVoice has also helped strengthen leadership in the peacebuilding sector, where, for example, former OV staff members such as former CEO, ES1, currently Executive Director of ALLMEP, and another former Director of OV and former CEO of ALLMEP, were instrumental in pushing through the 2021 Nita M. Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act in the US Congress. This provides major funding ($250 million over 5 years) for civil society organisations working for peace in Israel and Palestine (ALLMEP, 2021).

SNS which does not have an overt political agenda, has been addressing racism, in particular anti-Islamic hate and anti-Semitism, in UK schools. This has involved sharing information and knowledge about the region and the conflict in UK schools, in, what they hope are, unbiased ways. They have brought speakers from Israel and Palestine and helped them develop skills for their ongoing activism, something which this research has suggested, in the first section of this chapter, is important for promoting political change.

Organisations’ impact on local and national politics, experienced as either change or more fundamental transformation, is often the result of slow, mundane and incremental organisational learning. These are processes which organisations work through in order to define their vision, mission and purpose. Organisational learning as the outcomes of these processes can, I argue, prove to be transformational in politics through incremental change.
8.5 Measuring Change and Transformation and its Impact

In chapter 5, I discussed how measuring and evaluation processes take place at OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS and function as mechanisms for organisational learning. In chapter 7 I also suggested that organisations do not yet capture internal and external challenges to, or the reshaping of power. In this section I discuss how measuring change and transformation through evaluation can support the argument that organisational learning can be thought of as political. I argue that evaluation can be thought of as political not only in the underlying philosophies of evaluation processes but also in the ways in which it might, through embracing a wider conceptualisation of power, strengthen capacity for political change. This kind of analysis helps me to answer my research questions about who participates in organisational learning and how, what impacts on organisational learning, and what is political about organisational learning, including what are the potential political consequences of organisational learning. It also helps me to start to conceptualise a more practical evaluation framework which may be relevant for the organisations in this study (see 9.4).

At a theoretical level, fostering change through evaluation is sometimes thought of as problematic because of the ways in which evaluation processes are based on underlying philosophies and frameworks and help determine organisations or programmes’ overall purpose, what will be measured, who will measure it and how. There is a large literature on policy evaluation and the challenges of evaluation (Knill and Tosun, 2020). Chouinard (2014), for example, emphasises how, in development management, the context and culture of organisations affect every dimension of the evaluation process for organisations. For Everitt
(1996) also, critical evaluation of social welfare organisations involves acknowledging and evaluating the context of evaluation practice, the policy frameworks within which organisations operate, and a critical scrutiny of those social and political structures. She believes that if taken out of context, evaluation serves to depoliticise the practice which is, ‘constructed within legislative, policy and funding processes and is shaped through dimensions of class, gender, race, age, sexuality and disability’ (Everitt, 1996: 174), and in the context of this research, I would also argue, ethnicity and religion. For Everitt (1996) good practice in evaluation also involves principles of democracy and democratic process. In this sense, as discussed in chapter 2, evaluation processes can then be seen as political in that they scrutinise broader societal and political structures and discourses, alongside programmatic practices (Green, 2016 :129).

For OneVoice US, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, evaluation and monitoring of projects and programmes take place in all four organisations. Metrics such as numbers of participants at events, online reach, amount of media coverage and feedback from participants are collated and presented to donors and external stakeholders, often in the form of e-newsletters and annual reports. OV1, the CEO of OneVoice, believes, however, that more needs to be done in terms of presenting the big picture impact of all four organisations. It is a conversation which she believes the OneVoice board were only ready to have a few years after the creation of Darkenu and Zimam in 2016:
In terms of thinking, now that we have these strong component parts, what are the ways in which we are all connected and where should we make adjustments in terms of where we should have our intended collective impact (OS1, 2019)?

Ongoing participation and levels of engagement with Zimam activity are well monitored by Zimam (Zimam, 2021c) but here there are other challenges in measuring the transformational impact of their work in the relatively short time frames required for reporting:

A lot of it [the learning] is accumulative, it is sometimes about personal transformation and impacting on people’s opinions who you won’t see again, and that is hard to measure through quantitative models which show how many petitions we have signed and how many students we talk to (ZS2, 2020).

In Israel, Darkenu’s Research Department is at the forefront of targeting research and adapting professional and academic tools to help develop, deliver and then assess programmes and campaigns, as well as to train staff and activists for research and evaluation. However, when DS3 led the department as the only full-time researcher employed by an NGO in Israel, she believed that while the sector was becoming more professional, monitoring and evaluation and research was still underfunded and considered a ‘privilege’ in a culture that tends ‘to think before doing’ (DS3, 2019).
Most non-profit organisations such as OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS attempt to track their performance by metrics, such as amounts of money raised, their membership growth, number of participants in activities or visitors to digital platforms, people served, and overhead costs. Non-profits do not, however, resemble businesses that can measure their success in purely economic or quantitative terms. Quantifying success for organisations like OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, which have ambitious and sometimes abstract goals such as transformation and change through promoting political participation for strengthening democracies and peacebuilding, also takes place through qualitative approaches, which attempt to capture experiences rather than measuring them (SNS, OV, Darkenu, Zimam, Annual Reports). For this network of organisations, both qualitative and quantitative metrics differ from organisation to organisation. In chapter 5, CEO of OV, OS1 suggested that what gets measured, and other factors which shape evaluation frameworks at OV, Dakenu and Zimam, do not, to date, provide a consistent measurement matrix across the network. This is not surprising though as each organisation is accountable in different ways to different regulatory and financial bodies, institutions and individual donors. Additionally, when organisations’ context and environment is often changing in dramatic ways, and when working with transnational partners involves negotiating power, providing an accurate picture of multi-level change and transformation is indeed challenging.

While each stage of incremental change is more easily quantifiable, transformations resulting from cumulative change are, certainly in relation to organisations and organisational learning, more difficult to measure. As evidenced in this chapter, equally hard to capture is when a series of incremental changes stops being incremental and becomes transformational. This is key to the challenge of distinguishing between change
and transformation. Pettit (2021) already provides a framework based on Gaventa (2006) for development organisations to help understand where and how power is exerted. In the context of gender relations, Kelleher (2002) also suggests that learning organisations, which are seeking transformation and fundamental change, require an enhanced toolbox. For the organisations in this research, an enhanced toolbox will I suggest in chapter 9, ultimately involve a reconceptualisation of evaluation frameworks and multi-level studies, not currently funded or prioritised by funders or peacebuilding organisations (Lyndon, 2020). This approach builds on Gaventa and Pettit’s approach, and would identify more precisely not only how power is exercised, but also when and how the reshaping of power takes place at individual, organisational and national political levels, in ways which impact on peacebuilding.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have used a case study of OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS to understand the relationship between organisational learning and change and transformation at individual, organisational and national political levels, in ways which are understood to be political through the challenging and redistribution of power. This redistribution and the challenging of power are evidenced in this chapter in the ways in which individuals find power within, hope and voice in ways which help them to use organisations to challenge the political status quo. I have also demonstrated how at an organisational level power has been challenged and reshaped when hybrid NGO/SMOs have carved out a space for moderate politics, at local (Zimam), national (Darkenu) and internationally (OV), and promoted
moderate values, attitudes and behaviours (SNS). In previous chapters I demonstrated how these organisations, particularly OV, Darkenu and Zimam, have played roles in changing governments and laws, gradually won acceptance and legitimacy in their own societies, helped shift norms by creating and promoting alternative political and cultural values, and how they produce and disseminate knowledge for political change. In this chapter, I have also demonstrated how informed by organisational learning, organisations, including SNS, work at different levels, scale and in different ways to achieve change and transformation. I have analysed how the individual actors who make up those organisations (activists, staff, board members, external stakeholders) experience personal change and transformation through individual and organisational learning, how the organisations themselves change and become transformed through formal mechanisms for organisational learning and how organisations then sometimes help contribute to wider political change.
Chapter 9 – Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis addresses the question of how learning takes place within and between organisations and their wider contexts in Israel and Palestine by expanding on the concept of organisational learning to include how it might be thought of as political. In this concluding chapter I discuss the main findings of the research in relation to the secondary and then the overarching research questions which have helped me to explore these ideas (9.1). I highlight the contributions which the thesis makes to existing literature (9.2) as well as the theoretical implications of my research (9.3). I also consider what I see as the practical and policy implications of the research for the peacebuilding sector which can be addressed by funders and civil society organisations in Israel and Palestine, or in other conflict environments (9.4). I conclude with final reflections and insights.

9.1 Main Findings in Relation to the Research Questions

The main findings of the secondary research questions which have guided this research and contributed to answering the overall research question are outlined below.

Question 1 - Who and what influences organisational learning at OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and Solutions Not Sides?

OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS work either ‘in’ or ‘on’ the ongoing, intractable conflict in Israel and Palestine (chapter 3). Organisational learning was found to be influenced by the environments and by the actors within them, where positions are hardened around
national, political and religious views. National narratives, shaped by political discourse and instrumentalised by political parties, impacted on the stories and narratives that people told about themselves, their communities and their organisations (chapter 6). When encounters and new narratives were informed and shaped by organisational learning processes, meeting and addressing ‘the other’ at local, national and international levels, as well as reflecting on and challenging these dominant narratives were both mechanisms and outcomes of organisational learning (chapter 5).

OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, although independent organisations, are part of an international network of peacebuilding organisations, and were found to work together and influence each other in the ways they use processes, mechanisms, sites and the outcomes of organisational learning to challenge and negotiate power at multiple levels (chapter 7). Through the exchange of knowledge, use of learning tools and the organisations’ own constructivist approaches to learning, individual staff members, activists, board members and external stakeholders all influenced and impacted on how organisational learning is understood and operationalised.

Question 2 - How does organisational learning take place at personal, intra- and inter-organisational levels, who participates and how?

At OV, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, consciously applied constructivist learning processes underpin formal and informal organisational learning directed at shaping and fulfilling the organisations’ strategies and missions (chapter 5). Organisational learning involved staff, activists, board members and external stakeholders, all focused on shared goals of peacebuilding and political change. Formal managed and informal action learning processes
and mechanisms were used to address issues based on the four organisations’ contexts and the particular challenges they face.

Against the backdrop of the historical dimensions of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, and as part of peacebuilding, processes and mechanisms for learning included a focus on understanding and engaging with ‘the other’ within and between societies. Relationships and relationship-building provided important opportunities for action learning in encountering ‘the other’, particularly within and between organisations. Managed processes, including strategy, planning and evaluation, were found to be mechanisms for organisational learning; these helped the organisations formulate and adapt their goals and missions to promote their cause, gain legitimacy and support within their communities and internationally, as well as help ensure their survival in the evolving context of conflict.

Partnerships and collaborations between the four organisations and external partners facilitated organisational learning through the sharing of knowledge and expertise, where different forms of learning included ways in which skills were shared, while ideas and key driving themes were used to build strategy and define organisations’ purposes. Examples ranged from exchanges of information and sharing of skills at the level of individuals to the co-ordination of organisational strategies. For staff, activists, trustees and external stakeholders of the four organisations, this learning was seen to take place in different learning spaces or ‘sites’ for learning, either within their own organisations and communities or in wider networks of practice beyond their organisations, including internationally.
Question 3 - How does organisational learning impact on the thinking and activities of internal and external stakeholders (staff, activists, board members, donors and external partners)?

All the organisations were found to provide skills development and training opportunities which enabled activists, staff and stakeholders to develop skills to articulate and critique their own and others’ political views, as well as to be sensitive to their religious and political differences, in such a way as to help strengthen their organisations and promote their causes (chapters 5, 6 and 7). Formal and informal processes and mechanisms of organisational learning in the form of capacity building helped ensure activists and staff gained or developed the skills required for understanding the nuances in behaviour between different cultural groups – not just between Israelis and Palestinians but also within those societies. It also helped them respond to criticism and even deal with social exclusion for challenging particular political and/or religious views.

The reframing of narratives, as a mechanism for and an outcome of organisational learning, has been found to be fundamentally connected to and helpful in shaping and strengthening individual and organisational political identities (chapter 6). The reframing of narratives shaped individuals’ and the organisations’ rationales for political engagement, while strengthening the organisations’ strategies and capabilities for achieving political change in a way which was intended to resonate with rather than alienate a widely diverse public made up of many political and religious affiliations. While this was not entirely successful in terms of election results, the acceptance of different narratives by the four organisations and their network of supporters and partners, extended beyond peacebuilding in its ability to open people up to accepting and confronting differences through deconstructing
processes of othering and challenging stereotypes. This was the case for the staff activists, trustees and external stakeholders in all four organisations, reaching beyond political differences to include religious and cultural ones. Capacity building in safe and accommodating political spaces (6.2; 7.3.3) enabled staff and activists to respond to public criticism and even social exclusion for challenging political and/or religious views. All of the organisations have gained legitimacy and increased their reach and support by opening up debate on new digital platforms such as DemocraTV (Darkenu in Israel), challenging perceptions and attitudes (all the organisations), strengthening activists’ and staff’s ability to articulate and debate their own and their organisations’ agendas (all organisations), and promoting political participation in Israel and Palestine as well as supporting the work of their partner organisations in the region (OneVoice, Darkenu and Zimam).

Processes, mechanisms, sites and outcomes of organisational learning helped individuals build ‘power within’ and hope, where they found purpose which strengthened their political engagement (chapter 8.2). Individuals’ attitudes, behaviours and commitment in turn drove the organisations’ activities. At an organisational level, strategy, planning and evaluation - both mechanisms and outcomes of organisational learning - helped the organisations find and enact their visions and missions and decide which activities to engage with (8.3). Joint research and other shared activities between all four organisations included the regular communications and close relationships between them, promoted collaborations and partnerships which strengthened the organisations’ capabilities, and heightened their profiles and legitimacy within their societies and the peacebuilding sector.
**Question 4 - How can learning in organisations be understood to be ‘political’?**

In chapter 7 I concluded that organisational learning is political in its contestation and challenging of power, particularly in a conflict environment. Where politics is understood as the exercise of power, learning through processes, mechanisms, sites and outcomes of organisational learning enables organisations to deal with their own internal power struggles, and helps address external asymmetries of power (more or less successfully). This was evidenced in the multiple levels of interactions of individuals, organisations and local and national politics, where power was challenged and contested in different ways.

Individuals and organisations contested power by managing organisational struggles and reshaping organisational structures, most markedly when OneVoice International seeded and then separated into four independent organisations, OneVoice, Darkenu, Zimam and SNS. The organisations questioned political, peacebuilding and individual narratives through dialogue and debate within, between, and external to them, in order to rethink political tactics and campaigns. They empowered activists through skills and training programmes, providing safe and accommodating political spaces, both physical and virtual, where they promoted a more moderate agenda for politics and peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine (7.3.3). This was done through the non-violent exchange of ideas in forums and settings, formal and informal, inside and outside of organisations, as well as through social media and new digital platforms such as DemocraTV, which have gained mainstream support.

The provision of safe and accommodating political spaces by the organisations enabled individuals to collectively debate sensitive issues, understand the use of political and
religious dialogue and language, and accommodate different cultural identities in expanding networks and new alliances. These spaces facilitated the formal and informal mechanisms for organisational learning which both supported individual capacity building for political participation and underpinned the organisations’ abilities to collectively influence and lobby for policy and political change. All four organisations encouraged non-partisan, non-violent, and inclusive participation in their programmes, as well as internally, in the ways they explored and addressed asymmetries of power.

**Question 5 - What are the relationships between organisational learning and political change?**

In chapter 8 relationships between politics and organisational learning were not just analysed in terms of the national political context for learning in Israel and Palestine, as in chapter 3, but by how organisational learning influenced multiple levels of relationships of power which might lead to individual, organisational and broader political change. As processes, mechanisms, sites and outcomes of learning, organisational learning helped individuals and organisations acknowledge and address asymmetries in the exercise of power. This was evidenced in the ways organisations worked to address asymmetries in the context of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, within and between organisations, by changing and adapting structures and hierarchies, and at an individual level by increasing political participation through activism.

Politics, as the exercise of power, saw power challenged, contested and related to multi-level incremental change and more fundamental transformation. The terms change and
transformation were understood as different kinds of change – incremental, mundane and extraordinary. These distinctions were applied at the level of individuals in how they attain agency, and at organisational and broader structural levels in how through organisational learning, organisations helped achieve wider political change in terms of new policies, laws, language, attitudes and representation in public life, at local and national levels.

At the level of the individual, transformation took place within and beyond the organisations. It was characterised by individuals, such as young activists in Israel, Palestine, the US and the UK, acquiring intangible assets including a new sense of agency through gaining ‘power within’ and ‘hope’. Both action learning and formal skills development and training facilitated and helped make political participation possible for activists as well as for staff, donors and board members, in ways which were also sometimes experienced as transformational. This was evidenced in the ways activists and staff gained skills, hope and confidence through leadership training, university and school programmes, as well as through the action learning which allowed them to meet, debate with and better understand ‘the other’.

At an organisational level, the organisations made incremental changes through organisational learning both to adapt to changing contexts and to accommodate and promote changing visions of the future of Israel and Palestine. The new knowledge which the organisations researched, produced and disseminated internally and externally, combined with the actions taken based on that knowledge, informed and facilitated change in political spheres at local and national political levels. This occurred both in terms of supporting individuals who participated in politics at local and national levels, and in
promoting values and norms which became accepted more widely. This was achieved through, for example, Zimam’s support and nurturing of independent political activists, Darkenu’s media presence in DemocraTV, OneVoice’s ongoing support of those organisations through knowledge exchange and funding, and SNS’s work in schools addressing racism.

Change, and occasionally transformation, was evidenced at an organisational level, when circumstances such as violent conflict between Israel and Palestine dictated, or decisions were made, to make fundamental organisational structural changes, or to dramatically change directions. These organisations contributed mostly to incremental political change, in terms of addressing asymmetries of power. This occurred over time through the directions and activities which organisations chose to take as a result of cycles and outcomes of organisational learning. This was evidenced in the ongoing learning and adaptations that organisations made on a daily basis through formal bureaucratic processes and through action learning. Organisational learning as incremental change was occasionally transformative and led to more transformative change at local and national political levels. This was best illustrated, for me, in how over a period of 20 years since the foundation of OneVoice International, the organisations and individuals in the study have gradually gained legitimacy and a degree of influence, and challenged and sometimes changed norms and values supporting non-violent change in Israel and Palestine. Numbers of activists, supporters and viewers of Darkenu’s DemocraTV digital news channel and Darkenu and Zimam social media platforms, are already in their millions. The lobbying efforts of the organisations and their staff are acknowledged by mainstream political parties. Additionally, programming in the US, the UK, Israel and Palestine impacts on
individuals in meaningful ways. This has importantly taken place when, for an entire generation, there has been no political traction to be had from peace building. Although peace between Israel and Palestine is not yet achieved, these transformations have resulted from organisational learning and incremental changes over time.

The above questions have all helped answer the overarching question for this research which asks:

**How do international hybrid NGO/SMOs learn to create political space for change and transformation in the context of the Israeli Palestinian conflict?**

In the context of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, the hybrid NGO/SMOs in this research created political space for change by learning that politics can be addressed and challenged both internally and externally through the exploration, challenging and negotiation of asymmetries of power and the imagining of new futures. These asymmetries lie between individuals, within organisations, between organisations as well as amongst political arenas of Israel and Palestine. The role of organisational learning has been to provide and reflect on processes, mechanisms, sites and outcomes of learning. This change, and sometimes transformation, took place at multiple levels, individually and collectively for the organisations. For the hybrid NGO/SMO organisations in this study, creating political space for change and transformation involved using formal and informal collective learning processes and mechanisms in safe and accommodating political spaces. In order to continue to innovate and take informed action on the political change that they were working to achieve, the organisations also explored the outcomes of that learning in
ongoing cycles of learning typical of organisational learning which is adapted for their contexts.

Although there were dissenting views concerning the impact of the work of the four organisations, or how it can be defined or measured, individual experiences of learning were overwhelmingly positive. However, none of the above findings negate the fact that peace has not been achieved in Israel and Palestine and that the organisations in the study continue to have to work hard to adapt, to sustain legitimacy and to be impactful in peacebuilding or through elections. Organisational learning also has its limits. Not all individuals, for example, will have experienced change in how it relates to learning as positively as those who have been interviewed and observed for this research – something which may have implications for future research and the selection of sample groups. Nor are the organisations yet able to capture fully the complexities and nuances of politics, and change and transformation through evaluation in ways which might better serve their own and their funders’ purposes.

9.2 Contributions to Existing Literature

This research asked how learning within and between hybrid NGO/SMOs might be managed as part of development efforts to bring about change and peace in the Israeli Palestinian conflict. This question led to a central focus on organisational learning combined with insights from other literatures (see chapter 2). Through the empirical work, my research has been able to expand on current conceptions of organisational learning by
suggesting that organisational learning in the context of conflict is political in its guiding principles and implementation, as well as in its consequences. This includes a theorisation of organisational learning as part of processes of political change and sometimes transformation, where politics, understood as the exercise of power, takes place at individual, organisational and local and national political levels. Power is negotiated and challenged through organisational learning as part of mundane and incremental processes of political change and sometimes extraordinary transformation.

An analysis of organisational learning as political (chapter 7) adds to organisational learning literature by demonstrating some of the ways in which organisations conceptualise internal as well as external political struggles, and work to address them. In the context of violent conflict within and between countries, it adds to peacebuilding research where impact studies already focus on longitudinal studies which chart activists’ changing attitudes and levels of political participation beyond organisations. My research adds to those studies by explaining how attitudes and levels of participation change through activists’ engagement with NGOs/SMOs, and are the deliberate, as well as the inevitably unintended, consequences of organisational learning. The organisations in this study provided processes and mechanisms where activists are able to encounter ‘the other’, be challenged and challenge others, including by challenging asymmetries of power within and between the organisations as well in their own social and political settings. Additionally, I introduce the concept of safe and accommodating political spaces as an important site of organisational learning for organisations working in conflict environments, where multiple and often competing religious and political histories, perspectives and narratives are accommodated.
in order to then be reshaped and enable people to work together across differences for peace in Israel and Palestine.

This research also adds to literature by suggesting that organisational learning can be understood as part of processes where individuals, such as those working in or associated with the four organisations in this study, achieve individual agency which leads to political participation and change. It expands on organisational learning, development and social movement literature to suggest that organisational learning (in all of its forms, with all of the influences, different context and values which it incorporates and reflects) can, at least for the organisations in the context of peacebuilding in this research, be understood as a political process which helps to produce, or at least impacts on, organisational and wider political change and sometimes transformation. The results of the study contribute particularly to organisational literature which has not yet full conceptualised the political aspects and implications of organisational learning in hybrid NGO/SMOs, or indeed in organisations in the private sector.

### 9.3 Theoretical Implications for Future Research

Theories could therefore be expanded to include thinking about learning, NGO/SMO organisations in relation to their wider environments, and acknowledging organisations’ social and political aspirations, goals and achievements in a way that encompasses how that which is political manifests itself both in the mundane and the extraordinary of organisational life and learning. In order to help meet global development challenges of
sustainability, environmental issues, poverty and inequality, it has, for example, become imperative to expand on conceptualisations of organisational learning in all kinds of organisations (Siebenhüner and Arnold, 2007), particularly those focused on resolving these issues. Expanded ideas of organisational learning can therefore be taken forward for organisations in the context of peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine, and might also be helpful for other kinds of public and private organisations with different development agendas and roles, and within other contexts.

I presented encountering, debating with and understanding ‘the other’ as a fundamental aspect of peacebuilding which has not yet been fully conceptualised as a process or an outcome of organisational learning. However, understanding ‘the other’ in the context of organisations and learning may have important implications for future research on forms of ‘othering’, including race, gender, sexuality and disability.

Additionally, what is not accounted for in development or organisational literature, but is indirectly referred to in social movement, critical pedagogy and psychology literature, and more directly in my data, is the idea of ‘hope’ as a mobilising force for good which may result from learning and lead to political participation. The role of hope in organisational learning literature needs more research and conceptualisation.

As NGOs and SMOs continue to problem-solve about how to push forward their agendas, new conceptualisations about what learning means will require rethinking evaluation frameworks to incorporate organisations’ abilities to survive, adapt and collectively influence and lobby for policy and political change, as well as to promote individual quests
to attain agency as change makers (see more on this below). Finally, the implications of understanding organisational learning as part of multi-level political processes in peacebuilding will benefit new research and conceptualisations of social movement organisations in other contexts. This thesis therefore suggests a significant research agenda for academics and practitioners to investigate the social and political impacts of organisational learning.

9.4 Practical and Policy Implications for the Peacebuilding Sector

There are also practical implications of the research findings which suggest that existing forms of evaluation do not fully capture the ways in which organisations engage with peacebuilding, or their impact on politics. Critics of the ways in which existing NGO evaluation tools and frameworks are used (Mowles, 2010), and those who discuss more participatory evaluation methods (Chouinard and Cousins, 2013), help point to future practical directions for research which is more participative and democratic. This would, I propose, include focusing on what might be useful organisational learning requirements and tools for defining and measuring both change and transformation in the realm of the political. Evaluations are often carried out in function of what donors and sponsors require but they can also potentially be a useful learning mechanism for the organisations themselves. Pettit (2021) already provides a framework based on Gaventa (2006) for development organisations to help understand where and how power is exerted. In the context of gender relations, Kelleher (2002) also suggests that learning organisations which are seeking transformation and fundamental change, require an enhanced toolbox. For OV,
Darkenu, Zimam and SNS, an enhanced toolbox might require building and expanding on these approaches. This would be a way to gain a better understanding of the different forms of change and transformation which reflect the multiple ways power is challenged and sometimes reshaped with political consequences for individuals, organisations and at local and national political levels. These aspects of evaluation are not yet part of organisational learning processes or explicit within ‘good practice’ for evaluation.

Understanding the relationship between organisational learning, politics and change is important for this research, and it is key for organisations focused on political change. Understanding how power is contested and relationships are reshaped at multiple levels through learning might allow organisations to gain a better grasp of, and evaluate some of, the multi-faceted and multi-level dimensions of their work.

At a policy level, organisational learning, which encapsulates both the mundane and the extraordinary, should be better understood for peacebuilding in ongoing, intractable conflicts. This could include further interdisciplinary and joint enquiry between NGOs, SMOs, funding bodies and academics working ‘in’ and ‘on’ conflict’, into the role and outcomes of organisational learning and how they are political. Finally, the answer to the overarching question of this research - ‘how do international hybrid NGO/SMOs learn to create political space for change and transformation in the context of the Israeli Palestinian conflict’ - lies in how those organisations, each in their own context, use organisational learning to understand and challenge asymmetries in the exercise of power. Understanding and challenging asymmetries in the exercise of power, I argue, takes place internally and
externally through the mechanisms, processes, sites and outcomes of learning which the organisations create, which can result in mundane change or extraordinary transformation.

However, there are limits to this as an idea for practical implementation and to how those in state politics and organisations encourage learning which might end up challenging their own power. At an organisational level, in the organisations in this study at least, for founder Daniel Lubetzky who has relinquished the reigns of running OneVoice, and the former CEO of OV, who oversaw the separation of Zimam, Darkenu and SNS from OneVoice International, relinquishing power has been as important as challenging it. Knowing when and how to do that, it seems, is an equally important outcome of organisational learning.

9.5 Final Reflections

The data collected for this research has produced rich findings in terms of the research questions, despite the Covid-19 travel restrictions and the layers of complication which the pandemic added to the research. I found that processes contributing to organisational learning helped hybrid NGO/SMOs achieve some, but not all, of their political goals that aim to be transformational in a way which reflects the desired values and relationships for a peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine. I also found that organisational learning was political, in that power is exercised and negotiated through and as a result of it. Mind-sets and narratives are changed, individuals empowered, organisations adapt and are also part of processes to change or transform norms and values. However, this does not involve seizing power in the traditionally disruptive ways often expected of social movements. Instead, the more mundane aspects and many of the smaller incremental changes which are
part of organisational learning, including bureaucratic ones, are deemed both political in nature and outcome.

For the most part, transformation happens at an individual level when people gain agency and become politically engaged. Occasionally, however, it is also seen at an organisational level, when circumstances might dictate, or lead to decisions on, fundamental organisational structural changes, or to change strategy. At local and national political levels, organisational learning, together with the directions and activities which organisations choose to follow, are also occasionally transformative in their impact. Although peace between Israel and Palestine is not yet achieved, these transformations have resulted from incremental changes enacted over time, and in how policy has been impacted on, national narratives steered in different directions or changes of government have taken place. By charting these changes and transformations at different levels and asking why and how power is or could be exercised, challenged and negotiated, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of both the mundane changes and the extraordinary transformations which take place in relation to organisational learning and politics in the context of peacebuilding.
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Appendices

BOX 1 – Scenario Planning March 2020

Scenario 1
If travel restrictions are lifted in the next 6 months (by August 2020), I will look to:

Reschedule fieldwork and:
- Where possible continue conducting interviews by Skype/Zoom/WhatsApp/Facetime
- Conduct UK focus group in August 2020
- Conduct interviews and focus group in Palestine in mid-September or late October 2020
- Conduct interviews and focus group in the US in early September or October 2020

Scenario 2
If travel restrictions are not lifted until January 2021, I will look to:

Reschedule fieldwork and:
- Where possible conduct interviews by Skype/Zoom/WhatsApp/Facetime
- Conduct UK focus group in February 2021
- Conduct interviews and focus group in Palestine in March 2021
- Conduct interviews and focus group in the US in April 2021

Scenario 3
If travel restrictions are not lifted until September 2021, I will seek a six-month extension to my PhD until March 2023 and will look to:

Reschedule fieldwork and:
- Where possible conduct interviews by Skype/Zoom/WhatsApp/Facetime
- Conduct UK focus group in September 2021
- Conduct interviews and focus group in Palestine in September 2021
- Conduct interviews and focus group in the US in October 2021

Scenario 4
If travel restrictions were not lifted by the summer of 2021 and I am unable to obtain a funded extension, I will look to re-conceptualise my thesis and change my research questions.
APPENDIX A - Pre-Covid Fieldwork – Participant Observation at OV US, OV UK, SNS, Darkenu and Zimam

October 2018–March 2020

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<td>23, 24 Oct. Board Retreat NY</td>
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<td>9-12 June Staff Retreat</td>
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<td><strong>SNS</strong></td>
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<td>3-7 Nov. Schools Program Bradford, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Darkenu Israel</strong></td>
<td>22-26 October OV Delegation – Darkenu Visits, meetings and networking with peace movement activists, politicians, stakeholders</td>
<td>7-22 Sept. OV Women’s Delegation and Participant Observation at Darkenu – Election Campaign</td>
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<td>1-10 March Darkenu GOTV Election Campaign Tel Aviv Focus Group</td>
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<td><strong>Zimam Palestine</strong></td>
<td>OV Delegation - Zimam Visits, meetings and networking with peace movement activists, politicians, stakeholders</td>
<td>OV Women’s Delegation and Participant Observation at Zimam Visits, Interviews</td>
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# APPENDIX B – Coded Schedule of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Trustees</th>
<th>Activists</th>
<th>External Stakeholders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zimam Palestine</td>
<td>CEO – ZS1, Director of Policy and Public Relations – ZS2, Director of Advancement – ZS3, Field Coord., Ramallah – ZS4, Head Nablus chapter – ZS5, Head Zimam Youth Leadership Programme – ZS6, Head Gaza Chapter – ZS7</td>
<td>(Former Head of Comms Zimam) – ZT1, (Director Shams) – ZT2</td>
<td>Activists: ZA1, ZA2, ZA3, Focus Group 19 September 2020 x 10 participants – ZFG 1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OneVoice Europe</td>
<td>CEO (2008-2018) – ES1, Acting Director (2018-present) – ES2</td>
<td>EB1, EB2, EB3</td>
<td>OV Europe/SNS Focus Student Leadership Programme Feb. 21 x 20 participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Solutions Not Sides | Executive Director – NS1  
Managing Director – NS2  
Head Isr. Speakers – NS3  
Head Pal. Speakers – NS4  
Head Comms – NS5 | NB1  
NB2  
NB3 | Activists,  
Programme Participants,  
Speakers:  
(Bradford tour) – NA1  
(Bradford tour) – NA2  
Student Leadership Programme – NA3  
Participant Student Leadership Programme – NA4  
Participant Student Leadership Programme – NA5 | Pears Foundation – NE1  
Bradford Council – NE2  
The Linking Network – NE3 |
APPENDIX C – Interview Questions

Questions For Semi Structured Interviews *(the list of questions for each interview was further adapted, refined and edited for the approx. one-hour interviews)*

OneVoice, Zimam, Darkenu, SNS – Staff and Activists

**Background:**

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

**Individual learning:**

Are you currently doing any studies (formal or informal) which you have initiated and which have to do with your personal and professional development? In which language?

In what ways do you think the Israeli/Arab or other conflicts have impacted on those studies?

**Professional training:**

Do you participate in professional training associated with OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS?

How often, what kind, who coordinates it, who delivers it?

How have you benefited from professional training?

Does working with OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS provide you with learning opportunities that you wouldn’t ordinarily have?

Can you think of any instances where that professional or formal training has changed your thinking about something?

**Personal performance assessment:**

Do you have regular performance assessments at OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS?
Can you give me an example of when your behaviour has changed as a result of a performance assessment?

**Internal Communications:**

What is the most common form of communications for you between you and your colleagues at OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS?

How is internal information and knowledge most commonly shared?

How are meetings and sharing of information between OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS and its partner organisations such as OneVoice, or others, managed? Do you find them beneficial? Who initiates meetings?

Do you feel that your ideas and contributions are welcomed and heard by your colleagues?

Do you participate in future planning for OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS?

Do you participate in evaluation and assessment for OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS? If so, which models for assessment do you use?

**External Communications, Professional, Social Networks:**

Who do you most commonly hold regular professional meetings outside your organisation with?

How are meetings and the sharing of information with external shareholders managed (newsletters, networks, board meetings, etc...)?

Are you part of any professional networks beyond OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS?

How does communication happen between OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS and their external partners?

Between whom does communication happen when OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS communicate with external partners?

Do you think collective learning takes place between OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS and their external partners?
If so, can you think of an instance where collective learning with external partners has impacted on OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS?

What do you feel is the most important individual and/or collective learning OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS?

Do you feel that there is equal access to those learning opportunities at OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS?

Impacts of Learning:

Are you able to identify and describe an example of when learning has taken place and impacted on decisions you personally have made or on how you behave?

Are you able to identify and describe an example of when collective learning has taken place and impacted on internal OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS decision making?

Can you identify and describe an example of when learning has taken place and impacted on the way in which OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS interacts with its partners or external stakeholders?

Can you identify and describe an example of when learning has taken place and ultimately impacted on Israeli/Palestinian politics?

Do you think OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS are effective agents for peacebuilding and change in Israel/Palestine? Why/How?

Do you think OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS are effective agents for political change in Israel/Palestine? Why/How?

What do you think are the most important ways in which learning at OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS impacts on peacebuilding?

What do you feel has been your most important individual contribution to bringing about political change? Has learning contributed to that?

What do you feel your organisation’s most important contribution has been to bringing about political change? Has learning contributed to that?
Board Members and Trustees

How did you first hear about or become involved with OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS?
What is your current association with OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS? Is this a formal or informal relationship?
What do you feel is your main contribution to OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS (ideas, guidance, contacts, funding...)?
How often are you in communications with OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS and with whom?
Through formal or informal communications?
Do you communicate with board members of either OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS?
How receptive do you feel OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS is to your ideas, guidance, contacts - how is that demonstrated?
What do you personally most gain from your relationship with OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS?
How adept do you feel OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS is at processing new information from internal and external stakeholders more generally?
What do you understand by organisational learning?
Is organisational learning something which you have already considered in the context of other organisations that you have worked with?
What do you feel characterises OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS formal (evaluation and assessments of activities and performance, professional training, communications, governance structures etc..) and informal (personal, social networks) approaches to organisational learning?
What do you think most impacts on organisational learning in a conflict environment?
Can you think of an instance where something that you have learnt from OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS has changed or influenced your thinking or behaviour?
Can you think of an instance where something that you have said has changed or influenced thinking or behaviour at OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS?
Can you think of an instance where learning which has taken place within OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS has impacted on the political landscape in Israel/Palestine or beyond?

What do you think it means to be an effective agent for change in the US/UK/Israel/Palestine?

Do you think OneVoice/Darkenu/Zimam/SNS is an effective agent for change in Israel/Palestine?

Why/How?

**External Stakeholders, Partners**

How did you first hear of or become involved with OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS?

What is your current association with OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS? Is this a formal or an informal relationship?

What do you feel is your main contribution to OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS (ideas, guidance, contacts, funding...?)

How often are you in communications with OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS and with whom?

Through formal or informal communications?

How receptive do you feel OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS is to your ideas, guidance, contacts?

How is that demonstrated?

How adept do you feel OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS is at processing new information from internal and external stakeholders more generally?

How well informed and up to date do you feel Zimam staff are about current affairs?

What do you understand by organisational learning?

What do you feel characterises OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS approach to organisational learning?
Can you think of an instance where something that you have learnt from OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS has changed your thinking or behaviour?

Can you think of an instance where learning which has taken place within, or between, OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS has impacted on politics in Palestine or beyond?

Do you think OneVoice/Zimam/Darkenu/SNS is an effective agent for change in Israel and/or Palestine? Why/How?

What do you think most impacts on organisational learning in a conflict environment?
APPENDIX D - Focus Group Format Darkenu and Zimam

Participants arrive at the Darkenu/Zimam office/online and are reminded to read Focus Group Information Sheets in Arabic/Hebrew and to sign Consent Forms, which had also been sent to participants in advance of the sessions.

Greetings and Introduction to Session (5 minutes)

Introductions of myself, facilitator and translator. I then outline the timings and sequencings of activities and underlined that during the sessions, there are no right or wrong answers, that it is ok to disagree, that each participant needs to respect each other’s positions, that it is an ideal forum to enquire more deeply into each other’s thinking and that people mustn’t interrupt of have side conversations. All participants are asked to put their phones on silence for the duration of the sessions.

Activity 1- Introductions (15 minutes)

On post it notes participants write two words to describe themselves 5 years ago, 2 words to describe themselves today and two words to describe themselves in 10 years-time and then introduce themselves and explain the words which they have chosen.

This is a fun introductory exercise where participants were able to introduce themselves to the group and to speak about themselves as well as start to think of themselves as individuals who may go through individual change.
Activity 2- Talking about Darkenu and Zimam (30 minutes)

Pots of Playdoh have been placed in the middle of the table and participants are asked to make an animal or an object which represents how they see Darkenu or Zimam. They are given five minutes to make their animal and then each participant is asked to describe their object or animal and how they think it represents Darkenu or Zimam.

*Play doh Modelling is a focus group technique which I was introduced to in a Conducting Focus Group Seminar. It is a focusing exercise which helps enliven and focus conversation around the specific subject of Darkenu and Zimam, which we were then able to go into more deeply. It was a particularly effective exercise as participants kept their pots of Play doh throughout the three-hour session and continued to play with the Play doh as others spoke and they listened. It is also a particularly useful tool to help participants focus and a fun and creative exercise, which helps set a relaxed tone for the rest of the sessions.*

Activity 3 – Talking about Learning (20 minutes)

Participants are asked to discuss the ways in which they perceive learning at Darkenu/Zimam - formal and informal. The facilitator writes the ideas which come out of the discussion on a Flip chart divided into two columns – one for words or ideas that people associate with learning and the other side for activities that can be associated with learning.

*Participants are asked what words or activities they associate with learning? What counts as learning and what are examples of positive and negative learning experiences. This exercise helps answer my research question about how organisational learning takes place, who participates in it and how.*
Activity 4 - Talking about what influences Learning (30 Minutes)

What and who impacts on learning? Participants are asked to write on post it notes 5 things which they think impact on your learning experience at Zimam. These can be practical things like people’s environment or scheduling, individual people or mentors, individual interest and passions, family and friends, religious practice or anything that people feel has to do with the way that they learn. Participants are then asked to place each of their 5 ideas on an influence diagram which is placed on the flip chart - close to the centre or further away, depending on how important these ideas are to their learning at Darkenu/Zimam. Very influential factors are placed close to the middle and less important factors further away. A participant the room places the words and ideas described by their colleagues in Gaza, on the flip chart.

Influence charts map relationships between different stakeholders and their influence on each other.
Activists interact with a wide range of people and types of learning and this exercise helps determine who and what influences and impacts on their learning?

LUNCH BREAK (30 minutes)

Activity 5 - Thinking about your relationship with Darkenu/Zimam and what you have learnt. (40 minutes)

Participants are asked to describe three scenes as if they were short film scenes: an opening scene where participants talk about their first engagement with Darkenu/Zimam, a second scene when participants describe an important learning experience at Darkenu/Zimam; and a third scene where they describe a situation where they think or behave differently as a result of that learning.
This activity uses narratives and stories to describe how personal and collective stories about learning, the conflict, about social change and about participants have changed or been reinforced.

These short stories also explore Identities, how participants see themselves in their relationship with Darkenu/Zimam.

FEEDBACK, THOUGHTS, ANYTHING WE HAVE MISSED (5 minutes)

END
APPENDIX E

Post –Focus Group Evaluation
Sept. 19 2020

Zimam

1. What about today’s discussions was most interesting or valuable for you?

2. Have your feelings about or understanding of anything changed today?

3. How do you think you might use this knowledge or skills in your work or life?

4. How comfortable do you feel participating in a focus group with the moderator and some participants online?

   1   2   3   4   5
   Not comfortable   Very comfortable

5. What do you feel were the strengths of this focus group?

6. What do you feel were the weaknesses?