

From Awareness to Action

A study on organizational change in the School for Peace

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Abstract

This thesis studies organizational change in the peacebuilding organization the School for Peace. It asks the question: *What shapes organizational change in the School for Peace?* Being located in Israel's only peace bubble, the School for Peace presents as an unusual case of peacebuilding in unique conditions. To understand reasons for change and evolvement of the organization's practice – as well as its ties to organizational survival – organizational change within the years of 2017-2024 has been studied through process tracing. Based in the field of organizational studies, this change has been studied through four causal mechanisms: event-, resource dependence-, institutional- and social movement mechanisms. Through these mechanisms, this study has shown two major patterns of change in the practice of the School for Peace, a larger focus on graduates of its courses and an increased professionalization. These patterns of change prove to be tied to mechanisms of institutional pressure, resource dependence and social movement mechanisms. Events throughout the time-period has also led the organization to adapt its practices towards the needs in its participants and surrounding community. The most recent critical event being the ongoing war breaking out the 7th of October between Hamas and Israeli military.

Key words: Peacebuilding, organizational change, non-governmental organization, peace bubble, Israel/Palestine.

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1. Introduction

The conflict in the territories of Israel/Palestine is historically one of the most protracted and contentious conflicts, creating immense challenges for peacebuilders and the international community. Attempts have been made to build peace on all levels, from elite-level mediation to bottom-up approaches focused on grass-root knowledge on peacebuilding in the local context. From the 1990's, in the larger field of peacebuilding there has been a larger focus on bottom-up approaches on peacebuilding. This has been a development in the early days led by Lederach and later developed by authors such as MacGuinty through the theory on Everyday Peace (Lederach, 1997; MacGuinty, 2022). The concept of peace bubbles, or peace zones are built on such theories and the idea of the importance of bottom-up peacebuilding, creating trust and relations between people. Peace bubbles such as the Israeli Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom (WASNS) are areas in otherwise conflict affected land, where people in different ways have deliberately chosen to live in peace with each other (Autesserre, 2022: 142-144). WASNS, in English "The Oasis of Peace", is a village where Israeli Jews and Palestinians have chosen to come together and create a community built on the idea of equality and peace (Armbruster 2004; Nathan 2007). Built on the idea that peaceful coexistence between Israeli Jews and Palestinians are possible through peaceful dialogue, the School for Peace was created in WASNS in 1979 (Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004: 375). The School for Peace (SFP) is a peacebuilding organization built in line with later developed theories such as Lederach and centers dialogue as a tool for creating peaceful relations.

Organizations such as the SFP is part of a form of peacebuilding that have gained larger attention the last few decades and with that more research has been developed. However, there is still a lack of focus on the organizational level of these smaller peacebuilding organizations. Some studies have been made, such as the Gawerc study from 2013 on Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilding organizations. However, there is still a lack of in-depth research of smaller organizations, how they operate in volatile environments prone to conflict, how they evolve and adapt their practices as well as what makes them survive in these challenging environments. To understand what makes different peacebuilding organizations successful, it is important to understand their practice on an organizational level (Hasenfeldt & Gidron, 2005: 98-99).

My aim with this study is to contribute to fill this research gap. Through an in-depth study of a peacebuilding NGO, I aim to show how a peacebuilding organization adapts to a challenging environment and persists in hostile milieus. To in-depth study the organizational level in this type of organization will contribute to understand what causes peacebuilders to change their method of practice, what contributes to their success and ultimately their survival. This will further be interesting to different forms of peacebuilding initiatives and organizations. To do this, I will conduct a single-n case study of the Israeli NGO the School for Peace in the time-period of 2017-2024. The study will hence answer the following question:

What shapes organizational change in the School for Peace?

To understand how the SFP has changed on an organizational level during the time-period of 2017-2024, this study will investigate four mechanisms important to the work of the organization. Founded in organizational theory, causal mechanisms have been created to explain how events, resource dependence on donors, institutional pressure (from Israeli and international institutions) and social movements have affected the practice of the SFP. Through process tracing, this study will answer how these four causal mechanisms has shaped the organizational change in the School for Peace in the years of 2017-2024.

2. Background

2.1 Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

The village was founded in 1972 when the priest Father Bruno Hussar received a donation from the nearby Latrun Trappist monastery of a piece of land. It was founded on the vision of Hussar, of Jews and Palestinians living together in “harmony and peace and collaboration” (Armbruster, 2004: 84). Today 70 families reside in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (WASNS). The village includes a nursery, primary, hotel, café and a popular pool. Because of these facilities, the nearby fields and the history of the village, it’s a popular tourist-location (WASNS, 2024). The primary as well as the nursery was created through a necessity when the village grew and families resisted to put their children in Jewish or Arab schools in the nearby area, where only one-sided views on Israeli history would be provided. To pass on their values of an equal view on history and representation, the village’s families created the primary school (Interview A, 2023; Armbruster, 2005: 85-87). The village functions as a bubble of peace with a mixed population of approximately half Jewish and half Palestinian residents. The village has its own mayor and council, as well as installed security with a gate and camera. With conflicts worked through in village meetings and the residents’ WhatsApp-group, the village is mostly self-managing (Nathan, 2007: 263-264). Many of the village’s residents are politically active in different ways, a natural choice after having actively chosen to invest and move to, the in its nature political, village. Because of this, the norms and values of many in the village is not representative of the outside society, and the village works as a bubble in that way. However, this bubble is very much affected by the outside society, partly because many residents work outside of the village. One way that residents are affected by “outside ideas”, is the backlash many are met with from family and close ones. Many are seen as “betrayers”, that they are turning their back on their people when choosing to live with “the enemy”. The village is of course as well highly affected by the political situation in Israel/Palestine (Interview A, 2023).

2.2 The School for Peace

Against the background of the village's function as a bubble, the School for Peace (SFP) can be seen as a liaison to the outside society and the larger peace movement in Israel/Palestine. The School for Peace was founded in the early days of the village, by some of the first families residing in the peace bubble in 1979. The vision was to create a platform to create and facilitate dialogue between Jews and Palestinians. This has been done through courses and workshops with High School and university students as well as different professional groups. The organization receives no funding from state institutions, but are funded through foundations and Friends Associations internationally (Halabi & Sonnenschien, 2004: 375-376). The method of the SFP has evolved throughout the school's practice through trial and error as well as through research developed simultaneously. The goal of the dialogue encounters is to build relationships based on equality and to bring awareness to the conflict and the individuals own part in it (ibid.: 376-377). The practice of the School for Peace is built on the assumption that national identities are at the core of the conflict in Israel/Palestine, and therefore these identities are centered in the dialogue. The encounter is seen and treated as an "intergroup meeting" (ibid.: 377). The participants meet in groups of 14-16 people and both Hebrew and Arabic are spoken to create an equal foundation of the meeting, where both groups can speak their mother tongue. Translation is provided to enable this (ibid.).

2.3 The Protest Movement

The larger part of 2023 in Israel was colored by the major protest movement, started the 7th of January lasting until October 7th, when the Hamas-led attack hit Israel. The protest movement was centered around the judicial reforms, which were first presented January 4th. The most criticized bill would limit the Supreme Court's ability to halt legislation from the government if it deems it unconstitutional. This was intended to transfer power from the Supreme Court to the government. This sparked large discontent and the movement mobilized as much as 260 000 people on some occasions. The movement was largely constituted by secular, liberal and left-wing Jews who strive to safeguard the democratic foundations in Israel. Participants in the protests have as well included military personnel and reservists, who in Israeli society hold a particular social

power. The movement grew strong during the year and at some occasions protests shut down highways and the national airport (Mellen et al. 2023).

2.4 October 7th and the following war on Gaza

The 7th of October 2023 Hamas killed 1200 Israelis and took around 250 hostages. The following war in Gaza has resulted in more than 30 000 killed civilians, in writing moment. The war has resulted in an immense humanitarian crisis in Gaza and large international critique against the Israeli state. At the same time, violence in the West Bank has risen, and the protest movement from 2023 has transformed into protests demanding the return of hostages. The attack on the 7th of October was the first time since the Holocaust this many Jews has been killed in one attack (BBC, 2024). This has created a major trauma on the Jewish population in Israel, which further has created large tension and a significant gap in news reporting on the war in Gaza and the humanitarian suffering of civilians (Tiberg, 2024). The war has created one of the most critical situations in the history of the conflict of Israel/Palestine and the challenge has grown for a peaceful resolving of the conflict.

3. Previous Research

The previous research on the School for Peace and Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is extensive and will be covered in grand parts in this section together with literature on peace bubbles and organizational change in peacebuilding NGOs. Of course, there is extensive literature on the conflict of Israel/Palestine as well as different peacebuilding initiatives. However, only research relevant to the theoretical foundations of the chosen case of WASNS and the SFP will be covered.

3.1 Peace Bubbles

Peace bubbles or peace zones is a concept used to describe communities that have deliberately chosen to withdraw themselves from the violence in an open armed conflict but can also describe a community in a post-conflict setting which have chosen to live together and promote peaceful relationships in an everyday life-setting (Hancock, 2022: 1781; Autesserre, 2022: 137). One of the defining characteristics that Hancock points to in a zone of peace is the foundation in the grass-roots and the local community. Another thing that Hancock highlights, is the characteristic of the community's relation to the exterior and the need to maintain a neutrality with the outside to keep the community safe from outside threats (Hancock, 2022: 1782-1783). This is something that Autesserre seconds in her portrait of zones of peace, specifically in the community of San José de Apartadó in Colombia, where members of the village have needed to halt political statements after violent incidents (Autesserre, 2022: 141-142). Both Autesserre and Hancock argues for the benefit of zones of peace and the approach of bottom-up peacebuilding built on the notions of Lederach, Galtung and later MacGuinty to create lasting stability (Autesserre, 2022: 148-150; Hancock, 2022: 1786-1787).

One of the examples of zones of peace addressed by Autesserre is the village of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (WASNS). She highlights the management of conflict in the village and the non-violent conflict resolving such as debating, compromising and voting (Autessere, 2022: 144). Previous research on WASNS also points out the focus on conflict solving through dialogue and debates. Tuv

addresses the role of language in the village and its place in relationships and the power asymmetry highlighted in the use of language. In the context of WASNS, the use of Hebrew consolidates the power relations between Jews and Palestinians and asserts the image of Jews as the dominant group. This creates the background of the strive for a bi-lingual space in WASNS (Tuv, 2018: 37-41). In line with other peace bubbles, WASNS has had to face and address the reality of the outside conflict, in rise of political tension or violence in the larger society. However, in the words of Nathan and his study on the village, they do not seek to distance themselves to the outside context, but to function as educators and an example of peaceful coexistence (2007: 287-288). The idea of WASNS as an example of a peaceful future is something that echoes throughout the studies on the village, to not back down from conflict, if it is concerning national identity, culture or everyday issues, WASNS strives to set an example of conflict resolution through dialogue, education and empathy (Armbruster, 2004: 93-94; Nathan, 2007: 287-288).

3.2 Organizational change in peacebuilding NGOs

The literature on organizational change is mainly focused on larger corporations, however, the theoretical field has addressed non-governmental organizations (NGO) as well. This has mainly been done in the field of developmental studies, but studies on peacebuilding organizations have been made. One of these is the study made by Gawerc (2013) on peacebuilding NGOs in Israel/Palestine. The author investigates 12 peacebuilding NGOs in Israel between 1997 and 2008. From a perspective of organizational theory and social movement theory she studies the needs of peacebuilding organizations and what contributes to their survival in a challenging setting. Gawerc highlights the importance of maintaining legitimacy and support from the outside, something essential to survive in uncertain environments when tensions rise. An aspect of this was managing power asymmetry and to work equally with an awareness of the outside reality, as one of the important factors to building and maintaining legitimacy from partners and supporters (Gawerc, 2013: 193-195). The challenge of maintaining donors in uncertain times is reflected as well in the study of Heideman. In the study from 2013, she criticizes the current form which peacebuilding NGOs are supported by donors. The author argues that the projectivization of peacebuilding, where funding often only is given in forms of projects, limits the organizations room for long term peacebuilding (Heideman, 2007: 7). The critique is additionally

targeting the expectations from donors of NGOs to include extensive reports on applications and results of their projects, which puts a great administrative burden on the organizations. This also include the problem of peacebuilders to quantify their result, with activities and initiatives providing different form of results that not always translates in clear numbers. Heideman argues that this limits peacebuilding organizations to adapt their practices to the needs of the specific context and create more long-term peacebuilding initiatives (Heideman, 2007: 141, 162). A need to adapt the organization's practices to fit the expectation from donors is highlighted also by Hasenfeld and Gidron. They point to the professionalization of NGOs as a response to donors' norms and claim that this phenomenon increases with the organizations dependance on international donors (Hasenfeld & Gidron, 2005: 102-105).

3.3 The School for Peace

The research on the School for Peace (SFP) has been made by both researchers connected to the organization and outside scholars. The studies made by Halabi & Sonnenschien (2004) and Bekerman & Sonnenschien (2010) are examples of the former, with Sonnenschein being one of the founders of SFP. The first mentioned study from 2004 outlines 5 phases the authors have identified in the dialogue encounter with the two groups. The phases develop from the first timid meeting, through awareness and conflict, a stalemate to a phase of discussion based on mutual respect. The authors view these encounters as a microcosmos of the larger conflict and argue for the vision to enable the larger context to reach a phase of discussion founded on respect (Halabi & Sonnenschien, 2004: 383-385). The common theme of studies of the SFP such as Bekerman & Sonnenschien as well as Feuerverger (1997) is the view on victimhood in both groups. The authors highlight the need to move past the individuals own image of victimhood to be able to conduct productive dialogue, something observed in several encounters. They describe the sense of victimhood traps the participants in a phase of blaming and competing stories of trauma. The frustration of Palestinian participants around their inability to "compete with the Holocaust" is described (Feuerverger, 1997: 21-23). The studies mentioned above all point to the need to move past this narrative to create a fruitful dialogue (Bekerman & Sonnenschien, 2010; Feuerverger, 1997; Halabi & Sonnenschien, 2004).

4. Theory

To examine the factors that lie behind organizational change at the School for Peace, this thesis will depart from the field of organizational studies. Through this framework, different theoretical subfields within organizational theory will be combined. Hasenfeldt and Gidron as well as McAdam and Scott argue for the importance to combine different theoretical frameworks to fully understand driving factors behind the work of NGOs (2005; 2012). Organizational theory is a large field with early founders such as Weber and W. Taylor. For this study however, it is imperative to look at the environment of the organization, and therefore this study will be centered around theoretical developments that see organizations as open systems. This enables the study of the dynamic between organizations and environment, something that is critical when studying an organization in an unstable, conflict-prone environment. This framework includes the theory of resource dependence and institutional theory (Handel, 2003: 225-226). McAdam and Scott argue further for the importance of including social movement theory within organizational studies to fully understand how an organization is affected by its changing environment (McAdam & Scott, 2012). However, to thoroughly understand the impact on organizations by its environment, it is as well imperative to examine the impact of larger events in organizations and society. To enable this, Morgeson et al. developed the event system theory, outlining the difference in impact by events on organizations (2015). To examine the organizational change within the School for Peace, this study will use resource dependence theory, institutional theory, social movement theory as well as event system theory as explanatory mechanisms of organizational change.

Resource Dependence Theory

Pfeffer and Salancik makes the argument that an organization is dependent on its environment to survive and grow. Following this, what becomes challenging for an organization is when it exists in an unpredictable environment. The organization's survival and growth will therefore be dependent on its ability to adapt and change its practices in relation to the changing environmental conditions. An organization's ability to do so is furthermore affected by how much of the organization's resources is allocated outside of the organization, where it is dependent on outer sources. This additionally connects to the organization's survival: "The effective organization then, is the organization

which satisfies the demands of those in its environment from whom it requires support for its continued existence” (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978: 242).

Institutional Theory

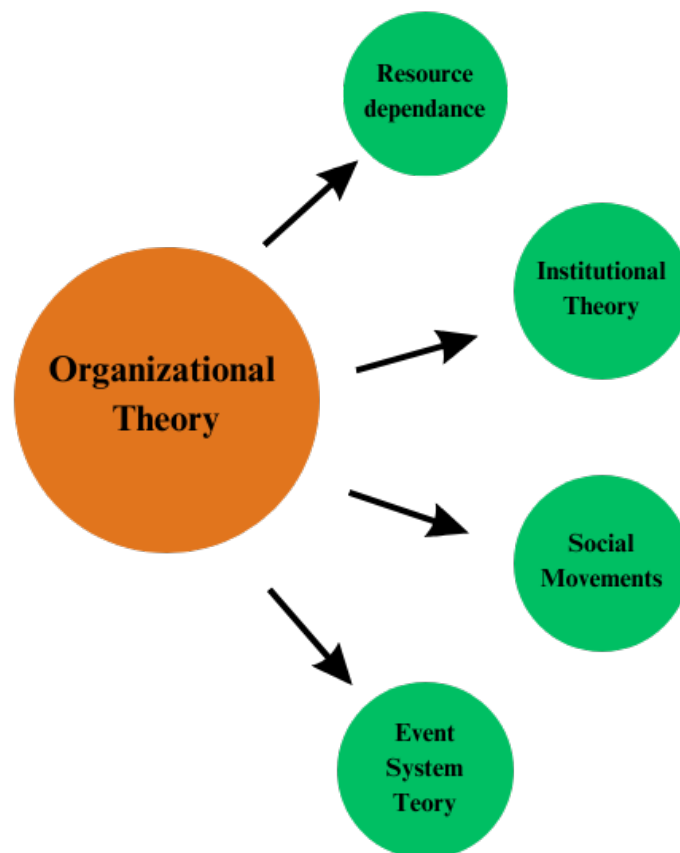
DiMaggio and Powell argue for the importance of state institutions and regulations impact on organizations. They claim that the pressure from state regulations lead organizations to homogenize, leading to a process called isomorphism, when a unit is affected to form in coherence with another unit in the same environment. This can take form in three different ways, the first being through a coercive process, constituting of informal and/or formal pressure from other organizations, such as political institutions. Secondly, it can be through a mimetic process, where uncertainty drives organizations to mimic each other and follow prior examples. Finally, it can happen through normative pressure, that first and foremost comes from the demands of professionalization. The demand formal education as a basis for the work of the organization as well as professional networks works as two important aspects in the development of organizational norms. The above stated processes work as important factors in organizational change in the views of DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 243-249).

Social movement Theory

McAdam and Scott argue that organizations will be affected by the social change brought by social movements, and therefore a perspective of social movements theory is crucial to properly understand organizational change (McAdam & Scott, 2012). In line with this approach, Zald et al. examines how social movements impact organizations (2012). They assume that social change affects and changes organizational behavior through organizational policy and because of this, “...movements and organizations must be seen in interaction” (Zald et al., 2012: 256). Zald et al. argues that an organization can have different forms of responses in result of different amounts of pressure from social movements. They argue that how much a social movement will affect an organization is dependent on the organization’s compliance readiness. This is further comprised of ideological commitment, how much the organization is willing to commit to the movement’s ideological standpoint, as well as organizational capacity (Zald et al., 2012: 266). The authors also point to the importance of actors and groups in different organizational levels that is linked by identity as well as networks to the goals of social movements, which affects organizational responses.

Event System Theory

Morgeson, Mitchell and Liu developed this theory in 2015 as a response to the lack of theoretical discussion around the effects of events on organizations throughout space and time. They argue that it's imperative to examine the impact of events to fully understand how organizations are affected by their environment. The authors highlight for example how the 9/11 impacted American organizations and augmented measures such as surveillance on electronic technology (Morgeson et al., 2015: 532). Event System Theory outlines different factors of an event that will have result in the event having a different impact on organizations. These include event strength (including novelty, disruption and criticality), event space (how an event travels within the organization), and event time (including duration, timing and how the event strength change over time). These factors, including the different combination of them will affect in what way and how strongly an event will impact an organization (Morgeson et al., 2015: 520-529).



Model 1.: Theories used within the field of organizational theory.

5. Research Design and Method

The following section will outline the design of the study and the method used. This study is a single-n case study and the data which has been collected through interviews, which together with additional documents have been analyzed through process tracing. This section will outline the background of the case-selection and how the interviews have been conducted. It will also address how process tracing has been used to study how the School for Peace (SFP) has changed and altered its practice between 2017 and 2024.

5.1 Case Selection

The choice has been made to conduct a single-n case study to enable a rich, in-depth analysis of the topic on hand. The case of the School for Peace, in the peace bubble of WASNS, in the context of the conflict in Israel/Palestine has been chosen as an unusual case (Halperin & Heath, 2017: 215). This case is a unique example of a peacebuilding organization through several factors, including the protracted and contentious nature of the conflict as well as the unique environment of the only peace bubble in Israel, creating particular conditions of peacebuilding. This unusual case is used to apply the theoretical framework of organizational theory to examine how a peacebuilding organization in an uncertain environment adapts to changing conditions and how this environment affects the practice on an organizational level (Halperin & Heath, 2017: 214-217). The timeframe of 2017-2024 is chosen to investigate the themes of change at the SFP during the last years of major change in Israel/Palestine. The starting year of 2017 is chosen because it enables the study to investigate patterns spanning over multiple years. The year of 2017 is as well chosen because the Annual Reports were first published by the SFP from 2017, and the possibility to triangulate the data generated is enabled only from 2017.

5.2 Data Gathering

The data generated for this study has been made mainly through qualitative interviews on sight at the School for Peace. Field work was conducted during two weeks in June 2023, during which an internship was conducted. This enabled the interviews to be made, but the assessment has been made that this did not affect

how the interviews were conducted and the data gathered. The interviews were conducted with the staff of the SFP, those relevant to the question studied. Because of the small staff of the organization, only 4 interviews were made and deemed relevant for the topic in question. To gather more rich data about the SFP, more persons could have been considered as interviewees, however, this would not be relevant to the study of the organizational level of the SFP. Therefore, only four people were chosen to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted as qualitative, semi-structured interviews, where a combination of structured questions and more informal, unstructured and follow-up questions were used. This form of interviews enabled more rich data to be generated and to more deeply understand the interviewees' experiences, both personal and as staff at the organization (Halperin & Heath, 2017: 289). A follow up was as well conducted with one of the interviewees via email in May 2024. The interviewees are anonymous in the data presented in the study and all interviewees were informed about the purpose of the study, how the data would be used and where the study would be published. To preserve the interviewee's anonymity, the pronoun *they* will be used to reference an interviewee. It was made sure that the interviewees knew that participation was voluntary and informed consent was given before interviews. This was made all in line with ethical consideration in academic studies, (Halperin & Heath, 2017: 308).

It is important to highlight that all interviews were made in 2023 before the attack on the 7th of October. The situation in Israel/Palestine has changed greatly since the conducted field work and it's important to consider what this could change and the ethical considerations of using responses in interviews conducted before this. However, the assessment has been made that the data gathered and used in the study is not of contentious matter that would change after this event. Because of this, the data generated through these interviews has been used in line with the previously made agreement.

Part of the data used in the study comes from Annual Reports published on the organization's website. The reports are documents produced by the SFP outlining their work each year, the programs and courses that have been conducted and changes made from previous years. These documents are used to triangulate the data generated from the interviews and improve the validity of the data (Halperin & Heath, 2017: 308).

5.3 Process Tracing

Because of the aim of the study is to investigate the changes made in the School for Peace during the time-period of 2017-2014, the method of process tracing has been chosen. To analyze the causal mechanisms of change and the decision-making, incentives and pressures behind, specifically in a case-study, process tracing is useful (Halperin & Heath, 2017: 217). Process tracing is a method used to investigate the causal mechanisms behind certain outcomes or historical processes. The method focuses not only on causes, but on the causal processes triggered by causes that later leads to an outcome. It is the process in between that is interesting. Process tracing investigates these causal mechanisms and through rich empirical data links them to a particular outcome (Beach & Pedersen, 2019: 1-2). There exist different forms of process tracing, and in this study, the approach of Explaining-Outcome will be used, enabling the study to include more causal conditions and defining outcomes in broader terms. Allowing a multiplicity of causes also enables case-specific causal conditions, creating better opportunity to in depth trace the changes and underlying mechanisms in a particular case (Beach & Pedersen, 2019: 283). Using the Explaining-Outcome, the study will investigate four mechanisms of change in the time-period of 2017-2024. The study will trace how these have affected the SFP and potentially caused the organization to adapt its practices. The mechanisms investigated are founded in the field organizational theory and includes resource dependance, institutional pressure, social movement impact and event impact. These factors will be analyzed in four blocks of time where each block represents a theme of change or a major event. Throughout these blocks of time, the four causal mechanisms will be investigated, how they have impacted the work of the SFP during this block and connects to the theme of change in that time-period. Through this, the study will trace the process of change in these four blocks of time.

5.4 Operationalization

To understand how process tracing will be used and how organizational theory will be applied to investigate the causal mechanisms in the process of change of the School for Peace, it is important to operationalize the theoretical understandings of each causal mechanism. The following section will outline the operationalization of the four mechanisms: resource dependance, institutional pressure, social movement impact and event impact.

Resource dependance mechanism

The mechanism of resource dependance will be used on the foundation of the theory developed by Pfeffer & Salancik (1978). It will be used to understand how the dependance on outer donors affects the School for Peace. The SFP has no domestic governmental support and therefore is completely reliant on outside donors. Previous studies have showed that this can have significant impact on a peacebuilding organization (Heideman, 2013; Gawerc, 2013). Because of this, resource dependance has been chosen as a causal mechanism to investigate during the four blocks of time.

Institutional mechanism

The second mechanism used in this study is based on the theory of DiMaggio and Powell (1983). The theory arguing for the importance of institutional pressure as a driver of organizational change will be used to investigate how the Israeli and international institutions have impacted the SFP. The reliance on outer sources of funding gives an insight on the impact of the norms of Israeli institutions. The mechanism will be used to investigate the impact of pressure in different forms, mainly from the Israeli institutions have impacted the organizational change between 2017 and 2024.

Social movements mechanism

This mechanism constitutes both the impact by social movements on the SFP, based on the theory of Zald et al. as well as the organization's impact as an actor in the movement for peace in Israel (Zald et al. 2017). As a peacebuilding organization, the SFP works as an actor within the movement for peace in Israel/Palestine, in partnerships with other similar organizations, holding conferences and coming together for example in joint statements against the current war in Gaza (Annual Report, 2018: 4; SFPeace, 2024g). This means that the SFP is impacted by social movements both from outside and within the social movements in Israel, affected by social movement as an organization and as a peacebuilding actor having impact from within the movement for peace.

Events mechanism

The last causal mechanism used in this study will be the impact of events on organizational change, built on Event System Theory developed by Morgeson et al. (2015). Outlining the difference of how events impact organization, the theory addresses what factors affects the impact of an event on the organization in

question (Morgeson et al., 2015). This is used to investigate the effects on the organization by major events such as the Covid-pandemic, violence breaking out between groups and the war breaking out the 7th of October 2023. To understand how these events have impacted the SFP and potentially caused the organization to adapt to new conditions, it's essential to incorporate the factor of Event System Theory.

These four factors will be used to trace themes of change and causal mechanisms in four blocks of time to investigate how these factors have impacted the SFP. Each mechanism will be addressed in every block, tracing the process of organizational change within the School for Peace.

6. Analysis

This section will present the results from interviews and official documents from the School for Peace (SFP). It will present events in the organization and its environment as well as themes of change in accordance to the chosen factors of organizational change throughout four blocks of time between 2017 and 2024.

6.1 Block 1: 2017-2019

Events

During this time-period, the Israeli state officially declared itself a Jewish state, creating more tension between population groups, further alienating the Palestinian minority living in Israel. Other legislative processes continued to further strengthen the position of the right wing in Israeli politics (Annual Report, 2018: 3). No major, critical event took place during this block of time, however the political situation in Israel was continually more tense which put additional pressure on the organization. The political situation and the tension between population groups in all blocks affects the organization's opportunity to recruit participants in courses and the openness of people to engage in dialogue (Interview A, 2023).

Resource dependance

The School for Peace is as previously stated, dependent on donations from outer sources, the grand part of these coming from international actors. During this first time-period, the SFP was granted with two larger donations from the EU and USAID. This enabled them to conduct longer projects, spanning multiple years. The project financed by the EU ran all planned years, however, the project funded by USAID centering mental health professionals across the border between Israel and the West Bank was taken down early in 2019. This was following a change in the US policy on joint initiatives across Israel/Palestine borders. To continue the project as planned, the school had to seek funding on a short notice at Friends Associations and foundations (Annual Report 2019: 2).

In an interview with *Interviewee A*, they expressed the difficulty of meeting expectations from donors. The donors often seek results that can be clearly quantifiable, something that complicates the work of the SFP. *Interviewee A* stated

that this view of peacebuilding is very simplistic, “(...) *if you look on our organization, it's not based on the numbers.*” (Interview A, 2023). Because of this, meeting donors’ expectations can sometimes be complicated (ibid.). These experiences with donors funding peacebuilding initiatives by NGOs are in line with the study by Heideman. She critiques the fashion which donors grant funding to peacebuilders and argues that this creates unnecessary burdens on NGOs and further negatively impacts the results of peacebuilding initiatives. The critique from *Interviewee A* that donors seek quantifiable results which doesn’t always represent the organization’s work, is something that Heideman highlights (Heideman, 2013: 149). She argues that the need to adapt the organization’s work to “fit” the donor’s perspectives will in the end limit the effect of peacebuilding (ibid.: 162).

Institutional pressure

One of the most important factors that affect the SFPs ability to conduct their work, is funding, and the lack of support from larger domestic institutions. The organization receives no support from local government and is dependent on international actors. This works as a coercive, informal pressure from the Israeli government. The lack of support from the Israeli state constitutes an informal pressure on the organization. The change in US donor policy can as well be seen as coercive institutional pressure. Because of the change in governmental policy to halt the funding to initiative across the borders of the West Bank and Israel, the conditions for the SFP to conduct its work was altered when funding for their project ceased. Therefore, the pressure from US institutions risked to halt their work and forced them to seek outside financial sources to continue its project (Annual Report, 2019: 2).

Social movements

As both affected by social movements as an organization in Israel, the SFP is also part of the peace movement in Israel/Palestine. To continue to be an influential actor in this movement, the organization support and encourages the graduates of their programs and courses to be active and start different activist and/or peacebuilding initiatives (Interview B, 2023). In 2018, the book by Nava Sonnenschein *The Power of Dialogue* was published. This became a starting point for a somewhat new, and stronger focus on graduates. Following the learnt experiences of the needs of graduates, the organization came to make a turn of focus. “*We understood that graduates are an asset and that we have some kind of*

responsibility towards them. It's an opportunity to follow up on the previous work we did." (Interview C, 2023). The idea was to support the work of graduates and contribute the investment made in them prior. Through this, they could enlarge their impact on the movement for peace. During this first block 2017-2019, the SFP is on the starting grounds of these new initiatives and not until beginning of 2020, the first official steps towards a graduate community were made (Annual Report, 2020: 14).

Themes of change

The time period was colored by the publishment of the book *the Power in Dialogue* which brought forward experiences of graduates of the courses at the SFP, starting a discussion on a stronger focus on continuity through working with graduates. This however is not officially achieved until the beginning of 2020 (Annual Report 2018:3-4). The theme of change characterizing this block is the commencement of the strive for a larger focus of graduates, creating a continuing line of engagement from the SFP's courses to further activism by graduates. The time-period was also characterized by consequences of the organization's dependance of resources from outer sources, for example by the halting of the USAID grant.

6.2 Block 2: 2020-2022

Events

This time-period was largely characterized by three major events affecting the SFP, the Covid-pandemic, the violence in May and the arson attack in September 2020.

The Covid-pandemic affected the SFP in similar ways as other organizations. The SFP was not able to conduct fieldtrips and their activities were largely moved online or outside. However, their practice was largely able to continue after mentioned adaptations (Annual Report 2020: 4). This was an event that, even if it did not directly halt most activities, it forced major changes to the organization's practice. Activities were performed online or outside which created different conditions affecting their outcome. In that way, the pandemic was an all-encompassing event affecting all levels in the organization. Given the pandemics long duration, its effect lasted on a longer period of time on the SFP.

The arson attack on the facilities of the SFP was as well a critical event in 2020. The attack happened in September and completely destroyed the SFP's building. This naturally had an emotional effect on staff and participants, creating fear that was as well consolidated by the police's inability to find a perpetrator. Additionally, the attack had logistical consequences for the organization, forcing it to move facilities and creating financial strain through rebuilding the old facilities (Annual Report, 2020: 6). The duration of the main consequences has been significant, since the SFP has in writing moment not yet been able to move in to the new facilities. These factors contribute to define the arson attack as a critical event.

Following the eviction of the Palestinian family, violence broke out in May 2021, both between civilians and Israeli police as well as between the Israeli military and Hamas (UCDP, 2024). Following this, tension rose between the two groups, especially in mixed settings. In response, the SFP was asked to provide a dialogue course at the Nursing program at Tel Aviv University to respond to increased tensions (Annual Report, 2021: 25). These events brought as well forward the need for uni-national dialogue with internal discussions within both groups to process what had happen and how to move forward (Interview D, 2023; Annual Report, 2021: 25, 49, 54). The event and the paired rising tensions hence created a need at the organization's target group, which it later responded to. However, it was not all encompassing on the organization's structure of practice such as the Covid-pandemic had been.

Resource dependence

During this time-period, the grants provided by the EU and USAID were no longer in use, and as before, the SFP was continually dependent on donor funding. Partly as a response for a need in showing clear results to donors, the organization starts during these years more actively collecting and documenting data and results from their programs and courses. They do this through surveys after the end of their courses to later analyze the results of their work. This enables the organization to more clearly show the results of their work and can then more easily meet the expectations of clear, quantifiable results of donors. The data is used both for showing previous donors results and seeking further support in new actors (Interview A, 2023). This constitutes a professionalization of the work of the organization, as a response to the expectations from donors. This change of work alters the focus and time-management of the organization's staff, putting

larger resources on administrative tasks. This could draw resources from tasks more vital to peacebuilding practices (Heideman, 2013: 149, 162). However, it's important to point out that a more significant evaluation of data from courses and programs could allow the organization to analyze and develop its practices (Interview A, 2023).

Institutional pressure

The professionalization of the organization is also a part of the institutional pressure on NGOs to conform to certain administrative criteria. The normative pressure contributing to a gradual professionalization, is a process driven mainly by the legitimization given by formal education, university specialists and professional networks (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 247-249). The School for Peace is a research driven organization, with a research center being a part of its practice from 2017. Additionally, the organization is a part of a larger movement of peacebuilding organizations and frequently attend meetings and conferences connecting them to a larger network (Interview B, 2023; Annual Report 2017: 6-7). Through the organization's connecting partnerships and professional networks the SFP is influenced to conform to certain norms concerning administration, documentation and professionalism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 247-249).

Social movements

The social movements during this time-period were largely affected by tensions rising after the eviction of a Palestinian family from East Jerusalem in May 2021 (UCDP, 2024). Because of the nature of the SFP, the organization is both affected by, and a part of social movements in Israel. As peacebuilders, the organization is greatly impacted by tensions rising in the political climate and a part of the movement for peace they respond tensions and violent events. The organization was as well characterized by the initiative started in previous block, focusing on graduates. The first formal activities centering graduates were launched, such as forums created for planners, mental health professionals and leaders in mixed cities (Annual Report, 2020: 14). This is a way for the organization to sustain its impact in the peace movement and Israeli society. *“You invest so much in people in one course. So then you expect people to be active and to change the status quo. But you have to sustain this investment and not forget about the people. (...) The people are our resources.”* (Interview B, 2023). This investment is made through *“supporting them morally, socially (...), and also materially.”* (Interview C, 2023). This can be through meetings, connecting them with professionals, supporting them in their channels and through grants (Interview B, 2023).

Through this, the SFP sustains its work and prolongs its impacts on the movement for peace in Israel/Palestine.

Themes of change

The theme of change characterizing Block two was largely a professionalization of parts of the organization's work. This was an answer to both the expectations from donors and institutional pressure from organizations and networks in the proximity of the SFP (Interview A, 2023). The organization was as well affected by the larger events during the time-period that forced the SFP to adapt their practices, through changing facilities, adapting to Covid-guidelines and providing dialogue facilitation where needed in their community (Annual Report, 2020: 4, 6; Annual Report, 2021: 25).

6.3 Block three: 2023 (until October 7th)

Events

The major event impacting the SFP during this period of time, was the protest movement affecting large parts of Israeli society. This movement mobilized a substantive part of Israeli society with a large impact on the political conversation. The movement colored the practice of the SFP and the opportunity for dialogue. The protest movement was a major event in Israeli society, disrupting everyday life through for example blockades of high ways and the national airport (Mellen et al. 2023). This, paired with the effect on the political situation, created a critical event in Israeli society. Because of the protest's impact on Israeli society, the movement would have a great effect on the School for Peace, even without the organization's the participation in the movement.

Resource dependence

Throughout the year of 2023, the SFP was continually dependent on outer sources for funding, including the funding of the new building that was in construction. This included a grant from the Swedish foundation Folke Bernadotte Akademin (Arbman, 2023). Interviewee A expressed the difficulty providing the material and facilities needed for their activities "*with humble budgets*" (Interview A, 2023). Like previous time-period, the SFP has continued to develop documentation of their work to present to donors and is further affected by the demands of quantifiable results from donors (Interview A, 2023; Heideman, 2013: 149, 162).

Institutional pressure

The institutional pressure to professionalize is continued throughout this block as well, just as the pressure from the Israeli state to comply to the norms of the government. “... *a lot of governmental forces are hostile towards us, (...) and it’s been for years but it’s only getting more hostile.*” (Interview A, 2023). The policy of the Israeli government since the breakdown of the Oslo process has created “*two major difficulties for us*” (the SFP). It creates difficulties building an equal dialogue through creating “*a lack of belief among people that dialogue and meeting the other side can make a difference*” as well as through cementing an asymmetrical power relation. This creates further difficulties to form a space where “*both Jews and Palestinians feel they can frankly express their views.*” (Interview E, 2024). This hostility towards the organization and its practice functions as informal coercive pressure, when the government pressures the SFP to comply to the norms of the current rule in Israel (Interview E, 2024; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:245-246).

Social movements

What characterizes this period in the SFP as well as Israeli society is the judicial reform protests that stretched from the 7th of January until the outbreak of violence 7th of October. The School for Peace has both been a part of these protests, with staff and graduates participating in the weekly protests (Interview B, 2023). However, the SFP were a part of the rift in the protest movement. The protest to safeguard the democratic foundations in Israel, did not include protesting against the government’s treatment of Palestinians in Israel. This is something that graduates and staff from the SFP has highlighted and acted against. Some SFP graduates were for example active in the group *There is no democracy with occupation*. “*If you go to the demonstrations, (...) I say, she was in our course (...), they were in a mixed city course, they were in our facilitators course. So I know a lot of people there. (...) The impact is strong.*” (Interview B, 2023). The protest movement have in this way affected the SFP, not only in mobilizing its staff and participants, but brought forward a conversation about what democracy actually means in Israel, and for whom it’s meant for. Interviewee D expressed an insecurity among participants where discussions were centered around the feeling of disconnect for Palestinian participants against the protests. “*If you go to this protest with the Palestinian flag (...) you’re not welcomed (...) For me, democracy is to end the occupation*”. (Interview D, 2023).

The effect on the SFP by the protest movement was not direct in the way that the organization was directly connected by the issue at hand, since it is not in any way connected to the Israeli government. Hence, it did not receive pressure to comply with the demands of the movement. However, it was affected by the mobilization of Israeli society to fight for democracy, and the discussions that rose around the definition of Israeli democracy. Because the SFP in many ways were a part of the movement, there were a high compliance with the norms of the movement in the organization. The organization for example gave support to graduates trying to influence the Israeli Bar Association (Interview B, 2023). However, the SFP also were a part of the division that demanded the condemnation of Israeli occupation on Palestinian territories to be brought forward in the protests. In that way, the organization did not fully comply with the movement, even if it shares many of the norms and opinions of the protest movement.

Themes of change

What largely characterized Block 3 was the impact of the protest movement during the larger part of 2023. As a part of the peace movement in Israel, the School for Peace and its staff was both a part of the protest movement and affected by its impact on Israeli society. The central theme of change of the time-period was the reaction to, and participation in the protest movement. Through changing the political climate in Israel, it led to discussions in courses and program centered around the protests and the political and activist future in Israel. This also focused on Palestinians' place in this movement and the space for Palestinians with Israeli citizenship in Israeli political debates (Interview B, 2023; Interview D, 2023).

6.4 Block 4: October 7th 2023 – May 1st 2024

Events

The attack on Israel the 7th of October and the following war has been one of the most critical events in Israeli history. The war has not just changed the collective security in the region, but the foundations for peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine. The conditions for dialogue have been fundamentally altered and during the first time after the outbreak of war, it was highly difficult to conduct bi-national meetings. The SFP entered a state of crisis and answered to different needs in varied settings where support for both uni- and bi-national dialogue was requested. This included a digital program with Palestinians and Israelis living in Europe, a meeting with residents in the village and local organizations working in

mixed settings such as educational institutions and hospitals (SFPeace, 2023c; ibid. 2023d; ibid. 2023e). After a delay that followed the 7th, the SFP continued with scheduled courses and programs – however, the work of the organization has been focused around crisis management and facilitating encounters colored by tension following the war. The outbreak of the war was (and continues to be in writing moment) an all-encompassing event that affected the entirety of the work of the SFP. Their ability to reach out and recruit potential participants, the conditions enabling dialogue, and the room for peacebuilding has been severely altered (Interview E, 2024). This critical event has altered the conditions for the organization’s practice and could in the end be a critical factor in the organization’s survival.

Resource dependance

Because of its continued dependance on international donors, an important part of the work of the SFP has been to raise awareness of the peacebuilding work that continued in spite of the outbreak of war. The strive to engage with international media was founded in the aim to reach out with their message of the ideas of peace and the need for a political resolution to the conflict (SFPeace, 2023a). However, the contact with media has also been a way for the organization to gain support for their work and possibly reach potential donors. The SFP also openly supported a number of their graduates initiatives, both in Gaza and Israel. This support wasn’t only morally, but when doing this, the SFP clearly gave directions on how someone can donate and support the initiative (SFPeace, 2024i).

Institutional pressure

The SFP reported on critique and repression against those who critique the war in Israel. The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (Adalah), reported on the prosecution of Palestinian students as well as the prohibiting of Palestinians to protest (SFPeace, 2023b). Jewish protest against the war has as well been met with repression from the Israeli state (Reuters, 2024; Interview E, 2024). The repression against those who protest the war has affected the School for Peace as an outspoken peacebuilding actor as well, functioning as informal coercive pressure from Israeli state institutions urging the organization to comply to the norms of the Israeli state. “*Since day one of the war, the Israeli government started a crackdown on Palestinians with Israeli citizenship who voice opinions objecting the war*”. This further harms the opportunity to “*create an equal dialogue*” (Interview E, 2024; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983: 245-246).

Social movements

The protest movement from 2023 has in many forms morphed into a movement urging the return of the hostages and criticizing the Israeli rule's inability to do this. The movement against the war during this time-period, however, was not as strong, and as stated above, these types of movements were met with repression. The SFP however, is part of a movement of organizations in different ways working for peace, that has signed multiple statements demanding a ceasefire (SFPeace, 2023f: *ibid.* 2024g). The divide in the movement between protesters urging the return of the hostages and those protesting the war, resembles in many ways the divide in the protest movement earlier in 2023. The people previously disappointed with the lack of focus on the occupation in the democratization protests, are the ones today demanding a ceasefire. This divide was experienced by the SFP, with the organization being part of the movement urging for peace (Interview B, 2023; Interview D, 2023; SFPeace, 2023f: *ibid.* 2024g).

Themes of change

The last block has naturally largely been characterized by the war and steps the SFP has made to adapt to this new reality. Following the 7th of October and the following war on Gaza, the School for Peace has altered its activities into more crisis-focused state. The focus of the SFP has largely been to respond to needs in their community, facilitating dialogue in different settings, both uni-national and bi-national. Speaking to international media and highlighting the initiatives made by their graduates, they have made efforts to raise awareness and gain support for their method of peacebuilding.

7. Final Discussion

This study shows two main patterns of change in the School for Peace during the time-period of 2017-2024. These consist of an increased focus on graduates from previous courses and programs, where the SFP aims to expand its impact on Israeli society and its role as an actor in the movement for peace. The organization has additionally had a pattern of professionalization, brought on by donor demands as well as a normative pressure from surrounding organizational values (Heideman, 2013: 149, 162; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 245-246). Simultaneously, the organization has adapted their practices to critical events occurring throughout the time-period, for example adapting facilities or focusing on different target groups (Morgeson et al., 2015: 520-529).

The study showed the pattern of different consequences concerning the organization's dependance on donor financing. A level of uncertainty coloring some of the organization's work as well as a pattern of professionalization were the major themes observed as a consequence of resource dependance on donors. This is a pattern observed widely in the field of peacebuilding by non-governmental organizations. These findings are mirrored in the study by Heideman, where "peace pathologies" are outlined caused by donors' expectations on peacebuilders. The argument that peacebuilding is hindered or worsened by this is partly underlined by this study of the SFP, where an uncertainty surrounding project-based work and a greater administrative burden is observed. The importance of maintaining donor support is a critical issue for many peacebuilders that are not tied to any governmental institutions, and therefore the impact of this donor dependency on peacebuilders is of great importance (Heideman, 2013: 149, 162; Gawerc, 2013: 193-194). Findings that underline the argument that the fashion which donors organize the financing of peacebuilding has negative impact on peacebuilders on the ground is of significant interest. However, this thesis also shows a value of greater analysis of the organization's work, providing an opportunity for evolving its practice. The result of this thesis can therefore indicate that greater professionalization in form of analyzing the organization's practices can be an opportunity for peacebuilders. However, this finding is difficult to generalize and different organizations could have different ability to benefit from increased professionalization.

There is a need to highlight that the war that started with the attack the 7th of October is an ongoing and changing situation in writing, and therefore the situation and impact on the School for Peace can have changed after the final draft of this thesis. However, there is an interest to see how the organization has reacted and adapted to this new reality, even in the short time-span that this study is able to cover. This thesis has showed how the SFP has been able to adapt its practices to the needs of participants and the organization's surrounding community. The study shows the ability and resilience of the organization to persist in challenging environments. The room for dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives in Israel/Palestine is however shrinking in pace with the harshening war and the threat against the survival of the School for Peace might be the greatest in a long time. In the words of an interviewee: *"We are in very unpredictable times. If the School for Peace would have to close after 43 years of work, I swear to God, no one will say 'OMG, where did this come from? I'm so surprised!'"* (Interview C, 2023).

This further brings forth the question of organizational survival and the relevance of the question of organizational change. Peacebuilding organizations in hostile environments are often centered around the question of survival (Gawerc, 2013: 193-194). If the aim of an organization in many ways is to persist, survive and be able to function as examples of peaceful relations – why care about organizational change? On the other hand, this study shows why organizational change is important for organization survival. The ability of the School for Peace to adapt, most recently in response to the disruptive war, has enabled the organization to stay relevant to participants and gain legitimacy in donors. The theme of change of professionalization has enabled the organization to stay legitimate in the eyes of donors and to continue to develop its practices. The development of the graduates' program has enabled the SFP to elongate its impact in participants and the peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine. Through this, the organization continues to stay relevant in the movement for peace in Israel/Palestine. Henceforth, this thesis shows the relevance of studying organizational change in peacebuilding actors to further understand organizational survival.

8. Conclusion

This study has answered the question: *What shapes organizational change in the School for Peace?* Looking at the years of 2017-2024 it has through process tracing examined four causal mechanisms (event-, resource dependence-, institutional- and social movement mechanisms). This has shown two larger themes of change, professionalization of the organization and a greater focus on graduates. Professionalization grew as a response to expectations from donors, tied to the mechanism of resource dependence and pressure from norms of surrounding organizations which is tied to the institutional mechanism. The greater professionalization is shown to be both a challenge and opportunity. It creates a greater administrative burden drawing from limited resources but proves also to be an opportunity to analyze and improve their practices. The study shows additionally a larger focus on graduates throughout the time-period, supporting graduates to continue work started in courses. This change is tied to the social movement mechanism, where this focus by the SFP functions as a way to elongate the work started in courses and continue to impact the movement for peace in Israel/Palestine. Throughout the time-period, the organization continues to adapt their practices as a response to critical events, latest to the war breaking out the 7th of October. The war has resulted in a foundational change of the conditions for peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine, including the work of the SFP. However, through adapting to continually changing conditions, the SFP creates improved possibilities for peacebuilding practices and ultimately their survival.

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