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Resilience and Everyday Peace in Perspective:

A critical assessment of grassroots peacebuilding initiatives
based on the village Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam

verfasst von / submitted by

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I woke up with heavy eyes
As if after an earthquake
My body was tied and chained
And the crying inside me
Everything was as usual
The pilot who killed
And got killed in Argentina
The war that we invited to our home
This home that has no end
How can we ask for the sky
If our eyes are heavy
If there are earthquakes in our hand
The clouds look down
Indifferent and wondering

Daniella Kitain (Interview 4 2022, 110)

Statutory declaration

I declare that I have developed and written the enclosed Master Thesis completely by myself and have not used sources or means without declaration in the text. Any thoughts from others or literal quotations are clearly marked. The Master Thesis was not used in the same or in a similar version to achieve an academic grading or is being published elsewhere.

Vienna, 17/09/2022 Signature (Nathalie Steiner)

Abstract

With the aim of contributing to the critical debate on neoliberal (or post-liberal) peacebuilding practices, this thesis examines how the ruling knowledge claim of resilience in peacebuilding is perceived from a local perspective in a conflict that is between unequal sides. Taking a theoretical point of departure in Roger Mac Ginty's (2014), a British peace and conflict scholar, notion of *everyday peace*, I have assessed the resilience capacity of the grassroots peace project Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam through the lens of complexity theory. Drawing on previous research and primary data conducted via a questionnaire and interviews, I have discussed potential risks and consequences of the theoretical debate on resilience in an environment where local everyday practices of peace are shaped by a power asymmetry between occupier and occupied. I have concluded that the neoliberal advocates of resilience have not satisfactorily addressed the implication of grassroots peacebuilding initiatives in deeply divided societies, where one narrative, culture, and language is considered superior to another. The Israeli-Palestinian issue that shapes the environment of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as a binational village and as a peace project under the administration of the state of Israel cannot be seen as separated from the personal life, culture, and narrative of the people living with, or under the occupation. Therefore, the bottom-up, ecological approach to resilience adopted in this thesis must be extended by the understanding that resilience is inseparable from individual practices of everyday resistance. In line with Yara Hawari (2021), a Palestinian political scientist, I argue that considering the village as a successful and ethical coexistence project between Israelis and Palestinians enqueues in the normalization discourse as it neglects the village's complex environment. Concurrently, it supports the general knowledge claim of the ruling class and reproduces the prevailing power imbalance between occupier and occupied. The present thesis speaks to the complex logic, context, and experience of the inhabitants of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam and the Palestinians living in the West Bank. The notions of *everyday peace* and resilience were put in perspective to remove a potential fixation on 'protagonist' and 'antagonist' in an attempt to redress power imbalances by giving those stories and narratives a voice that are systematically overruled.

Keywords: Bottom-up peace building, Resilience, Resistance, *everyday peace*, Israel, Occupied Palestinian territory

Abstract

Mit dem Ziel, einen Beitrag zur kritischen Debatte über neoliberale (oder postliberale) Praktiken der Friedensförderung zu leisten, untersucht diese Masterarbeit, wie der dominante Wissensanspruch der Resilienz in der Friedensförderung aus lokaler Perspektive in einem Konflikt mit zwei ungleichen Seiten wahrgenommen wird. Ausgehend vom Begriff des ‚Alltagsfriedens" nach dem britischen Friedens- und Konfliktforscher Roger Mac Ginty (2014) wurde die Widerstandsfähigkeit des in Israel ansässigen grassroots Friedensprojekts Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam durch die Linse der Komplexitätstheorie bewertet. Auf der Grundlage früherer Forschungen und Primärdaten wurden die potenziellen Risiken und Konsequenzen der theoretischen Debatte über Resilienz in einem Umfeld diskutiert, in dem alltägliche Friedenspraktiken vor Ort durch eine Asymmetrie der Macht zwischen zwei Bevölkerungsgruppen gekennzeichnet sind. Eine abschließende Gegenüberstellung der Ergebnisse zeigte, dass der dominante Wissensanspruch der Resilienz in der Friedensförderung die potentiellen Risiken von grassroots-Friedensinitiativen in einer Gesellschaft, in der ein Narrativ, eine Kultur und eine Sprache als überlegen angesehen werden, nicht zufriedenstellend berücksichtigt hat. Das binationale Dorf unter der Verwaltung des Staates Israel kann nicht isoliert vom persönlichen Leben, der Kultur und den Erzählungen der lokalen Bevölkerung betrachtet werden, welche als Teil oder unter israelischer Besatzung leben. Daher muss der in dieser Arbeit verfolgte ökologische grassroots Ansatz zu Resilienz um das Verständnis erweitert werden, dass Resilienz untrennbar mit individuellen Praktiken des alltäglichen Widerstands verbunden ist. Im Einklang mit der palästinensischen Politologin Yara Hawari (2021) argumentiere ich, dass die Betrachtung des Dorfes als erfolgreiches und ethisches Koexistenzprojekt zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern sich in den Normalisierungsdiskurs einreihen würde, da es das komplexe Umfeld des Dorfes vernachlässigt. Gleichzeitig würde es den allgemeinen Wissensanspruch der herrschenden Klasse unterstützen, und das damit verbundene Machtgefälle zwischen Besatzer*innen und Besetzten reproduzieren. Diese Arbeit befasst sich mit der komplexen Logik, dem Kontext und den Erfahrungen der Bewohner*innen von Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam und im Westjordanland lebenden Palästinenser*innen.

Die Begriffe ‚Alltagsfrieden' und ‚Resilienz' werden relativiert, um eine mögliche Fixierung auf ‚Protagonist*innen' und ‚Antagonist*innen' aufzulösen und Machtungleichgewichte auszugleichen, indem systematisch unterdrückten Geschichten und Erzählungen eine Stimme verliehen wird.

Schlüsselwörter: grassroots-Friedensprojekte, Resilienz, Widerstand, Alltagsfrieden, Israel, besetzte palästinensische Gebiete

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Content

1 Glossary

Palestinian	Palestinian from the West Bank, Gaza[1] or the Diaspora. That includes Palestinians with Muslim, Christian, or Muslim-Christian backgrounds.
Palestinian Israeli	People of Palestinian descent with Muslim, Christian, or Muslim-Christian backgrounds that are holding an Israeli passport.
Israeli	Jewish or Christian Israeli from diverse backgrounds (eg.: European Jews (Ashkenazi), Persian, Arabic, and Asian Jews (Mizrahi), as well as Spanish Jews (Sephardi) etc.)

[1] Gaza is a small, self-governing Palestinian territory, bordering Israel in the East and Egypt in the South. The West Bank (including East Jerusalem) is a landlocked Palestinian territory bordering Jordan in the East and Israel on its Northern, Western and Southern border. Both Palestinian territories are lying within historical Palestine and are occupied by or under the control of the state of Israel (Nations Online 1998-2021).

2 Introduction

Liberal peace strategies are in transition. In that respect, the failure of universal peacebuilding approaches and externally imposed liberal peace strategies has forced a reconsideration of international interventions and peacebuilding strategies. (Chandler 2014b; Juncos 2018) Under conditions of uncertainty, most international organizations, including the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the World Bank (WB), incorporated resilience as a concept into their policy framework as a response to past failures to intervene (Juncos, 2018, 564).

In a report from the OECD on state-building in situations of conflict and fragility, the success of resilience in conflict situations is considered to be directly linked to the extent to which "expectations, institutions, and the political settlement interact in ways that are mutually reinforcing" (OECD 2011, 21). Critical scholars (e.g. Joseph and Juncos 2019; Richmond 2010; Richmond and Mac Ginty 2013)argue that liberal peacebuilding has evolved into a system of governance as opposed to a process of reconciliation. The result is a standardization of peace processes underlying the integration of resilience in the contemporary peacebuilding approaches within the liberal peacebuilding paradigm. Following the earlier understanding of interventionism measures as an "act of external power" (Chandler 2012, 218), intervention re-entered the peacebuilding discourse as "an act of empowerment" (Chandler 2012, 218). Local agency experiences growing attention within the peacebuilding discourse. Nonetheless, the neoliberal (or post-liberal) approaches to resilience in peacebuilding seemingly fail to embed the local agency and self-determination of the people adequately. Concurrently, the implication of the notion of resilience in an environment like the Israeli-Palestinian issue is insufficiently addressed. This lack of context-sensitivity gains momentum in the conflict discussed within this thesis, as the peacebuilding agents are subjects to structural power asymmetry between occupier and occupied. Within this thesis, I shall demonstrate that resilience and resistance in the Israeli-Palestinian context are not inherently incompatible.

Especially in light of recent events such as the war between Gaza and Israel in May 2021, the Israeli-Palestinian issue seems insoluble. For observers on both sides, a coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis seems unthinkable. In the village Neve Shalom (Hebrew name) / Wahat al-Salam (Arabic name) (NSWAS), translated 'Oasis of Peace', this utopia appears to have taken a decisive step forward. Until today, NSWAS is the only village in Israel with the voluntary coexistence of Palestinian Israelis and Jewish Israelis. Jewish and Palestinian Israeli families share land, power, everyday life, and administration. The village,

which started as a peace project, aims to demonstrate against the general knowledge claim within Israel that a shared, peaceful everyday life between Israelis and Palestinians is impossible.

Drawing back on the assumption from OECD (2011) that the success of resilience in conflict situations is directly linked to the extent to which expectations, institutions, and the political settlement interact, the complex environment surrounding the village plays a significant role when engaging in a discourse about resilience, *everyday peace*, and coexistence.

The conflict in question is one of two unequal sides caught in an asymmetrical power struggle that shapes every aspect of the lives of the people living under Israeli occupation. This thesis aims to engage in resilience building 'from below' by focusing exclusively on the local agency. The integration of the voice of Palestinians living in the West Bank and the villagers of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam shall serve to open the discourse and create a space for knowledge-production where the Palestinian and the Jewish cultures, narratives, and languages are presented equally. The reader is invited to engage in a more holistic perspective on resilience, *everyday peace*, and coexistence within the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The aforementioned power imbalance between occupier and occupied shapes the implication of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as a binational village and as a project under the administration of the state of Israel.

The notion of *everyday peace* by Roger Mac Ginty's (2014), professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute at the University of Manchester (Mac Ginty 2014, 564), will be linked to bottom-up ecological resilience-building strategies in divided societies, centering around the local's agency.

Combined, this will build the theoretical foundation of the thesis. The methodological approach consists of three interconnected parts: (1) participatory research to allow active interaction with the objects of research through direct engagement with the local community of NSWAS and a selected group of Palestinians from the West Bank, (2) the application of the concept of resilience in peacebuilding assessed through the lens of complexity theory, and (3) co-created research generated poetry. The research will be performed on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collected via a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. This thesis deals with personal insights and sensitive data. Therefore, the names of all Palestinian interviewees have been changed and the names of a number of villagers from Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam have been anonymized. Based on the quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire, I will analyze the resilience capacity within the village on

three levels: the individual, community, and the system level. Consequently, I will engage in the implications of the notions of coexistence, resilience, and *everyday peace* from a Palestinian perspective against the background of the matrix of power relations between Israel and Palestine.

2.1 State of research

In recent years, the concept of resilience has gained increasing importance in the discourse on development and state-building. The European Report on Development (2009) was one of the first documents that discussed the concept against the background of the European approach to resilience in Africa. In addition, the Strategic Plan of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2018-2021 (2017) addressed resilience as one of three development goals. Resilience is a central concept in the European Union Global Strategy (European Union 2016, 24), and the World Bank applied the concept in a number of their World Development Reports (World Bank 2011, 2013). Against the backdrop of the rising complexity of global conflict (Chandler 2012, 2014a) and the increasing understanding of a direct correlation between natural disasters and conflict situations (Harrowell and Özerdem 2018; Johansson 2018; Vivekanand, Schilling, and Smith 2014), the concept of resilience is becoming increasingly important among researchers.

The shift towards new, adaptive, and integrative approaches to peacebuilding (Bargués-Pedreny 2015; de Coning 2018; Stepputat 2018) can be partially attributed to the extensive critique of international actors' engagement in peacebuilding efforts (Johansson 2018, 1). The latter critique centers around a potential standardization of peacebuilding in line with the liberal peacebuilding paradigm (Bargués-Pedreny 2015; de Coning 2018; Stepputat 2018). These critical accounts see a direct link between the rise of resilience in peacebuilding and neoliberal forms of governance (Johansson, 2018, 1). As argued by the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (2009, 108), governmentality is based on the knowledge claim of Political Economy as the main source of knowledge, while apparatuses of security are understood as the technical means at its disposal (cf. Juncos 2018, 564). Put differently, the concept of resilience gained prominence in peacebuilding at a time when stability, security, and governance were seen as the predominant approaches for the implementation of resilience in peacebuilding. (Jabri, 2010, 54; Johansson, 2018, 1p; Richmond, 2010, 24p) Among others, the professor of European Politics at the University of Bristol Ana E. Juncos (2018) focuses on institutional agency at large, other researchers have engaged in the agency of communities and populations in resilience initiatives (e.g. Cavelty et al., 2015; Corry, 2014; Ryan, 2015).

David Chandler, professor of International Relations at the University of Westminster (Lemay-Hébert 2019, xi), in his work "Resilience and human security: the post-interventionist paradigm" (2012), supports the approach of the latter researchers, endorsing "a shift away from liberal internationalist claims of Western securing or sovereign agency and towards a concern with facilitating or developing the self-securing agency – resilience – of those held to be the most vulnerable" (Chandler 2012, 213).

In respect of the above, the concept of resilience in peacekeeping can be interpreted and applied in a variety of ways. In my master thesis, I will engage in the critical accounts of the ruling knowledge claims on the implementation and implications of resilience as a peacebuilding concept in Israel/Palestine as a conflict-affected society. In addition, I will build on more recent integrative approaches to the concept with the aim of shedding light on the risks of standardized, Western-centric notions of resilience, coexistence, and *everyday peace* (e.g. Chandler 2014a; de Coning 2016; Mac Ginty 2014; Richter-Devroe 2011b; Ryan 2015).

Due to the unique nature of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as a coexistence project within Israel, the village has been a subject of interest for journalists from all over the world (e.g. Bost, 2021; Kaufmann, 2018; Kilchenmann, 2021). However, the scientific literature on NSWAS is rather limited (e.g. Bashir and Khwaiter 2002; Matyók 1953; Nathan 2007; Tuv 2018). While scholars have previously engaged in the critical literature on people-to-people (P2P) projects within Israel/Palestine (e.g. Bashir and Khwaiter 2002; Hawari 2021; Salem 2005), the topic of resilience as a peacebuilding approach has not yet been addressed in the context of NSWAS.

My contribution to the debate on bottom-up peacebuilding projects in the Israel/Palestine will take place within three areas: (1) resilience building through P2P peace projects based on everyday practices of peace, (2) grassroot peace projects in a context of power asymmetry, and (3) implications of coexistence, resilience, and *everyday peace* from the perspective of an oppressed people. By examining the notions of critical scholars on these three areas and challenging the theory through the lens of the local people themselves, the implications and applicability of *everyday peace*, coexistence, and resilience can be analyzed. The integration of the voice of local people within these three areas can be seen as a contributive argument to the counter debate on the neoliberal (or postliberal) peacebuilding paradigm based on the local's agency. Hence, this thesis is devoted to challenge the neoliberal (or postliberal) peacebuilding practices and stresses the necessity of context sensitivity and acknowledgment

of complexity and interdependence of all levels of society (i.e assessment of the liberal explanations from the perspective of the oppressed people). In broad terms, it can be understood as an extension of previous research, which I first and foremost built on the perspective of the local population whose everyday life is being researched. Inevitably, this contribution will also affect the credibility of liberal thinkers. Assessing the agency of the local population as strong can increase their credibility. Consequently, criticizing the liberal explanations as incomplete and context insensitive may decrease their credibility in conflict-affected societies such as the research area.

The underlying research question for this master's thesis are the following:

1) To what extent does the concept of resilience as a peacebuilding approach apply to the everyday life of the residents of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam?
2) What perspectives on everyday resilience through bottom-up peacebuilding projects like Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam do exist in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian issue?
3) What implications do coexistence and *everyday peace* have against the background of the matrix of power relations in Israel/Palestine?

2.2 Introducing the Oasis

Initiated by Father Bruno Hussar, a French Dominican brother of Egyptian-Jewish descent, in the 1970s, the village was founded as a space of dialogue between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Israelis (Tuv 2018, 12). The vision was to overcome the deep rifts that still dominate the reality of the people living with and under the Israeli occupation (Avidan 2018; Bost 2021).

Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam, in short NSWAS, is located equidistant from Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Jerusalem. The village was built on the 'Green Line' that was an outcome of the armistice agreements of 1949 (marked in red in Figure 1). While the Green Line was intended as a border between Israel and Palestine, parts demark a former 'demilitarized zone'. Technically, the part of the village around the municipality buildings is located within Israel. However, the inhabitants' houses are placed in the former demilitarized zone, which today is under Israeli control. (Tuv 2018, 12pp)

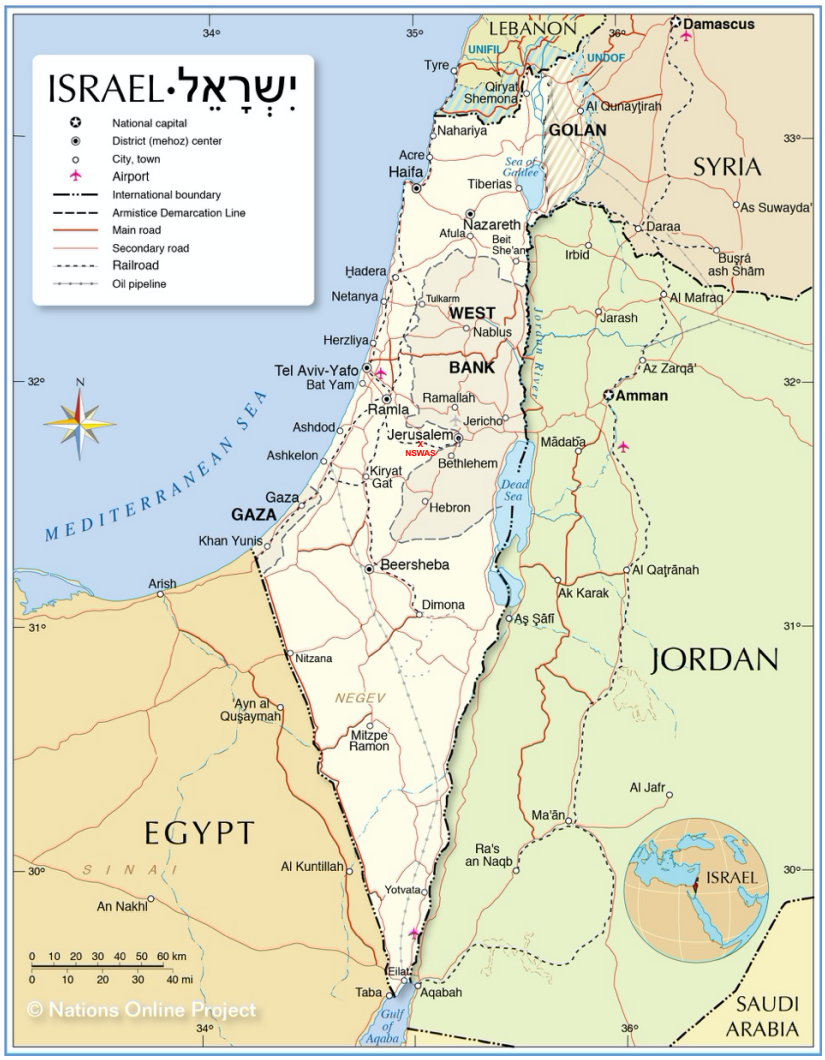

Figure 1: Location of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam (Nations Online 1998-2021)

According to the villagers, this technicality does not affect the everyday lives of the residents as the entire area today is under Israeli control. All inhabitants are fully Israeli citizens and integrated into the Israeli economic, social, and education system. Those working in Israel pay taxes to the state, villagers use Israeli banks and are part of the Israeli health system. Since 2014, the village's primary school has been under the direction of the Israeli Ministry of Education and receives state-supported funding. Even though the non-visible border leading through the village does not influence the residents' everyday lives, Palestinian villagers' experience outside of the community is shaped by racial prejudice and persistent inequality. These manifestations of prejudice are difficult to verify. Yet, they affect the lives of the Palestinian Israelis regarding study and work opportunities within the state of Israel. (Tuv 2018, 14).

In the beginning, the community suffered from its status as a hippie commune (Bost 2021). Since the village does not belong to any Zionist movement, it struggled for state recognition

for several years (Avidan 2018). After being granted land in 1972, on which the village was later built-up, building houses before 1972 was prohibited. People lived in containers or provisional arrangements. Today, the village is home to around 300 people. It receives only limited state aid and still is subject to criticism from both population groups. The 'Oasis of Peace' owes its continued existence to the work of many volunteers and generous donations from all over the world. (Bost 2021)

Within NSWAS, there is a distinction being made between so-called first-, second-, and third-generation villagers. Whereas the first generation refers to those, who decided to join in adulthood, the second generation is formed by the villagers that were born and grew up in the village. Accordingly, third-generation villagers are the children of the second generation. Yet, since the reality of the community is far more diverse than presented above, some of the villagers do not fall in either of the categories. On the one hand, emigres from various backgrounds such as America, Europe, and Asia joined the village. On the other hand, also within the Palestinian Israelis and Jewish Israelis, diverse backgrounds are to be found. The category of Jewish Israelis living in the village, for instance, is formed by European Jews (Ashkenazi), Persian, Arabic, and Asian Jews (Mizrahi), as well as Spanish Jews (Sephardi). When referring to Palestinians (or Palestinian Israelis) with regards to the village, that includes Palestinians with Muslim, Christian, or Muslim-Christian backgrounds. (Tuv 2018, 12p) It has to be noted that all villagers do hold an Israeli passport and are therefore full Israeli citizens.

As the inhabitants mutually argue: the choice to live a shared life is a demonstration against the general knowledge claim that Palestinians and Israelis cannot live in coexistence. NSWAS, therefore, is built on utopian values, above all peace and equality, that the villagers committed to with purely good intentions; a mutual aspiration of achieving an ideal social world. However, the inhabitants do not claim a broader change in the conflict dynamics within the country, only through the village's advocacy of coexistence. (Tuv 2018, 12pp)

The residents as individuals and the community as an entity consider themselves peacebuilding agents through various educational projects and public services in the village, addressed to Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Israelis from the region (Tuv 2018, 15). While the school system in Israel is widely separated between Palestinian Israelis with Muslim, Christian, or Muslim-Christian backgrounds and Jewish Israelis, the village established an integrative, binational school system. The students learn Hebrew and Arabic. In addition to

the usual subjects, they study the three world religions and the historical background of Palestinians and Israelis. (Kaufmann 2018)

Institutions such as The School for Peace, the Children's Educational System, the Pluralistic Spiritual Center, and the Youth Club serve as the basis for educational work to educate all generations toward peaceful coexistence among the villagers (NSWAS 2021). Especially the School for Peace (SFP), which came into existence in 1979, plays a central role in creating awareness of the existing power dynamic within the county. These educational practices shall mitigate the effects of this power imbalance on the behavior and thoughts of the participants. Thus, the SFP serves as a platform for 'binational' dialogue within the village. In addition, the school provides courses in universities throughout Israel. (Tuv 2018, 17p)

What started as a grassroots peace project in NSWAS, today is a recognized village within the state of Israel. However, it still is the only village in Israel with the voluntary coexistence of Jewish and Palestinian Israelis. (NSWAS 2021)

2.3 Personal Contextualization

This thesis is based on a participatory research approach conducted between October 2021 and May 2022. During this time, I regularly visited the village to guarantee collaboration with the inhabitants and to create room for iterative feedback loops on the literature and methods used as well as the data collection approach and the interpretation of the findings. Additionally, I have been in close contact with a random selection of community members throughout the entirety of my stay in Jerusalem that voluntarily supported me in my research process. Concurrently, I have been in continuous discussion with a group of Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank.

I have recorded four interviews out of which one was a group interview with two people that served three different purposes: (1) it provided me with first-hand experience from the villagers and allowed me to shed light on the Palestinian perspective on peacebuilding endeavors within Israel and the terminology of the underlying discourse, (2) helped me contextualize the literature used in this thesis, and (3) served as material for the co-created poems that were crafted from those interviews. Within this thesis, I will refer to the interviews and present the co-created poems on several occasions. In that case, I shall indicate the specific interview that served as source of information outlined.

During my research stay in Jerusalem, I have been a master's student in Development Studies at the University of Vienna. My focus areas are intercultural negotiation, dispute resolution, and peacebuilding in the MENA region.

Thus, my educational background and origin indicate that my perspective on life and work is marked by privilege and filled with blind spots. However, my education at well-funded Western colleges and universities, and my master's degree in specific, gave me access to valuable sources and publications that allow me to engage in extensive and system-critical literature, as well as the transformative politics of gender and feminist scholars. Further, it allowed me to conduct on-site research within Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories (including West Bank and East Jerusalem).

If I had to describe access to this conflict, I would typically start by saying that I only have very limited personal access as an Austrian woman. Yet, that is subject to perspective. Just like Palestinians – here I am referring to the millions of Palestinians in Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, and in the diaspora – people whose experience still, for the most part, is silenced; whose rights have been limited due to their accidental birth as Palestinians. Just like these people, I am looking for a home, peace, security, and freedom. I was born as a woman in Austria with an entire set of freedoms and opportunities. Yet, this must not be a privilege. These rights should not be limited to 'man-made' borders. Therefore, I claim that although I may have only limited immediate personal access, I certainly have human access.

The aim of the here presented research endeavor is to contribute to the debate on people-to-people approaches to peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine with the attempt to create transparency, even if only to a very small extent; even if only as a mouthpiece.

As a researcher in the field of peacebuilding, I will distance myself from the attribution of victim and perpetrator and predefined categorization. The aim of the master's thesis is to give voice to the people.

2.4 Disposition

The thesis proceeds as follows. In the next chapter, the theoretical areas which are based on the alternative approach to resilience from a bottom-up perspective are elaborated on and presented. Chapter 4 includes the motivation and discussion of methodological tools that are used to answer the research questions. The result of the primary material is presented in Chapter 5, such as an assessment of the resilience capacity within the Neve Shalom / Wahat

al-Salam. Chapter 6 serves to view the previous results from a Palestinian perspective. Lastly, conclusions and suggestions for further research will be presented.

3 Theoretical Framework – An alternative resilience approach to peacebuilding

> And at the end of the day
> When things are much the same
> I shall continue to hope
> I shall remember that the personal
> Is always political
> That inner peace
> Cannot be separated from wholeness
> And health in community
> That small acts of beauty
> By small groups of people
> Still carry the potential
> To change the world
> (Mead 2004, 8)

The underlying theoretical framework of this master's thesis is an alternate approach to the concept of resilience in peacebuilding. It acknowledges, as the poet Joy Mead, member of Iona Community, an international Christian movement engaged in peace and justice (Iona Books 2022), describes it, that "the personal is always political" (Mead 2004, 8). Within this chapter, I will engage in critical accounts of the ruling knowledge claims on the implementation of resilience as a peacebuilding concept and the more recent integrative approaches (eg. Chandler and Richmond 2015; de Coning 2016; J. M. Joseph and Juncos 2019; Juncos 2018; Mac Ginty 2014; Richmond and Mac Ginty 2013). Building on the said, I draw upon critical scholars within the resilience discourse when outlining a resilience approach that puts social practices of *everyday peace* in its center. Taking a theoretical point of departure in the notion of *everyday peace* by Roger Mac Ginty (2014), a professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute at the University of Manchester (Mac Ginty 2014, 564), *everyday peace* will be linked to bottom-up ecological strategies to resilience building in divided societies, centered around the entity's agency. Emphasis is put on the influence of the interchange between individuals and their

environment at all levels of the system and its influence on resilience building in communities. For this thesis, the subject in question is the binational community that came into existence as a peace project Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam. In this regard, I shall distinguish between positive and negative resilience and further elaborate on their implications.

By looking at different aspects of its application, the following will inform about the precise use of the term resilience in the context of this thesis. The aim is to develop a resilience approach to be applied beyond the neoliberal logic.

This chapter shall demonstrate that a bottom-up strategic approach to resilience building can lead to everyday resilience and contribute to the peacebuilding process in communities like the sample used for this thesis (Cavelty et al. 2015; Corry 2014; Juncos 2018; Schmidt 2014). Further, I shall argue that conflict transformation and sustainable peace is reached through people-to-people activities or, as Mac Ginty calls it, 'everyday diplomacy' rather than external intervention.

3.1 Origin, Definition and Application

The term resilience derives from the Latin word *resilere*, translated rebound or recoil. First used in the 19th century, the concept of resilience should describe the ability of wood to withstand heavy forces. (McAslan 2010, 1; Johansson 2018, 3) In its early iterations, resilience further found use in metallurgical and chemical sciences, whereas the resilience of a distinct substance was associated with how its attributes, quality or capacity reacts and adapts to external influence or to recover from external shocks (McCandless et al. 2015, 4).

Over the past decade, the understanding of the concept has developed from its employment as the description of a characteristic of ecosystems and species to communities and nations (McAslan 2010, 1; Johansson 2018, 3). Among others, resilience is used as an analytical concept in the fields of disaster risk reduction and humanitarian aid.

In recent years, the interest in resilience is growing among policy makers and academics in peacebuilding. Hence, its understanding developed from a purely scientific standpoint to the application in social science. (McCandless et al. 2015, 5) Prior notions transformed from a rather systematic and inquisitive understanding to a relational and process-oriented concept centered around the entity's agency. Following Erin McCandless, a British-American widely published scholar, policy advisor and practitioner working in conflict-affected areas, Graeme Simpson, an experienced peacebuilder with expertise in violence, reconciliation and

transitional justice, and director of Interpeace USA (Institute for the Study of Human Rights 2016; Interpeace 2016a) and the US-American Zoe Meroney, former Junior Consultant at Interpeace, entities in this regard are understood to be individuals, communities, institutions, and societies who are attributed the responsibility and capacity to shape their environment within complex social systems (McCandless et al. 2015, 4).
Consequently, as the interest in resilience in peacebuilding and the concept's presence in international organizations' policy documents is increasing (Juncos and Joseph 2020, 290) so are the concepts varying interpretations and implementations.

Against that backdrop, UN's focus on sustainable peace is centered around the concept of resilience (de Coning 2018; UN 2016). UNDP addresses resilience building as one of three directions of change in the development context within their Strategic Plan 2022-2025, alongside "structural transformation" and "leaving no-one behind" (UNDP 2021, 6p). Noting that, UNDP defines resilience as "strengthening countries and institutions to prevent, mitigate and respond to crisis, conflict, natural disasters, climate and social and economic shocks" (UNDP 2021, 6p). Yet, in their formulation of signature solutions to achieve the set goals, UNDP provides a more specific, human-centered approach focusing on "[s]upporting countries and communities in building resilience to diverse shocks and crises, including conflict, climate change, disasters and epidemics" (UNDP 2021, 9). The level of individual agency in resilience building is not explicitly included. Nonetheless, their focus on communities' agency and ability to foster resilience outlined above opens up the possibility to contribute to broader societal stability. (McCandless et al. 2015, 5)

Resilience also enters the work of the European Union, among others in the new EU Joint Communication on Resilience as a critical priority for the EU's external action, the new European Consensus on Development, and their European Union Global Strategy (European Commission 2017, 3; Joseph and Juncos 2019, 1). The latter defines resilience as "a broad concept encompassing all individuals and the whole of society" (European Commission 2017, 3) that features "democracy, trust in institutions and sustainable development, and the capacity to reform" (European Commission 2017, 3).

While the interpretation of the concept in international organizations' policy documents, as shown in the examples above, vary, the underlying consensus on the overall nexus of resilience on "the positive potentialities inherent in a given context that can help to build, consolidate and sustain peace" (McCandless et al. 2015, 5) among peacebuilding theorists and

practitioners emerged. However, resilience as a peacebuilding strategy has been subject to broad criticism.

Ana E. Juncos, professor of European Politics and researcher with a focus on European foreign policy and security policy, and Jonathan M. Joseph, professor in Politics and International Relations, both working at the University of Bristol (University of Bristol 2022a, 2022b), describe the EU's integration of resilience in their policy as an approach operating within EU's priorities while maintaining the main principles for external interventions (Juncos and Joseph 2020, 290). A more precise elaboration on the authors perception of the EU's integration of resilience in their policy can be extracted from their critical analysis of the resilience approach in EU foreign policy from 2019. With this, Juncos and Joseph argue that the EU resilience-thinking is influenced by "neoliberal [...] approaches to resilience in the sphere of global governance; [...] the EU as a [...] liberal power; and the [...] EU with its complex institutional structure and path dependencies" (Joseph and Juncos 2019, 1). Put differently, the authors criticize the standardization of peace processes underlying the EU's integration of resilience which follows a liberal peacebuilding paradigm built upon EU's priorities. Juncos' and Joseph's arguments are also reflected in Oliver P. Richmond's (2010, 24p) critique on liberal peacebuilding which, according to the professor of Politics at the University of Manchester and leading scholar in the field of International Relations, Peace and Conflict Studies (University of Manchester 2021) developed into a system of governance instead of what he calls "a process of reconciliation" (Richmond 2010, 24p).

Building on related arguments, Foucault (2008, 126p) ascribes the extensive increase in the use of resilience in peacebuilding to a form of neoliberal governmentality based on free markets and liberal democracies. Further, McCandless, Simpson and Meroney consider the debate on resilience to be a potential "new language that is gaining particular traction in the international community, but which may obscure some existing debates in the peacebuilding field" (McCandless et al. 2015, 5). Following this assumption, David Chandler, in his work on the shift from intervention to post-interventionism that found ground in the 2000s, describes an alteration of political subjects in security issues when resilience entered the peacebuilding discourse (Chandler 2012, 218). According to him, the understanding of human security in terms of resilience as prevention replaced the long-lasting perception of security seen as autonomy in the matter of "the capacity to secure oneself" (Chandler 2012, 218). Intervention and prevention are hence no longer seen as part of an irreconcilable dichotomy. Moving away from an "interventionist approach held to challenge states and undermine the sovereignty" (Chandler 2012, 218), intervention, the author agrees with McCandless,

Simpson and Meroney, has re-entered the discourse as "an act of empowerment rather than an act of external power" (Chandler 2012, 218).

Building on the above, a reconceptualization of peacebuilding interventions can be derived. Thus, resilience as a people-centered approach to peacebuilding is placed at the center of the contemporary peacebuilding discourse of various actors. However, the aim of promoting security alongside the reframing of international intervention as an act of empowerment holds the risk of obscuring earlier debates in the field of peacebuilding that criticize external interventions.

It cannot be denied that international interventions through external power have succeeded in ending acts of war leading to a cessation of physical violence which corresponds to the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung's (1969, 190) definition of negative peace. Nonetheless, external interventions as a tool to achieve a positive peace, in which social justice replaces discrimination and violence, have so far mainly been unsuccessful or even contributed to the perpetuation of conflicts. Most notably, this is true for long-term disputes such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which led to the emergence of the village Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as a peace project and sample for this thesis. (Juncos and Joseph 2020, 298)

Besides the wider academic discourse on resilience as an approach to peacebuilding, the perception of peace itself has gone through a wide variety of dimensions, determinants, and approaches in recent years. Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013), among others, speak of a 'local turn' in the discourse, based on the understanding of "the critical and resistant agencies that have a stake in a subaltern view of peace" (Richmond and Mac Ginty 2013, 764). In the same context, Richmond (2011) refers to a 'postliberal peace', which centers around the local population's utilization of external peace initiatives (see also Chandler and Richmond 2015, 20). Mac Ginty discusses the concept of 'hybrid peace' as a conceptualization of peace shaped in equal parts by local and international actors (Mac Ginty 2010). Other authors have drawn on the need for a new approach to peacebuilding to reach sustainable peace (see also Chandler 2014b; de Coning 2016, 2018), putting complexity, uncertainty, and the local capacities in the center of the discourse.

Following similar arguments, Cedric de Coning (2016, 2018), the research professor at the Research Group on Peace, Conflict and Development at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and co-director of the NUPI Center on United Nations and Global Governance, and the Climate, Peace and Security Risk project (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs 2022), acknowledges the failure of liberal peace strategies and argues for

an ‘adaptive peacebuilding’ approach based on complexity. While he sees the urge to promote local agency, within his approach, he argues for external assistance through international peacebuilders to foster resilience building within societies “helping them to develop greater levels of complexity in their social institutions” (de Coning 2018, 317). In other words, despite an increasing recognition of local agency in peacebuilding, the approaches to resilience in peacebuilding referred to above seem to view external agency as helpful or even necessary to build resilience for sustainable peace. Hence, even though a local turn within the resilience discourse can be derived from critical scholars, the ruling approach of resilience shows a tendency where international peacebuilding interventions continue to be perceived as reconcilable with local agency and self-determination.

In the following, I will elaborate on the resilience approach used for this thesis. By differentiating between distinct aspects of resilience, namely ecological and engineering resilience and positive and negative resilience, the interpretation and application of resilience for this thesis will be presented. Further, Mac Ginty’s definition of *everyday peace* will be outlined and integrated into the overall theoretical framework of resilience in peacebuilding for this thesis.

3.2 Ecological and engineering resilience

Within the resilience discourse, scholars such as the theoretical ecologist Crawford S. Holling (1973), the environmental scientist and resilience scholar Lance Gunderson (2000, 2010), Christopher Barrett, an agriculture and development economist, and Mark A. Constas (Barrett and Constas 2014), Associate Professor in the International and Development Economics group at Cornell University, distinguish between the engineering and the ecological concept of resilience, reflecting different aspects of resilience.

Engineering resilience centers around efficiency, constancy, and predictability, intending to go back to a state of equilibrium after a disruption or shock (Barrett and Constas 2014, 14625; Gunderson et al. 2002, 530). Put differently, engineering resilience in this context is the ability of individuals, communities, institutions, and societies to re-enter a state of equilibrium or steady-state after a conflict situation (Gunderson et al. 2002; Tilman and Downing 1994; Tilman, Reich, and Knops 2006).

While earlier notions of ecological resilience maintained a rather conservative perception of resilience, fostering the continuation of ‘same relationships’, a more recent approach challenges the engineering perception, focusing on persistence, change, and unpredictability (Juncos and Joseph 2020, 291p). Thereafter, the “focus on maintaining efficiency of function”

(Gunderson et al. 2002, 530) in engineering resilience contrasts with the "focus on maintaining the existence of function" (Gunderson et al. 2002, 530) in ecological resilience.

Hence, the view on resilience applied in this thesis follows more recent approaches built around self-organization, complexity, functional diversity, and non-linearity, linking ecological and societal resilience (Juncos and Joseph 2020, 291p). Through acknowledging alternative stable states within entities and the option of system changes following disturbances, the resilience approach applied distances itself from the assumption of one single existing state of equilibrium (Gunderson et al. 2002; Holling 1973).

Since both, ecological and engineering resilience approaches refer to the term resilience, but at the same time are based on different paradigms and refer to contrasting aspects of stability (Gunderson et al. 2002, 530), it is of utmost relevance to draw a clear line of usage of the concept for this thesis. Against that background, the implication of resilience in this research searches for an alternative stable state of peace where ecological resilience can be applied beyond the ruling neoliberal logic in the village Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam.
Following an ecological approach to resilience in peacebuilding that acknowledges self-organization, complexity, functional diversity, and non-linearity, Mac Ginty's work on *everyday peace* is particularly relevant for this thesis.

3.3 Resilience and the everyday peace

Mac Ginty (2014, 549) offers an alternative to top-down initiatives in conflict-affected societies led by institutions and peacebuilding experts. Center of attention are "the social practices of *everyday peace* that individuals and collectives use to navigate their passage through […] deeply divided societ[ies]" (Mac Ginty 2014, 549)that suffer from "ethnic or religious cleavages and be prone to [...] chronic or structural violence" (Mac Ginty 2014, 549). The aim is to reach conflict transformation through people-to-people activities or as Mac Ginty calls it 'everyday diplomacy' rather than a "negative peace of conflict-calming and avoidance" (Mac Ginty 2014, 549). Mac Ginty's focus lies on the agency of the locals in conflict-affected societies (Mac Ginty 2014, 548p) while opposing the notion of resilience in the context of a neoliberal agenda (Juncos and Joseph 2020, 293).

Nevertheless, his approach builds on three premises: the "heterogeneity of groups", the "fluidity of the social world" and the importance of "environmental factors that operate within a context of power" (Mac Ginty 2014, 549p). In a conflict-affected society shaped by a power imbalance between two peoples, the latter premise plays a major role when assessing resilience. Even though Mac Ginty refuses to engage in the vocabulary used within the

resilience discourse, part of the premises mentioned above may be interpreted as a more sociological and human-centered choice of vocabulary within the same discourse. Based on the said, there are to be found similarities between the premises heterogeneity of group and complexity as well as between uncertainty and the fluidity of social reality (Juncos and Joseph 2020, 293; Mac Ginty 2014, 549). Thus, Mac Ginty's work on *everyday peace* connects with the ecologic resilience discourse (see chapter 3.2 Ecologic and engineering resilience). The concept assists in approaching resilience building in the binational village Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam in a way that moves beyond institutional spheres (Richmond 2008, 452) towards are more human-centered and sociological proposition of resilience in peacebuilding (Lister and Jarvis 2013, 1).

The critical interpretation of resilience described in this thesis aims to apply the concept beyond the ruling neoliberal logic and apply it to a bottom-up peacebuilding project in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam. Accordingly, Mac Ginty's theory of *everyday peace* in which he concentrates on "bottom-up, localized and particularistic conflict-calming measures" (Mac Ginty 2014, 549) serves as a valuable theoretical groundwork to be used as part of the application and interpretation of resilience used for this thesis.

The following serves to examine resilience beyond the previously discussed approaches, which focuses on the return to one or more possible stable states for individuals, communities, institutions, and societies after a crisis or conflict situation. Emphasis is put on the influence of the interchange between individuals and the environment they are embedded in at all levels of the system and its influence on resilience building in communities. In this regard, I will distinguish between positive and negative resilience and further elaborate on their implications.

3.4 Positive and negative resilience

A noteworthy distinction of resilience in peacebuilding for this thesis is undertaken between negative and positive forms of resilience. The views on resilience mentioned above refer to resilience as a set of positive effects that the operationalization of resilience in peacebuilding holds. While ecological and engineering resilience build on different aspects of stability in peacebuilding scenarios, both approaches focus on one or various stable states for individuals, communities, institutions, and societies. (McCandless et al. 2015, 5pp)

However, 'negative' forms of resilience which refer to resilience that counteracts the withstanding of crises, adaptation, and transformation of the subject in question, must be considered in that context. Especially external factors such as enduring conflict-based

environments or radicalized narratives of ethnic and religious identity can hinder positive resilience and foster negative resilience practices. (McCandless et al. 2015, 5pp).

Negative resilience in that context may lead to a "dysfunction of local institutions from (re)building in transformative ways" for instance "by proliferating exclusionary and arbitrary practices that fuel rather than extinguish conflict dynamics and have longer term adverse impacts on peacebuilding" (McCandless et al. 2015, 7).

According to ecosystem theorists, resilience building within communities, in this thesis the community Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam, is strongly affected by the interchange between the individuals living in the village and their environment at every level of the system. This environment entails the community and external factors such as the broader social, political, and institutional systems the village is embedded in. (McCandless et al. 2015, 7). Moreover, this interaction between earlier mentioned layers of society is also highly influenced by risk and protective factors (McCandless et al. 2015, 7). Based on the definition of risk and protective factors in resilience and crisis management from a psychological perspective, risk factors are variables causally linked to maladjustment indicators and are likely to foster negative resilience. The evidence is provided mainly by correlations that are validated through longitudinal analysis. (Beelmann 2012) Risk factors are divided into external social risk factors (vulnerability) and personal risk factors (stressors and distress) and have a cumulative effect. The differentiation of personal protective factors (resilience, invulnerability, personal resources) and social protective factors (social resources) forms the overarching term of protective factors that are inherent within communities (Beelmann 2012; Federal Ministry of Health 2021). Protective factors in that context are potentially cumulative variables that buffer the effect of a risk factor, foster an increased level of functioning, and promote positive resilience (Beelmann 2012; Federal Ministry of Health 2021). Thus, protective factors increase positive resilience while risk factors decrease the positive resilience capacity and the same time may foster negative resilience and thereby prevent local communities from adaptation and transformation (Beelmann 2012; Federal Ministry of Health 2021; McCandless et al. 2015). Due to the limited scope of this master's thesis, the analysis of multilevel data will be undertaken as a cross-sectional study at one single point in time.

The implication of resilience in this research distances itself from a conventional focus on conflict lines and obstacles to peace. Instead, it centers around the endogenous capacities inherent in conflict-affected systems and societies that are simultaneously applying to various actors, context-sensitivity, non-linearity, and self-regulation. (Johansson 2018, 1; McCandless et al. 2015, 5) A valuable contribution to this logic is provided within complexity theory

suggesting that external intervention overrides “natural feedback, self-organisation and reaction process of the society itself” (McCandless et al. 2015, 7) and thereby hinders positive resilience. As a result, the agency of the individual and the group may be undermined and potentially results in dependency.

The following chapter will provide further insights into complexity theory and serves to demonstrate how the resilience approach applied in this thesis can be assessed through the lens of theory.

4 Methodological approach

> And if you want to stop all the fighting
> And all the armies
> The beginning should be understanding
> Why they are fighting
> And why we are fighting
> (Kitain 2022, Interview 4, 112)

The methodological approach of the master’s thesis will consist of three interconnected parts. The use of participatory research will allow active interaction with the objects of research through direct engagement with the local community of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam, as well as a randomly selected group of Palestinians from the West Bank. The second part consists of the application of the concept of resilience in peacebuilding assessed through the lens of complexity theory (see 4.2 Assessing Resilience through the lens of Complexity Theory). The research will be performed on quantitative data collected via a questionnaire. In order to address the issue of representation in the context of researching the resilience building experience of the inhabitants of NSWAS, as well as the outside perspective of Palestinians living in the West Bank, semi-structured interviews serve to co-create research generated poetry (see 4.3 Disclosing narratives in deeply divided societies through co-created poetry). The poetries shall serve as an attempt to dissolve the reactive and unstable ‘inside-outside’ dichotomy of the researcher as well as the researched (Rath 2012). In other words, the aim is to bridge the gap between the residents’ self-representation and the representation of an Other undertaken by the researcher. To integrate the voice of Palestinians living in the West Bank shall serve to open the discourse by including those Palestinians who cannot partake in projects like NSWAS, inter alia due to the lack of freedom of movement between the West Bank and Israel. Hence, co-developing poetics of narratives in the village and

beyond will present the third pillar. More detailed information on the application of the participatory research and the interlink of resilience and its assessment through complexity theory will be provided in the following.

4.1 Participatory research as an integrative way of knowledge production

Participatory Research (PR) is understood as a collective of methods, research designs, and frameworks that serve to undertake research in direct collaboration with those people whose issue and actions are being studied (Cargo and Mercer 2008, 372; Vaughn and Jacquez 2020). Therefore, the approach requires the local community's direct engagement, priorities, and perspectives throughout the entire research process through research partnerships between researcher and researched (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995, 1668p). In light of this master's thesis, the preparation of the research, data collection and interpretation were undertaken in direct collaboration with a random selection of inhabitants of the village and Palestinians from the West Bank. As the research process was not funded and required a certain level of commitment, I relied on participants that took part voluntarily. In doing so, attention was paid to ensuring that the representation of women and men was approaching equality. For the participants within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam, a focus was put on giving equal voice to Israeli and Palestinian Israeli inhabitants.

The aim of conducting PR for this thesis is to undertake research in a context-sensitive real-world context. A mutually reinforcing knowledge production partnership shall be fostered by integrating a random selection of the local community, as well as Palestinians living in the West Bank, including academic and non-academic participants into the knowledge production process. The research is conducted democratically and collaboratively. Feedback loops and constant collaboration support the creation of more valid findings and a research outcome that can be effectively translated into non-academic and community contexts. (Cargo and Mercer 2008, 372; Vaughn and Jacquez 2020) It has to be noted that within this thesis, participatory research is understood as an underlying methodology that sees a significance in the direct involvement of research partners in the knowledge-creation process, rather than a concrete research method (Bergold 2007; Bergold and Thomas 2012). Jarg Bergold, former professor of Clinical Psychology and Community Psychology at Freie Universität Berlin and Stefan Thomas, professor of Empirical Social Research and Social Work at Potsdam University, defined four fundamental principles of PR that will lay the ground for the present research process (Bergold and Thomas 2012).

Firstly, democracy is considered a precondition for participatory research. The use of participatory research as an emancipatory research approach does not naturally eliminate power asymmetries between people of different genders, different communities, ethnicities and political entities, inter alia. Thus, all individuals who participate in the research process are considered agents regardless of academic or professional background, gender, nationality, age, etc. The aim is to move from a researcher-researched relationship to a research partnership. (Kara 2018, 107).

Secondly, a 'safe space' for knowledge creation must be provided (Bergold and Thomas 2012). Emancipatory research is based on the "ethics of justice in attempting to redress power imbalances, and on ethics of care in working to make the research space safe and valuable for everyone involved" (Kara 2018, 111). That said, the collaboration between the inhabitants of the village, the Palestinians living in the West Bank, and the researcher within the research partnership is based on dialogue, mutual knowledge creation, and iterative feedback loops to build the required conditions for an emancipatory and reciprocal information flow.

Thirdly, Bergold and Thomas (2012) refer to the questions of who the participants are and how 'the community' is defined. The contextualization of the individual inhabitants, the community, and the outside perspective gained from Palestinians living in the West Bank, played an essential part in preparing the research process, the data collection, and the interpretation of the research outcome to foster transparency. This includes the historical context underlying the emergence of the village and the individual motivation to live in the village; the political context in which the village came into existence and its development over time, and the extent to which the inhabitants and the village position themselves as a political entity within Israel/Palestine. Further, the perspective of the Palestinians who are living in the West Bank allowed to move beyond the borders of the village and get insights into how the village is perceived from an outside perspective. In addition, it shed light on potential risks that such projects may carry against the background of the existing power asymmetry between people holding and Israeli citizenship and Palestinians from the West Bank who need approval from the state of Israel to access Israel and thereby have very limited possibility to take part in such projects. My personal contextualization presents an additional layer to foster transparency.

Fourthly, the different degrees of participation of the research partners need to be defined thesis (Bergold and Thomas 2012). Certain structural aspects like logistics in terms of timely resources and the level of commitment required may exclude potential research partners.

Further, this research process is not funded. Thereafter, the participants take part voluntarily. However, an extension of the research process from four to seven months and the option of a flexible participation allowed the participants to be involved on different levels throughout the process, based on their availability. (Kara 2018, 107pp)

PR requires openness, flexibility, and adaptability throughout the entire research process. This approach opened space to perceive and incorporate new category aspects that emerged during the research process. Hence, the research questions and the underlying theoretical framework have been adjusted along with new category aspects (Bergold 2007; Bergold and Thomas 2012).

Based on an emancipatory approach to research, the application of complexity theory to assess resilience through quantitative research is presented in the following.

4.2 Assessing resilience through the lens of complexity theory

In recent years, interest in the application of complexity theory has increased in the fields of International Relations and Peace Studies (e.g. de Coning 2020; Jervis 1998; Kavalski 2015) as well as Development Studies (e.g. Ramalingam 2013; Rihani 2002; Walby 2007). Based on the assumption that social systems are complex, non-linear and dynamic, complexity theory acknowledges uncertainty and non-linearity (Coleman 2004, 226; de Coning 2020).

The aim of the theory's application is not to generate definite answers or solutions. Instead, due the complex (social) systems' non-linear, dynamic, and multi-level nature, insights are seen to be inevitably provisional and subject to continuous change. Noting that, peace studies are considered highly context-specific and can only be studied within the given frame of reference. (Coleman 2004, 226; de Coning 2020) The combination of participatory research based on complexity theory opens space to consider who the agents of a potential peace process are and includes them in the generation of findings within the context in question. In the case of the sample used for this thesis, the agents and decision-makers within the village are considered the community's members. In light of the broader conflict, the agency of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank is equally considered. From a bottom-up peacebuilding perspective, a societies self-organization capacity presents one of the major themes within complex systems. (Coleman 2004, 226; de Coning 2020) Turning away from the traditional assumption that organization within communities, societies and systems must be imposed externally, self-organization evolves internally. Self-organized, complex systems emerge out of the interaction between the members of the community who organize themselves into patterns. Self-organization in that regard refers to the society's inherent peace

consolidation processes and its resilience towards internal or externally caused disturbances, pressures, crises, and shocks. (de Coning 2016, 2020) In de Coning's words, "[t]he robustness and resilience of the self-organizing capacity of a society determine the extent to which it can withstand pressures and shocks that risk a (re)lapse into violent conflict" (de Coning 2020).

This process is shaped by the interactions of the components of the system that are interdependent, and an inherent self-reinforcing positive feedback loop.

A self-organized system imposes an initial state of disorder. This disorder creates room for transition to an ordered system through a locally initiated, dynamic, and iterative process shaped by the interactions of the components of the system. When random events occur within a society, community, or system, positive feedback loops are understood as an iterative and reinforcing transition mechanism. The initial pattern of an organization or a stable state is destabilized, and the system is pushed into an alternative stable state to maintain and develop functioning. This transformative process inherent in all adaptive systems is non-linear. (Systems Innovation Platform 2020b, 2020a)

Put differently, the endogenous positive resilience capacity of a conflict-affected system, society, or community is shaped by its self-organizing ability, the interaction between interrelated actors and random events in a particular context. The agents, their environment and the social processes in which the system, society, or community is embedded, are fundamental elements of the complex system and are to be understood in relation to one another. (Randazzo and Torrent 2020, 12) Positive feedback loops foster mobilization and transformation. Hereby, it is of utmost importance to acknowledge the critical agency of the local individuals and the community whose experience is the subject of research. (McCandless et al. 2015, 14) From a complexity theoretical standpoint, local ownership goes beyond a hybrid, post liberal interpretation of agency where peacebuilding is "primarily focused [...] on articulating frameworks for interrogating the (often hidden or marginalized) agency of local actors" (Randazzo and Torrent 2020, 13). Local ownership is essential to achieve self-sustainable peace and emerges from locally owned and led bottom-up peacebuilding approaches (de Coning 2020). Self-organization in that regard cannot be imposed externally. International interventions are considered to "interrupt the internal [natural] feedback process" (de Coning 2020), and thus may foster dependency and the same time counteract learning opportunities for the system (McCandless et al. 2015, 15).

Among other scholars, Meera Sabaratnam (2011), a researcher at SOAS University of London in the field of colonial and postcolonial dimensions of world politics, points out that the

power imbalance as a result of the "centrality and coherence of Western agency and the necessity for Western engagement to bring peace in the nonliberal non-West" (Sabaratnam 2011, 797) further re(produces) a narrative of neoliberal control over non-western societies.

To counteract the above, the resilience thinking applied in this thesis, through the lens of complexity theory, considers the people living in conflict-affected societies as central agents and political subjects that own and lead the peace-processes (Randazzo and Torrent 2020, 13). However, despite the local actors' interdependence and interconnection, external influence such as policies, norms, or rules imported from the outside, add another layer of complexity that interacts with the autonomy of local agency in a peacebuilding process (Randazzo and Torrent 2020, 15). The more interchange of a system, community, or society with its environment – a dynamic and partially uncontrollable variable – the higher its connectivity and interdependence with systems and processes outside of the entity. At the same time, an entity's adaptivity and resilience to cope with and adapt to change and maintain and develop the functioning becomes increasingly important. (Systems Innovation Platform 2020a)

Resilience is a multi-faceted phenomenon that is embedded within and across multiple levels of society. Within this thesis, the levels of society that are investigated are the individual level, the community level, and the system level. Resilience is therefore shaped by the complex relationships between those levels of society and the system the community is embedded in. (McCandless et al. 2015, 8) Further, based on the assumption that there is a potential correlation between social capital, social cohesion, and the society's resilience capacity, the assessment of endogenous sources of resilience in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam will engage in the complex relationship between those three aspects (McCandless et al. 2015, 15).

As parameters to measure social capital, I will build on McCandless', Simpson's, and Meroney's approach, following Colletta, Nat J. and Michelle L. Cullen[2] which is based on the "internal social and cultural coherence of society, the norms and values that govern interactions among people and the institutions in which they are embedded" (Colletta and Cullen 2000, iii; McCandless et al. 2015, 10). When investigating the reciprocal relationship between social cohesion and a society's resilience capacity, social capital is considered a key concept to measure endogenous sources of resilience (McCandless et al. 2015, 10).

[2] Colletta, Nat J. is the manager of the Post-Conflict Unit (PCU) at World Bank and Michelle L. Cullen is a postconflict consultant at PCU (Colletta and Cullen 2000).

Against the background of the said, the acknowledgement of positive and negative forms of resilience is highly important. Complexity theory shall support to understand the dynamic between and potential causes of both forms of resilience within the community Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as well as from the perspective of Palestinians living in the West Bank with very limited access to such projects within Israel. Additionally, the theory aims to uncover how negative factors of resilience that counteract peacebuilding have the potential to undergo a catalytic shift into positive factors that foster peacebuilding in a specific context. Complexity theory allows the assessment of resilience in a holistic, multi-track, and contextualist manner. (McCandless et al. 2015, 13p) Further, based on the interplay of experience, culture, and action, the theory gives room to build on local, transformative agency. Following Anna Stetsenko (2019), a developmental psychologist and professor of Psychology and Urban Education at The City University of New York (Stetsenko n.d.), "reality is reconceived as that which is being constantly transformed and realized […] by people themselves" (Stetsenko 2019), whereas people are considered as agents of dynamic social practices. Transformative agency in that regard assumes that "[p]eople never merely react or respond to what exists but agentively act in co-realizing both the world and themselves" (Stetsenko 2019).

In the field of peacebuilding, bottom-up approaches like the sample study can be seen as a continuous process that emerges from ordinary actions and practices. It is a process of trials and errors that translates into knowledge, thoughtful action, underlying the search for enduring peace and alternative stable states following a disturbance. These processes of interaction between the different layers of society considered in this thesis – namely the individual, the community, and the system – create the local, dynamic culture of peacebuilding that transforms alongside the interaction of all levels and its relationship between them. This culture is the result of the above-mentioned interplay between experience and (re)action. Aim is to move beyond a mere analysis of the horizontal and vertical perspectives, but also considering their interaction in a dynamic environment where nothing is fixed. (McCandless et al. 2015, 10) The horizontal perspective hereby refers to how far individuals are affected by the public and the 'natural' world and its interrelationship. Meanwhile, the vertical perspective engages in the individual and subjective experience of the person. (Westerlund 2022, 99pp)

The approach of assessing resilience for this thesis will be based on quantitative data conducted via a questionnaire that is clustered into (McCandless et al. 2015, 10p):

1. The *individual level* that refers to the individuals' endogenous resilience capacity, such as the problem-solving ability, and the interaction of the individual with his or her social environment in terms of belonging, tolerance, and participation on a social, and political dimension. Factors like the perception of exclusion, legitimacy, and trust are additional parameters on which resilience of the individuals will be assessed. (McCandless et al. 2015, 10)
2. The *community level*, which indicates the communities' endogenous resilience to shocks, stress, and crises. Part of the assessment is the access to livelihood assets. Examples are the access to education, as well as political and social participation within the community. Further, transformative processes and structures within the community, and coping strategies of the community to withstand and recover from internal disturbance are considered. Combined, those factors will generate insights into the community's resilience capacity. Hereby, attributes like the "role and character of leadership across different levels of society", the "function of intermediary agencies" and the communication that links these different levels, and "existing patterns of exclusion or selective inclusion" (McCandless et al. 2015, 10) serve as indicators to analyze the interaction between the horizontal and the vertical system level. (McCandless et al. 2015, 10)
3. The *system level* which will be analyzed based on the acknowledgement that the resilience capacity of a community is not only shaped by the complex relationships between the different levels of society, but also the relationship between the community and the system. In addition, the processes and structures that the community is embedded in such as existing power asymmetries between occupier and occupied will be assessed. Those aspects will provide insights into the communities' resilience capacity towards externally imposed processes and creates insights in the ethical dimension of such projects within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. (McCandless et al. 2015, 10)

As mentioned above, complex systems are shaped by the interconnection of and relationship between various levels of society. Complexity science is typically based on data-driven methods and computational sciences (Systems Innovation Platform 2020b). To assess the resilience in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam, the data generated through the questionnaire will be used to detect correlations, patterns and transformative potential of both, negative and positive forms of resilience, as relational concepts that "empowers individuals and collective actors to shape their environment and to be shaped by it" (McCandless et al. 2015, 14). The

use of complexity theory throughout the research design, data monitoring and evaluation shall facilitate the identification of the communities' and individuals' everyday practices of peace, as well as conflict and peace drivers within the community and beyond, while enriching conflict-sensitivity and hence the peacebuilding evaluation (McCandless et al. 2015, 13p). Put differently, the aim is to uncover where within society resilience resides, what the underlying everyday practices of resilience building are, how resilience is constituted, and in what context.

To address the issue of representation in the context of researching the experience of the inhabitants of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam and the Palestinians view on projects like NSWAS that serves as sample for this thesis, qualitative interviews serve to co-create research generated poetry. As thesis deals with personal insights and sensitive data, the names of all Palestinian interviewees have been changed and the names of a number of villagers from Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam have been anonymized.

The following chapter will provide deeper insights into how poetry will be used as an attempt to dissolve the 'inside-outside' dichotomy of the researcher and the researched within the given context.

4.3 Disclosing narratives in deeply divided societies through co-created poetry

> Stories matter
> They have gravitas
> They are grave.
> They have weight
> They materialize policies, institutions, relationships
> And identities that circulate
> Locally and globally,
> Anywhere
> And everywhere
> (Cobb 2013)

As Sara Cobb, the scholar-practitioner in the area of negotiation and conflict resolution and director of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University (The Taos Institute 2022), writes – stories are grave. The underlying conflict between Israel and Palestine strongly shapes the context in which the subject of this thesis is embedded in. The stories (re)produced by both parties and the outside world translate into conflict

narratives as a result of those "layered stories that provide a plot sequence, a set of characters, and moral frameworks that authorize and legitimize a particular history, a given identity" (Cobb 2013, 276). Likewise, the told stories, conflict narratives, and created identities operate as a framework that defines the self/ves and Others and justifies trust and distrust at all levels of societies (Cobb 2013; Porat 2004; Rosenfeld Halverson 2004).

The stories told and retold by the state of Israel about Palestinians and vice versa, can be seen as an interpretation of history, rather than a depiction of the actual set of events. Consequently, this account of the narrated history results in ongoing distrust that legitimizes border control, continuing settlements, restrictions of the freedom of movement of Palestinians operated among others at the checkpoints, and authorized violence. In contrast, it empowers networks of rebels, and endorses the Palestinian Authority's ability to alleviate the misery of the population in the West Bank and Hamas' role in mitigating the suffering of the population in Gaza. Simultaneously, a narrative about Palestinian identity is (re)produced from within. (Cobb 2013, 3; Tuv 2018, 33pp)

Thus, Palestinian's, Palestinian Israeli's, and Israeli's everyday life is marked by two competing yet over-arching narratives about the conflict. The everyday lives of the people differ drastically based on certain preconditions such as citizenship, access to education, political participation, and a set of freedoms such as the freedom of speech that are only applicable for a certain part of the population. Yet, the awareness of those narratives is unequal. Due to its appearance in Israeli media, politics and the education system, the Jewish Israeli narrative is prevalent within Israel and beyond. In contrast, the awareness of the Palestinian narrative is limited to the people who either live with, or actively engage with it. (Tuv 2018, 33) The examples of competing narratives mentioned above are just two out of multiple to outline that the conflict is based not only on a set of unresolved issues but also on persisting conflict narratives that immerse fragile relationships (Cobb 2013, 3pp). Those narratives play a major role when engaging in the ethical dimensions of the discourse on resilience and *everyday peace* in coexistence projects within Israel, as well as their acceptance from the outside and impact on the Palestinian national question.

Such narratives are part of multi-layered, complex, and interdependent constructs of conversation that simultaneously operate on different levels (interpersonal, intrapersonal, local, and international). It can be seen as a continuous process of producing and reproducing boundaries between the self/ves and an Other. (Cobb 2013, 3p) At this intersection of the speaker and the audience, meaning is negotiated, and constantly renegotiated. Hereby, the

interaction between the speaker and the audience is not to be understood as a direct conversation between two parties, but rather as a multi-layered construct of conversations operating on various levels through multiple players. The speaker's role and the audience are fluid, non-linear, and do not follow clear boundaries (Cobb 2013, 7). Cobb in that respect refers to a "struggle for meaning in which the parties to this process offer interpretations in response to others" (Cobb 2013, 7). Thus, the speaker is attributed a legitimacy confronted by an outside, while this legitimacy is constantly renegotiated within itself, and through the outside. Message and meaning are destabilized. Therefore, fluidity of message and meaning emerges, which in this thesis finds articulation through poetry. (Cobb 2013, 277)

The assumption that poetry destabilizes is the starting point and argument for the use of poetry for this thesis where meaning and narrative has been bent or even transformed to a point where coexistence and *everyday peace* within NSWAS is possible. Meaning can only be derived within a specific context and the set of events. Given the complex nature narrative components, every change in description or conversation alters the meaning and the flow of action and vice versa. When conversations modify the flow of action, the subject positions simultaneously reshape the discourse. The question of agency is a significant factor that plays into that process. If subject positions are not legitimate, as a result, people will deny the proposed story or justify their individual actions, as approving the story of the Other will potentially erase their own legitimacy. Against that background, the very essence of the speaker or conflict party is to maintain legitimacy. (Cobb 2013, 277pp) The contribution of engaging in the narrative in conflict resolution is to "move narrative itself from [...] descriptions that purport to imitate the world to narration, which makes clear the presence of the narrator, as a person, as a human being" (Cobb 2013, 277). Thereafter, the use of poetry in this master's thesis aims to make the speakers' perspectives transparent, which is a central poetic function.

As indicated above, the creation of meaning is not a monologic, linear phenomenon and is thus fundamentally unstable. In a conflict situation, however, there is a potential risk that the multi-layered and context-dependent nature of language and meaning will be erased by the speaker. Thus, when the speaker tells his or her story only from the perspective of a victim, the emergence of meaning becomes monologue and simultaneously alternative stories are being eradicated. (Bakhtin et al. 1982) To counteract this one-sided narrative impasse, the focus of both, the theoretical foundation of this thesis and the methodological approach, lies on the people' agency. Here, the linguist George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Lakoff and Johnson 1999), offer the concept of an 'empirically

responsible philosophy'. The concept recognizes the central role of people as agents in the creation of meaning. Thus, it centers around the power of people's actions and their role as speakers (Cobb 2013, 280). In Cobbs words, empirically responsible philosophy "allows people to alter the meanings that materialize their worlds" (Cobb 2013, 280). This awareness is of particular relevance in conflict resolution that investigates in bottom-up peacebuilding approaches that focus on the everyday in a society shaped by a systematic power imbalance (see chapter 3.3 Resilience and the everyday peace).

Within this masters' thesis, existing competing conflict narratives will be objects of exploration, interrogation, and reflection, among others articulated through poetry (Cobb 2013, 279pp). Poetry, in this sense, embraces the complexity of people and the context in which they operate. It is an invitation to explore, elaborate, and transform meaning that is constantly (re)produced through a form of art that "calls for new 'lines of flight', new configurations of meanings, and the social construction of a relationship through which complexity emerges without destroying legitimacy" (Cobb 2013, 285). Poetry therefore can be seen as a message articulated through art that shall blur the lines between the self/ves and the Other; between present, past, and future; context and perspective (Cobb 2013, 277). By doing so, poetry aims to encourage the reader to embrace the unstable nature and non-linearity of truth and validity, findings and interpretation. He or she is encouraged to recognize the unsaid and the empty spaces of text to construct his or her own interpretation (Rath 2012). The objective is to produce a text that speaks to the complex logic, context, and experience of the inhabitants of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam and the 'outside world' represented by the perspectives of Palestinians living in the West Bank.

Two approaches underlie the generation of the poems: One part consists of existing poetry from inhabitants of the village and people living in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second part represents co-created poems. These co-created poems I crafted from the interview transcripts of the interviews with inhabitants of the village and Palestinians living in the West Bank. In a first step, the words of the interviewees have been transcribed. The second step consisted of marking the most expressive parts of the interview. In a last step, the phrases have been put together in a poem. The words will be used in the same order as they were said. Punctuation is deliberately abandoned in the poems. In line with Sheila Packa (2011), a US-American poet, writer and teacher, the aim is to give same weight to all line breaks. Or as Packa puts it: "Without punctuation, the line seems to end in space, without landing" (Packa 2011).

Including the perspective of Palestinians living in the West Bank serves to open the discussion to people living in the broader context of the conflict. Engaging in poetry as part of scientific writing is an attempt to deconstruct the expectations towards what is considered 'academic knowledge' within the neoliberal discourse. Hereby, the goal is no analytic certainty. Instead, the poetries shall invite the reader to develop a sense of how the unstable nature of meaning is constantly negotiation by the participants of research projects and the researcher within a research project. (Rath 2012)

In the following chapter, I will explore the context in which the village came into existence. In a second step, the resilience capacity will be assessed on an individual, community, and system level, based on the results of the quantitative data gained through the questionnaire. The existing conflict narratives and their effect on the everyday life of the villagers will be analyzed and discussed in a third step.

5 Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam – Voices of the residents

So, you begin to realize
That there are also differences
Within the same group.
And when we enter the discussion
With a vote
You can see, you know
Many fingers up
And this will definitely be a mixture of groups.
So, I think,
This experience puts you in a place
Where you begin to ask yourself questions
(Rizek 2022, Interview 1, 96)

In the interview in a small coffee shop in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam called Café "Ahlan", which translates into 'welcome' in Arabic, Rayek Rizek, author of the book "The Anteater And The Jaguar: Is This Our Destiny? A Story From the Oasis of Peace", published in 2017, told me about his personal experience as a villager. Rayek owns the little café and gift shop together with his wife Diana, two of the early inhabitants of NSWAS. Rayek is a Christian Palestinian Israelis born in Nazareth. "I have to say Palestinian Israelis, so to not to confuse people, because it's not allowed to have Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza to live

here" (Rizek 2022, Interview 1, pp), he explained. Together with Diana, he moved to Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam in 1984 when the village counted around 20 inhabitants. Today, NSWAS is home to around 300 people.

5.1 A grassroots project in Israel: Coexistence in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam

> Sometimes you laugh until you cry
> Sometimes you swear in silence
> There are days you can see the light
> And there are times when you are closed
> In the hardness of your aching heart
> It always are the same fields
> And a small house
> Yet the same excitement
> In the curve of the road
> On the way to my village
> (Kitain 2022, Interview 4, 110)

In her poem, Daniella Kitain the Jewish Israeli writer and villager of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam draws a circle connecting hardship and hope, loneliness, and home as part of her own experience beyond her life in the village, but as an Israeli citizen living in and with the conflict. The village that started as an initiative from the French Dominican Bruno Hussar of Egyptian-Jewish descent came into existence in the 1970s. While in the mid-1980s, only 20 people lived in NSWAS, today, more than 100 families live in the village in around 100 houses. Another ten houses are currently being built. The coexistence of Israelis and Palestinian Israelis at that time, and even nowadays, is an idea that transcendents the country's reality. (cf. Rizek 2022, Interview 1) Following the villagers' voices, the start of the grassroots project did not follow a specific ideology. Members were not acquired or extrinsically motivated. Until today, every person joining the 'Oasis of Peace' does so out of exclusively intrinsic motivation. In the interview, Rayek narrates Bruno Hussar's idea to create a binational community within Israel:

> "He realized that this is a very complex situation, to bring […] people from two different contradicting narratives. So, he said always from the beginning, that it's enough to start with accepting the other as an equal person without elaborating on

what does it mean to [be] equal. And I'm sure with time you will find out the answer for the questions." (Rizek 2022, Interview 1, 99)

The village was founded as a space of dialogue between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Israelis to overcome the deep rifts that still dominate the country's reality (Avidan 2018; Bost 2021). According to the participants' answers to the questionnaire, 67% of the villagers believe that a person's religion will always affect the way people perceive one another within the state of Israel, whereas 33% disagree to some extent without clear correlation between the individual answers and background. Nevertheless, the perception of the significance of the religious background of the villagers in their everyday lives in NSWAS is notably different. 83% of the villagers disagree or disagree completely that religion will always affect the way people perceive one another, while 17% agree to some extent.

The above diverse religious backgrounds represented in the village include European Jews (Ashkenazi), Persian, Arabic, and Asian Jews (Mizrahi), as well as Spanish Jews (Sephardi) that all have the Israeli citizenship. The Palestinian Israelis's within the village is formed by Palestinians with Muslim, Christian, or Muslim-Christian backgrounds that, likewise, are Israeli citizens.

The results of the questionnaire and the interviews further showed that neither the people who identify themselves as Jewish, Jewish-Muslims, nor Muslims or Christians (including various sub-groups) personally consider themselves religious. However, only 50% of the people do not identify themselves with their religion. 25% identify somewhat with their religion, and an additional 25% identify themselves entirely with their religious background. The area in which the village is located is of great religious significance. From a Jewish perspective, the Jewish state as we know it today is considered the "Promised Land" (Lipka 2016). For Muslims, historic Palestine is where Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven, and in Christianity, the 'Holy Land' is the home of Jesus. Thus, historic Palestine is considered a holy place for the three monotheistic religions: Islam, Judaism and Christianity (Lipka 2016).

The religious background of the populations, their birthplace, and their ethnic descent strongly impact not only the belonging of a person to specific groups or sub-groups but also an inherited set of rights. In light of the above, the identification with the participant's religious background, even if they consider themselves secular or non-religious, can partially be attributed to the cultural significance of religion in the area. Consequently, this translates into everyday practices of a culture inherited over generations and included in everyday life rather than religious convictions. It is noteworthy that all participants hold the Israeli

citizenship and grew up within 1967 borders of Israel, following the Six-Day war when Israel took control of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem (The Editors of Encyclopaedia 2021b).

While the background of the members and their reason for joining the village vary, there is a shared willingness to take on the challenge of living 'with the conflict' in an environment that is open to dialogue; blurring the lines between the self/ves and an Other. For first-generation villagers who decided to join the village in adulthood (see 2.2 Introducing the Oasis), idiomatical reasons, the ideology of the projects and the quality of life that comes with living in NSWAS were the main drivers for the people to join.

The community started as a grassroots project with people from various ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. None of the participants have had experience in conflict resolution or peacebuilding.

> "[W]e started with those very, very basic arguments about Palestinian, Israeli Arab, a Zionist, non-Zionist, you know. But it wasn't like a group of PhD holders who know and studied conflicts. It happened on the very grassroots level. Simple people who got together here." (Rizek 2022, Interview 1, 100)

Thus, NSWAS did not start as a political entity or an externally initiated peace project. The village grew from within. In the interview with Rayek Rizek, he recalls what one Israeli first-generation villager said to him right after she moved to the community:

> "[D]on't expect me now to go home and to begin to read books about the history of the conflict. So, I can, face you with my knowledge. For me, it is enough that I'm living here." (cf. Rizek 2022, Interview 1)

Following the voice of the villagers themselves, and despite the context in which the village came into existence, politics was neither the major driver nor was it on the surface of everyday discussions when the village was established. However, with the increasing interest of Western tourist groups, journalists, and media attention, the village's political positioning became ever more critical. Consequently, the necessity of discussing their political standpoint as a village resulted from rising awareness and interest from the 'outside'. An 'Outside' that is not only defined through the increasing attention for the 'Oasis of Peace' from the Western world but also the society within Israel and the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza. 67% of the villagers, constituting of first-generation villagers, state that coexistence projects like NSWAS are not in the interest of the Israeli government. Following the above, a 66-year-old Palestinian villager argues:

> "It is serving a just cause of justice and equality between the inhabitants of this land, which I believe does not meet with the general Israeli politics yet." (Rizek 2022, Interview 1, 101)

100 % of the second-generation villagers who grew up in NSWAS form the remaining 33% that perceive an interest of the Israeli government for projects alike.

> "[I]n the long run, people will understand coexistence is for their benefit. Lowering the hate between people will save the [Israeli] government money they use for 'protection'." (Jewish-Muslim second-generation villager 2022, Interview 5, 115)

The villagers' perception of the acceptance of the project among the Palestinian people living in the West Bank shows different results. 83% of the participants that include all ethnical and religious backgrounds represented consider communities like NSWAS in the interest of Palestinian people, whereas 17% disagree to some extent. The latter percentage is exclusively accounted for second-generation villagers.

In light of the results mentioned above, there is no positive correlation between the religious or ethnic background and the answers presented. However, there is a difference in perspective among the first-generation and second-generation villagers. While the first-generation villagers are more likely to see the Israeli government as disapproving of the village and coexistence projects alike, they at the same time expect higher approval from the Palestinian society. The opposite applied to the second-generation villagers. 100% of the second-generation villagers that took part in the survey, which results in 33% of the total number of participants, consider coexistence projects such as the 'Oasis of Peace' to be in the interest of the Israeli government, while at the same time objecting a potential interest of the Palestinian society.

As mentioned earlier, the village started with a group of people who chose to live in coexistence without prior education or professional experience in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Nevertheless, the reality of the village today differs. The entirety of the participants of the questionnaire holds a Graduate University Degree (or equivalent). More precisely, 83% hold a Graduate University Degree (or equivalent) or a Post Graduate University Degree from Israel or abroad. It, therefore, can be said that today's population of the village is formed by highly educated Israelis or Palestinian Israelis, out of which 33% currently engage in conflict resolution in their professional endeavors or retired from a profession of the same nature.

In its early years, the village struggled for state recognition as it is not part of any Zionist movement (Avidan 2018). However, in 1972, NSWAS was granted land on which the community later was built. While building houses was prohibited in the beginning, today, the village is home to around 300 people. Today, NSWAS is officially recognized by the state of Israel. While some early first-generation villagers experienced the fight for recognition, the younger generation was born into an already fully recognized village with established institutions. They received primary and secondary education in the local binational school and grew up in a binational context. Accordingly, a shared life for the second-generation villagers can be considered part of their inherited identity. For first-generation villagers, this part of their identity was acquired by choice. This decisive attribute may impact the different perspectives on how far the village is in the interest of the state of Israel and the Palestinian people.

Common ground can be found in the villagers understanding that the mere existence of the community alone will not have an impact on the broader political situation they are embedded in. However, the inhabitants see their choice to live a shared life as a demonstration against the general knowledge claim existing within Israel that peaceful coexistence between the two peoples is unthinkable. Therefore, the village shall demonstrate that coexistence can foster mitigation of the effect of conflict and inequality.

> "I believe that the existence of our community is a political statement against the sad reality of this land. I believe that those people who have chosen to live in Wahat al-Salam / Neve Shalom are doing and not only talking. It goes very much with what Confucius said: "Be the change which you are trying to create." (Statement of a Palestinian Israeli first-generation villager 2022, Interview 5, 115)

Thereafter, despite the notion that the existence of the village alone will not have a greater impact on the mitigation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at large, the inhabitants may serve as agents to promote coexistence and *everyday peace* through education and dialogue within the Israeli society. Yet, as the Israeli-Palestinian second-generation villager adds:

> "I think programs like that send ambassadors into society that can promote coexistence and encourage more conversation, but they lack an activism part. Simply showing that having a conversation or living together is not enough at this stage." (Statement of an Israeli-Palestinian second-generation villager 2022, Interview 5, 115)

The quote above is just one out of several in which the villagers address the potential risk that such coexistence projects may carry in the broader context of the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

One major issue that the inhabitants point out is the existing lack of Israeli bottom-up peacebuilding approaches to actively engage in the power asymmetry between Israelis and Palestinian living in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the Israeli occupation.

> "Coexistence projects that do not deal with the asymmetry in power relation between the two peoples and the inequality between them and the reality of the occupation are not enabling a real change." (Statement of an Israeli first-generation villager 2022, Interview 5)

Despite the acknowledgment of the villagers that only through the village's existence no 'real change' of the conflict will take place, which is also referred to on the homepage of NSWAS, the community implemented a set of strategies to give space to, respect and integrate all existing narratives and viewpoints of the inhabitants. As the London-based researcher Liat Tuv concluded in her assessment of the villagers' approach of 'talking through difference', "successful dialogue does not imply unity – the villagers take pride in their ability to fiercely disagree" (2018, 50). Throughout the evaluation of the interviews and the questionnaire, Tuv's statement took on many faces that represent the same logic from their individual point of view. Considering the said, Rayek explained:

> "[D]isagreements are not Jews on one side and Palestinians on the other side. And this […] creates some kind of confusion in the beginning, you know. I came here, Rayek, believing that, you know, my group will be the Arab Palestinians, and we are […] facing the Jews on the other side." (Rizek 2022, Interview 1, 96)

The focus on creating a space for dialogue in an open, understanding, and amicable manner is based on the willingness of the inhabitants to work on themselves in order to be able to listen to the story of an Other (Tuv 2018, 49p). In contemporary work on cross-border ethics, this way of addressing differences is referred to as a process of 'incommensuration' (Evans and Mair 2015; Heywood 2015). The process of incommensuration acknowledges power asymmetries within group dynamics and understands certain positions as incomparable. Accordingly, the aim is not to resolve but rather to create understanding for these differences on both sides.

Noting the above, the approach of 'agreeing to disagree' in NSWAS gives equal rights to opposing narratives and standpoints within the community. Equal weight of opposing standpoints serves as a precondition for incommensuration processes to be successful. Put differently, both sides need to have equal possibilities and rights to have a voice that is heard (Lambek 2015, 228). The context in which NSWAS is embedded is shaped by a conflict-

affected society where these differences are subject to a power imbalance between two peoples, while one narrative, voice, and language is considered superior to another. For a coexistence project such as the 'Oasis of Peace' to be effective, one needs to create space where the Palestinian and the Jewish cultures, narratives, and languages can be presented equally (Tuv 2018, 50p). In words of a Palestinian first-generation villager:

> "For me, it has been serving as a place where I can present our Palestinian narrative, which has been subjected to distortion throughout the years of the conflict." (Statement of a Palestinian Israeli first-generation villager 2022, Interview 5, 115)

To the question what coexistence means to Daniella Kitain an Israeli first-generation villager, in the interview in her house in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam, she explains:

> "That it will be possible to learn from each other and to benefit from each other. And to overcome racism and to understand the other side. So, I think it's more like a how can we work together." (Kitain 2022, Interview 4, 114)

While the above engaged in the background and context of the village and its inhabitants, an analysis of how far the everyday practices of peace within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam and the villagers understanding of 'agreeing to disagree' has led to resilience within the village will be presented in the next chapter.

5.2 Resilience in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam

> And there was a lot of anger at some moments
> And there was hugging at some moments
> Even people cried together at some moments
> Realizing little by little
> That we have chosen a very complex challenge
> But at the same time
> None of us wanted to leave
> And in spite of those difficulties
> We want to somehow find a comfortable life here
> (Rizek 2022, Interview 1, 100)

What Rayek describes in his words above points out the two major characteristics inherited in the everyday life of the villagers: firstly, the engagement in everyday practices and endeavors to sustain the relationships within the community; secondly, the commitment of the

inhabitants to support the utopian aims of coexistence on which the village was founded (Tuv 2018, 52).

The micro-data gathered through the questionnaire was divided into three different levels of analysis: the individual level, the community level, and the system level (see 4.2. Assessing resilience through the lens of complexity theory). Per level, the data has been assigned to different factors to measure the social capital, social cohesion, and consequently the community resilience within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam. The sample consists of twelve participants between the ages of 26 and 74. 50% of the participating inhabitants define themselves as women and 50% as men. Villagers of Palestinian and Israeli descent are represented equally. The first-generation villagers account for 67% of the participants, whereas 33% are second-generation villagers. The results of the questionnaire will be presented below.

Individual level

The assessment of resilience on an *individual level* engages in the individuals' endogenous resilience capacity measured through, among others, the interaction of the individuals with her or his social environment in terms of belonging, tolerance, and social and political participation. Additionally, the individual problem-solving ability of the individuals was assessed.

Belonging and trust

All participating villagers state that they have a large and active social network and feel a strong sense of community among the people living in NSWAS. In addition, they all affirmed the full support of their families in their decision to become part of the community. Trust and open communication play an essential role among the community members; 100% of the residents report that they trust the people within NSWAS. The vast majority, namely 83%, feel comfortable speaking frankly to other community members. Whereas the first-generation villagers are unified in their complete identification with the village, the second-generation villagers only agree to some extend or disagree. Further, in contrast to 100% of the first-generation villagers who say that Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam residents experience situations and incidents similar to them, 50% of the second-generation villagers disagree with this statement, and 50% agree somewhat.

Tolerance

By living in the 'Oasis of Peace' and the villager's everyday interactions, all first-generation villagers state that they changed prior assumptions and attitudes about an Other across religious and ethnic divides. Against this background, a Palestinian Israeli first-generation villager adds:

> "This experience made me more open and more tolerant to differences, as a result of community life and for the success of this experiment." (Statement of a Palestinian Israeli first-generation villager 2022, Interview 5, 115)

In the same context, she continues her thought when she says:

> "I became more aware of my own identity as an Israeli Jew. This change happened through the encounters with the Other." (Statement of a Palestinian Israeli first-generation villager 2022, Interview 5, 115)

This result shows that throughout their time in NSWAS, the villagers did develop a better understanding and acceptance of Other narratives and identities and stronger awareness of their personal identity and narrative.

The perspective of the 26-year-old second-generation villager on this matter re-proves the difference between first-generation villagers who acquired coexistence as part of their identity and the second-generation who grew up within the village in a context where coexistence can be seen as part of their inherited identity:

> "Growing up in the village and growing to school there teaches you from a young age that there is a lot of diversity of people in the country and outside. Being raised with this understanding makes it easier to understand others." (Statement of an Israeli-Palestinian first-generation villager 2022, Interview 5, 115)

The assessment of the data on the social environment of the participants reveals that 33% percent have six to ten friends across other communities or cities from Israel and occupied Palestinian territories[3] who regularly visit their homes. 67% of the contributors count more than ten friends across Israel and occupied Palestinian territories who visit NSWAS on a regular basis. Further, when discussing the distribution of the participant's close friends with different beliefs than their own, the results show the following: 33% state more than ten, 17% indicate six to ten, 33% say two to five, while 17% state they have zero friends with different believes. There is no clear linear correlation between either of the multiple variables that are

[3] When referring to visitors from the occupied Palestinian territories, it has to be noted that those Palestinians need a permit to enter Israel (see 5.1 Everyday peace in a context of inequality).

considered, such as ethnic or religious background, age, or gender. In other words, as one variable moves one way, the other moves in another unrelated direction. Nonetheless, the participants who state a number of zero friends that do not share their beliefs consider themselves secular and do not identify with their religion. In that context, it can be said that sharing beliefs in this context is not to be understood as a shared religious background but rather a set of values that allow open communication, understanding, and tolerance for an Other.

Participation on a social, and political dimension

All participants take part in social activities and associations within the village, while 25% contribute to a school club or group, including first- and second-generation villagers. The percentage of active participation in political activities and associations (17%), as well as involvement in cultural and religious activities or associations (17%) outside of the village, is limited to participants from the first generation. In the above mentioned, the villagers could choose several answers depending on their levels of contribution within the political and societal sphere. Based on the above, 100% of the contributors took part in cross-community projects between the village and other communities at least once or twice (67%) or regularly (33%). In addition, the total amount of people who partook in the questionnaire is actively engaged in meetings on peacebuilding held in the community. Further, according to the results, the motivation to do so is purely intrinsic, based on personal beliefs and moral standpoints. The responses to the contribution in cross-community projects as well as the participation within the village are equally distributed across all the variables under consideration.

In addition, independent decision-making plays a central role for all participating members. Against this background, the total amount of the participating individuals indicates that they feel comfortable making autonomous and independent decisions, and 83% state they can play a part in influencing group decisions that are important to them. An environment where every person's voice is heard equally creates room not only for creating understanding for the group identity and potential sub-groups but also for the individual identity of the people. By doing so, the boundaries between the self and the Other blur while creating space for new group constellations.

Problem-solving ability

The data gathered from the first- and second-generation villagers indicate that the residents have integrated a set of individual problem-solving strategies into their everyday lives. For instance, they jointly agree that they take active steps to understand the viewpoint and narrative of the Other as an everyday practice of peace while constantly working on themselves and learning about their own identity in order to enter a meaningful dialogue with an Other. Further, all participants stated that they learned from prior mistakes and came up with new ways of handling difficult situations. Within the 'Oasis of Peace', the individuals show strong optimism and relentless will to resolve conflicts within the community through open and respectful communication. The commitment of the inhabitants to 'agree to disagree' and to live 'with the conflict' is based on iterative feedback loops to improve mutual acceptance and understanding of other viewpoints and narratives among the villagers.

Perceptions of the ability to mitigate conflict through raising important issues within the villagers show a positive correlation between generational affiliation and their answers. Noting that, 100% of the second-generation villagers that account for 33% of the participants state that they avoid looking at important issues going on among the inhabitants. In contrast, all first-generation villagers that form the remaining 67% stress their openness to raising awareness about existing conflicts.

In summary of the above, first- and second-generation villagers show a strong sense of community. Everyday practices of peace that the inhabitants are committed to the objective of 'agreeing to disagree' and to 'live with the conflict', foster mutual understanding, tolerance for different stories and narratives, and trust. Consequently, it fosters a common sense of inclusion and belonging. Iterative feedback loops help the villagers to continuously adapt and respond to changes and unpredictable events. While the political and social participation outside of the village and the willingness to raise issues within the village is higher among the second-generation villagers, the villager's participation in social and political associations and activities within NSWAS is remarkably strong. This can be partly attributed to the fact that for the second-generation villagers shared life is part of their inherited identity, whereas the first-generation villagers have acquired this part of their identity by choice (see 5.1 A grassroots project in Israel: Coexistence in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam). Therefore, conflicts between first-generation villagers occur more regularly, as the personal narrative, as well as the narrative of an Other is continuously challenged and contested. For second-generation villagers, living together is more natural, and conflicts occur in a different way as their personal narrative already includes the reality of coexisting in a binational village.

Consequently, the data shows a strong social capital which has a significant positive influence on the communities' social cohesion as well as its endogenous resilience capacity. Despite the divergent results with regard to the social and political participation of first- and second-generation villagers outside of the 'Oasis of Peace', there is no linear correlation between any of the multiple variables that are considered, such as ethnic or religious background, age, or gender. This result reproves that the villagers successfully created an environment where the voice of every individual is heard equally, which has two key outcomes: firstly, it creates space for the understanding of group identities and potential sub-groups; secondly, it challenges the individual identity and narrative of the people and hence creates space for new group constellations.

Community level

The *community level* indicates the communities' endogenous resilience to shocks, stress, and crises. Part of the assessment is the access to livelihood assets. Examples are the access to education, as well as political, and economic participation within the community. Further transformative processes and structures within the community, and coping strategies of the community to withstand and recover from disturbance are to be considered. Another indicator that is taken into consideration when assessing the community resilience is the role and character of leadership within the community. Combined, those factors will generate insights into the community's resilience capacity.

Access to education

All participants of the questionnaire hold a University Degree (or equivalent). More precisely, the vast majority, namely 84%, holds a Graduate University Degree (or equivalent) or a Post Graduate University Degree from Israel or abroad. The remaining 16% hold an Undergraduate University Degree (or equivalent). It, therefore, can be said that today's population of the village is formed by highly educated Israelis or Palestinian Israelis.

33% engage in conflict resolution in their current professional endeavors (or retired from a related profession). The second-generation villagers who were born in NSWAS received primary and secondary education in the binational school in the village (see 5.1. A grassroots project in Israel: Coexistence in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam), whereas the entirety of the participating villagers revealed that they would send or did send their own children to a binational school.

Thus, since the individuals of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam are considered full Israeli citizens, they enjoy unlimited access to the educational system within Israel and abroad.

Access to political participation

The outcome of the political participation of participating villagers that are presented under the 'individual level' within this chapter is the result of personal preferences and beliefs. All inhabitants do have the right to vote within Israel, as well as the freedom to join political activities and associations within Israel and beyond. The fact that political participation of the villagers is significantly stronger within the community than outside the communities' boundaries can be partly attributed to the fact that all contributors state that their voice as a community is not or insufficiently taken into account by the Israeli government in their policymaking. Accordingly, this result can be ascribed to the feeling of a lack of agency within Israel when it comes to policymaking combined with a clear distrust in the national government, which was revealed by 83% of the participants with no clear positive or negative correlation between the variables that are considered and the answers. In contrast, 83% that do not display the same distribution of responses as the percentage above state that they have full trust in their community and control of the decision-making process within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam. The remaining 17% disagree to some extent and attribute this to their personal experiences as community members. One Israeli first-generation villager served as a group facilitator in the School for Peace when her son got killed when he served in the army. In an interview, she shared her story:

> "I was part of this call for peace before Tom was killed. And then I stopped because my personal narrative was something that is illegitimate. From the perspective of the School for Peace [...] but also the villagers. Many go to the army. When the village started, it was obvious that [...] all the men that came to the village were part of the army. [...] It became difficult during the years. It's more and more illegitimate. In eyes of some people. It's not all the village." (Kitain 2022, Interview 4, 112)

Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam does not support the Israeli army and has a very low tolerance toward Israelis that underwent the service. Yet, the state of Israel requires all Jewish, Druze, and Circassian Israeli citizens above the age of 18 to join the military service for a minimum of 24 months for women and 32 months for men. Palestinian Israelis, religious or married individuals, and people with medical or mental issues are exempt from the military service but have to attend a so called 'voluntary service' in the Israel Defense Forces (Israel Defense Forces 2022). In that respect, the above-mentioned experience of the Israeli woman is no

exceptional situation, but the reality of Israeli citizens that fulfill the aforementioned criteria to join the Israeli army.

Thus, this specific case of 'positive discrimination' favors members of disadvantaged groups, in that scenario, individuals who did not serve the Israeli army and who suffer from discrimination within Israel (Weisskopf 2006). For the Israeli woman above, however, the result was a personal feeling of being devaluated of her accomplishments within her everyday life based on her and her son's Jewish Israeli origin, which led to a certain mistrust in the community's institutions and leaders.

Access to economic participation

Whereas all participants agree that they have the same job opportunities as other Israeli citizens outside of the village, the villagers have very different preferences when it comes to their choice of work location. 50%, including first- and second-generation Israelis and Palestinian Israelis, disagree that they would choose a profession within the village. The major argument supporting this decision is the separation of social and professional life. Noting that, the 26-year-old second-generation villager explains:

> "I'd rather avoid mixing my social life and work life because if conflicts happen it can get very uncomfortable." (Statement of an Israeli second-generation villager 2022, Interview 5, 116)

The remaining 50% prefer to be closer to the everyday life of the community and therefore chose to take on a profession inside the community.

Role and character of leadership

As referred to earlier in this chapter, 100% of the participants state that they feel comfortable making autonomous and independent decisions, whereas 83% indicate that they can play a part in influencing group decisions that are important to them. Concurrently, the totality of the participating villagers disagrees that they depend on the group leader for direction. In light of the above, the results show that there are two key elements that played a major role for the villagers to move beyond the effects of past conflicts and thus contributed to the strengthening of peace within the village: first, the leadership within the village and second, the relationships of the people living in the community. Both the leadership and the relationships among the community members are considered the strongest on a community level rather than on the individual, family, or national level.

Thus, the character of the leadership can be summarized as respectful of and open to different perspectives and narratives while including the entirety of community members in the decision-making process through the application of their insights and knowledge on the planning, action, and management level. The leadership is representative of the community, building on mutual trust, which serves as a valuable indicator of strong social capital. Those characteristics translate into leadership that demonstrates great competencies in dealing with conflict situations while maintaining the existence of function without undermining the voices of the residents. The community's leadership acknowledges self-organization, complexity, functional diversity, and non-linearity, which thus can be interpreted as a link between ecological and social resilience (see 3.2. Ecological and engineering resilience).

Coping strategies

The problem-solving abilities mentioned earlier as part of the 'individual level' apply to the same extent to the group level. The village has experienced several crises within Israel and Palestine (including West Bank and Gaza) throughout its existence, such as the first intifada in the late 1980s and the second intifada in the early 2000s. The most recent conflict was the outbreak of violence between Israel and Gaza in May 2021. On the influence of the war between Gaza and Israel in May 2021, 83% answered that it affected the village in a negative way. In the words of a Jewish Israeli villager:

> "Every military action imposed a dark cloud." (Statement of a Jewish Israeli first-generation villager 2022, Interview 5, 116)

With regard to a potential change of behavior of the villagers following the most recent crisis situation, 67% of the inhabitants state that they have noticed new behavior in people. Above all, the villagers acknowledged increasing support of the inhabitants of their personal narrative and their 'people'. Hence, despite the village's endeavors to foster and maintain *everyday peace* within the village and the strong and resilient leadership, external factors such as war situations that cannot be controlled present a risk to the *everyday peace* of the community.

Concluding the above, the results of the questionnaire show there is a set of protective factors present in the village, such as the high social and political participation of the villagers within the community and its institutions, as well as the strong and resilient leadership. The data demonstrates that the resilience capacity of NSWAS is strongest on the community level. Further, as all villagers are full Israeli citizens, they enjoy access to livelihood assets within

and beyond Israel, such as education as well as the state's political and economic sphere. In specific cases, the endeavor of the community to favor members of disadvantaged groups poses a risk of 'positive discrimination'. In the example mentioned earlier, this positive discrimination came to the extent of an Israeli villager who absolved the military service. Nonetheless, iterative processes of trials and errors that take place in informal (eg. round table discussions) as well as formal settings (e.g. The School for Peace) open space to reach conflict transformation through people-to-people activities, or in Mac Ginty's words' everyday diplomacy', by embracing the agency of the individuals. As a result, negative factors of resilience, such as the rise of positive discrimination that resulted in the feeling of neglect, have the potential to undergo a catalytic shift into positive factors that foster peacebuilding in a specific context. Concurrently, the rise of negative resilience within the village is mitigated through everyday practices of peace undertaken by the individuals and the community and go beyond mere conflict-calming activities and avoidance; but give room to 'talking through difference' and therefore may create a better understanding not only of the Palestinian but also the Israeli narrative.

Against the backdrop of the said, the villagers conclude that self-organization, which plays a central role in the villagers' everyday lives, cannot be imposed externally. The inhabitants agree that if NSWAS was to be an experiment initiated from the outside, the result would be a significant decrease in progress. Subsequently, this can be seen as opposing the notion of resilience in the context of a neoliberal agenda. Externally imposed conflict calming measures such as international interventions are therefore considered to interrupt the internal feedback process and may foster dependency. At the same time, it can counteract learning opportunities for the community and its villagers.

System level

The *system level* was analyzed based on the acknowledgment that the resilience capacity of a community is not only shaped by the complex relationships between the different levels of society but also by the relationship between the community and the system it is embedded in. Further, the processes and structures that the community is entangled in, such as existing power asymmetries between Israelis and Palestinians, will be assessed. Those aspects will provide insights into the communities' resilience capacity towards externally imposed processes and shocks and create insights into the ethical dimension of such projects within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Externally imposed shocks

As mentioned earlier, despite the village's endeavors to foster and maintain *everyday peace* within the village through everyday practices and against the backdrop of the strong and resilient leadership capacities, the data shows that external events that cannot be controlled, such as the May war in 2021 between Gaza and Israel, present a risk to the *everyday peace* and thus the villages' resilience capacity. Based on the results of the questionnaire, the two major risks that can be identified are: (1) violent conflicts between Israeli and Palestine (including the West Bank and Gaza) that challenge the understanding of the villagers towards the Other narrative, and (2) violent conflict situations can lead to stronger support of the villager's personal perception of their narrative and hence their understanding of their self/ves and their personal narrative.

From a complexity theoretical standpoint, such events within a self-organized system impose an initial state of disorder. Yet, this disorder creates room for transition to an ordered system through a locally initiated, dynamic, and iterative process shaped by the interactions of the villagers on an individual, community, and system level. Thus, when random events like the outbreak of violence between Israel and Gaza in May 2021 occur within a community, the iterative positive feedback loops that are part of the everyday practices of peace in the village can be understood as an iterative and reinforcing transition mechanism. Consequently, the initial pattern of organization (or 'stable state') is destabilized, and the community is pushed into an alternative stable state to maintain and develop functioning in terms of *everyday peace* within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam. The inherent protective factors of the individuals and the community that translate into everyday practices and strategies to maintain the efficiency of functioning of the community are highly important to avoid the rise of 'negative' forms of resilience within NSWAS, which may counteract the withstanding of crises, adaptation, and transformation of the villagers and the community.

Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam in the Israeli media

While the village is recognized within Israel and is therefore subject to the laws of the State of Israel, 67% of the participants disagree to some extent or disagree completely that the Israeli media does present the village in an appropriate way. Noting that, covering a fire that was set in the School for Peace in 2020, two of the most-read English newspapers within Israel and abroad, The Times of Israel and The Jerusalem Post, report the following:

> "A fire broke out overnight Sunday at a school in the Arab-Jewish community of Neve Shalom near Jerusalem […]. Residents of Neve Shalom said in a statement they now

> believed both incidents were arson and hate crimes against the community […].” (Toi 2020)

The Jerusalem Post covered the same occurrence when they describe the village as follows:

> “Wahat al-Salam – Neve Shalom – is a community of both Arab and Jewish Israelis located near Latrun. The village is dedicated to building justice, peace and equality in the country and the region.” (JPOST EDITORIAL 2020)

On the one hand, the above outtake of the newspaper articles exclusively refers to Arab Israelis and Jewish Israelis that live in the village, whereas the word Palestinian Israelis, that form around 50% of the population of NSWAS, does not appear in the articles. The Palestinian identity in that regard can be seen as insufficiently represented within both articles. On the other hand, while the report in the Jerusalem Post states both names in the quoted sentence, the title of the article “Neve Shalom fire – a wake-up call for coexistence and peace – opinion” (JPOST EDITORIAL 2020) and the following notions of the village’s name within the article only refer to the Hebrew name which applies to the same extent to the article of the Times of Israel. Amal Jamal, a Palestinian Israeli political scientist, referred to such practices as part of a process of ‘hollowing out citizenship’ (Jamal 2007, 473; 2009, 499). In his analysis that centers around three components (legislation and the political sphere, economic policies and access to resources, and the cultural/symbolic), Jamal built on the model that was developed by Nancy Fraser (1997), a professor of Political Science in the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research. Liat Tuv refers to the concept of ‘hollowing out citizenship’ as a process “by which citizenship cannot be fully realized because minorities are prevented from fully participating in several spheres of society” (Tuv 2018, 34). In this context, the third pillar, the cultural/symbolic provides valuable insights into the influence of education and media in fostering and promoting a, as Tuv calls it, “misrecognition of Palestinian Israeli identity” (Tuv 2018, 36) in a way where a set of political and social policies constitute the ‘Israeliness’ as “a neutral common civic identity that can incorporate the Arab citizens inside the state despite its Jewish character” (Jamal 2009, 496).

Concluding the above, the assessment of the data collected via the questionnaire shows that the endogenous resilience capacities of the conflict-affected community of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam simultaneously apply to different levels of society (individual, community, and system) due to the highly context-sensitive environment in which the village

is embedded, the non-linear nature of *everyday peace* practices and the focus on self-regulation within the village.

Thus, on the one hand, the resilience capacity of NSWAS is not only affected by the individual and subjective experience of the villagers (vertical perspective) but also by external factors such as the public and the 'natural' world and its interrelationship (horizontal perspective).

Additionally, it can be said that externally imposed processes like the misrecognition of Palestinian Israeli identity in Israeli media and war situations such as the war between Gaza and Israel in 2021 represent risk factors to the community in their aim to withstand such disturbances while maintaining their efficiency of functioning. In that respect, engineering resilience approaches are insufficient to analyze the resilience-building within NSWAS as they center around efficiency, constancy, and predictability, intending to return to a steady-state or state of equilibrium following a conflict situation (see 3.2. Ecological and engineering resilience). The environment surrounding the village is shaped by change and unpredictability combined with the need for persistency in the villagers' endeavors to 'live with the conflict', which build the key elements of ecological resilience within a highly complex system. Therefore, the assessment of the resilience capacity of the 'Oasis of Peace' through the lens of complexity theory, based on the interlink between ecological and societal resilience, provides more valid insights into the resilience capacity of the community.

In the following, the existing conflict narratives, and their effect on the everyday lives of the villagers will be analyzed and discussed as the differences in narratives in the context of this thesis play a major role in addressing peacebuilding processes and power asymmetries.

5.3 Transformative narratives within the village

So here are 22 books
So he thinks that he knows
There are 10,000 books about the situation here
Every person is a book
You could sit with ten people and everyone has a story
Whether he lived through 48
Or after
Or before
Or today
(Rizek 2022, Interview 1, 98)

This co-created poem is an outtake from the interview with Rayek in his coffee shop in the 'Oasis of Peace'. In three powerful sentences, Rayek not only shows strong personal social responsibility towards an Other; the said reveals his ethics of justice as an attempt to redress power imbalances by giving every story and every narrative a voice. As he later explained, this perception is the result of a long process of creating self-awareness and awareness of the stories, narrative, and culture of an Other as part of his experience of living 'with the conflict' in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam. This standpoint was reoccurring in the sense of the villagers' endeavor to self-reflect combined with the strong feeling of personal responsibility among the inhabitants. Those narratives of personal change are based on what the villagers call the necessity to first "be in dialogue with yourself" (Tuv 2018, 69) in order to "engage in dialogue with the other" (Tuv 2018, 69) – a sentence repeatedly used by the villagers in the formal interviews as well as informal conversations.

The entirety of the people who participated in the questionnaire stressed that education and learning about both narratives play a significant role in the peace progress between the two peoples. 75% state that a process of learning the other perspective helps in supporting the Palestinian struggle as it "is the minimal must" (Jewish Israeli first-generation villager, Interview 5, 115) and "could create better communication" (Jewish Israeli first-generation villager, Interview 5, 115). Against the background of the said, 100% of the participating inhabitants stated that in their point of view, it would have a significant positive influence on the relationship between Palestinians, Palestinian Israelis and Israelis if more binational and cross-community projects were formed. However, the Jewish Israeli villager Daniella Kitain who served as a group facilitator in the School for Peace explains that:

> "[T]he School for Peace […] talk a lot about the power relations inside Israel. They don't ... I don't know how far they talk about the power relations between Israel and the West Bank or Gaza." (Kitain 2022, Interview 4, 112)

In complex environments like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the differences in narratives play a major role in addressing peacebuilding processes and power asymmetries. There are two major opposing narratives within the village: the Israeli narrative and the Palestinian one. For centuries, Jewish people have been subject to discrimination across different countries and cultures and were denied fundamental human rights such as persecution and annihilation (Cobb 2013, 171). This inherited narrative of Jewish Israelis translates into an ongoing existential threat present in the Israeli society that draws back to experiences shaped by a history of persecution in the diaspora and the Holocaust (Tuv 2018, 64).

The Palestinian narrative that is seen to stand in contrast to the Israeli narrative underlies a "system of oppression and domination [by the state of Israel] over Palestinians" (Amnesty International 2022), through ongoing territorial fragmentation, denial of social and economic rights, segregation and control, and dispossession of land and property, which was recently confirmed through a report published by Amnesty International (Amnesty International 2022). However, the narratives mentioned above are subject to modification throughout generations, groups, and sub-groups, depending on an individual's background. While the Palestinian Israeli villager Rayek Rizek stresses:

> "[W]e call ourselves Palestinian Israelis. And many Jews do not like this definition; Palestinians and Israelis; What is Palestinians? So, I have to explain to them [...]. I mean, for me, there are no Israeli Arabs and the West Bank, and Gaza and the Diaspora. There was one time before 1948, when all those people were together in one country and considered themselves as a nation." (Rizek 2022, Interview 1)

He refers to the Lebanese-French writer Amin Maalouf when he stresses that his identity is defined by multiple layers, which shape and alter his personal narrative as a Palestinian that lives in Israel:

> "[S]o he says identity is what you have collected through your life of experiences […]. And when you decide to limit your identity or definition to yourself, within a small box […] – I am Christian only; I'm Jewish; I'm Muslim; I am Hindu [...] – this is what he calls killing identity because it separates you from the others [...]. [I]t is better if you include all those experiences within your identity. [...] I'm also an Arab originally. I'm also a member of the Christian community. I'm not religious but it is part of my

> culture. So, I'm also a Palestinian and I'm also partly Israeli. […] And so, this addition of being Israeli and that I grew up within Israel and I know the language and I know the culture here much more than any other Palestinian … […] I cannot deny it as part of my identity. So, my identity is a collection of different experiences." (Rizek 2022, Interview 1, 94)

Assuming that a person's narrative is influenced by an accumulation of different factors and experiences, it can be said that there is a noticeable difference between the narrative of the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza and Palestinians that are considered full Israeli citizens. While Palestinian villagers told me about several experiences of discrimination towards them that happened within Israel, the lack of citizenship and the Israeli occupation add a critical layer of discrimination to the experience of Palestinians living in occupied Palestinian territories (including the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem). On the other side, a Jewish Israeli first-generation villager explains:

> "I grew up as a Zionist and I was one until now. In the sense that I believe, the Jewish people should have state. It doesn't mean to conquer other people or to rule other people. […] I think the first thing is [...] to understand that we as Israeli are also not one. In a sense, we are all occupiers, but we are different, all kinds of people. […] Of course, we must stop the occupation. Not that I know how to do it, but I think this is basic. Personally, I can tell you that in 1967 when the 67-war happened, I was still in the army. Theoretically I have some kind of sign that I participated in the war. But I was part of people who started right after the 67-war to say this is not right." (Kitain 2022, Interview 4, 114)

Thus, the Israeli and the Palestinian experience and narrative show different faces dependent not only on the ethnic and cultural background but also on the individuals' set of experiences embedded in their identity. The data gathered through the questionnaire and the interviews show that the Jewish Israelis within NSWAS acknowledge the existing power imbalance between Israelis and Palestinians and their privileged position within Israel's society. They stress the need for a state for the Jewish people. As Cobb concludes, the awareness of the occupation combined with the articulated need for a Jewish state may pose a "challenge to Jewish Israeli notions of the moral character of their identity" (Cobb 2013, 64) which gains momentum when looking at the perspective of Daniella Kitain, a Jewish first-generation villager, on the perception of the Israeli occupation within Israel's society:

> “Israeli people they can just close their eyes. It's amazing. It's amazing. They don't know that there is occupation. Or it’s not like they don't know. But yeah, they don't admit.” (Kitain 2022, Interview 4, 113)

Until today, Jewish Israelis have been considered subject to a state of emergency and narrative violence for centuries. From a Jewish perspective, this state of emergency fosters the creation of “radioactive narratives that have long half-lives” (Cobb 2013, 171). This state of emergency and narrative violence translated into a cycle of victimization that imposes the state of emergency on an Other (in this case, the Palestinians). As Daniella Kitain’s statement indicated, the result is the denial of the proposed story of the Palestinians or justifying their individual actions, as approving the story of the Other will potentially erase their own legitimacy. In Cobb’s words: “Once victims of a state of exception, the narrative scenarios are extreme and limited: Impose the state of exception on Others so that they will not destroy you” (Cobb 2013, 171). Accordingly, the subject matter is not only a struggle for meaning; it is a round-robin of victimization between two peoples.

It thus becomes clear that there are two dominant overarching yet competing narratives within the Israeli-Palestinian society. At the same time, however, the interconnection of national and personal narratives is subject to alteration and differs among Israelis and between Palestinian Israelis and Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. Those two general, opposing narratives about the conflict affect not only the everyday lives of the people in terms of the use of language, objects, or even food, but subsequently result in competing meanings to the same historical events. (Tuv 2018, 33) However, in an environment where the Palestinian narrative is systematically made subaltern, the Israeli narrative is seen to be the ruling knowledge claim by giving voice to the Israeli narrative over the Palestinian.

To address the power imbalance between the two peoples, only engaging in the narratives of the Israelis and Palestinians living within Israel neglects the narrative of those Palestinians that live in the occupied Palestinian territories. An approach to bottom-up peacebuilding that does not actively engage in those structural power inequalities is thus highly problematic in a context of power imbalance as predominant in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as an intentional community where ‘talking through difference’ is one central element of their everyday practices of peace, builds on an ‘ideal social world’ based on equal rights within the community (see 6.1 Everyday peace in a context on inequality). Thus, the villagers consciously set themselves apart from the wider Israeli-Palestinian society (Tuv 2018, 53) while creating a space where the Palestinian and the

Jewish narratives, languages, and cultures are equally represented. In that sense, the villagers use what the US-American philosopher and author Kelly Oliver calls 'the transformative power of meaning' through (re)configuring how the villagers conceive themselves and an Other (Oliver 2001, 38).

As an approach to counteract the competing meanings to the same historical events, such as the Nakba commemoration day on May 15th, which commemorates the displacement and dispossession of thousands of Palestinians during the 'Israel War of Independence' in 1948 and 1949, the village's institutions such as the School for Peace, the village's primary school and the Pluralistic Spiritual Centre hold round-table discussions. The aim is to create a sense of 'moral responsibility' among the participants. This event is particularly sensitive as the Nakba, translated from Arabic, stands for catastrophe. For Israelis, it is celebrated as the Israeli Independence Day, which commemorates the Israeli Declaration of Independence on May 14th in 1948. (Tuv 2018, 64) The endeavor of the School for Peace to raise a sense of responsibility among participants and awareness of the members' group identity shall encourage the participants to take active steps towards peace and equality "by suggesting they should all make use of the privilege provided by being part of a collective village that has a voice" (Tuv 2018, 64). Despite this theoretical aim of fostering participants actions, 75% of the villagers that partook in the questionnaire state that the village would need to increase their political actions for a real change to happen.

Yet, despite the challenges and risks that bottom-up peacebuilding projects like Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam hold, a poem of Daniella Kitain, the Jewish Israeli first-generation villager, creates bittersweet hope in a seemingly endless circle of conflict; hope that utopian projects like the 'Oasis of Peace' may become everyday life beyond the borders of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam:

> "From one fortress to another fortress
> From one place of war to another place of war
> We are walking and dreaming
> Peace and love
> Clods of earth
> Filled with blood and smoke
> Laughing and crying." (Kitain 2022, Interview 4, 109)

This chapter discussed the background of the NSWAS as a grassroots peacebuilding project in light of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the lens of the people themselves.

The assessment of the data collected via the questionnaire shows that the endogenous resilience capacities of the conflict-affected community of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam simultaneously apply to different levels of society (individual, community, and system) due to the highly context-sensitive environment in which the village is embedded, the non-linear nature of everyday peace practices and the focus on self-regulation within the village.

Further, the result of the questionnaire reproves that the villagers successfully created an environment where the voice of every individual is heard equally, which (1) creates space for the understanding of group identities and potential sub-groups, and (2) challenges the individual identity and narrative of the people and hence creates space for new group constellations.

Thus, on the one hand, the resilience capacity of NSWAS is affected not only by the villagers' individual and subjective experience but also by external factors such as the public and the 'natural' world and its interrelationship. An approach to bottom-up peacebuilding that does not actively engage in those structural power inequalities is thus highly problematic in a context of power imbalance as predominant in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
In the following, the written will be put in a broader perspective by discussing it from the perspective of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. By doing so, the meaning of *everyday peace* and resilience will be put in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The aim is to remove a potential fixation on 'protagonist' and 'antagonist' and serves as an attempt to redress power imbalances by also giving those stories and narratives a voice that is systematically overruled.

6 Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam in light of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

> As long as we have Israelis in the West Bank
> There is no space for peace
> As long as there is a soldier moving with his gun in the West Bank
> No place for peace
> (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 105)

In an interview with Muna Ayad, a Palestinian woman living in Ramallah, a Palestinian city in central West Bank, she shared her personal definition of *everyday peace*, covering her

words in a smile. For security reasons, her name was changed. Muna Ayad is one of many Palestinian women whose husbands are under 'administrative detention', a term used by Israeli authorities as a form of political detention under deteriorating conditions such as abuse and torture of Palestinians, including children. Imprisoning Palestinians from the occupied Palestinian territories is a common practice undertaken by Israeli authorities and is illegal under international law. (Amnesty International 2017; Human Rights Watch 2021; IMEU 2021) In continuation of her thoughts, Muna Ayad explained:

> "I fell asleep with my husband in the same bed. But in the morning, I woke up without him. He was arrested. So, I fell asleep in a situation but woke up in another situation. This is similar to what I said – I go to work but am not sure if I will return in the end of the day. Alive." (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 107)

In a situation of conflict, only giving a voice to the narrative of the Israeli people (including Palestinian Israelis) would neglect the experience and narrative of those that have, for most part, been silenced. To include the voices of the suppressed, and therefore those that have suffered the most harming consequences of the oppression and the conflict at large, shall invite the reader to get access to a more holistic perspective regarding the Israeli-Palestinian issue, that shape the environment of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as a binational village and as a project under the administration of the state of Israel.

While the data presented in Chapter 5 show that Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam, a village build on utopian values, demonstrate a strong community resilience capacity while having successfully implemented practices of *everyday peace*, the following will shed light on the concept of resilience, and Mac Ginty's notion of *everyday peace* through the lens of the Palestinian people.

6.1 Everyday peace in a context of inequality

> Everyday peace in this situation
> For me is to go out
> Go to work
> And return back alive
> Feel safety
> To feel safety
> (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 107)

Palestinians living under Israeli occupation are confronted with systematic discrimination, including territorial fragmentation, rejection of social and economic rights, and expropriation of property. This reality roots in an imbalance of power between Israelis, Palestinian Israelis, Palestinians holding a Blue Jerusalem ID[4], and Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza that are denied the freedom of movement through existing checkpoints between Palestine and the outside world; in descending order. (Amnesty International 2022, 61) Following the interviewees' voices from NSWAS and the West Bank, this structural power imbalance cannot be resolved through people-to-people (P2P) diplomacy only without taking active steps to address this imbalance in power between occupier and occupied. In the wake of the rise of conflict mediation approaches that found ground in the mid-1980s and are often referred to as the 'confrontational model', the NSWAS School for Peace has adjusted its P2P approach to conflict mitigation.

Moving the emphasis from interpersonal relations (which were at the center of earlier coexistence models) to inter-group relations shall allow the group identity to build the center of the encounters. This approach is intended to create space to engage in existing structural inequalities, political and social identities, and historical narratives that shape the everyday lives of Palestinians and Jewish Israeli villagers. (Tuv 2018, 47) However, such models have since received criticism for insufficiently addressing critical power imbalances between the participating groups. Further criticism suggested that such approaches may even support those group inequalities as their center of attention lies in shared humanity and superficial differences while missing out on addressing structural power asymmetries effectively. (Tuv 2018, 45)

The underlying discourse that supports this assumption is the 'normalization' debate. In reference to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the term 'normalization' is used to describe the risk of coexistence projects that do not engage in the underlying political issue and the existing inequality of supporting the status quo. Consequently, they are seen to support the picture of a liberal society that the Israeli government depicts. A counter-discourse that is represented within the Palestinian society is the 'anti-normalization' movement. Anti-normalization in this specific frame of reference perceives the engagement with Israel as 'normalizing' the status quo and thus the relation between occupier and occupied. (Tuv 2018, 45p) Yara Hawari, senior analyst of Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network, describes

[4] Since 1967, the Israeli government has been the de-facto sovereign power of historic Palestine (including Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel). The Blue Jerusalem ID is granted to Palestinians that reside in East Jerusalem and gives access to most areas within historic Palestine. When a Palestinian that holds a Blue Jerusalem ID is living outside of Jerusalem, the ID can be revoked. (Visualizing Palestine 2014) It must be noted that the ID is not comparable to an Israeli citizenship.

anti-normalization as "an attempt to fight back against the legitimization and whitewashing of Israel's violations of Palestinian rights through the veneer of dialogue […] that is not based on the fundamental principles of international law" (Hawari 2021, 6).

Not only Palestinian interviewees living in the West Bank, but the Palestinian civil society at large rejects the idea of P2P projects as they (1) do not comply with the principles of international law, and (2) are not based on the recognition of fundamental Palestinian rights. After the 1993 Oslo Accords[5], an upsurge of P2P projects in Israel and Palestine was witnessed due to the Track II diplomacy[6] scope extension to Palestinian and Israeli civil society organizations. The focus was on broadening the two parties' understanding of their own group identity and the one of an Other rather than a broader influence on official bodies. The focus was on broadening the two parties' understanding of their own group identity and the one of an Other rather than a broader influence on official bodies. (Hawari 2021) However, the number of P2P projects declined significantly in the 2000s. This decrease is based on a variety of causes. Yara Hawari (2021) summarizes the three main factors as follows: (1) the uprising of the second Intifada, (2) the decline of the Israeli 'left', which advocated for P2P projects, and (3) the renewed consensus of the anti-normalization movement among Palestinian civil society in 2007.

In the eyes of the Palestinian interviewees, P2P projects serve to support Israeli impunity. A narrative that is repeatedly echoed in the interviews with the Palestinians living in the West Bank. Certainly, this is a very distinct narrative that is difficult to reconcile with the goals of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that there is a potential risk that by not adequately addressing the Israeli occupation within the community and actively taking actions in the wider Israeli society, a trivialization of difference may degrade the Palestinian experience (Hawari 2021).

When putting this discourse in the context of coexistence projects like NSWAS, Diab Zayed argues that "[t]he occupation denies Palestinians right to exist, hence, coexistence becomes meaningless". Following his argument, it is a "way to change the face of the occupation and convince audience that life under occupation is possible" (Zayed 2022, Interview 2, 102).

[5] Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli Prime Minister, and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) negotiator Mahmoud Abbas signed a Declaration of Palestinian Self-Rule in 1993 at the White House, which is commonly referred to as the Oslo Accord (The Editors of Encyclopaedia 2021a).

[6] Track II Diplomacy can be defined as an "unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversary groups or nations that aim to develop strategies, to influence public opinion, organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict" (Montville 1991, 162).

Unlike the anti-normalization movements within the broader context of the Arab countries, the movement within the Palestinian society rejects Israel as a state (Salem 2005). As the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS)[7] movements show, this strong critique on 'normalization' among the Palestinian people that has found ground in the international arena has been adopted and applied to the entirety of P2P projects. This standpoint is apparent in the way the Palestinian interviewees talk about Israel. Muna Ayad explains:

> "[T]he beginning of the occupation was kind of groups who build their existence on the expense of the others; on grievance of other people. So, we do not consider the occupation as a state. For us the occupation is just groups of killers who came from several countries and suddenly created this entity and call it a state." (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 103)

Using the term 'entity' or 'occupation' instead of Israel is a clear sign of neglecting the state of Israel. One significant risk the Palestinian interviewees see in the 'normalization' is that it neglects the Palestinian national question, or in the words of Muna Ayad, which was supported by Diab Zayed, "the focus on the national question will become weak" (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 103). This statement is also recurrent in the interviews with Diab Zayed and Mahmoud Aziz.

As an intentional community, Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam has adopted critical everyday practices of peace in the form of P2P interactions that foster an equal society and *everyday peace* within the community. The villagers set themselves apart from the wider Israeli society and the structural power imbalances that are apparent within the Israeli-Palestinian issue. NSWAS is built on utopian values, above all peace and equality. The inhabitants' everyday lives and social encounters are shaped by dialogue and respect towards the narrative, culture, and language of an Other based on their approach of "talking through difference" (Tuv 2018, 53). Those utopian values can be seen as a mutual aspiration of achieving an ideal social world (Tuv 2018, 53p). One significant value of utopian thinking that can be observed in the community is the focus on the creation of self-awareness and the understanding of one's group identity and the underlying privilege or discriminatory practices as a precondition to maintain the functioning of the community. Put differently, as mentioned earlier (see 5.3. Transformative narratives within the village), the villagers promote the need to first be in

[7] The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement is a cause that aims to end international support for the oppression of Palestinians from the Israeli occupation and to pressure Israel to comply with international law (BDS Movement 2022)

dialogue with oneself in order to engage in dialogue with an Other. (Partya 2022; Tuv 2018) Drawing on Rosabeth M. Kanter, professor of Sociology and Organization and Management at Yale University, Tuv convincingly argues that those utopian values can also be found in Plato's work on a utopian society (Tuv 2018, 54). The utopian value described above, following Tuv's argument, echos the "platonic value of self-knowledge, that is knowing one's role in the ideal society, and how this knowledge can lead to heightened ethical self-awareness in day-to-day interactions" (Tuv 2018, 54). While the villagers are committed to those utopian values, they are limited to the village's borders and do not represent the environment in which the village came into existence.

Not only do the experiences of Israelis and Palestinian Israelis on the one side and Palestinian living in the occupied Palestinian territories differ. There is also an apparent deviation in the definition of *everyday peace* for people living within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam and the interviewees from the West Bank. Whereas the people that shared their stories from the community referred to *everyday peace* as a continuous process of learning about oneself and an Other in order to live a life in dignity, equality and peace within NSWAS, the description of *everyday peace* in the eyes of the Palestinian interviewees draw a drastically different picture. Diab Zayed shares his perception of *everyday peace* as a Palestinian whose everyday life is strongly impacted by the Israeli occupation:

> "Simply, to lift the oppression imposed on Palestinians and enable them to lead a life alike any other nation. End the fear […] caused by the occupation and provide Palestinians with access to life. Palestinians feel that their life [is] under threat and that transfers life into a kind of anxiety […]. Israel, through its practices, denies Palestinians right to exist as human being […]." (Zayed 2022, Interview 2, 101)

Muna Ayad's definition of *everyday peace* is quoted in the poem in this chapter. For her, "*everyday peace* in this situation […] is to go out, go to work and return back alive" (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 107). In continuation of her thoughts, Muna Ayad explains:

> "Palestinians lack the feeling of security and safety, and this contradicts with the concept of peace." (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 102).

Underlining her statement, she shares an example from a recent happening in the city of Bethlehem in the West Bank:

> "Take the case of the woman killed in Bethlehem last week who is semi blind and became confused. So, three armed soldiers shot her from zero distance. Such behavior indicates that the Israeli occupation does not recognize Palestinians as human beings.

> Leading a normal life is the actual meaning of *everyday peace* and that could not be achieved unless the occupation comes to an end." (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 102)

Thus, the different experiences of the people have a significant impact on the way they perceive *everyday peace*. One can see that the struggle for security, freedom, justice, and self-determination for the oppressed strongly shapes their individual understanding of *everyday peace*. Peace in the interviewed Palestinians' everyday lives means returning home alive; to feel safe. This conception of peace not only differs from the definition of the villagers, but it also drastically distinguishes from the Western notion of peace. The above statements lead to the question of whether it would be ethical to consider the village a peace project in the given context. Against the background of the said, Hawari argues that only by ending the Israeli oppression "ethical coexistence" (Hawari 2021, 5) can evolve. Namely, a coexistence founded on universal equality and justice (Hawari 2021, 5). Thus, the author opposes the possibility of ethical coexistence between an occupier and an occupied, which is in line with the voices of the Palestinian interviewees. In the words of Diab Zayed, "[c]oexistence could be between two groups enjoying equal rights but would never be between occupier and occupied" (Zayed 2022, Interview 2, 102). In his eyes,

> "[w]ith the occupation, there is no room for coexistence. Coexistence is between two totally independent entities that share the same land and respect each other. The occupation denies Palestinians right to exist, hence, coexistence becomes meaningless." (Zayed 2022, Interview 2, 102)

Concluding the above, it can be said that the more complex a society and the interdependence between its elements (individual, community, and system), the more sophisticated practices to maintain the function of the system or community – here, the community NSWAS – are required. On the one hand, the utopian values referred to above allow the villagers to engage in the most basic moral standards that the community is committed to in their endeavor to reach *everyday peace* and maintain the functioning of the community (Partya 2022). On the other hand, however, as presented in chapter 5 Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam – Voices of the residents, are those values continuously challenged by external factors such as war scenarios between Israel and Palestine, as well as the reality of the Israeli occupation at large in a deeply divided society where power asymmetry shapes not only the everyday life of the people but also their individual definition of *everyday peace*. Based on the data conducted via the questionnaire and the interviews, it can be concluded that the personal life, culture, and narrative of the people living with or under the occupation, cannot be considered separate

from the wider Israeli-Palestinian issue. The utopian values anchored in the village are not representative of the overall conflict, which leads back to the discourse of a 'normalization' of the occupation. However, this potential normalization is not a conscious practice undertaken by the villagers. As Rayek Rizek (2022, Interview 1, 100) explained, politics has been forced on the villagers from the outside. As the inhabitants mutually argue: the choice to live a shared life is a demonstration against the general knowledge claim that Palestinians and Israelis cannot live in coexistence. However, what does coexistence mean when the conflict is one based on a power asymmetry?

In conclusion, the utopian values that the villagers in NSWAS committed to with purely good intentions can be seen as a mutual aspiration to achieve an ideal social world. Yet, the reality of the Israeli occupation and the Israeli-Palestinian issue that shapes the environment of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as a binational village and as a project under the administration of the state of Israel cannot be separated from the personal life, culture, and narrative of the people living with or under the occupation coexistence and *everyday peace* are possible within the village. Yet, the implications of coexistence and *everyday peace* if the issue is not one of two equal sides falsify the country's reality and subsequently neglect the Palestinian national question. In line with Hawari (2021), I, therefore, argue that considering the village as a successful and ethical coexistence project between Israelis and Palestinians enqueues in the normalization discourse as it neglects the complex environment surrounding the village.

In the following, the notion of resilience will be assessed from a Palestinian perspective. Further, I shall demonstrate that resilience and resistance in the Palestinian context are not inherently incompatible.

6.2 A critical stance on resilience from a resistant's perspective

> Resilience is not through coexistence
> Resilience
> For me
> Is rejecting the existence of the entity
> (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 104)

In the previous chapter, I quoted Diab Zayed's words where he explains, "[c]oexistence could be between two groups enjoying equal rights but would never be between occupier and occupied" (Zayed 2022, Interview 2, 102). The poem above can be seen as a continuation of Diab Zayed's thoughts by Muna Ayad. As the majority of the Palestinian civil society, Muna

Ayad does not only reject the state of Israel when she calls it 'the entity'. She further indirectly opposes the notion of resilience. "Resilience is not through coexistence" (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 104), she explains. For her, as a Palestinian woman, resilience is rejecting the entity's existence. The overarching goal of P2P projects is the creation of a lasting peace and thus positive resilience through cross-border cooperation. However, two significant elements shape the inapplicability of such P2P projects in the area:

(1) Defining a border of Israel is a difficult endeavor, as the Israeli regime has never officially proclaimed its borders. This can be attributed to the fact that defining a clear border would contradict the expansionist intentions and the accompanying settler colonialism.
(2) Due to the reality of the Israeli occupation, which systematically creates a superior and an inferior power, equal cooperation to build lasting peace and positive resilience is not possible in the case of Palestine. (Hawari 2021)

Thus, as Edward Said (1992) and countless other Palestinian intellectuals and activists have stressed coherently, the Israeli-Palestinian issue is about two unequal sides caught in an asymmetrical struggle for power. As Hawari convincingly argues: "P2P narrative of two conflicting peoples across a shared border misrepresents the reality of an occupied and colonized Palestinian people" (Hawari 2021, 3).
Against the backdrop of the said, in order to talk about resilience from a Palestinian perspective, an alternative notion of the concept is needed that is located within the everyday practices of individuals and communities living under Israeli occupation. The prevailing neoliberal (or post-liberal) logic of the concept of resilience as a practice of security, and governance where externally imposed practices are seen as legitimate, fails to acknowledge the nature of resilience that lies in the everyday practice of individuals and communities in a context of power imbalance between two people. (Chandler 2012; Chandler and Richmond 2015; Corry 2014, 2014; Richmond 2011) The latter is disregarded in contemporary knowledge claim. Further, the notion that resilience may represent a practice of strategic and collective resistance, or as Caitlin Ryan (2015), and assistant professor at the Department of International Relations and International Organizations at the University of Groningen, terms it, an "infra-politics of resistance" (Ryan 2015, 299), is left silent. Put differently, applying the concept of resilience as a strategy based on external interventions disregards the fact that resilience is itself a standing practice of individuals and whole communities used on an everyday basis (Ryan 2015, 299).

Drawing back on Muna Ayad's words, when asking her about her personal approach to resilience, she immediately refers to it as a form of rejecting the, as she calls it, entity.

> "Resilience, or Sumud as we call it, for me is rejecting the existence of the entity." (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 104)

In the eyes of the Palestinian interviewees, it becomes clear that resilience is inseparably linked to their individual way of everyday resistance. Diab Zayed, in this very same context, agrees with Muna Ayad when he explains:

> "For Palestinians, the term [resilience] means to remain on their land and face the challenges imposed by the occupation by all available means. Resistance for Palestinians is part of the resilience regardless of the nature of the resistance." (Zayed 2022, Interview 2, 102)

Not only does Diab Zayed express a direct connection between the terms resilience and resistance, but he also takes a position for the Palestinian civil society at large. What Muna Ayad refers to as Sumud is a collective term for a wide range of actions and tactics by Palestinian civilians to maintain the Palestinian presence on Palestinian land (including the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem). This collection of practices accumulates in the everyday resistance of individuals and entire communities to Israeli occupation. The Arabic word Sumud (Arabic: صمود) translates to steadfastness or resilience. (Richter-Devroe 2011, 32pp; Ryan 2015, 300p)

Sumud, as an indigenous and community-based approach to resilience, serves as an empirical example that acknowledges resistance as a critical part of everyday resilience (Chandler 2014a; Holling 1973; Ryan 2015). Resistance and resilience are consequently not only compatible, but even from a Palestinian standpoint where resisting the occupation "through the sheer fact of continued Palestinian political, social and cultural presence and existence on the land" (Singh 2012, 538), is a prerequisite for Palestinians to continue their everyday lives in dignity despite the Israeli occupation. (Chandler 2014a; Holling 1973; Ryan 2015)

For this thesis, drawing on an ecologic, bottom-up resilience-building approach, I argue that the level of resilience of an individual, group, and system can be measured through three key elements that are interconnected and complementary: adaptability, enduring relationships, and transformative agency. As in this thesis, resilience is assessed through the lens of complexity theory. Particular attention is drawn to the local, transformative agency. The interaction between the different layers of society (individual, community, and system) creates the local and dynamic 'culture' of resilience building that transforms alongside the interaction of all

levels and the relationship between them. This culture results from the interplay between experience and (re)action (see 4.2 Assessing resilience through the lens of complexity theory). When taking into account the nature of the Israeli occupation (action) and its effect on the Palestinian society and acknowledging adaptability (reaction) to external events as a precondition for resilience, then the resistance to the occupation as part of the resilience from a Palestinian viewpoint is essential (Ryan 2015, 304).

In the same context, Diab Zayed draws a clear line between what he considers resilience:

> "For Palestinians, resilience means to change the existing situation, this is ending the occupation. For some foreigner's resilience means to live with acceptance of the occupation. They advocated the idea of making the occupation to be easy and soft. Resistance is the way to live for Palestinians." (Zayed 2022, Interview 2, 102)

Hence, Diab Zayed stresses the importance of separating what external actors might perceive as resilient capacity alongside the occupation. The said can be seen as an opposing standpoint toward the prevailing neoliberal (or post-liberal) logic of the concept of resilience as a practice of security and governance where externally imposed practices are seen as legitimate. Sumud is a 'resilient resistance' tactic, following Caitlin Ryan (2015, 312), conditioned by the occupation. For the Palestinian interviewees, resilience is the everyday resistance against the occupation and the rejection of the state of Israel, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Rayek Rizek, therefore, underlines the necessity to acknowledge the reality of the occupation and sees the resistance against the occupation as an essential part of everyday resilience from a Palestinian standpoint (cf. Zayed 2022, Interview 2, 102pp).

On top of the above, the social norms and gender division in Palestine resulting from the Palestinian societies' patriarchal nature shape a different occupation experience for women and men. Due to the systematic oppression in a patriarchal society, and the reality of the Israeli occupation, Palestinian women suffer under a multilevel suppression. Put differently, Palestinian women face complex oppression within a colonial context in a patriarchal society based on a gender-blind social discourse and mindset. Therefore, women are those who have suffered the most harmful consequences of oppression and the conflict at large (Richter-Devroe 2011a).

Consequently, for Palestinian women, Sumud is a battle on two fronts. As the Israeli occupation actively neglects the dignity and rights of Palestinian women, it is a struggle for equality, security, and dignity against the occupation. Due to the structural discrimination against women within Palestinian society, the struggle for embedding these very rights and

dignity within society presents the second front, namely the patriarchal structure of Palestinian society. As the associate professor in the Women, Society and Development Program at the Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Sophie Richter-Devroe, convincingly argues, "with their everyday resistance acts, Palestinian women thus challenge and bargain, practically and discursively, with material and ideational patriarchal power structures in their own society" (Richter-Devroe 2011b, 44).

While the understanding of the everyday resistance represented in this thesis does not fit the traditional notion of resistance, which is often associated with violence and fighting, it is vital to recognize this peaceful everyday resistance as part of the everyday resilience of the subordinate group.

Sumud is more than a coping or survival strategy. Instead, following Richter-Devroe, Sumud is "a form of infra-politics or everyday (nonviolent) resistance" (Richter-Devroe 2011b, 33). Drawing on Richter-Devroe's argument, 'resilient resistance' is a political action rooted in society. Opposing such bottom-up practices as political actions would neglect the local agency of the Palestinian people. At the same time, it supports the general knowledge claim of the ruling class and thus, directly and indirectly, reproduces the prevailing power inequality between occupier and occupied. In line with John Gilliom (2001), professor in the Department of Political Science at Ohio University (Ohio University 2022), and the political scientist and anthropologist specializing in comparative politics (Yale University 2022) James C. Scott (1987), Ryan supports the said when she writes, "[w]hen 'we' declare that everyday practices of resistance are not political enough to count, we support the continued subjugation of people engaging in these everyday resistances" (Ryan 2015, 311).

An additional highly problematic endeavor is to assess resistance based on the magnitude of social change it results in. Building on Ryan's further elaboration, "thinking about the infra-politics of everyday resistance should not start from the premise that any form of everyday resistance will fundamentally change people's lives" (Ryan 2015, 311). However, this does not mean that everyday resistance has no impact on the everyday life of the people. Everyday resistance in the Palestinian context implies enabling a life worth living by adapting to imposed practices of the Israeli occupation, inter alia the blocking of checkpoints or the detention of relatives (Ryan 2015, 313). At the same time, the legitimacy of the occupation is being opposed, which is recurringly articulated by the Palestinian interviewees when calling Israel "the occupation" or "entity" (cf. Zayed 2022, Interview 2; Ayad 2022, Interview 3). As Mahmoud Aziz, a Palestinian interviewee underlines:

"For us Israel is not a state, it is an occupation." (Aziz 2022, Interview 3, 108)

Everyday resistance can thus be considered a collective practice of the Palestinian society as it is built on shared experiences of oppression and subjugation. Therefore, it can be said that everyday resistance does significantly affect the everyday lives of the Palestinian people despite the question of whether it creates a broader social change. As the narratives presented in the interviews and further existing literature. (Khalili 2007; Richter-Devroe 2011b; Ryan 2015; Singh 2012) endorse, Sumud is a fundamental element of the Palestinian everyday resistance. Considering that the Palestinian approach to resilience (Sumud) requires the ability to adapt to uncertainty and changing environments on an everyday basis, fosters enduring relationships among the population and centers around the often subordinated agency of the people, it can hardly be denied that Sumud represents a way of resilience; a way that requests to move beyond the rationale of liberal debates of resistance and resilience, and to move the focus on the agency of local actors, the context in which resilience resides, and the complex nature of the concept . (Ryan 2015, 44pp)

This thesis shall contribute to unsettling the neoliberal (or post-liberal) conceptualization of resilience, resistance, and peacebuilding efforts by stressing the necessity of an alternative understanding of the above-mentioned terms. In other words, resilience (and resistance) cannot be seen as independent of existing power systems. Instead, they are conditioned by these very power structures. (Ryan 2015, 44pp) This chapter demonstrates how essential it is to recognize peaceful resistance as part of the resilience of the Palestinian people and to include this perspective in the resilience discourse within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as a 'binational' coexistence project within Israel. Neglecting this interdependence between resistance and power (or action and reaction) would support the general knowledge claim of the ruling class and thus, directly and indirectly, reproduces the prevailing power inequality between occupier and occupied within the research endeavor. Thus, when engaging in resilience-building between two peoples of unequal power, it is inevitable to include the broader context of the discourse that is shaped by the reality of the Palestinian people that live under pervasive and omnipresent Israeli control. This chapter demonstrated how essential it is to recognize peaceful resistance as part of the resilience of the Palestinian people and to include this perspective in the resilience discourse within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as a binational coexistence project within Israel. Neglecting this interdependence between resistance and power (or action and reaction) would support the general knowledge claim of the ruling class and thus, directly and indirectly, reproduces the prevailing power inequality between occupier and occupied within the research endeavor. Thus, when engaging in

resilience-building between two peoples of unequal power, it is inevitable to include the broader context of the discourse shaped by the reality of the Palestinian people who live under pervasive and omnipresent Israeli control.

In the previous sub-chapter, I argued that considering Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam a successful and ethical coexistence project between Israelis and Palestinians would enqueue in the normalization discourse as it neglects the complex environment surrounding the village. The Israeli-Palestinian issue is one of two unequal sides caught in an asymmetrical power struggle and de-facto non-existing clear borders due to the expansionist nature of the state of Israel. I, therefore, stress that the bottom-up, ecological approach to resilience adopted in this thesis must be extended by the understanding that resilience is inseparable from individual practices of everyday resistance. Not doing so would: (1) misrepresent the nature of NSWAS as a 'demonstration' against the general knowledge claim that *coexistence* between Israelis and Palestinians is not possible, and (2) falsifies the reality of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation.

Based on the assumption that in conflict-affected societies that are shaped by structural power asymmetries, identity and personal narratives are exposed to permanent contestation, the following chapter will discuss the creation of meaning, identity, and the different existing narratives, and their implication on coexistence projects such as Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam in a conflict-affected society.

6.3 A deadlock to transformative narratives

My son is seven years old now
When his father was arrested
He was only five years old
How could I say to my son
That this soldier that is arresting your father
Will be our friend one day
How could I convince my child
That this soldier who did this to his father
Would be our friend one day
How would you convince the refugees
How would you convince them
That this is peace
Parents were killed

in front of their kids
Imagine a child
Living with dead bodies
Of their mother, father, or brother
What do you expect from such a child
We speak of kids during that time
But now these kids are 25 years old
How would you convince such a person
To live with the occupation
To coexist with the occupation
(Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 107)

The poem's first half traces Muna Ayad's personal experience of her and her son's life under the Israeli occupation. In the second half, however, she switches from an 'I' to a 'we' perspective within her first-person narration, describing the experiences of those Palestinians who lived in Jenin, a Palestinian city in the northern West Bank, in 2002 when the Israeli occupation forces invaded and largely destroyed the refugee camp. In continuation of her description of the situation at that time in Jenin refugee camp, she explains:

> "The camp was demolished on the heads of people. And they were shooting on everything. Even if you were moving behind the windows in your own house. You were shot. […] And the ambulances and medical staff were not allowed to enter Jenin refugee camp." (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 109)

In complex environments like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the deviation in narratives plays a significant role in addressing peacebuilding processes and power asymmetries. Within this master's thesis, a wide variety of narratives were touched upon. While the two overarching narratives, namely the Israeli and the Palestinian, are predominant in the discussion of existing narratives within the Israeli-Palestinian issue, there are significant differences in individual experiences within these two narratives. The inherited narrative of Jewish Israelis dates back to a history of persecution in the diaspora and the Holocaust, which translates into an ongoing existential threat present in Israeli society (Tuv 2018, 64). This state of emergency led to a cycle of victimization. As a result, the state of emergency was imposed on an Other – the Palestinian people (see chapter 5.3 Transformative narratives within the village). Sara Cobb provides a highly valuable deconstruction of the "narrative violence" (Cobb 2013, 38) and resulting discriminating practices that the Palestinian narrative and people are subject to,

which consequently places them in a state of emergency: (1) Israel refuses to recognize Palestine as a state, (2) basic fundamental rights and laws granted to the Jewish population of Israel are denied to Palestinians (including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip), and (3) The suffering of Palestinians, such as the Palestinian interviewees, is either not recognized or even denied. The pain within the Palestinian population is externalized and attributed to the "weapons of others" (Cobb 2013, 38). Thus, through recurrent practices undertaken by the state of Israel, the Palestinian society has been systematically placed in a state of emergency. The practices outlined above undermine all rights to dignity, justice, equality, and agency of the Palestinian people. (Cobb 2013, 38)

The process of self-realization to which the residents of NSWAS have committed led to a sense of personal and social responsibility towards an Other, as the data collected showed (see 5.2. Resilience in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam). A deconstruction of the 'cycle of victimization' is essential for breaking these entrenched and constantly reproduced structures of power asymmetry. Tuv (2018, 64pp) builds on the Brasilian educator (1921-1997) Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1970), when she explains that the fight against the existing power imbalance begins with self-knowledge and the empowerment of the oppressed group. While NSWAS takes active steps to continuously enhance and contest the inhabitants' understanding of the self/ves and an Other, the active engagement in empowering the oppressed group is restricted to a small group of first-generation villagers (see 5.2. Resilience in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam). The village, as an intentional community where 'talking through difference' is one central element of their everyday practices of peace, builds on an 'ideal social world' based on equal rights within the community (see 6.1 Everyday peace in a context of inequality). Thus, the inhabitants consciously set themselves apart from the wider Israeli-Palestinian society, while creating a space where the Palestinian and the Jewish narratives, languages, and cultures are equally represented. In that sense, the villagers make use of what Kelly Oliver calls 'the transformative power of meaning' through (re)configuring how the villagers conceive themselves and an Other (Oliver 2001, 38). However, as argued earlier, this transformative power of meaning is limited to the borders of the village. Mahmoud Aziz, one of the Palestinian interviewees who shared his experience, shares:

> "For me, those people are living in fantasy. They are living in fantasy" (Aziz 2022, Interview 3, 107).

In continuation of the above statement, he adds:

> "They create peace in Neve Shalom, but come on … I cannot go there. Simply. I need a permission to go there. It is only for the elite. For a group of people that are benefiting from the occupation." (Aziz 2022, Interview 3, 107)

As long as the participation of the villagers is not followed by active engagement in the redistribution of power to those Palestinians that continue to be excluded and whose voices are being either silenced or misplaced, the status quo will be maintained.

In the interview with Mahmoud Aziz and Muna Ayad, Mahmoud Aziz stresses the importance of "explain[ing] the actual narratives" (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 106), therefore to "[c]orrect the narrative" (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 106). Building on Cobb (2013, 142), in every story, particularly in conflict situations, multiple 'truths' exist parallel. In the light of the said, I argue that it is not a question of declaring a narrative to be correct or more authentic, but rather for all existing narratives to be heard. In an asymmetrical conflict, "the critical issue in conflict resolution is the evolution of meaning, such that speaking and being heard is possible" (Cobb 2013, 154).

Cobb builds on Hilde Lindeman Nelson, an US-American philosophy professor and author, when she writes that the systematic narrative violence against the Palestinian people, as described earlier, is based on the denial of opportunity and 'infiltrated consciousness' by those in power and their ruling master narrative (in this context, the Israeli narrative). In order to reclaim the undermined moral agency of those who have been declared subaltern, effective counter-narratives can repair the narrative damage. The author identifies four characteristics of such effective counter-narratives: (1) people are understood as fully developed moral agents, (2) it is carried by a large number of people, and (3) it can take many forms (Cobb 2013, 160). As Hilde Lindeman Nelson contributes to the same issue, counter-narratives loosen "the constraints on a person's moral agency" (Hildeman Nelson 2018, 186). Further, those effective counter-stories also offer possibilities "to frame the conflict via a storyline in which they are legitimate" (Cobb 2013, 162).

As pointed out in the previous sub-chapter, Sumud can be seen as a set of everyday social and political actions and practices owned by the Palestinian society and is thus a fundamental element of the Palestinian everyday resistance. It fosters enduring relationships among the population, centering the people's often subordinated agency and taking on various forms within the civil society and their individual everyday practices. Thus, it can be said that Sumud as an everyday practice of local resistance, would fulfill all the above-mentioned criteria for an effective counter-narrative. However, reality paints a different story. The

Palestinian narrative is still subject to continuous repression, illegitimization, and demonization.

Drawing back on the issue of victimization (see chapter 5.3 Transformative Narratives within the village), this can be attributed to the 'cycle of victimisation' that underlies the Jewish Israeli narrative. The result is the denial of the proposed story of the Palestinians since approving the story of the Other will potentially erase their own legitimacy. This fact clearly shows that a seemingly compelling counter-narrative without power redistribution is an empty and frustrating process for a society that is systematically made subaltern (Cobb 2013, 143).

Following Cobb, "to speak about the pain requires positioning Self within the very discourse that excludes the Self as a Self" (Cobb 2013, 154). Thus, for reclaiming agency, having a voice that is heard is crucial. Yet, the reality of the Palestinian population is one where the only words available to describe their pain as an oppressed society are the words of the Other, namely the oppressor (Cobb 2013, 151pp). As mentioned earlier, the crucial aspect of mediation between conflicted parties is to develop meaning in a way that allows people to speak and be heard. Hence, the fight for having a voice that is heard, an essential element in conflict resolution, remains caught in a deadlock of the struggle for meaning in a way where speaking and being heard are possible. (Cobb 2013, 154) Assuming that the identity of individuals is influenced by an accumulation of factors and experiences, it can be said that there is a noticeable difference between the experience of the Palestinians living in the West Bank and the experiences that the Palestinian Israelis shared in the interviews and the questionnaire. Palestinian Israeli villagers told me about experiences of discrimination towards them that happened within Israel. Yet, the Israeli occupation in the West Bank adds a critical layer of discrimination to the experience of Palestinians living in occupied Palestinian territories. Muna Ayad explains:

> "They do not suffer like the rest of the Palestinians. They probably have never been uprooted from their lands. Palestinians inside Israel are still facing difficulties and challenges. So, they do suffer. But less than the refugees that have been uprooted and had to move outside the country." (Ayad 2022, Interview 3, 108)

In fact, while the Palestinian interviewees share multiple stories of how they and their family members have been physically attacked within the past five years, 100% of the villagers of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam state that neither they nor their families have been subject to physical violence in the same timeframe. Thus, the experience and identity of Jewish Israelis, Palestinian Israelis, and Palestinians show different faces dependent not only on the ethnic

and cultural background but also on the individuals' set of experiences embedded as part of their identity. The interplay of national and individual experiences and, as a result, narratives, is thus subject to alteration and differs the one hand among Israelis and Palestinian Israelis, but also differ significantly between Palestinian Israelis and Palestinians living under Israeli occupation (cf. Tuv 2018, 31). These different experiences further result in very different perceptions of the three critical elements of this thesis, namely coexistence, resilience, and *everyday peace*, as addressed in this chapter.

One central argument that reoccurred in the interviews with all contributors and the questionnaire towards progress in creating a just peace is the need for accountability. As the Jewish Israeli first-generation villager Daniella Kitain explains:

> "Israel should recognize the Nakba. […] People should be compensated. […] Because you cannot change what happened. But if you recognize it. That makes a great difference." (Kitain 2022, Interview 4, 114)

Drawing on Cobb (2013, 3), the prerequisite for a P2P project to be successful is to create a room for all participants to have a voice that is heard; to understand and be understood; a room to remember rather than to forget, and to stress the right to hold people accountable for their actions (Rauch 2011, 42). Without integrating the voices of the Palestinians that are living in the occupied Palestinian territories and only focusing on the difference between Jewish and Palestinian Israelis belittles the experience of the Palestinians living under occupation. Addressing the structural power inequality while focusing on only one side of the story will be highly difficult and may even contribute to a normalization of the occupation. (Tuv 2018, 48)

Earlier in this chapter, I stressed the importance of acknowledging resistance as part of everyday resilience centered around the local agency. Not doing so, as I concluded, would, on the one hand, misrepresent the nature of NSWAS as a demonstration against the general knowledge claim that peace and, therefore, peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians is impossible. On the other hand, it falsifies the reality of the Palestinian population that live under Israeli occupation for whom resistance plays an essential part in their everyday lives. Further, it is essential to recognize that, while the villagers living in NSWAS and the Palestinian population incorporated resistance as part of their everyday resilience practices, the area and subject of resistance differ. For the villagers (Jewish and Palestinian Israelis), the area of resistance is *within* the 1967 borders of Israel, following the Six-Day War when Israel took control the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem (The

Editors of Encyclopaedia 2021b). The subject of resistance for the villagers is the above-mentioned general knowledge claim within Israel. In contrast, the Palestinian's subject of resistance is the Israeli occupation of historical Palestine. However, the expansionist nature of the Israeli occupation increases the complexity of the area of resistance for the Palestinian people living under occupation, resulting in an intersectional and accumulated need for resistance on several fronts to continue an everyday life in dignity.

In conclusion of this chapter, I stress that three key findings need to be considered when engaging in the everyday resilience in NSWAS within the Israeli-Palestinian issue and the underlying power imbalance.

Firstly, the Israeli-Palestinian issue is one of two unequal sides caught in an asymmetrical power struggle and de-facto no clear borders due to Israel's expansionist practices. Therefore, the bottom-up, ecological approach to resilience adopted in this thesis must be extended by the understanding that resilience is inseparable from individual practices of everyday resistance. Neglecting resistance as part of the everyday resilience of local agents would falsify the nature of NSWAS as a resistance to the general knowledge claim that peaceful *coexistence* between Israelis and (Israeli) Palestinians is impossible and disguise the reality of the Palestinian people that live under occupation.

Secondly, the village is mainly formed by Jewish and Palestinian Israelis. Hence, despite the overarching narratives (Palestinian and Israeli) that are represented within the village, there is an entire set of shared experiences of *all* villagers, such as the citizenship, a set of basic fundamental rights, and laws that are not applicable to Palestinians living in occupied Palestinian territories, and the equal access to the social, economic, and political sphere of Israel. Not taking into account these shared experiences of Jewish and Palestinian Israelis and only focusing on the two overarching narratives would delegitimize the Palestinian struggle; a struggle that goes way beyond a mere struggle for meaning but includes the claim for compensation, equality, justice, dignity, and the right to hold the state of Israel accountable for their dehumanizing practices towards those Palestinians who do not share the above-mentioned experiences. This can lead to a misrecognition of Palestinian Israeli identity where political and social policies constitute the 'Israeliness' as "a neutral common civic identity that can incorporate the Arab citizens inside the state despite its Jewish character" (Jamal 2009, 496). As a result, the Palestinian narrative is at stake to be incorporated into a 'neutral' civic Israeli identity. By doing so, the Palestinian identity of Palestinian Israelis is being separated from the Palestinian nation and redefined as an 'Arab identity'. Consequently, the

reality of the Palestinian population suffering under the Israeli occupation is being silenced and falsified by the ruling power.

Thirdly, as a result of the points mentioned above, considering Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam a successful and ethical coexistence project between Israelis and Palestinians would enqueue in the normalization discourse as it neglects the complex environment surrounding the village and, therefore, the Palestinian struggle of living under Israeli occupation.
In the following conclusion, I will summarize the critical findings deducted from the data presented in this thesis. Further, the underlying research questions will be answered based on the theoretical and methodological approach of the thesis.

7 Conclusion

> I woke up with heavy eyes
> As if after an earthquake
> My body was tied and chained
> And the crying inside me
> Everything was as usual
> The pilot who killed
> And got killed in Argentina
> The war that we invited to our home
> This home that has no end
> How can we ask for the sky
> If our eyes are heavy
> If there are earthquakes in our hand
> The clouds look down
> Indifferent and wondering
> (Kitain 2022, Interview 4, 110)

In this master's thesis, I aimed to contribute to the critical debate on neoliberal (or post-liberal) peacebuilding practices. In that respect, I argued for the need to amplify the notion of bottom-up resilience and people-to-people (P2P) projects in peacebuilding, as the neoliberal explanations fail to sufficiently engage in the implications of P2P peacebuilding projects in a context shaped by a power imbalance between an occupier and an occupied. In order to fulfill this aim, the present research is based on three interlinked research questions, which will be answered in the same order as presented below:

(1) To what extent does the concept of resilience as a peacebuilding approach apply to the everyday of the residents of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam?
(2) What perspectives on everyday resilience through bottom-up peacebuilding projects like Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam do exist in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian issue?
(3) What implications do coexistence and *everyday peace* have against the background of the matrix of power relations in Israel/Palestine?

The collected primary data assessment shows that the conflict-affected community's endogenous resilience capacity simultaneously applies to different levels of society (individual, community, system). Following the voice of the inhabitants, endogenous resilience is most substantial on a community level. The villagers show strong social capital, which has a considerable positive influence on the social cohesion and thus endogenous resilience capacity of the village and its inhabitants. Despite the divergent results concerning the social and political participation of first- and second-generation villagers outside of Neve Shalom (Hebrew name) / Wahat al-Salam (Arabic name) (NSWAS), translated 'Oasis of Peace', no linear correlation between the multiple variables considered, such as ethnic or religious background, age, or gender. This result reproves that the villagers' endeavor of 'talking through difference' successfully created an environment where the voice of every individual is heard equally, which (1) opens up space for the understanding of group identities and potential sub-groups, and fosters social responsibility for an Other, and (2) challenges the individual identity and narrative of the people and hence creates room for new group constellations.

As a grassroots project, Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam grew from within. The villagers mutually argue that self-organization and resilience cannot be imposed from the outside. Externally imposed conflict calming measures such as international interventions are therefore considered to interrupt the internal feedback process and may foster dependency. At the same time, they counteract learning opportunities for the community and its villagers. Subsequently, this can be seen as opposing the notion of resilience in line with the neoliberal agenda. However, the resilience capacity of NSWAS is not only affected by the individual and subjective experience of the villagers (vertical perspective) but also by external factors such as the public and the 'natural' world and its interrelationship (horizontal perspective).

Thus, externally imposed processes like the war between Gaza and Israel in 2021, represent a risk factor to the community in their aim to withstand disturbances while maintaining their efficiency of functioning. In that respect, engineering resilience approaches are insufficient to

analyze the resilience-building within NSWAS as they center around efficiency, constancy, and predictability, intending to return to a steady-state after a disturbance. The environment in which the village is embedded is shaped by change, unpredictability, and the need for persistency in the villagers' endeavors to 'live with the conflict'. Hence, the assessment of the resilience capacity of the sample through the lens of complexity theory, based on the interlink between ecological and societal resilience, provides more valuable insights into the resilience capacity of the community.

I argue that two key findings must be considered when engaging in resilience and *everyday peace* in the village within the Israeli-Palestinian issue and the underlying power imbalance:

Firstly, the village is mainly formed by Jewish and Palestinian Israelis. Despite the overarching narratives (Palestinian and Israeli) that are represented within the village, there is an entire set of shared experiences of *all* villagers, such as citizenship, a set of basic fundamental rights and laws that are not applicable to Palestinians living in occupied Palestinian territories, and the equal access to the social, economic, and political sphere of Israel. Not taking into account these shared experiences of Jewish and Palestinian Israelis, and only focusing on the two overarching narratives, would delegitimize the experience of those Palestinians who live in the occupied Palestinian territories. The latter experience goes beyond a mere struggle for meaning. It includes the claim for compensation, equality, justice, dignity, and the right to hold the state of Israel accountable for the dehumanizing practices undertaken by the Israeli occupation forces. Political and social policies constitute the 'Israeliness' as an unbiased collective identity in which the Arab people are incorporated (cf. Jamal 2009, 496). This can lead to a misrecognition of Palestinian Israeli identity, as the Palestinian identity of Palestinian Israelis is being separated from the Palestinian nation and redefined as an overarching 'Arab' identity. Consequently, the reality of the Palestinian population that is suffering under the Israeli occupation is being silenced and falsified by the ruling power.

Secondly, the utopian values that the villagers in NSWAS committed to with purely good intentions can be seen as a mutual aspiration of achieving an ideal social world. However, the reality Israeli-Palestinian issue that shapes the environment of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam as a binational village and as a project under the administration of the state of Israel, cannot be seen as separated from the personal life, culture, and narrative of the people living with, or under the occupation. Therefore, the bottom-up, ecological approach to resilience adopted in this thesis must be extended by the understanding that resilience is inseparable from

individual practices of everyday resistance. Neglecting resistance as part of the everyday resilience of local agents would misrepresent the nature of NSWAS as a resistance against the general knowledge claim that peaceful *coexistence* between Israelis and Palestinians is impossible and, concurrently, disguise the reality of an occupied Palestinian people.

I, therefore, argue that considering the village as a successful and ethical coexistence project between Israelis and Palestinians enqueues in the normalization discourse as it neglects the complex environment surrounding the village. As a result, the voice of the Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation is systematically silenced alongside their local agency. At the same time, it supports the general knowledge claim of the ruling class and thus, directly and indirectly, reproduces the prevailing power inequality between occupier and occupied.

Through a participatory approach to research within this thesis, openness, flexibility, and adaptability were guaranteed throughout the entire research process. Further, it opened space to perceive and incorporate new category aspects derived from my interaction with the individual inhabitants and the Palestinians living in the West Bank (i.e the normalization and anti-normalization discourse and the significance of resistance as part of resilience). The combination of complexity theory and co-created poetry encourages the reader to recognize the unsaid and empty text spaces to construct a personal interpretation. Thus, the present text speaks to the complex logic, context, and experience of the inhabitants of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam and the Palestinians living in the West Bank. The meaning of *everyday peace* and resilience was put in perspective to remove a potential fixation on ‘protagonist’ and ‘antagonist’ and serves as an attempt to redress power imbalances by giving those stories and narratives a voice that are systematically overruled. Hereby, the stories presented are not to be evaluated according to their accuracy. Instead, preference is given to their ability to reflect what the interviewees intended to be told.

8 Recommendations for future research

The boundaries of complex systems can be understood as a component of a system's activity. At the same time, they are a result of the respective interpretation of a system. In this thesis, a complex system, namely resilience and *everyday peace* in, or through, people-to-people (P2P) projects, was explored against the background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus, the system was framed in a particular way for the purpose of answering the research questions. (Cilliers 2011, 141)

For a continuation of the research, the expansion of the boundaries drawn for this thesis would be relevant in examining the critique of P2P projects from the perspective of Jewish Israelis who live outside the village. This is particularly interesting as the Israeli peace movement and left-leaning organizations are increasingly under attack from the Israeli government and the majority of the civic population (Rauch 2011, 43). Against this background, I see the inclusion of Jewish Israelis' perspectives outside the community as valuable further research.

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Figure

Figure 1: Location of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam
Adapted from “Political Map of Israel, Middle East” by nationsonline.org. Copyright Year 1998-2022. https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/israel_map.htm [August 25, 2022].

Appendix

Appendix I: Interviews

Interview 1: Rayek Rizek in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam
Date: 29/03/2022

Nathalie: I read in your book that you moved here from Nazareth with your wife? Can you tell me a little bit more about the background of moving to NSWAS?

Rayek: My wife and I met in 1982, got married in 1983 and in 1984 we came here. So soon – on the first of May – we will be exactly 39 years here. Or 38.

Nathalie: That is impressive.

Rayek: We are about the same age. Both born in 1955. So, when we came here in 1984 we are both around 29. A little bit less. About one year married. We lived in Nazareth for around elven moths in an apartment. I learned about the community from her. She knew the place since 78/79 when it was just the beginning. And at that year when they started to organize encounters between Jews and Palestinians and political discussions. During that time she was studying at the University of Haifa where she heard about these encounters. So she liked to come and take part in them. Since that time she stayed in contact because later she has been offered a course for facilitation. So she took that course and she started working as a freelancer to facilitate encounters between Jews and Palestinians. Before our marriage we visited the place maybe three, four times. And everybody knew Diana then. At that time there were maybe 15 or 18 people here. Very small place. There was no paved roads and even water on and electricity were not available everyday. I liked the place. Being so basic and primitive. So at one point they asked: "You keep come and visit. Why don't you come and live with us?" And so it came a time when I was thinking of…. Wanting to leave Nazareth. Because two years before I came back from the States after seven years … for a few months there was the excitement of going back to Nazareth to my family and friends. But little by little I came to realize that this is not the place where I want to live in for the rest of my life.

Nathalie: Why was that?

Rayek: Mainly because it is a conservative society. There is no privacy. I have been always a very liberal person and I saw Nazareth as just joking me. To make me a copy of everybody who lives there. So I had many arguments with my father about the friends that I work with. About the way I dressed. He always wanted me to …. . He said: "What is this? Cowboy?" And if I did not shave for two days he would say: "Shave. You look like a prisoner." But in a nice way of course. Anyway, I mean there was this possibility. And I did not want to go abroad again. Out of the country. And then I thought about this place after they told us to come and live with them. So we applied. We had to fill in an application and to be interviewed by a committee at that time. And they accepted us. So at the first of May we had still very little furniture. I mean we were about one year married and we rented an apartment. So I think we had two couches, a bed and a big carport, refrigerator, washing machine and a stove. So it was easy to put on the truck and we came here. There was a house waiting for us – a small caravan – but even at that time I thought that I will be … maybe I will try for a few months and see how things go, But you know, time went by and so far 39 years. We brought up two sons.

Nathalie: So you came here when only 15 People here?

Rayek: Yeah, we were … there were five couples with children, one or two each. We were the sixth couple, still without children. And there was also ... so those five couples were 10 people, Bruno, the founder, and his friend, who passed away just recently, at the age of 96. She's a French woman who knew Bruno from the beginning and she stayed with him. And he also always appreciated her being besides him all the time to support him with the idea. And then other two elderly couple and another five, six singles. So I think altogether … they, exactly when we came in 84, they were 20. So me and Diana were 21/22. Okay. But since that time, a few passed away. And another three left the community. So today with those who are living here, when I came, I think we are number 10. Or eleven. Yeah.

Nathalie: And how many people live here now?

Rayek: More than 100 families. There are 100 houses and another maybe 10 now being built. And and of course it is divided 50/50 Jewish and Palestinian Israelis. I have to say Palestinian Israelis – so to not to confuse people – because it's not allowed to have Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza to live here. Because of that Israeli law, you know, but in spite of this fact, we call ourselves Palestinian Israelis. And many Jews do not like this definition Palestinians and Israelis what is Palestinians? So I have to explain to them, okay, people who are not really ... a bit ignorant about history. I mean, for me, there are no Israeli Arabs and the West Bank, and Gaza and the Diaspora. There was one time before 48, when all those people were together in one country and considered themselves as a nation, I don't know. In the process of building. Because until the First World War, Palestine was part of what was then called the greater Syria. So there was no separate Lebanon, there was no separate Palestine, there was no separate Jordan, there was nothing like Jordan. Jordan was created. And Syria. So I mean, the Sykes-Picot agreement between the French and the British who occupied the territory from the Ottomans. They did not leave the territory as it was before. So they drew those borders, and they cut Syria and the Lebanon and Palestine and Jordan. But they cut a region of people where many of them were related. Suddenly, because of the border, cousins, and others ended up living in two separate entities. And until this day, many families in Nazareth, like, they claim that they have relatives in Lebanon and Syria, even my family. We have relatives in Jordan, and some of them go back to like three, four generations back. So it wasn't like Europe where you have different languages, you know, Dutch and Danish and German and French. Here, the majority spoke the same language, Arabic, with some difference in accent. It is common in any country, if you take a country, even Austria, because there will be different accents between the rural areas and the cities. South and north and all of this. Anyway, all of this I have mentioned in my book, just to give the people an idea about the history of this region, and many people don't know these facts, you know. Anyway.

Nathalie: Maybe drawing back again for a litte. You mentioned the committees that chose the inhabitants. You still have some sort of committees right, where people apply in order to live here.

Rayek: From the beginning, yeah.

Nathalie: So people apply and then you hear them out? And then you decide according to a set of preset conditions if they can join. Or not.

Rayek: Yeah, I mean, the conditions were never hard or complicated, they mostly just wanted to find out if the people or the couples are okay, mentally. And if they have kids to make sure

that the kids are not abused. Guessing that if they have applied, they don't mind the idea of living in a mixed community, they don't mind the idea of sending their children and babies to the same kindergarten and the same school learning about the culture of the other side and their language. Kind of often people. For some people it doesn't fit, you know, there are many people who are, I would say, maybe more radical in their ideas, you know, and are afraid of mixing with the other side. So, in the beginning, it was easier to accept families. Now, in the last few years, because of the shortage of space, it has become very difficult because every two three years the committee will screen like 100 applications to choose maybe five or 10 every two years. And we are about to close the gate ... small area. So, they have to ... like …. when you have to choose 10 out of 100 ... 90 have to be – I cannot say rejected, but I don't know. Anyway, it is a committee that is elected every two, three years, a member could suggest him/herself. I cannot say that they are very objective. You know, sometimes if Nathalie wants to come and live here, and I know Nathalie ... . So there are some kinds of ways to push my friend and ... but still, I mean, the basic requirements are there. Later it became a bit more radical. Okay, there are some Palestinian members in the committee who kind of have a difficulty with accepting Jewish, who have served in the army in combat units, like took part in the West Bank. And so some people cannot accept this, you know, and even though the person could be a nice person. So we have many Jews who are living here who did not even do the army service. So these are easier to accept.

Nathalie: So is there a strict no if somebody served in the army in a combat unit, or of course, some special service?

Rayek: Usually no, with the recent committee that has been working for the last 10 years, they reject those kind of people.

Nathalie: Okay. And what you mentioned before and also wrote in your book, that when you describe yourself, describe your 'identity' as Palestinian Israelis, how do you feel about that term? Do you identify yourself as an Palestinian Israelis? In terms of your identity, would you say that this is who you are.

Rayek: I have struggled with the definitions for most of my life. Especially since I came to live here in this community. Because people all the time asked me, you know. I would stand there from the beginning, I remember, since the first few months, I ... we moved to the here; I used to speak with the visiting groups. They asked me because they realize that I was in the States and I can speak English. So the groups were beginning to really ... more and more of them, come to visit the community, Germans, French, Austrians, British, whatever. And there was a need for somebody to welcome them. They were curious and they had questions and so in the beginning, it was like a, you know, who ever was available will take the group. But later it was organized and there is an office and you have to call before to reserve a time and and responsible person for the group visits. She or he will find the speaker. Sometimes they request the Palestinians, sometimes they request two – Jewish and Palestinians – not always, you know, the requests are available. And so there are through history ... there has always been about maybe 5, 6, 7 people who do this work. And I was one of them. One of the early people who did this work. And I remember every time I introduced myself to a group – and it made tourist guide who was with the group who was usually Jewish very angry – those definitions. "Palestinian, why Palestinian? You are Israeli." So, and sometimes there would be a translator with the group because they were Italians which I cannot speak. Or German. I always spoke English and the guide will translate. And I always realized that I instead of saying I am Palestinian he would oversay he is 'Arabisch', okay. So he decides to censor my talk. My identity. But anyway, it made me change or accept another way of regarding my

definition to myself after I read a book many many years ago. From Amin Maalouf, I don't know if you know this person. Amin Maloof, it's called English killing identities.

Nathalie: Yeah, I know the book. Have never read it through to be honest.

Rayek: In Arabic it is the ... I will show you the book. So he, Amin Maalouf is a Lebanese Christian, originally, who lived most of his childhood and adult hood in Lebanon. And then maybe in his early 20s, he traveled to France. Of course, he started in a private school in Lebanon, and he could speak French. And now he's, I think, past 70 years of age, and wrote quite a few books. One of them is very, I mean, about the war of the Crusaders the Crusaders raids through Arab eyes. Yeah. So in the book, he discusses what is identity. It's a small book. Very interesting. And he … I think I learned from him also his style of writing. Which is like, he opens a kind of conversation with the reader. Okay. He puts his idea and then asks the reader, you know. "What do you think?" So, in Arabic, the book was translated to be called ‚killer identities', okay. And he was influenced a lot because he lived in the beginning of the civil war in Lebanon, which started in 1975. And where suddenly in Lebanon, Christians and Muslims, So Shia Muslim, Druze, among others, butchering each other, you know, shooting each other. Every community have created a militia. And they fought about control of certain territories. And sometimes somebody would want to pass and so they had checkpoints. And it happened. There are many stories about, you know, realizing that the driver is not from their community. So he would be shot, okay. And so many people were killed just because he's Muslim, but just because he's Christian, because he happened to end up to be in the wrong place. And so it was very ugly. It went on for 20 years. I think today they talk about 100,000 people who were killed during the civil war in Lebanon. And still, I mean, the country is not over this conflict there. It is still built constitutionally. According to the communities you know. The Christians have a share in the parliament and the position of the president. The Christian Maronites there is also Christian Orthodox and Christian Catholics. Amin Maalouf was a Christian, a member of a very small community, not Catholic, not Protestant, maybe a Syrian or something like this. And … so he says at the end there, which helped me, that I am Lebanese, I was born in Lebanon, I … Arabic is my first language. I studied in a private school and I lived, or had been living in France for many years. So French is another language, basic language, for me. I lived in a mixed community in Beirut where there were Muslim neighbors and other Christians. And life experiences ... so he says identity is what you have collected through your life of experiences, okay. And when you decide to limit your identity or definition to yourself, within a small box of you know, I am Christian only I'm Jewish, I'm Muslim, I am Hindu I am … . This is what he calls ‚killing identity' because it separates you from the others where I mean it is better if you include all those experiences within your identity. So here I started defining myself I'm also an Arab originally I'm also a member of the Christian community I'm not religious but it is part of my culture.
So I'm also a Palestinian and I'm also partly Israeli. Because I grew up … to compare myself with other Palestinians who grew up and lived their life in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip or in the Lebanon for example – I met many of them. Or Kuwait. They were born there because their families ended up leaving or expelled in 1948. And so this addition of being Israeli and that I grew up within Israel and I know the language and I know the culture here much more than any other Palestinian. So I cannot deny it as not part of my identity. So my identity is a collection of different experiences.
So this is also when I started defending myself in such a way in front of groups. I turned to be more acceptable and more logical also. Just as, you know, you are an Austrian okay, you lived in Vienna and you are from the mountains. From the mountains that's another addition to your identity. You are a woman. That's another addition to today you have been living here and you have been learning about the local culture of the Jewish and the Palestinians and so you

are adding this to your identity also. So unless you live all of your life from birth to death in a small village as a farmer. I don't know … somewhere … never left the place, okay. So you can also be that person only. But religion is part of your identity also whether you grew up in a religious household or a not religious house. All these things have to be considered, okay. And not to end up killing each other because of those limited identities just as when he called me an Arab. So today, I don't have those confusions. Because, I mean, I was like everybody else. I was in my 20s and my 30s, searching and trying to find out, you know, who exactly I was. In Nazareth, I would feel like also some separation between me as Christian Nazarene and the Muslim Nazarene not all of them. I had friends. Many, you know, adopt Islam as in in a radical way so I cannot connect with them at all, even though he could be my neighbor. And many times in the West Bank, if I go to Ramallah, Palestinians, they always would like to know: Are Christian or Muslim? As if it makes a difference. You know, so here in this country, as I said, also my book that the religion … always the people asked me here, even the Jewish people: "Are you Christian or Muslim?" I come from a Christian background. I grew up within a Christian family, but I'm not religious. Okay. I don't go … I used to go to church a lot when I was young with my parents. Every Sunday. Because our house and the old city of Nazareth is like … five minutes walk from the church, which by the way, was built by my great great grandfather back in 1750. Okay, and his thomb is also inside the church. It is the Greek Orthodox Church in Nazareth, the oldest church in Nazareth so far. There is now the huge cathedral. The Catholic Church, which was built in the 60s. When Paulus the sixth, the Pope visited Nazareth. But anyway, it was built on the top of the ruins of a Byzantine old church the same like with our Community Church. Why did I mention the churches? Anyway, I used to go. My parents were religious, not radical, you know, but they were believers. You know, my mother believed that there is God. She always requested the help from Mary. The mother of Jesus. Mary, in Nazareth especially, Mary is much more prayed for than Jesus himself. Because she is the mother, okay. And she lived in Nazareth. And so even … I was telling some friends yesterday about … and I mentioned this in my book … about my mother having visions during her sleep. Regarding 1948, and chaos that was around the people, the occupation, the fightings near Nazareth, the expulsion. I mean, it wasn't like today. We have Facebook, and you have live coverage of news like we see in Ukraine. And at that time, you know, barely, I think every maybe 20 families, there was one radio in the neighborhood. Okay, so she always told me that her father had the radio. And the neighbors used to gather in their fathers reception room, you know. And they sit around the radio and listen to the news. Or sometimes they choose to listen to a song or from the radio of Cairo radio, BBC London, or so the news was very limited, at that time. So was the knowledge of what was happening. And so they were in Nazareth, my mother was with two sons, my eldest two brothers, the eldest was born in 1946. And the second one who was born in May 48, just during the war. They always told us the story that suddenly someday my father shows up. And he told her I found a small pickup truck from a friend and let's load our furniture or whatever we can take and go to Lebanon. He told her that the situation is very dangerous. And there are many people who already left to Lebanon. My mother refused. She told him: "No, I cannot. I mean how can we go now. We have one baby." My eldest brother Bashir, who was maybe a year and a half. And the second one who was just 1, 2 weeks old. "Where would I carry them and how we're gonna manage and they are still shooting on the way from Lebanon to Nazareth. It is a long distance." About at least 150 kilometers, 100 kilometers, but they were still fighting everywhere. But before … a few nights before, she had a dream or a vision in her dream. She always told me she saw in her vision, Mary, the mother of Jesus, walking in our neighborhood, with a white throne, and with a lantern in her hand lighted, and just walking around. So she understood from this vision, that Nazareth will be safe. Okay. And she depended on that vision to insist not to leave. And that's what happened. Again, what did I mention this issue?

Nathalie: I was asking about your identity, you said that they were asking you even in the West Bank, whether you're Christian or Muslim. And then we developed from there I think. So, what you mentioned before … you said, you kind of found peace, if I can say that. Peace with that your identity includes a whole set of experiences that are part of you. Do you think that this is something that the people here in the community share? And do you maybe see narratives or conflict narratives that are clashing?

Rayek: No many do share that. Because here we have some … I have some neighbors who turned to Buddhism through, you know, meditation and yoga. And so that's another addition you know, because I also did a lot of reading about Buddhism and I liked many ideas about Buddhism. And so I'm also partly Buddhist I could say even though I don't practice. So, I mean, for me, it's like picking flowers from the garden, you know. And there are things that I like in Islam. There are things that I like in Judaism, there are things that are like in Christianity and Buddhism in every region, and things that I do not like at all. Especially, I mean, it's not I mean, there is always confusion and misunderstanding regarding those who explain the textbook, okay. If you take the Jewish Torah or the Quran or the Bible … suddenly there are so many branches within the same religion. (Interrupted by a villager)

Nathalie: Okay, so would you say that this way of how you see yourself, your identity … would you say you disconnect from your view of seeing yourself as 'I am Palestinian only, I am Arab only, I am a Palestinian Israeli only", or maybe either of that. But more. I'm a set of all of those things and more.

Rayek: Here, what we have realized, I think all of those who chose to come and live here … it has been realized very early, I remember, through the meetings and discussions that we had, that there is agreement and disagreement. Some these disagreements are not Jews on one side and Palestinians on the other side. And this is … it creates some kinds of confusion in the beginning, you know. I came here, Rayek, believing that, you know, my group will be the Arab Palestinians, and we are like facing the Jews on the other side. But in a short time, I began to realize that I don't agree with every Palestinian who is living here. And I don't necessarily agree with every Jewish. Even in the meetings when we discuss issues like, I mean – not necessarily political issues – environmental issues, school education … you can see, even around those issues, how to relate to cats and dogs, okay. So you begin to realize that there are also differences within the same group. And when we enter the discussion with a vote, you can see, you know, many fingers up and this will definitely be a mixture of groups. So I think this experience puts you in a place where you begin to ask yourself questions. But I thought this is my group, and that we should be in total agreement about everything. Even when it comes to political discussions, you know, there are some Palestinians here who insists that the only solution should be two state, okay? Others believe that maybe one state. So around even this issue, even within the Jewish community, and so this opens up again, you know, that it helps you to liberate yourself from this closed, you know, placed identity, when you realize that you are not in agreement with every member of your community. And sometimes, not sometimes, many times you are in agreement with the person from the other group. So that's what I think was the main reason to create some confusion regarding definitions. And if you haven't experienced this mixed live, maybe you don't have to deal with those questions. And I always say, if I have stayed in Nazareth, first of all, I mean, I cannot expect everyday somebody to come and ask me, who are you and tell me your story? I am one out of another, maybe 80,000 or 90,000 people who are living there. But here maybe, not maybe, for sure … living in this community is another reason for many people to ask you questions, you know. Where do you come from? That keeps you busy with

those arguments and those questions all the time and search. You know, sometimes I regretted the, you know, this move to here, because of it is it too exhausting at some point. Dealing with those questions every day. And I would say to myself, maybe it could have been more relaxing, to just have to sit in Nazareth and note to deal with all those questions.

Nathalie: So what I experienced coming from the outside, is that living, or going back and forth between the West and East of Jerusalem … I noticed that I'm confronted with conflict narratives, so to say, that are completely different. And it confused me in the beginning, because people from the West were telling me that they have never been to East Jerusalem and yet seem to know so much about everything. And that goes both ways sometimes. So do you feel for yourself that you had a specific conflict narrative? So questions like: How do I perceive the conflict? How do people act? Who are the others? Who am I? And then coming here to NSWAS and then suddenly … everything is just … different. So how did you experience that perception of the other and yourself and also how was it to then move to this context in coexistence? Suddenly being confronted not only with the other on an everyday life, but also with yourself and yourself. So where do you position yourself? How do you deal with those questions? That was a lot of questions, so maybe just choose one that you want to elaborate on?

Rayek: First of all, it's a fact that there are two basic narratives: the Palestinian and Israeli. But even within the two groups there are different narratives also. So if you take the Jewish community in this country, I mean, they also there are those, you know, Jews who are religious, Orthodox who always have to find out through the testament, the Torah, the reason for their existence here, and there are seculars who don't care for that. But their motive was to maybe run away from persecution in Europe and to create a safe place for their life here. Palestinians tend, many times, to put too much blame on ourselves and our leaders in the past before 48 and today. Like something to be more understanding of the reality. So there is no shortage of arguments, okay, within the groups themselves. And these are different narratives. I mean, why do we argue, okay? You think that this is what happened and I think that this is what happened and then it creates an argument even though we could be from the same background, same religion even. So, I don't know, the challenge is that you have to develop an attitude to be more open. To accept that she or he has a different idea. Because as I mentioned in my book, I think when you discuss political issues, social issues, psychological issues, there is no objectivity in such discussions. I am and you are, you are, you are … because, I mean, it matters where I grew up myself. In a house with rich parents? Did they love me? Did they abuse me as a child? In which neighborhood I lived, what experience I had in my youth in the primary school and the neighborhood, in the city where or the village where I live. All those experiences, you know, build you and make you sometimes even selective in your choice of narratives. And you hear all the time people now with the war, Russian Ukrainian war, just turn the news on and you can hear 100 people telling different stories about it.
This is a story that doesn't end, you know, as long as you live, you are always dealing with this reality of living with people who have different ideas about life, about others, even within the same house. I mean, like, between me and between Diana, every couple who lives together, you know, there is always sometimes arguments, but we should learn to accept each other. As long as I am not hurting you, or not considering your feelings, your emotions, or trying to always subjugate you. We need to understand that we have different backgrounds here. And I avoid to create arguments. Okay. Since we have different ideas about the situation, I would like more to find out. Why do you think like that? I hope that you want to find out why do I think like that. And maybe to find a place in the middle where we can meet. But not to, for me to cancel you. Since you don't agree with me or the other way around.

These people are everywhere in every community and every family even. Just to be humble as much as you can. To realize that you don't know all the information regarding any story in history. And no matter how many … like I remember once when they spoke with the this Kushner son in law of Trump who pushed this agreement here and there. And then in the press conference he said yeah, I read 22 books about the Palestinian Israelis conflict. So here are 22 books. So he thinks that he knows. There is 10,000 books about the situation here. Every person is a book, okay? You could sit with 10 people and everyone has a story, whether he lived through 48 or after or before or today or … I still meet Palestinian guests who tell me stories about their life. I always ask them, where are you from? The Palestinian sometimes is a bus driver who brought a group and is waiting for them here. So most of the time they are at the moment in this village, but are originally from another village but in 48 we left and we ended up as refugees in the nearby village. Okay. Tell me about that village. Does it still exist? No, it doesn't exist. So I always find stories to hear to. Recently, I just learned that Nazareth has accepted – or not accepted, absorbed – the in 1948 20,000 refugees, when the population was 20,000 of Nazareth before the war. Can you imagine? I mean, 20,000. Doubled the size in like few months, okay. From nearby villages. And yeah, and the people who remember, I don't remember, I don't know that time because I was born much later. But recently, I had the book 'Memoires of a physician' from Nazareth, who left Nazareth in 1967. And ended up living in the States. He died recently, just about three, four years ago at the age of.
And he tells in some parts of the book. At that time, he graduated as a medical doctor from the American University of Beirut in 1944/45. So he opened the clinic in Nazareth. He was the first children physician at that town at that time, and he tells what happened in Nazareth during 48. And he mentioned this fact, about 20,000 refugees coming to Nazareth where they have filled all the monasteries, all the schools, any public space was refugees, refugees. Every time I watch a war happening recently, like Syria, Iraq before, now Ukraine … I have, you know, photos of me, in my mind, these are similar to the Palestinians and what they have gone through. Walking, you know, carrying babies in their suitcase, maybe looking for a place to sit, crying in pain. And so this has been repeated all the time, all the time. But today, I mean, we can watch it. With cameras, you know, in 48, there are very few, maybe images or black and white photographs. Or knowledge about it, you know, when something was happening, maybe 20 kilometers away that the people on the other side did not know about it. Yeah.

Nathalie: That's true. Very good point. So, I mean, this is a different story now, but the area we are in here, you're basically on the green line, right?

Rayek: Yeah, the place of the community is on the green line. Exactly. I don't know by chance or because Bruno looked for a place. And suddenly he ended up with a Latrun and they offered him this land.

Nathalie: This as a village … I mean, are you completely separated from the entire political system of Israel? As the way you pursue life and every day it's not how you do it in any other village or city within Israel.

Rayek: No, because of the living together.

Nathalie: But do you feel that either one way that you're to some extent dependent on the state of Israel, if it come to decision making within the village. Like for example can you expand this village? Or also if it comes to certain rights that apply within Israel that discriminate Palestinians. As you are still under the rule of law of the State of Israel.

Rayek: Yeah, we are subject to the laws of the State of Israel. If you want to build a house here, you have to have a permission, like everywhere in the country, but the permission is granted to you by the Regional Council or the municipality of the area which is Israeli, okay. You have to pay taxes, we pay taxes for the state. So we are totally part of the country and we are subject to these rules and laws and I have a business here, private business, for what I have to pay taxes every month. So for every product that I sell, I have to take out 18% for tax to pay for the country.

Nathalie: But do you feel like this is a hurdle? Or is this a problem for you guys? I know for example how they act if it comes to East Jerusalem and Palestinians businesses there. So is it different here? Do you feel like it is a disadvantage that you live out here. If it comes to policies or expanding or building houses, businesses, … ?

Rayek: No. Yeah, in the beginning, it used to be difficult to do. Because it took many years for the state to recognize the community. But then it wasn't organized in I think maybe 88/89. At that time, there were already … like … maybe around 15 families living here. And since we were recognized everything is going through the laws, you know. There is a law for everything. So later we had an official water line, we had an officially electricity line, telephone connections.

Nathalie: So now, there is no difference between any other village within Israel and you, if it comes to any decision making or application for building houses or opening businesses?

Rayek: At the moment, no, in the beginning, it was difficult. But after we have been recognized by the state, we became like any other community. And, I mean, we are considered fully Israeli citizens. Not like East Jerusalem where they are going to be maybe sent away from the city for any reason. So I can't say that there is at the moment any discrimination from the states. Maybe it also helped us that the community is built on private land, okay. Yeah, not what is called state land. Latrun land. In the beginning it was leased and then 2022 years ago, it was gifted to us from the monastery. Part of it. I will show you these nice photos.

Nathalie: Do you think this project, what you have here, and this is a way of living life in coexistence would have happened or could have happened, if that was some outside person telling you what to do, intervening and building, peace from the outside. If you're not actively choosing to come here, do you think that would have happened?

Rayek: Yeah, I mean, no, we were never subject to the conditions or the instructions of anybody else. Besides, I think we did not … I think Bruno was a very smart person. He started the community. Very strange to the reality of the country. But he did not start it according to any specific ideology. Like … if you … sometimes you find the group or a political party, or I don't know, some other group that makes you interested, and you will join them; becoming a member. He realized that this is a very complex situation, to bring maybe people from two different contradicting narratives. So, he said always from the beginning, that it's enough to start with accepting the other as an equal person without elaborating on what does it mean to equal? And I'm sure with the time you will find out the answer for the questions. So we got together here, okay, I had a reason that I wanted to leave Nazareth. But I did not mind the idea of living together. Everybody had a different story that brought him here. But they all share the same need or not need – the willingness to experience this challenge, okay. I mean, I am Jewish, I'm Palestinian, but I don't hate the other side. So what I

mean, I can come and live with them as my neighbors but nobody knew in the beginning how it would be … the challenge that we have chosen to come and live here. In the beginning, politics was not … like … on the surface all the time. Until you know, we began to be flooded by Western groups and journalist and TV and don't know what, making interviews. I think politics has been forced on us I would say from the outside. I mean, one of the first arguments was about, which I had myself … there was already when I came here some brochure that they have written here. Neve Shalom … what is Neve Shalom. It doesn't even mention the Arabic name, Israeli Jews who live together and you know. I did not like the content of the brochure. And I asked about considering, for example, saying Palestinians instead of Saying Arabs in the brochure and adding the Arabic name to the brochure. So that was the beginning of arguments about you know, the definitions, okay. But none of us came from a background of knowledge about approaching conflicts and resolving conflicts. And I remember we had very tough arguments here, especially in the beginning of summer 85. It was one year after we joined the community, we decided to sit together 20/25 of us in the same hall. And we invited also counselors from outside. Once there was a psychologist, once was a group facilitator. And we – for the first time – we were together in the same room speaking up, okay. About our expectations, from what we are doing here, how we are going to, I mean, how much freedom do every member have here regarding definitions and identity? And we started with those very, very basic arguments about Palestinian Israeli Arab, a Zionist, non-Zionist, you know. But it wasn't like a group of PhD holders who no know and studied conflicts. It happened on the very grassroots level. Simple people who got together here. And we were trying to figure out. And there was a lot of anger at some moments. And there was hugging at some moments. Even people cried together at some moments, realizing little by little, that we have chosen a very complex challenge. But at the same time, none of us wanted to leave. And in spite of those difficulties, we want to somehow find a comfortable life here. So it has been a very tense experience, I think, for almost everybody. Not today, by the way, but I'm talking about the 80s until the mid 90s. Because what really has helped is that we stayed together here, okay. And with the time I could be, like, angry with you in some meeting about maybe some ideas that you express your opinion about. But then a few days after, I hear that you are ill. And I cannot not come over and check on you and wish you good health or birthday party. Okay, an open invitation. Suddenly, you see the person that you think that he's your enemy, he's showing up. So, it is 24 hours living together, none of us wanted to live here. And there, we built the friendship, we built the neighborhood, we built kind of family relation with each other. It came by itself you know. But it wasn't during one week or one month, you know, it took years. So today, I consider every person who lives in the community as a member of my family. Regardless if we agree, or don't agree about different issues, political, environmental, education, and it's enough for me. Like once I remember, one of my neighbors told me, a Jewish woman from the first group of members here in our discussions with that psychologist, she told me “don't expect me now to go home and to begin to read books about the history of the conflict. So I can, you know, face you with my knowledge. For me, it is enough that I'm living here”. Okay. So as I mentioned it here, I did not mention her name, but it is like living here is by itself is a political statement. Okay. Regardless of I what I know about the history, the past who is to blame. It is enough for me that I respect my neighbors here, I don't have anything against them, even though I know that we don't agree okay. But when we hear personal stories in that discussion about a Palestinian member who is not originally from Nazareth, but his family was somewhere else. So we were learning new information about Jewish family who ran away from the Holocaust, came to hear. His grandparents were all killed and so all those we find many similarities in our identity in our suffering in the past, okay. And so, not to think that you are the only person who has been living with pain in your life and have experienced pain, okay. We too have done. But not to compete on who is more and who is less you know. So, today we have matured, as I

mentioned, like in my book, like we started our experience here, where most of us were like 30 minus/plus in age and today we have become 60 plus/minus some have reached 70. So, those long years of living together also did their effect on keeping us together as a group. Otherwise, I think, as I mentioned also in my book, that if this was an experiment where you brought two sides together right from the beginning to figure out what to do with this, how to do that nothing will really progress. We opened the school in 1984. Okay, there was a discussion. School, okay. It was very agreed on the fact that we will teach Arabic and Hebrew – two languages. But suddenly there is Israel's Independence Day, suddenly there is Land Day which is in the coming two days. With the independence there is the Nakba, how do we deal with those things? Okay. So we had to gather talk about those topics and find a way and at least in the beginning, you know, to give a place for the two narratives. Even though they contradict. But realizing that we don't know all the facts, okay. Still, I mean, the history of the conflict here, even 1948 is still being uncovered regarding, you know, all those classified documents and archives. Not all of them has been opened so far. Okay. Until I'm growing up and every once in a while, I learned about new information that I did not know before. Okay. I have always resisted and rejected the idea of turning all of us into like a one politically group with one idea like a Communist Party, like I don't know what the Conservative Party. Where we will have all to agree about everything. No, this is the diversity. And this is the reality of the country and that's how I mean peace in the country. If it happens someday. It doesn't mean that somebody has to give up to the other side. Okay. If I am Jewish, and I think that Zionism is an important part of my identity, so this is it. Or if I am Palestinian. So we can. We have different ideas. But maybe the future will change by itself okay, like Europe. I mean, Europe has gone through two big wars. 10s of millions have been killed. Nobody, by the end of the Second World War could have imagined that Europe could be as it is today. And now with Ukraine.

Nathalie: One more question. Do you think communities like Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam are in the interest of the the countrie's society?

Rayek: No I don’t. It is serving a just cause of justice and equality between the inhabitants of this land, which I believe does not meet with the general Israeli politics yet.

Nathalie: Thank you very much Rayek. I think that is a great ending to a lot of valuable insights from your side. Thank you.

Rayek: Thank you, Nathalie.

Interview 2: Diab Zayed in Ramallah
Date: 16/04/2022

Nathalie: So to start with. And also building up on our prior discussions – What does *everyday peace* mean for you?

Diab: Simply, to lift the oppression imposed on Palestinians and enable them to lead a life alike any other nation. End the fear, threaten caused by the occupation, and provide Palestinians with “access to life”. Palestinians feel that their life under threaten and that transfers life into a kind of anxiety and people might hesitate to advance in doing anything new. Israel, through its practices, denies Palestinians right to exist as human being and deals with Palestinians as threaten and risk. For example, any Palestinian might be killed in case the Israeli soldiers estimate (arbitrary) that he/ she is a threaten on them. Take the case of the woman killed in Bethlehem last week who is semi blind and became confused, so three armed

soldiers shot her from zero distance. Such behavior indicates that the Israeli occupation does not recognize Palestinians as human beings. Leading a normal life is the actual meaning of *everyday peace* and that could not be achieved unless the occupation comes to an end.
Due to the presence of the occupation, Palestinians lack the feeling of security and safety and this contradicts with the concept of peace. Hence, *everyday peace* means to feel safe and as long as the occupation is there, then there is no peace. To live in peace Palestinians need to have their independent sovereign state and control their daily affairs. The occupation imposes restrictions on Palestinians right to mobility as well as other rights. Without the permission from the occupation, Palestinians cannot do anything: build a house, open a factory, pave a rad…. Hence the daily peace is to give Palestinians the right to live as independent as possible. cannot travel without the permission of the occupation that controls the external borders, so, people are living in a big open air prison. Likewise, the occupation deals with Palestinians in a manner that harms their humanity such as sentencing a Palestinian for hundreds of years or arresting the bodies of Palestinians who are killed by the occupation itself or die while they are under the detention. In the best cases, the occupation buries the bodies of Palestinians killed in this way, in the so- called cemeteries of Numbers where the body is given a number but not a name. In one sentence: Daily Peace Means Ending the occupation and enable Palestinians to live Independent

Nathalie: That definitely is a statement. Thank you, Diab. Against the said, what does everyday resilience mean in this context?

Diab: The term resilience emerged within the Palestinian context may be two or three decades following the 1967 occupation. The term has no clear definition but interpreted based on the views of those who use it. For Palestinians, the term means to remain on their land and face the challenges imposed by the occupation by all available means. Resistance for Palestinians is part of the resilience regardless of the nature of the resistance (including military resistance). For Palestinians, resilience means to change the existing situation i.e. ending the occupation. For some foreigners (externals including the so- called Israeli peace movements: Peace Now, Mahsoum Watch….) resilience means to live with acceptance of the occupation. They advocated the idea of making the occupation to be “easy” and soft.

Nathalie: So you connect resilience to what we discussed as everyday resistance?

Diab: Yes. Everyday resistance is simply, to resist the occupation by all available means (popular resistance, military resistance, and any other form). Resistance is the way to live for Palestinians.

Nathalie: I see. So in that scenario ... what does coexistence mean to you in terms of Palestinians and Arabs living together in peace?

Diab: With the occupation, there is no room for coexistence. Coexistence is between two totally independent entities that share the same land and respect each other. The occupation denies Palestinians right to exist, hence, coexistence becomes meaningless. Coexistence could be between two groups enjoying equal rights but would never be between occupier and occupied.

Nathalie: So what value do you give to such grassroot initiatives?

Diab: They are waste of time and resources and just a way to change the face of the occupation and convince audience that life under occupation is possible. The experience

proved that these initiatives resulted in nothing. The previous couple of years witnessed five elections in Israel and each time the Israeli community elects the most radical movements and parties that deny Palestinians right to exist on their land. What results did these initiatives come with?
What would needed to be considered that such initiatives would be effective and relevant? They should target the Israeli community itself but not the Palestinian community. These initiatives should be dedicated to convince the Israelis that the occupation is a risk on the Israeli community more than it is a risk on the Palestinian community. Due to the occupation, at some point the Israeli community itself will collapse. So, let them work inside the Israeli community and advocate to end the occupation rather working with Palestinians and convincing them to live with the occupation.

Interview 3: Muna Ayad and Mahmoud Aziz (names were changed) in Ramallah; Date: 29/03/2022

Nathalie: So, to start with, I have eight general questions. The aim is for you to elaborate on what you consider to be the most relevant. We discussed that before, but if you hear me saying that this coexistence project as a peaceful project seems to be successful … what comes to your mind? How do you see that?

Muna: I don't think that this will be a successful project if the goal is to create peace beyond the borders of the village. This is a statement.

Mahmoud: Are we making that a formal interview?

Nathalie: No. I actually is not supposed to be formal. It is supposed to be real. So feel free to say whatever comes to your mind. And if you want me to censor your name, you just tell me. That is completely fine.

Mahmoud: Ok, great. Because then we keep joking and kidding, yallah.

Muna: So regardless of the number of us who support this idea – and there aren't many. It is a minority. Cause the majority is rejecting such projects. Or the idea of coexistence. So even if there are some supporters, they only represent a minority. Cause the majority of Palestinians suffer under the occupation. They sacrificed a lot. And those you suffered from the occupation either were killed or injured, have disabilities now or have been arrested for several years would never coexist with the occupation. We will never tolerate the occupation. Even though the occupation considers itself a state now with this situation and culture. But the beginning of the occupation was kind of groups who build their existence on the expense of the others, on grievance of other people. So we do not consider the occupation as a state. For us the occupation is just groups of killers who came from several countries and suddenly created this entity and call it a state.

Nathalie: So, when when you hear coexisting there, in this village … what risks do you see or why do you think apart from the fact that they are occupying your land as you said … what risks do exist if this would be considered successful and a resilient society or group that are making a step towards peace?

Muna: So the major risk is that it will weaken the Palestinian national question. The focus on the national question will become weak.

Mahmoud: Cause the Israelis will pretend that they are proposing peace and they putting their hand on this peace. But Palestinians are rejecting this peace.

Muna: While in fact the things are the opposite. It is not like that. Not all those people that have been killed by the occupation have been resisting at the moment when they were killed. They were killed without partaking in any resistance in this sense.

Mahmoud: Bsabd. (Correct in Arabic)

Muna: So many of those people were just walking in the streets and they were killed. It seems like they kill Palestinians for the sake of fun. Without the killed ones causing any risk on the Israelis lives, but they are still killing those Palestinians.

Nathalie: So I read in the beginning that the state of Israel was not accepting that project as a coexistence project. They tried to build settlements around it as they did not want that coexistence to happen. So … it seems for me now that this project is rejected on two ends. On one hand from the state of Israel and on the other hand from the majority of Palestinians.

Muna: The Israelis do not have the right to reject or accept such a project. They do not have the right to exist in our land (laughter). Sorry … but this is a fact.

Nathalie: I understand what you are saying.

Muna: We were going to Nablus last month. And at the checkpoint to Nablus – so we were in a Palestinian car but in front of us was an Israeli car with yellow plate. So, there could be settlers in it or Palestinians with Jerusalem ID, okay. A young settler crossed in front of the cars and they stopped to not hit the Israeli car. And the soldiers prepared themselves to shoot at their car. So, they did not shoot because the first car was an Israeli car. And the settler started to make fun of us. But imagine … there were seven people in the car and they could have shot all of them. For nothing. So, our life is under threat. It is kind of a game for the Israelis. So I think the Israelis did not reject the project because they want coexistence, but because of the land. They want to use the land for more settlements.

Mahmoud: They are true, and they're pretending that they want peace. After Oslo they should withdraw from all the 1967 areas and bring it back to Palestinians. But come on … you see the 1967 area is full of settlements. So it is clear that they are not interested in peace from the very beginning.

Nathalie: So, what does it mean for you if I say resilience in this context. I have two questions actually, what do you consider or how do you feel like if I say that this project and the people are resilient. So, what is resilience? And what is resilience for you … like … you mentioned resistance a lot. How do those terms connect for you, or do they even? How do you make your daily life to be livable?

Muna: Resilience is not through coexistence. Resilience, or Sumud as we call it, for me is rejecting the existence of the entity. I do not say Israel as we do not recognize Israel as a state. Most of us and I am one of them.

Mahmoud: I respect what she says.

Muna: As long as we have Israelis in the West Bank there is no space for peace. As long as there is a soldier moving with his gun in the West Bank. No place for peace.

Nathalie: So would you say your survival or coping strategy is not resilience. Its resistance?

Mahmoud: Yes. It is resistance. As long as there is occupation it is not resilience, but resistance. There is a big difference. I am just trying to explain Muna the difference between resilience and resistance. Cause in Arabic they are the same actually.

Muna: I was interviewed for a new job. I started recently. They asked me a question … what are the forms of resistance you believe in? I said all forms of resistance are legal. All forms.

Nathalie: Does that include killing and shooting?

Muna: Yes, because they're killing. They are killing us. (laughing)

Nathalie: Yeah. But do you think that reacting in that way, that way would make a difference? Because I mean, it's action – reaction – action – reaction. So, like, is that the right way to go?

Mahmoud: I think she answered that question indirectly in the beginning. So, so long as there is occupation there is resistance. Yeah, just to let you get the idea. Maybe you can ask what or where is the area of your resistance? What area should you resist? Yeah. Inside Israel, inside 1948 or 1967. Here you can make the difference in the resilience search.
But Muna, so Nathalie is from Austria and she is very familiar with the context. But in the West, generally, they believe Palestine is somewhere and Israel is somewhere else. This is the Israeli propaganda. But come on … you are living in our safe cities, in our small cities. And then it is said that Palestinians are coming to attack them. This is how they promote it.

Nathalie: Sorry for interrupting, I have a question regarding this. Because what I saw when I came here is that there's different narratives. And my question to you is now, do you think that resolving that narrative … that giving the Palestinians a voice would make a difference? And how would that need to look like?

Mahmoud: Yes. Just to explain the situation as you saw it. I remember we met a group of Turkish people here. One of them was asking, where is this Palestine where they have the conflict? Standing in the middle of Palestine. So, this is arranged. This is Israeli narrative. But they come to attack us in our cities. They came and request us.

Muna: So Israelis promote themselves as the victims. But they are not the victims. This is how Israel is using media in Europe. They are victims and Palestinians are terrorists. In the beginning when they said this is Israel they did ethnic cleansing from Palestinians. They chased Palestinians out from their own cities … homes. Around 500 Palestinian villages were totally destroyed. And 2/3 of Palestinians were transferred into refugees. This is during the Nakhba 1948. So they just made the Palestinians leave and put them all over the world with no care about their future or their life. It is inhumane. It is savage behavior from the Israelis from the beginning. And now they come to present themselves as the victims. (laughing)

Mahmoud: What contradiction is this? (laughing)

Nathalie: But do you think that the Palestinian narrative can reach the audience that might be needed for equality to happen? Or for an acceptable peace for you to happen? How do you think the outside narrative on Palestinians can be changed?

Mahmoud: The important thing is to explain the actual narratives. Correct the narrative. It is not to change, but to explain the actual narrative.

Nathalie: I see. Do you think that you might have a different perception of the Israeli narrative? Or more how you see the Israeli story? Because the Israelis are more than the occupation, right. They are people as well. So the PA and the military forces is one thing, but this is not the entirety of the people? So do you think that you might have a different narrative or a wrong narrative probably in regards to the Israelis?

Mahmoud: Yes. Probably. But the narrative on the Israelis is falsifying history. Changing the names of the Palestinian towns and cities. Giving them Hebrew names.

Nathalie: And you think that coexistence in that sense, is not an option, and it can not be. Because of this power asymmetry. And because of this wrong narrative that is put on you?

Mahmoud: I think one of the things that you need to focus on is how to do how you define coexistence.

Nathalie: How do you define it?

Mahmoud: How do I define it? For me, following Oslo Accords, okay. We agreed on two separate states. Without the presence of the occupation in our state. But they refused it as Israelis. But they refuse it. They continued building settlements, the number of settlements in the West Bank doubled since. So it is clear that they are not interested in the coexistence. So why should we seek coexistence if they are rejecting it.

Nathalie: But so, I'm talking about grassroot initiatives to build peace, yes. To show the real narrative. What weight would you give that and how far do you think would it be helpful to cooperate with Israel in that sense?

Muna: There are some Palestinians from the grassroots who want to live in peace now. Wanted to have normalization with occupation. Saying … I mean come on, we are tired. We need to live now. But this is normalization.

Mahmoud: But on the other side we find other Palestinians who are not only rejecting the occupation, but also rejecting those you call for normalization.

Nathalie: What's the threat that you see in normalization? What risks do you see if you were to accept the normalization?

Muna: I said in the beginning, it will weaken our Muslim question.

Nathalie: There's also the anti normalization movement, right. So, a movement within Palestine that exactly talks about this. Rejecting a normalization and stating that there is no peace if there's a power asymmetry. So what you said – there is no peace if there's occupation. But do you think that when talking about peace … what does that mean for you? How does it

look for you … an *everyday peace* and what does *everyday peace* mean for you? How do you arrange your life that you can live a life in this situation?

Muna: *Everyday peace* in this situation for me is to go out, go to work and return back alive (laughing). I feel asleep with my husband in the same bed. But in the morning I woke up without him. He was arrested. So I fell asleep in a situation but woke up in another situation. This is similar to what I said – I go to work but am no sure if I will return in the end of the day. Alive.

Nathalie: So it's a survival strategy more than an *everyday peace*. But what would peace look for? What would you request to be able to say – this is peace. I live a peaceful life?

Muna: Feel safety. To feel safety. How to feel safety? I am 30 years old and I feel terrorized when I leave Ramallah. When I go to Hebron. Because I have to pass through the settlements and the checkpoints and so on. In some places you might be walking down the street and there is a settler across to you. But you cannot assume what he would do. He might attack you.

Nathalie: What would a grassroot initiative look like that would be successful. Or could be successful. A step towards peace in the way of feeling safety? (Muna is laughing)

Muna: Well they will do nothing. Those initiatives are useless. They speak about peace but there are attacks on an hourly base.

Nathalie: So just to make that clear again, they don't say they are creating peace. They just try to escape the environment and create peace in their own everyday life. Do you think that this is legitimate as such?

Mahmoud: No. It is not legitimate these people in those projects, because it increases our suffering. For me, those people are living in fantasy. They are living in fantasy. They want just to prove that … okay … we can create peace. They create peace in Neve Shalom, but come on … I cannot go there. Simply. I need a permission to go there. It is only for the elite. For a group of people that are benefiting from the occupation. That is a fact.

Muna: Yeah. My son is seven years old now. When his father was arrested – 2 ½ years ago – he was only 5 years old. He just visited his father last week. How could I say to my son that this soldier that is arresting your father will be our friend one day. During that visit he wanted to hug his father. Just wanted to hug his father. But the soldiers prevented us cause we have to see him from behind a glass. Behind a thick glass wall and speaking through kind of a phone. How could I convince my child that this soldier who did this to his father would be our friend one day.

Nathalie: So if you would have the chance to go to the village and ask the people questions, what would the two biggest questions be to them? Considering that you said they live in a peaceful life in their own little bubble? Benefiting from the occupation?

Muna: I would never go there. (laughing)

Mahmoud: So, this is a clear rejection of these initiatives.

Muna: There's no place for discussing with them because we have two different views.

Nathalie: So you plan to live your life without trying to find dialogue with the people that try to learn about the other narrative and find peace within Israel?

Muna: They say that they are rejecting the occupation, but they are living under occupation and are part of occupantion. For me the occupations is something illegal.

Nathalie: Well not only for her. From a human rights perspective and international humanitarian law, among others, it is illegal. (laughing)

Mahmoud: For us the occupation is Israel. Make sure to write that in your thesis. For us Israel is not a state, it is an occupation.

Nathalie: Will do.

Muna: So many Jews came to Palestine for 1948. For the Nakhba. And there was a kind of discussion about the Zionist project in Palestine. But people were not aware. Even though Palestinians accepted the existence of Jews. Not Israelis, Jews at that time. But Palestinians were in their houses, were in their homes, were in their life. So for them, it was ok to have some migrant Jews to live in Palestine. But those were the core of a huge project which is to replace Palestinians. So the idea of Israel, of the state of Israel, is to replace Palestinians with Jews. Create an identity for them.

Nathalie: Okay. So let me ask one very big question (laughing). I understand you would not go to the village and talk to the people. So what if you got a big microphone and talk to the people outside Israel/Palestine – what would you say? So if you would have the chance to just get a microphone be anonymous and just speak to the world about grassroots initiatives in Israel and peacebuilding in the Middle East and in Israel/Palestine?

Mahmoud: That is a very complicated question.

Muna: That is a very difficult question. It is difficult to understand for me that some Palestinians are living there and accepting the idea. But most of those Palestinians, I think, are from 1948. Not from 1967. So those are beneficiaries. They benefited from the idea. Those people are disappointing Palestinians. And they are benefiting from the occupation even though they agreed to live in this oasis.

Nathalie: Disappointed why?

Muna: They do not suffer like the rest of the Palestinians. They probably have never been uprooted from their lands. Palestinians inside Israel are still facing difficulties and challenges. So they do suffer. But less than the refugees that have been uprooted and had to move outside the country. How would you convince the refugees that slept outside until they go a roof over their head. How would you convince them that this is peace. For them to accept peace they should return to their original places. Peace for Palestinians is to end the occupation. Resistance, even military resistance. We are not criminals. What is expected who lived went through that childhood. The experience in 2002. There was an invasion of all the Palestinian localities here. When the Israeli tanks were under our windows. What do you expect from kids that lived through that moment. In 2002 they attack Jenin refugee camp. They demolished it totally. We speak of kids during that time. But now these kids are 25 years old plus. The camp was demolished on the heads of people. And they were shooting on everything. Even if you were moving behind the windows in your own house. You were shot.

People could not moving in their own houses. So many people in Jenin refugee camp were shot in their own houses Just because they were moving inside their home. And the ambulances and medical staff were not allowed to enter Jenin refugee camp. Parents were killed in front of their kids. Imagine a child or a baby living with the dead bodies of their mother, father, or brother. What do you expect from such a child? How would you convince such a person to live with the occupation? To coexist with the occupation?

Interview 4: Daniella Kitain in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam
Date: 08/05/2023

Nathalie: So, you say you have written some poetries. Would you mind to share some of them?

Daniella: Of course. Let me see. I try to translate. Because it is in Hebrew.

There is this one:

From one fortress to another fortress
From one palce of war to another place of war
We are walking and dreaming
Peace and love.
Clods of earth
Filled with blood and smoke
Are laughing and crying.

And that. But this was not for Tom. Even though people thought that after Tom died. When they read it.

To my son
Two weeks old
My little son
You are the one who knows
And from all the mothers you chose me
That we could give each other
Love and sorrow
Happiness and worries
And that of all this will not be in vein
Just let it not be in vein.
About her youngest son

And I have another one. So it says like this:

All the songs that bellowed in me
Die on the doorstep of the words
All the brooks that overflow in me
Get blocked against the walls of the rocks
All the happiness inside me
Is getting bitter with tears and anger
But above all that
There is a small careful cloud
That smiles in transparent gentleness

Nathalie: What was that about?

Daniella: I don’t know – who knows?

This is the more political one that I remember. They started the war in Lebanon, but also there was the war in Argentina. About the islands of Falklands. It was in the same time. A British pilot whose plane was shot, but he also killed.

I woke up with heavy eyes
As if after an earthquake
My body was tied and chained
And the crying inside me
Everything was as usual
The pilot who killed
And got killed in Argentina
The war that we invited to our home (this is the Lebanon war)
This home that has no end
How can we ask for the sky
If our eyes are heavy
If there are earthquakes in our hand
The clouds look down
Indifferent and wondering

Nathalie: So you are referring to the Falkland war, Lebanon war and the war in Israel/Palestine?

Daniella: Yeah, exactly. And this is about the kibbutz I lived in but it is also good for NSWAS.

Sometimes you laugh until you cry
Sometimes you swear in silence
There are days you can see the light
And there are times when you are closed
In the hardness of your aching heart
It always is the same fields
And a small house
Yet the same excitement
In the curve of the road
On the way to my village

This is about losing something, in translation, right?

Nathalie: Wow, thank you so much. Wait let's see if the recording worked. I'll just put it a little closer. If you don't mind. Not to get something lost in translation here.

Daniella: It's okay. I think it probably works.

Nathalie: So as you told me in our last conversation, you are familiar with the term normalization. Yeah. What does that mean for you in this context?

Daniella: Look, it's not my term it is the term of Palestinians. Yeah. You say we don't want to have a, as I understand it, we don't want to have a relations with the other side because it will mean that we are for the occupation. So, we are accepting the occupation as we are talking to the occupying people. I'm part of a group called the feminist forum. You know about it.

Nathalie: I do.

Daniella: So we are part of this group. And we encounter this term ‚normalization' all the time. First thing they say is that we don't want normalization, but I think the first thing is in the forum to understand that we as Israeli are also not one. In a sense, we are all occupiers but we are different, all kinds of people. So it's good for them to make alliances with people in Israel, Israelis who are against the occupation. So that's the Palestinians in the form that are our friends. Still there are many other words that are also difficult for them. See, when our son was killed, it was 25 years ago, and he was killed in the army. There was an accident of helicopters in the army. And they were on the way to Lebanon. They still had the places in Lebanon, where the Israeli soldiers would be and it's crazy. Today you asked people from the army and they say it was crazy. They stayed there. The war in Lebanon started in 1982. And they left Lebanon in 2000. So, 18 years. It's crazy. They say it is our security line. Okay. When Tom was killed, we were here and of course. The people in the village, they knew him. He came here. He was nine years old. He was a boy. And they played with him. They knew him.

Nathalie: Yeah, I was told that story. Rayek wrote about Tom in his book. That was also the peak of the discussions regarding the Memorial Day and the Nakba, right?

Daniella: Oh, so you know about that story. Exactly. So it was a difficult time for us. Rayek is one of the good people. I don't know. Everyone is good, but he is one of the people who can go above and look at things from somewhere higher. He has this kind of perspective. But it was a very difficult time. Here. And then okay, then we joined the, this group the, it was called the parents circle. Now it's called the feminist circle or Palestinian Israeli feminist forum. For peace or something. It's a long name, too long. And we are both, me and my husband, we are both active. And one of the projects that we do is called the narrative project. I'm a group facilitator. I started to one here in the School For Peace. I learned to be a group facilitator. And then I did many, many years and in many places, so I'm one of the people who are guiding this project from time to time. And the idea of the project is that in order to bring people closer, it's important that they understand the narrative of the other; how the other one's telling their story. It's the same story but from two different angles. So what we do ... it's an ongoing project of about two months, two and a half months. We meet every second weekend, either for a long weekend or just for Friday. It's 15 Palestinians and 15 Israelis. Usually, they have something in common. The group that will start next week are I think all women, okay.

Nathalie: So, it's always different groups.

Daniella: Different groups, yeah. They are regular people. It's just ordinary people from Israel and from Palestine. 15 and 15.

Nathalie: When you say Palestinians you mean Palestinians from the West Bank?

Daniella: From the West Bank, yeah. Yeah, but they don't get here we do it in Beit Jala. Okay, which is the C area where all can come. But there are two parts that are in Israel. One is ... we have a day about the Nakba. So we go to Lifta. So we go to Lifta and hear the story of Lifta. That's the day of the Nakba. And the other day is about the Holocaust. We used to go to the Yad Vashem. This time this project will start somewhere else. We go to a kibbutz near Gaza. It's called „ya know, the high. You know? You know this kibbutz?

Nathalie: Yes. It is quite famous after 1948, right?

Daniella: Yeah, exactly. They have a small Holocaust Museum. They have something about the 1948 war, because many people killed – Israelis in 1948 there. It's also to make the Palestinians understand better the difficult word called Zionism. Because they say, okay, we're not against the Jews. We're just against Zionism. But I grew up as a Zionist and I was one until now. In the sense that I believe, the Jewish people should have state. It doesn't mean that to conquer other people or to rule other people. So those are a few tours we have on this project, and then we discuss everything. It's very interesting. It's a not easy project. Many discussions. Hot discussions and difficult. But I think people come out of it with more understanding for the other.

Nathalie: So would you say … as NSWAS, even though it is located on the green line, the village is still part of the state of Israel. So, do you see a problematic if projects like the village are considered successful and promoted as successful coexistence projects? Because I have heard voices that it weakens the Palestinian national question. What do you think about that? Or what is your perspective?

Daniella: I don't understand exactly. Why they say it weakens the Palestinian national question?

Nathalie: So, my methodological background and the approach that I follow for my thesis is more to create dialogue. And as you said, it is highly important to create awareness that there's not the Jew but there's a whole bunch of different views within Judaism and within the Jewish people living in Israel. But for them, as I understood, it is more that they see that projects like this within Israel do not sufficiently engage in the power aymmetry that is existing. And if you accept such a project as successful, then it would say that the actual problem is not existing, and the solution is dialogue. But for them, the problem is bigger because they are not even able to engage in a dialogue as they can't come here. The question on the willingness to engage in a dialogue is a different topic. But even if they would like to live in coexistence with the Israeli, they have no chance because they're occupied and their first thing that they face, just following their words, just to make clear that those are not my words, is to face the occupation; to resist the occupation.

Daniella: So first of all, our project mostly is in Beit Jala, as I said, which is West Bank.

Nathalie: Exactly. Sorry for interrupting, but now I'm referring more about NSWAS as such, As it is a different context.

Daniella: Okay. I know that the School For Peace talk … they talk a lot about the power relations inside Israel. They don't ... I don't know how far they talk about the power relations between Israel and the West Bank or Gaza. I can tell you only my perspective. I was part of this call for peace before Tom was killed. And then I stopped because my personal narrative was something that is illegitimate.

Nathalie: Illegitimate in what way?

Daniella: My personal narrative is that my son went to the army, okay, the Israeli army. It's illegitimate.

Nathalie: From the perspective of the villagers?

Daniella: From the perspective of the School for Peace more but also the villagers. Many go to the army. But it became harder during the years. When the village started, it was obvious that all the came here in our age was … about 30 something. But it was obvious to everyone – that all the men that came to the village were part of the army. I mean, because everyone is doing reserves. It became difficult during the years. It's more and more illegitimate. In eyes of some people it's not all the village. Why did I say that?

Nathalie: I was asking. And it is a very interesting point, actually, because also, Rayek talked about the military and people serving the army from his perspective. So it's very interesting to have another perspective. And I was asking if you consider, or more if you see a risk to the Palestinian national question, if projects like this do not sufficiently engage in the power asymmetry or engage with Palestinians from the West Bank, and, you know, not only based on dialogue, but actually taking action. If it comes to the broader picture.

Daniella: I think they must take action. And I think it's very important to also understand the Israeli perspective. Okay, my son was killed in the army, but it's not like I say okay, let's have no army like this. I wish there was no armies at all, but in the situation as it is. It's not realistic to say Israel should have no army. And if Israel should have an army then who is going to be in the army, see? So I think this is something that Palestinians should also understand. And if you want to stop all the fighting, and all the armies the beginning should be understanding why they are fighting and why we are fighting.

Nathalie: So, to clarify the narrative on both sides?

Daniella: Yeah.

Nathalie: Do you think that the Israeli narrative is more present than Palestinian one in that conflict? Here I am talking one the one hand about within Israel but outside?

Daniella: It depends where. I think personally that the Palestinian narrative is very much heard outside. In Israel it's true. Israeli people they can just close their eyes. It's It's amazing. It's amazing. They don't know that there is occupation. Or it‘s not like they don't know. But yeah, they don't admit. But I think outside the Palestinian narratives is heard very much.

Nathalie: Yeah. I see. Also for me, it was it's very interesting to talk to so many different people. So sometimes it even feels that the only thing they have in common, or a common ground is that there is no common ground. So I talked to so many different people with different backgrounds, different age. Women and men. And it is impressive how everything every person says makes sense. But if you put all the stories together they contradict completely sometimes, you know, while talking about the same issue, or the same thing. And what I also found out is that coexistence for everyone means something different. So, what does coexistence mean for you in that context?

Daniella: I must say that in the last two years, I don't like the word coexistence. It is too ... okay, we exist. Okay. I want to have some kind of bond between our two peoples. That it will be possible to learn from each other and to benefit from each other. And to overcome racism and to understand the other side. So, I think it's more like a how can we work together? I mean, politically, it could be some kind of Federation or Confederation or whatever, some kind of a tool for two independent units who can work together.

Nathalie: But not only theoretically speaking, but also in practice. There is no two equal entities. So how is that supposed to work that a dialogue starts even if the narratives are understood, you still have the occupier and the occupied. So if a Palestinian sees the other picture and says okay, I understand now ... the ruling logic is still the reality of the occupier and the occupied.

Daniella: Of course, we must stop the occupation. Not that they know how to do it, but I think this is basic. Personally I can tell you that in 1967 when the 67-war happened, I was still in the army. Theoretically I have some kind of sign that I participated in the war. But I was part of people who started right after the 67-war to say this is not right. Israel should recognize the Nakba. Cause it is too close. People should be compensated. On the other hand, Israelis do not get enough recognition from Palestinians either. And this is based on the asymmetrical power relations. So in a way it could be very simple. In a way to reconcile the conflict. Because you cannot change what happened. But if you recognize it. That makes a great difference.
And in the beginning, also the government of Israel, they said they don't want the territories. They said they will just hold them on them and they will be like our bargain for peace with Jordan with the Egypt. So, we hold on to the territories to have a bargain for peace. In the beginning. That was how it was. But then, you know, people said, no, it's ours. It's our homeland. I think the occupation must stop. But you know, I don't feel so hopeful or so active, doing something. So I say to myself, okay, I do my little part; I do the narrative project; I bring some people together and they discuss and they talk about exactly this what they talk about. So, your ruling us. We don't want to rule you. Okay. This is what I can do, but I think the occupation must end.

Nathalie: But this is great already. In the end, that's all we can do. The small steps and small actions that we can take personally. So, in those projects ... Do you see a change of behavior or a certain amount of new understanding from the Palestinian side and the Israeli side when coming together?

Daniella: Yeah. Both sides. And then the idea is afterwards to have some kind of, we have a group of projects graduates. There are about 1000. Or more. I don't know exactly. They had about, I think, 40 projects, like 30 people in each. How much is it?

Nathalie: 30 people per project and 40 project would be 1200 people, yeah.

Daniella: Yeah. So it's not a lot of people, but some. And they have a group of project graduaters and they decided to do ... they can do demonstrations on the barrier. They do all kind of things. So we want them to be active afterwards. Not just have the project and go. We're talking about small numbers.

Nathalie: Yeah. But it always starts with small numbers.

Daniella: I hope so. I hope you are right.

Nathalie: So I think those were beautiful words for a closure of the interview. Thank you so much Daniella for sharing your perspective.

Interview 5: Group discussion with four inhabitants from Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam (names were anonymized)
Date: 31/03/2022

Nathalie: Do you think communities like Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam are in the interest of the the countrie's society?

Jewish-Muslim second-generation villager: Yes in the long run people will understand coexistence is for their benefit. Lowering the hate between people will save the government money they use for "protection".

Nathalie: If more binational and cross-community projects were formed, do you think relations between Palestinians and Israelis would be better?

Palestinian Israeli first-generation villager: I believe that the existence of our community is a political statement against the sad reality of this land. I believe that those people who have chosen to live in Wahat al-Salam / Neve Shalom are doing and not only talking. It goes very much with what Confucius said: "Be the change which you are trying to create."

Israeli-Palestinian second-generation villager: I think programs like that send ambassadors into society that can promote coexistence and encourage more conversation but they lack an activism part. Simply showing that having a conversation or living together is not enough at this stage

Jewish Israeli first-generation villager: I became more aware of my own identity as an Israeli Jew. This change happened through the encounters with the Other. Is the minimal must. And I think it could create better communication.

Nathalie: Do you think communities like Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam are in the interest of the Palestinian people?

Palestinian Israeli first-generation villager: For me, it has been serving as a place where I can present our Palestinian narrative, which has been subjected to distortion throughout the years of the conflict

Nathalie: Have you changed your assumptions and attitudes about multiple "others," whether from within my own community or across religious and ethnic divides?

Palestinian Israeli first-generation villager: I did. This experience made me more open and more tolerant to differences, as a result of community life and for the success of this experiment

Israeli-Palestinian second-generation villager: Growing up in the village and growing to school there teaches you from a young age that there is a lot of diversity of people in the country and outside. Being raised with this understanding makes it easier to understand others."

Nathalie: So, if you were looking for a job, would you prefer a workplace in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam?

Israeli-Palestinian second-generation villager: To be honest, I'd rather avoid mixing my social life and work life because if conflicts happen it can get very uncomfortable.

Nathalie: Do incidents like the war between Gaza and Israel in May affected the village in a certain way?

Jewish Israeli first-generation villager: Every military action imposed a dark cloud.

Appendix II: Questionnaire

The questionnaire was put together in collaboration with the participating people from Neve Shalom and the West Bank. Basis for the questionnaire built the following sources, the questions have been adapted accordingly:

- Interpeace. 2016. Assessing Resilience for Peace: A Guidance Note
  Link: http://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2016-FAR-Guidace-note-Assesing-Resilience-for-Peace-v7.pdf [September 4, 2021].
- UNICEF. 2019. Towards a Child-led Definition of Social Cohesion.
  Link: https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/616/file
- ———. 2014. Compilation of Tools for Measuring Social Cohesion, Resilience, and Peacebuilding.
  Link: https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/052814_UNICEFPBEACompilationOfTools_UNICEF_English.pdf

SOCIAL CAPITAL (cf. Interpeace 2016b; UNICEF 2014, 2019)				
Belonging and Inclusion				
Statement	**I agree completely**	**I agree somewhat**	**I disagree somewhat**	**I disagree completely**
I identify strongly with Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam				
I have a large and active social network within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam				
Think of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam. Do you think there is a strong sense of community among people living here?				
People living in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam's feelings about situations and incidents are similar to mine				
If somebody in this community is having problems, the rest of the group helps her/him				
If somebody in this community has a good tip or information source, it is soon shared with the whole group				
I can speak frankly to other people in this community				

Within the community we try to understand why inhabitants do things, and try to reason it out				
We avoid looking at important issues going on between us				
We depend upon the group leader for direction				
Inhabitants with different opinions are distant and withdrawn from each other				
I challenge and confront others in efforts to sort things out				
We talk about sensitive/personal information or feelings to each other				
I have changed my assumptions and attitudes about multiple "others," whether from within my own community or across religious and ethnic divides				
I am comfortable making my own decisions				
I avoid conflict situations				

Tolerance

Statement	**None**	**one**	**two to five**	**Six to ten**
Friends from other communities/cities from Isreal/Palestine visiting your home				
Thinking about your close friends, how many friends do you have that do not share your beliefs/opinion?				
Statement	**I agree completely**	**I agree somewhat**	**I disagree somewhat**	**I disagree completely**
My family supports my decision to live in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam				
If you were looking for a job, would you prefer a workplace in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam? Why?				
If you were deciding where to send your children to school, would you prefer a binational school?				
Did you go to a binational school yourself?				
Did you go to a binational school yourself?				
I feel that I am part of my community				
If more binational and cross-community projects were formed relations between Palestinians and Israelis would be better				
There are no facilities within Israel/Palestine where I can meet with people of a different belief/opinion apart from Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam				
Do you think communities like Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam are in the interest of the the countrie's society?				
Do you think communities like Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam are in the interest of the Palestinian people?				

Religion makes a difference to the way people feel about each other in Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam				
Religion will always make a difference to the way people feel about each other in Israel/Palestine?				
I can play a part in influencing group decisions that are important to me				

Participation

"Please indicate if you are involved / participate in any of the following."

	Active member	**Inactive member**	**Don't belong**
School club or group			
Social activities/associations			
Political activities/associations			
Cultural/religious activities/associations			

"Please indicate your opinion regarding the following questions."

	Participated in several meetings	**Participated in some meetings**	**Not participated**	**No invitation**
Have you ever participated in any of the meetings on peacebuilding held in your community? What kind of meetings?				
If you participate in meetings then what motivated you to participate in the meeting? (answer could be more than one)				
	Always involved in influencing the decision making	**Often engaged in discussion and decision making**	**Giving an argument for a decision**	**Passive participation**
In that meeting what is your role? (Choose only one answer)				
	Yes – regularly	**Yes – once or twice**	**Yes – several times**	**No – Would if I had the chance**
Got together with others to raise an issue				
Attended a demonstration or protest march				
Attended any cross-community projects (that is, projects with people from Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam and other cities/communities)?				

Risk Factors

How prevalent are the following actions in the context of your community?

	I disagree completely	**I disagree somewhat**	**I agree somewhat**	**I agree completely**
The voice of the inhabitants of Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam is being heard by the Israeli government when a big decision needs to be made				
We have full control of the decision making process that regards the village (building houses, school system, land, ...)				
The village is recognized within Israel				
The Israeli media present the village in an appropriate way				

I have the same job opportunities as everyone else outside of the village. If not - why?				
People from other communities/cities in Palestine do treat me equally				
I am allowed to move freely within Israel and travel outside				
Incidents like the war between Gaza and Israel in May have affected the village? How?				
I have noticed new behavior in people				
There are new creations and activities as a result of the war in May 2021				
I trust the national governemnt				
I trust my community leaders				
I feel my voice is heard when the government makes decisions that affect me				
Governemnt does not provide education that helps me in my daily life.				
Protective Factors				
"Please indicate your opinion regarding the following questions."				
	I disagree completely	**I disagree somewhat**	**I agree somewhat**	**I agree completely**
Education plays a significant role for progress in peace				
In the past years, what has helped you to overcome the effects of the past conflict and contribute to strengthening peace within the village?	• Traditional institutions within Israel • Family • Education • Leadership within the village • Relationships with other communities or people • Relationships within my community and/or people • Other (Please specify)			
What are the things that you are doing to keep things going peacefully?	• Traditional institutions within Israel • Initiatives/ Institutions within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam • Family • Education • Leadership within the village • Relationships within my community and/or people • Relationships with other communities or people • Other:			
Of these elements to keep things going peacefully, what are the most important or the strongest?	• Traditional institutions within Israel • Initiatives/ Institutions within Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam • Families • Education • Leadership within the village • Relationships within my community and/or people • Relationships with other communities or people • Other:			
At which level do these elements exist or are strongest? Individual, family, community, district, national level? Does resilience at one level impact another level?	__Individual __Family __Community __National level			

Please rank the following as most important to you (1 highest, 5 lowest)	__Nationality __Village of __Origin __Religion __Language __Other:			
With whom do you socialize	1. Family 2. Friends from my nationality and others 3. Friends from my own nationality 4. Other (Please specify)			
Individual skills/Coping strategies	**I disagree completely**	**I disagree somewhat**	**I agree somewhat**	**I agree completely**
I can change my behavior to match the situation				
I learn from my mistakes				
I come up with new ways to handle difficult decisions				
I don't let anything stop me from reaching a goal I set				
I take active steps to understand the context of the other sides of the Israeli / Palestinian conflict (Education, communication and discourse, …)				
I try to figure out things that I don't understand				
I don't give up when something bad happens to me				
Social responsibility				
	I disagree completely	**I disagree somewhat**	**I agree somewhat**	**I agree completely**
It's important that people think of the community before they think of themselves				
Do you think learning the other perspective helps in supporting the Palestinian struggle ? If so, how?				
We should engage more politically to be able to make the government's work more transparent				
We need to be more active politically to influence political decisions				
People like me cannot have any influence on the government anyway				
Apart from voting there is no other way to influence what the government does				
Even people who are not in a position of power can bring public attention to crimes and corruption				
"Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family:"				
	Yes – often	**Yes – once or twice**	**No, never**	
Feared a war situation in your own home?				
Been physically attacked?				
	Yes	**No (Why?)**		

Do you feel this survey is helpful in addressing your views?		