

Bratislava ALPICOM Meeting
Bratislava, 4th – 7th November, 2006

Minute

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Open Space Technology, open introductive discussion

After the previous Lillehammer Meeting (15th – 19th July, 2006), the focused idea was to spend more time on the main topics of the partners' common work, sharing training and intervention approaches on conflict resolution, according to the main frame of the ALPICOM process, as "Adult Learning Project in Conflict Management and Non-Violence". In order to develop new methodology for a common understanding, the Bratislava Meeting is based on the structured technology of an "open space". The assumption for this is that people are "emergencies": so many emergencies, instances and "pressures" sitting all around into the circle, which represent the open forum where everyone can say and share things with the others. This Bratislava circle is made by more or less 30 people, with an amount of 600 years of experience, more or less, in their lives: experiences of conflicts and management of conflicts, with some common topics on conflict resolution that everyone is ready to share with the others: about non-violence, changing societies to promote democracy, development of new content and methodology approaches for conflict transformation. All the people meeting in the common "open space" are called to bring ideas, experiences and proposals in the middle, so to share things with all the Bratislava "conveners" and to create a sort of common "agenda", of things to do in the day and one half of the "open space" duration.

There are four principles:

1. focus on people all around in the learning process
2. focus just on what happens here and now that can influence our future
3. focus on the better time and point to start since the time to start is just the right time
4. focus on the energy related to the time in order to draft a good common agenda.

These principles are based on the so-called "law of two feet":

Move yourself according to your own "responsibility". That means: "move from time to time and from space to space in order to disseminate knowledge among each other" or "quite and place yourself just into one topic so to go better and deep", just on your own, according to the way you are, to your own personal responsibility. It's just your way to do things.

The "open space" social technology allows each other to feel free to contribute to the creation of a common agenda of things to do. The first step is to submit (writing it down on a peace of paper) an idea, an issue or a topic you want to discuss with others; then to present (verbally explaining the idea or the topic to the others) the issue in order to make it clear in other ones' minds; the last step is just to call for a time and a space to meet with interested people ("conveners") to discuss. In this way, I found some related topics of the greatest importance for the work of promoting peace learning, peace work and conflict transformation, especially thinking forward about the constitution of a Civilian Peace Corp (or Service) as rapid intervention civilian team to handle conflict with peaceful meanings. And, according to this, I moved, just as convener, to three different small working groups to connect different ideas based on the main frame of the conflict constructive transformation, via the work on confidence building and peace-oriented dialogue:

- a. Dialogue and Negotiations: exercise and discussion [held the first day, in the afternoon, by Hedda Langemyr, from NPA, Norwegian Peace Association]
- b. Civilian Peace Intervention in Conflict cases: how to do? [held the first day, late in the afternoon, by Chloe Foyer-Albaret, from MAN, Mouvement pour un Alternative Non-Violente]
- c. Future of Civil Society in Conflict Intervention [held the second day, in the morning, before the open space common end, by Frode Restad of NPA, already listed above]

The main common issues of the different working groups - before entering into details of discussion – is the approach to non-violence, which was as well the main topic issued in the morning common discussion into the open space, just before the working groups. The problem is to fix categories as pre-assumption of our common work and for action: non-violence as main basic tools for constructive “conflict transformation”. There are nowadays 93.000 peace-workers engaged just and exclusively in military actions (military peace-keeping). It means there’s a need of working for a civilian empowerment, without ideological approach and for a real change in the peace-making model. Of course, non-violence and non-partisanship are different (even if normally related, for the work of a peace-builder of a Civilian Peace Corp) and they depend on the context and the situation. The main question to focus is the following: is non-violence a technique to apply (external approach, which seemed to be pointed out especially by the Slovak team of PDCS, Partnership for a Democratic Change Slovakia) or a process to live (which was the point underlined by Simonetta Costanzo from NOVA, Centre for the Social Innovation, Catalunya, Spain). It means also it’s needed to develop an internal work about non-violence on ethic (not-religious) basis: there’s also a problem of promoting trainings and working for trainers on this point.

Dialogue and Negotiations: exercise and discussion

It’s possible to point out the main approaches for conflict resolution: dialogue and negotiation. The aim of the dialogue-related workshop is to show the relevance of the inter-action between the two approaches, in order to find sustainable solution in handling conflicts.

The aim of the dialogue (as a technique and as a process) is to increase mutual understanding and recognise legitimated, even if different and, sometimes, conflicting, positions, into a conflict situation. On the other hand, the aim of negotiation is to find a common solution in order to solve a problem.

Principles for dialogue are the following:

- a. neutrality (to be impartial in an active way)
- b. meaningless of being right: it’s not enough to be right in a dialogue-building process, because to be right is a zero sum game (because if I think I’m 75% right, it implies that all the others are 25% right – at all and for all)

If I see just two opposing parts (opponents) at the controversial interests and all the different directions focalise into just two point and it tends to produce a sort of polarization of the conflict, so it’s important to diversify, vary and articulate the scenario, in order to face a dimension of major complexity (multi-tasking effort). The main problem is the one to offer a variety which is more explicitly related to complexity of real world in order to offer different points of view and stimulate alternative creative solutions (ADR: Alternative Dispute Resolution), with the effect of changing stereotypes.

On the other hand, negotiation’s topics are:

- a. the position: the important to find a BATNA (Best Alternative To Negotiate an Agreement) or, in other words, to find a way to explore and put on value the main person, thing or circumstance to reach a shared agreement. To address a BATNA, things to do are: 1) handling all the useful information available, 2) knowing as much as possible the background, 3) focusing on social/cultural environment which drives intentions into actions
- b. the events: the importance to address the principle of fault-judgment-condemnation which is a pre-assumption for the action in all the reconciliation process in the history. Under this point of view, the position issue is important also to fix a rank of priority to solve opposition, out-line responsibility and find out a BATNA.

Points for creative negotiations are: 1) positions: what we say we want; 2) interests: what we really want; 3) needs: what we need and how much we are in a position to share. These are also pre-assumptions for creative sustainable solutions.

Civilian Peace Intervention in Conflict cases: how to do?

The basis for the discussion upon civilian peace intervention in conflict circumstances is provided by the examples offered by MAN (already listed above) and IRCN (Institut de Recherche sur la resolution Non-Violente des Conflits, France with the power point introduction made by Sebastien Babaud). The French Committee for Civilian Peace Intervention is a platform made by nine different organizations, founded in 1996, concerned on civilian peace intervention and, most specifically, on Civilian Peace Service [CPS]. The main aims of this civil society based platform are: 1) doing advocacy on the issue of CPS and 2) elaborate training for civilian peace missions. The trainings provided are based on the following topics:

- a. individual attitudes (in order to make personal disposition fit with the different conflict cases)
- b. team-work in conflict contexts (in order to multiply effects of civilian personnel deployed in conflict areas)
- c. “mandate” for peace-intervention mission: that means “to know how to be and how to do”.

It’s important to deal with peace-oriented group dynamics: managing conflicts, leading missions and emergency decision making. The main field for a civilian peace intervention are:

1. protective accompaniment to save civilian in the fire cross line or in danger situation
2. mediation to facilitate the circulation of good communication among the parts
3. observers role to monitor human rights and civilian and social rights to protect
4. managing security
5. managing with civil societies and political authorities.

There are a lot of open problems. First of all, it’s needed to study the linkage between training and deployment, not just to answer to a special need but in order to prepare a peace corp to apply to different kinds of conflict situations. In this sense. The importance is to grant effectiveness to this deployment, and to provide before the basic tools to develop a role into a specific context.

Of course, the main problem is the “mandate”, and this requires a clear focus on the context, the problem and the mission in order to grant sustainability through local context adherence.

The final focus for this kind of trainings is to grant strong expertise and to let a lot of people from NGOs take part into the peace-keeping operation system. There are different examples about different

ways to develop a common understanding: for instance, in Austria there a military approach in constituting a CPS, while in Germany there's a very good civilian based back-ground.

The last step of the training process is not an examination, but a talk with the trainer whom evaluate the trainer with.

According to this frame, it's quite clear that the mission itself is a part (the major part) of the training process, in the sense that the mission itself will constitute an event to enrich the trainer on time of deployment on the field. The process itself will continue with the monitoring and the final evaluation of the mission, so it's important to have people from conflict areas and different back-grounds in the training process as trainers and trainee in order to multiply effects.

At the time of deployment on the field, the real issue is how much to collaborate with "security institutions" on the field, given that the security mission of a civilian peace corp is just accompaniment and dialogue, which means it's completely different and uses completely different tools from than the official one. In order to develop a transparent Civ/Mil collaboration, it has to be clear that a CPS is not deployed to grant "military security" or "personal security", but just to assure the development of the condition for the "human security", according to the categorization of the term made by UN officials. A CPS is not interested at all to enter the field of military security because is interested in granting an adherence with the civilian defence mission (NPD: Non Violent Popular Defence).

The last thing to point out. During the working group discussion, a lot of interventions stressed on the point related to "best practices" catalogues. The importance and the relevance of a well balanced and a well experienced training depends also on the fact that conflicts are not made by two parts and on issue, because there are much more parts, interests and issues involved in the nowadays conflicts. So, how is a multi-tasking (like the conflict is) well experiencing and well balanced training? It has to be considered that a conflict is a product of the explosion of many different contradiction up to the level of the violence; it also means that a conflict rises from two different gaps: 1) a decision authority gap and 2) a social/structural gap. These gaps occurred with the failure of constituted authorities and this led to the escalation of the violence, which has never just one reasons, but many different ones, according to the different perception of each actor. Other fundamental issue to out-line in the experiencing trainings for conflict areas deployment are the ones connected to the social structure of the conflict context: a) gender issue; b) power sharing and c) related culture.

Future of Civil Society in Conflict Intervention

As focused in the second morning open space related working group too, there are many different aspects in the field of training for peace-building, especially if you consider the multi-lateral actors within the UN system.

In 2005, it was established a Peace-building Commission (PBC) inside the UN architecture in order to provide strategies to be implemented for emerging violent conflicts, especially in regard of development and transitional countries. Reading statistics, the probability that a conflict occurs/emerges depends on the security forms/approaches provided by multilateral presence under US mandate. It means that the way the UN Peace-keeping missions area deployed and implemented on the field is really important to grant security and the stability in the targeted context.

For the emerging of a violent conflict, it clear that the crucial period is the electoral one, because it causes a polarization in the social and political system and this is crucial for the actors of violence to emerge. The UNDP has a lot of funds and expertise to help countries to develop strategies and programmes for development. Another fundamental UN actor is the Peace-keeping Operation Office (PKO) which takes care about peace-operations mandate (the role of "blue helmets"). Very important is

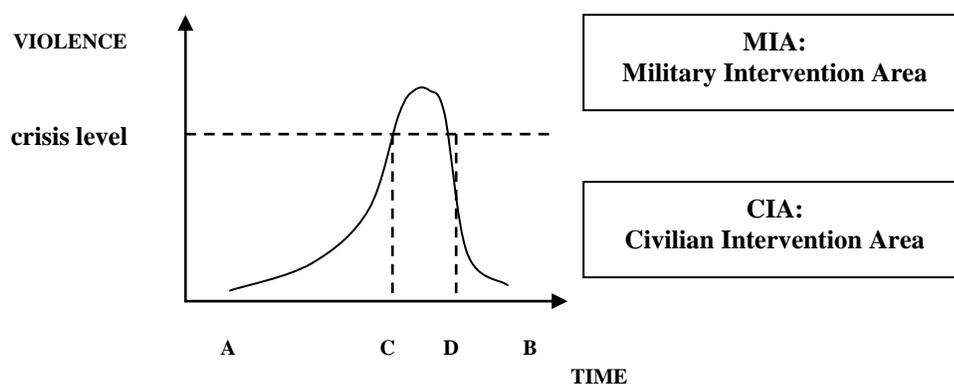
the role of civil society in implementing development based strategies and promoting dialogue among the parts, also on the institutional level.

Talking about the available financial resources, the budget is 250 million USD for PBC which was used to found two specific programmes, the first one in Sierra Leone and the second one in Burundi, as pilot experiences in order to solve the problem of relapse. Regarding Peace-keeping, there are 16 on-going peace-keeping operations, with a comprehensive budget of 5 billion USD (finally, it's also important to mention that UNDP has 6 billion USD budget). Peace-keeping requires a lot of fund and longest operations as it's clearly showed by the duration of the different missions, starting from the most ancient one (UNFiCyp, in Cyprus) up to the recent one (UNIFIL plus, in Lebanon).

As Lebanese mission shows, the most important issue in the peace-making operation is the inter-action with civil society, especially the local one. For example, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation is now providing expertise for civil and ethno-political conflicts, starting from Sierra Leone context. Especially from the Sixties, the voice of civil society is getting louder and louder and, inside the reformation package for UN system, there are three main topics which is important to stress out:

1. the relation between humanitarian and development and the form of intervention for a civilian peace service in these two aspects,
2. the different approaches required by long term – wide scale and brief term – small scale,
3. the introduction of a representation of civil society inside the General Assembly of the UN, which is to be interpreted as trans-national civil society with its own issues and topics (even if, for this point, it's needed that civil society starts talking on international level with only one and representative voice, and this is a main problem to solve).

Definitively: PBC counts 250 million USD and is now engaged in Sierra Leone and Burundi missions and its mandate is to face conflict explosions (pre-conflict: AC); UNDP counts 6 billion USD and has to deal with programmes and strategies for development and transition (ongoing mandate: AB); PKO counts 5 billion USD and aces the consequences of the conflict, sometimes with for of cooperation with civil society peace-making intervention (post-conflict mandate: BD).



As it was issued by Paul Collier, the strategy of the civil society intervention in the violent crisis is to intervene in the pre-conflict time (prevention) and/or in the post-conflict period (re-composition); in the cycle of the violence, the post-conflict peace-building is also a peace-making oriented strategy in order to avoid the explosion of further violence (so re-conciliation is also a prevention strategy in the direction of the constructive peace-making). In order to prevent violent explosion, civil society intervene into three main aspects: 1) social; 2) economic and especially 3) cultural (reconciliation, grass-roots negotiation, dialogue-making and confidence building), and this is the strict mandate of a CPS.

For what regard the EU system, we have in this case three institutional levels: the European Commission (EC) deals with development related topics; the European Parliament is involved in the planning and the political direction of the general policies of the Union (for example the 1999 recommendation in order to constitute a European Civilian Peace Corp, ECPC) and the European Council, which is responsible of the ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy). Under the council is place the Council Secretariat, which is in charge for the preparation of civilian forces for training and mission under the frame of the ESDP. The EU policy focuses on four major civilian tasks: 1) police; 2) civil protection; 3) civil administration; 4) rule of law, which require entirely either a “job profile” and a “training setting”. For all these tasks, Maarti Athisaari, former President of the Republic of Finland and now main European Mediator for the Kosovo Issue, proposed the constitution of a European Union Training Centre (EUTC) as a sort of network fulfilled by each Member State based training organizations from civil society, with the specific tasks to connect the training setting for tasks 1-2 and tasks 3-4 which are strictly related.

The crucial tasks’ chain for the civilian intervention in conflict areas is 3-4: from human rights observation and monitoring to democracy building through the establishment of transparent institution and the empowerment of context based civil society (community building) and then from the insurance of the rule of law and the development of social justice in order to contribute to positive changing societies. In this sense, it’s needed to consider that both EC and European Council established a ESDC (European security and Defence College) under the frame of the ESDP, which was a Franco-German proposal with the aim to foster the strategic rank of the European Defence System (but, on the operational level, the structure does not exist yet).

One of the other useful task to be followed is the establishment of the CPT (Conflict prevention Team) as a rapid reaction team in charge for immediate quick intervention in case of immediate escalation of violence and rapid break-down of the community based institutions. Of course, a specific task, in this sense, is required to the ECPC.

Conclusion of the meeting session

Finally: how do we do? The main important issue to focus is the following: which is the role of civil society in conflict transformation? At the end of the last meeting group, different issues were focused in the discussion.

Sebastien Babaud [IRNC]:

- a. need for a better clarification of the terms (prevention/management/transformation)
- b. importance to valorise the peace-keeping operation missions (with a special regard to EU-linked missions).

Bernardo Venturi [CSDC, Centro Studi Difesa Civile, Italia]:

- a. relevance to know very well the institutional level
- b. task to promote a specific civilian formation/training – for example, related to the UNIFIL plus mission in Lebanon, according to the efforts promoted by the Round Table for Cooperation Mission in Lebanon under the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- c. importance to be concerned on specific tasks for civil society peace intervention: especially democracy, human rights and reconciliation.

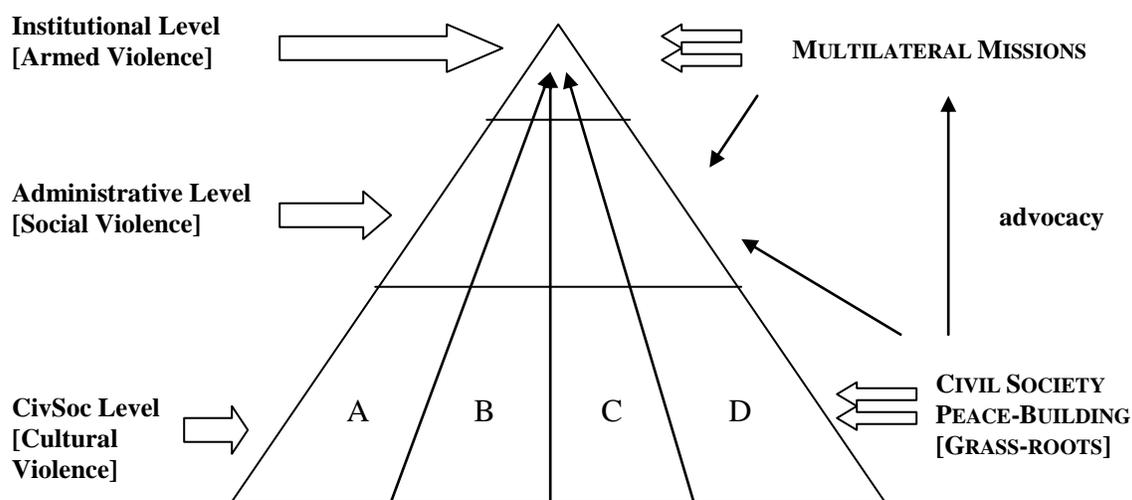
Arno Truger [ASPR, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Austria]:

- a. need for documentation about EPLO (European Peace-building Liaison Office)’s role
- b. better understanding about ECPC’s profile (since it’s expression of civil society direct involvement in conflict transformation even placed under institutional frame and grant)
- c. better understanding about the relation between EPLO and the ECPC project (since EPLO is a lobbying network also promoting ECPC).

Frode Restad [NPA]:

- a. focus point: which is the role of ALPICOM as a European Learning Network in this sense? How do we fill into this European and International discussion? It depends clearly on what each organisation is conceived for, because ALPICOM is a semi-structured network and it works much more as a process than as a process in itself
- b. the relevance of the ALPICOM learning process in order to face the challenge of civil society empowerment in its institutional building, in its technical and methodological skills and, final, in its capacity to constitute a peace intervention in conflict areas consists in the good understanding of nowadays complex conflicts on their different (multi-tasking) level.

It implies four levels of civil society grass-root tasks: 1) human rights and democracy (A); 2) economy/society (B); 3) civilian protection and accompaniment (C); 4) culture and reconciliation (D).



Conclusion of the Open Space laboratory

- 1 sedimentation tool (“Sharing Training and Intervention Approaches to Conflict Resolution and Peace-building and Related Topics”, Open Space, November 5th – 6th, Bratislava) produced at the end of the discussion inside the different working groups with a collection of reports, a PDCS issue and the mailing list of all the participants at the Bratislava Meeting
- next date: EN.CPS (European Network for Civilian Peace Service) Meeting in Berlin on March, 2007, eventually using again an Open Space Methodology to enhance discussion before the decision making process.

Summary

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