

THE JOURNEY FROM INTERGROUP ENMITY TO PEACEFUL CONFLICT HANDLING

**Peacebuilding Experiences of local NGOs in the former
Yugoslavia: Multiple Approaches for Undermining
Intergroup Animosities and Dealing With Differences**

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Results

Introduction

Overview

In this introduction, the research foci of this dissertation are shortly revisited. These consist of the investigation of mechanisms which aim at the reduction of post-war intergroup hostilities and at moving the war-affected societies towards a more peaceful coexistence via approaches for dealing with differences. The chapter continues with a section reminding of the value involvement of non-violence and equality in the research aims, constituting the basis of this research project. The succeeding section points to the idiosyncratically rich experiences of LNGOs with working at the grassroots level, while indicating that it is the persistence of hostility at this level which is a *sine qua non* for a sustained wide societal participation in violent conflict. It will then be explicated how, in the style of grounded theory methodology, the research foci shifted during the field research in the light of LNGOs' emphases.

This explication is followed by the presentation of the major results of the field study, commencing with a short portrayal of the prevalence of intergroup enmity at the time of the study. The major sections addressing the chief results of the study, in turn, are structured into two main parts: The first one presents LNGO measures for "improving intergroup relations by reducing enmity and by challenging dichotomous group categorisations", while the

second part engages with LINGO approaches towards “dealing with differences”.

Research aims

The overarching research aim of this dissertation is the examination of mechanisms which might have the potential of being conducive to the reduction of post-war intergroup hostilities, and to moving the war-affected societies towards a more peaceful coexistence, as mentioned in the previous chapter. This aim is embedded in the more general agenda of peace research, which is the endeavour to contribute to the global reduction of direct violence (as part of working towards, in Galtung’s taxonomy, “negative peace”, e.g. 1990), and, related to this, to the perception of the Other as a “fellow human being” (Ramsbotham et al., 2005: 244; cf. Curle, 1995: 139) as the long-term aim of “cultural peacebuilding” (ibid., drawing on Galtung’s term, op.cit.).

In the second theory chapter it was argued that within a post-war setting characterised by the prevalence of enemy-images some degree of cultural peacebuilding is a pre-condition for the broad acceptance of structural peacebuilding, since a collaborative planning and implementation of structural peacebuilding measures – involving former war parties – is unlikely to happen as long as the conflict opponent is seen as inherently untrustworthy in character (cf. Zartman, 2005: 50; Kriesberg, 2005: 77).

Similarly, in the first theory chapter it was indicated that mechanisms for addressing the ‘conflict issues’, to which Fisher et al. refer (2000: 14, cited above), cannot be expected to be fruitful, as long as enemy images are present.

Without the reduction of intergroup hatred, there is little prospect for either a cooperative intergroup analysis of needs (envisaged by the theory family of conflicts which is oriented on interests and needs; Burton, 1990, 1999; Azar, 1986; Kelman, 1999; Fisher & Ury, 1999), or an open intergroup communication procedure of mutual understanding and the creation of a common view of reality (envisaged by the constructivist theory family of conflicts; e.g. Väyrynen, 2001; Jabri, 1996; Gergen, 1999); neither are gestures of reconciliation likely to be instigated, such as apologies or compensation attempts, as long as the opponents' side is regarded as responsible for the past war. Correspondingly, it was argued that the reduction of intergroup hostilities and prejudices is of pivotal significance when peacebuilding activities are initiated.

While reducing intergroup hostilities is essential for structural peacebuilding and for work on underlying conflict issues, it is, as mentioned, also regarded as an aim in itself. The long-term agenda of peacebuilding is conceptualised here, drawing on Curle (1995: 139) and Ramsbotham et al. (2005: 244), as partially constituted by the re-humanisation of the opponent. The recognition of the others as 'fellow human beings' (Ramsbotham et al., *ibid.*) can be conceived as equivalent to having overcome intergroup animosities under the condition that these 'fellow human beings' of the former opponent group are regarded as possessing equal rights as the people of the own side.

Another characteristic of a peaceful society is by definition the absence of direct violence, which implies that the society needs to incorporate capacities for non-violent ways of dealing with emerging conflicts; this is the classical endeavour of conflict resolution and conflict transformation models.

These two broad aims, i.e. the fostering of recognition via the reduction of mistrust and the capacity to deal non-violently with conflicts, are interrelated insofar as the perception of the opponent as inherently bad in character suggests that dealing collaboratively with the opponent is not possible. Conversely, a transformation of the relationship in the direction of mutual recognition entails that conflicts are not solved by the forceful assertion of the one side's aims irrespective of the other side's interests.

There is no automatism, however, from granting the former opponent the same rights (as those granted to members of the own side) towards peacefully dealing with conflicts, since even conflicts among people who would allocate themselves to the nominally same society or sub-group are obviously not necessarily solved non-violently. The sort of recognition that would imply nonviolent conflict handling is recognition in a more comprehensive sense, namely that the other's interests or needs are fully respected. Fostering the alternative route of nonviolent conflict handling consists of establishing nonviolent capacities for dealing with conflict as a widespread skill and standard norm. In any case, when dealing with conflicts between members of former war parties, reducing hostilities and prejudices between these former opponents (cf. Zartman, 2005: 50; Kriesberg, 2005: 77) is likely to be a prerequisite before conflict parties are willing to engage in nonviolent conflict handling procedures.

The main foci configuring the research framework informed by these research aims prior to the field research were constituted furthermore by an investigation of the particulars of conflict handling, in relation to the aspects discussed in the first chapter: Whilst the Burtonian premise – according to

which the satisfaction of a stipulated list of needs is necessary and sufficient for conflict resolution (Burton, 1990, 1999) – was rejected, the potentially significant role of needs and interests in the escalation and de-escalation was acknowledged as a field of high heuristic value. Similarly, whilst the idea of creating a joint comprehensive view of reality was assessed as unrealistic, the comparison of the framework conditions of Habermasian discourse ethics and ideal speech situation (Habermas, 1986, ; cf. Finlayson, 2005; cf. Jabri, 1996) with local principles of communicative practices was regarded as possibly elucidating. In other words, part of the initial research orientation was to investigate the procedural framework used by LNGOs for intergroup communication, as well as to examine whether there are regularities in the substance by which LNGOs attempt to build bridges during intergroup encounters. Candidates for this substance were – in addition to Burton's (1990, 1999) "fundamental needs" – material needs, shared (super-ordinate) intergroup goals, as well as needs and interests understood more general and possibly idiosyncratic (as opposed to pre-supposed by a stipulated list). Even when, however, it is attempted to solve conflicts non-violently by taking the interests and values of the other seriously, the interests and values can be contradictory to a degree that the differences appear to be unbridgeable, so that the term 'intractable conflict' (Zartman, 2005: 47-64) or 'radical disagreement' can be employed (Ramsbotham et al., 2005; 2010). How LNGOs deal with such deep differences was part of the second focus of this research, while initially assuming that the differences would be less acute after the dissolution of enemy images.

In summary, the areas of investigation developed prior to the field research were: the potential of needs and common aims in reducing intergroup enmity, dealing with past war events, the potential of Habermasian framework principles of discourse ethics as well as the ideal speech situation as guide posts for intergroup exchanges, and practices of dealing with “radical disagreements”. These main areas of interests functioned as orientation posts at the outset of the field research, and were re-oriented in the process of the research in light of the emphases expressed by the research participants.

Peacebuilding as norm-guided

As a form of activity which is striving for social change, any peacebuilding agenda is inevitably a norm-guided activity, aspiring explicitly or implicitly towards particular aims, which in turn are inherently based on standards or values, as argued previously. Value judgments are thereby an inherent aspect of any goal-oriented societal involvement. When the aim of peacebuilding is defined as aiming for the recognition of the other as a fellow human being – and thereby also as striving for nonviolent ways for dealing with conflicts – there is no room for manoeuvring attempts to accommodate discriminatory local practices. A minimal value basis constituted by conceptualisations of peacebuilding is needed, which sets at least an approximate framework for peacebuilding endeavours.

The value aims of non-violence and equality which form the basis for this research project informed on the one hand the selection of the research foci,

while on the other hand stipulating the desired direction of change. As was argued earlier, contrary to the positions of positivism and relativism, values do not need to be regarded as arbitrary. A possible ground for values relates on the one hand to the mentioned fact/value entanglement. When e.g. factual beliefs in the superiority of certain human groups turn out to be false (Putnam, 2005: 13), or when the plurality of human capacities becomes recognised (Parekh, 2008), components of the basis of discrimination become eroded. Another pillar buttressing a value ground is formed by the quasi-universal approval of some basic values (Putnam, 2008: 377-88; cf. Booth, 1995), accounted for by Putnam (ibid.) through the term “appeal” of values, as indicated.

This ground formed by values is not conceived as formed by certainty, but by trust (Putnam, 1992; cf. Wittgenstein, 1969), as neither relations to factual beliefs nor references to a quasi-universal “appeal” of some values can overcome the scepticism of those who do not share these values. This reliance on trust, however, is not a characteristic which is idiosyncratic to moral values. Trust is a pivotal precondition for all of our statements (and all of our actions), as Wittgenstein (1969) taught us. “I really want to say that a language-game is only possible if one trusts something (I did not say ‘can trust something’)” (§509). As mentioned, one has to treat at least some fundamental assumptions as certain; “If you are not certain of any facts, you cannot be certain of the meaning of your words either” (§114). The significant conclusion is that values are in a similar epistemic position as factual assumptions; both can be part of the trusted basis of fundamental assumptions.

The semblance of values' compared to factual assumptions' epistemic status has another dimension, insofar as values as well as factual assumptions are required for motivating action. Without values, human action (and language) would be void of direction, and without factual assumptions, it would be void of a way. Values and factual beliefs are therefore forming together the inevitable basis on which action and language become possible, and which therefore need to be trusted.

The rationale for investigating experiences of local NGOs

Investigating activities which attempt to contribute to a reduction of direct violence – by fostering the re-humanisation and recognition of the former opponent as well as by building capacities of nonviolent conflict handling – is at the centre of the present dissertation. As these aims appear to be outside of the immediate foci of IGOs, practice experiences of local NGOs were at the centre of this research project.

LNGOs can be expected to have – being part of the grassroots level of society ('Level 3' in the classification of Lederach, 1997: 51-5) – the richest experience with work on this local level. It is the sustainment of group categorisations and hatred on this level which is the *conditio sine qua non* for a broad societal participation in violent conflict. While some politicians might fuel conflicts and wage wars due to self-interests in solidifying their own power basis (cf. Anderson, 1999; Silber & Little, 1996), support from a large part of the society depends on the broad acceptance of enemy images justifying war as an appropriate means to deal with the adversary. Activists of local NGOs are likely to have detailed knowledge within the societies concerned of the past development and present prevalence of group

categorisations and prejudices. This insider position might entail a particular degree of creativity, claimed by Prendergast (2006: 158) to be characteristic of for this level: “the greatest vitality and innovation in peacebuilding are to be found at the grassroots level, with diverse responses and initiatives being undertaken that involve both external agencies and internal actors.”

The selection of the specific LNGOs, approached with the request for participation in this research project, was guided by the mentioned research interests, to the effect that the selection of the sample followed the principle of theoretical sampling, being “aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness” (Charmaz, 2006: 6; cf. Charmaz, 2003: 265). Guided by the research interest, most of the visited LNGOs had been selected on the basis of their endeavours of working towards the improvement of intergroup relations. (The only additional NGOs included into the sample were two associations lobbying for specific interest groups – the one for war veterans and the other for war victims; these associations were included to gain further information on the needs of these war affected groups.)

The refinement of the research foci in interaction with the development of the results

Research foci were relocated and refined in the process of the engagement with the experiences of LNGO activists in the following ways:

NGO activists’ responses indicated an orientation towards a comparatively concrete level of communicative frameworks, rather than referring to abstract

Habermasian principles of argumentation. They pointed towards cultivating communicative practices which are supporting self-expression, exchange, personalisation, and reflection. NGO activities aiming at the reduction of intergroup enmity followed multiple routes, instead of being solely concentrated on intergroup collaboration on common goals or correction of stereotypes by mediation.

By giving space for stories of victimisation, for a better understanding of past motivations, for discovering intergroup commonalities, and for reflection on double standards, it was enabled that prejudices on imagined homogenous groups could be questioned and images of the own group's moral superiority could be challenged. By fostering interpersonal encounters which unearthed heterogeneous experiences and motivations within groups, and by building on commonalities in values, needs, war-related experiences and feelings, enemy images could be undermined.

As expected, activists did not tend to employ preconceived lists of needs during their work on intergroup divisions and conflicts. The needs of LINGO projects' recipients seemed to be very different depending on the particular target group or individuals, as well as on the time elapsed since local war events, and on the particular local setting. These specificities imparted significance to an introductory phase of the projects which consisted of an extended pre-analysis phase and envisioning processes. This introductory phase constituted the informational, visionary and relationship-building foundation for subsequent steps.

One of the topics which were wide-spread across settings was material scarcity of target group members, since those areas which were seriously

affected by the war were often areas which had been subjected to economic decline, and since the idiosyncratic income conditions of war victims and war veterans were often constrained. Therefore, projects on the material basis could have the potential to reduce a source of frustration while providing an intergroup connector of high relevance.

A further project field which loomed large in some LNGO activity profiles was constituted by fostering the recognition that some members of the outgroup were victimised as well, and by giving assistance to participants' dealing with traumatisation. For the endeavour of constructing bridges across groups, dealing with values played a pivotal role in some activities, either in the form of finding ways for dealing with differences, or through common values which provide a common ground for envisioning an intergroup future.

In the field of dealing with disagreements, the LNGOs' orientations followed a variety of principles and strategies. Features which were widely depicted as valuable were elements of signalling respect by listening, and exploring the nature of the conflict in terms of underlying needs, values and background assumptions. Depending on the contingencies of these underlying differences, diverse specific approaches were expressed as useful, varying from clarifications of misunderstandings, to finding viable modes of cohabiting, such as establishing a communicative framework in which disagreements can be continued, based on shared values.

The local NGO's practice experiences as reflected in the results of the research project are outlined in detail in the remaining sections of this chapter. The presentation of these results is structured into two main sections. The first main section, section I, comprises those projects and

aspects of LNGO activities whose overarching aim is to reduce the intergroup division created by former conflicts and war events; the second main section, section II, encompasses those LNGO activities which are directed towards the building of capacities for dealing with disagreements and differences.

Prior to these two main sections, a separate section will present activists' references to the prevalence of enemy images in the former Yugoslavia, setting the stage for the topic of section one, i.e. the reduction of enmity and of dichotomous group categorisations.

The two main sections have the following major subsections:

I) Improving intergroup relations by reducing enmity and by challenging dichotomous group categorisations

- I.A) *Improving intergroup relations by projects on the community/municipality level*, rendering intergroup commonalities visible; fostering a superordinate identity and undermining prejudices, partially through interpersonal contacts based on shared interests and needs
- I.B) *Working directly with people who were very seriously affected by the war*, supporting personal encounters which fragment the image of the outgroup through the provision of personal information about individuals, so that the internal heterogeneity of the opponent's group is rendered visible; at the same time, bringing commonalities in war-related experiences, feelings, and motivations to the foreground which cross-cut nominal group memberships

- I.C) *Challenging enemy images in the wider public* by presenting examples which deviate from their stereotypes, by presenting role models who have learnt from the war experiences, and by raising awareness for the suffering inflicted by members of the own side, so that the imagination of the own side's moral superiority is undermined
- I.D) *Learning from the past and planning for the future*: creating spaces for joint intergroup reflections on the past of the societies; envisioning desired future societal states, which can support the discovery and development of common values

II. Dealing with differences

- II.A) General mechanisms for dealing with conflicts
- II.B) Dealing with deep intergroup differences

The presence of enemy images in the former Yugoslavia

The situation in the former Yugoslavia at the time of the study underlying the present disquisition was described by the participating activists as still characterised by hostilities within substantial parts of the previously warring groups. It was pointed to the persisting depth of the cleavages between parts of the societies.

Measures aiming at the reduction of enemy images can be analytically described as challenging at least one of three characteristics of enemy images: α) an attribution of certain characteristics to members of one group

to members of another which imply that the other group is the threat to the own group, so that cooperation is impossible and opposition is inevitable, β) an exaggerated belief in the homogeneity of the characteristics ascribed to the other group, and γ) – related to the former points – a sense of moral superiority which is based on these assumed characteristics and on beliefs about historic events.

Generalised attributions, the homogenisation of the perception of the own and the other group, as well as a belief in the own moral superiority, are reflected in the following quotations. These citations express the claim of each group concerned that it was only defending something against a devious other, placing the blame for the war(s) on the opponent:

A Croatian will say “somebody attacked us first so we retaliated”. Serbs will say, we are not blame, because we were trying to defend Yugoslavia.¹

For example, I banalise, Serbs are declaring that they were defending Yugoslavia. Croats say that they are defending their country, their right for independence. And Bosnians are saying that they are defending their own lives, because Croats and Serbs attacked them. For example in Sarajevo, every man who fought will say “I defend Sarajevo, I defend my own house, my town, my street, my family”. In these wars everyone is defending. Every single ex-combatant will say to you “I went to war to

¹ Activist of a local war veteran and peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, June 2007

defend” something. And if you hear that you will conclude that in the region of ex-Yugoslavia all wars were defending wars.²

People in Kosovo [...] see themselves as victims in the hands of Serbs in the last war.³

If you ask the Bosnians, they will say the Serbs were the aggressors, they didn't defend, they attacked something. But if you ask Serbs, they will say, we were defending our people, we were afraid that the same thing would happen as in World War II, and it was violent act that Bosnia has become independent, because the referendum for example was boycotted by Serbs, so it was in a way a violent decision.⁴

[All sides] take the attitude that [...] they were victims [...] “we deserve the compensation, we deserve all the sympathy.”⁵

All of these quotations state that every of these mentioned ‘ethnic’ group sees the own group’s involvement in war as a necessity arising from the actions of at least one opponent, implying that the opponent’s intentions had posed a serious threat, which became translated into the severe victimisation of the own group. This perception of threat appears to extend into the post-war period:

² Activist M of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

³ Activist H of a human rights LNGO in Pristina, Kosovo, June 2007

⁴ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

⁵ Activist of a local peacebuilding organisation in Vukovar, Croatia, July 2007

Prejudices and stereotypes, [...] fear and all kinds of prejudices that people after the war had, that people were murderers here, they were afraid to approach to the other side.⁶

These stereotypes and prejudices came and come to the surface in multiple forms:

The International Criminal Court in Den Hague, their legitimacy is disputed when they are dealing with our people, so to say. So in Serbia it is disputed when it deals with [indicted Serbs], but in Croatia it is disputed when it is about crimes committed by the Croat side. They don't dispute the legitimacy when it deals with crimes committed on our side, that's perfectly ok. And that's a problem.⁷

When Vukovar fell, it was like one platoon of these people, with beards, with a black flag, singing, the song is like "we will have meat, we will have meat, we will slaughter the Croats". So this was the song. And [these symbols] were re-appearing to the present. And also in Croatian, [...] there is like, now it's a band, but you can see the black, for example, black T-shirt or shirts, it's symbol of the Ustasha, because they were in black. For example, right-wing party in Croatia, they were all, from the beginning, they were all in black. They will not openly say that they are like Ustashes, but to the other side, this looked very stress. Using these symbols just put up the flames; before the war, during the war, and

⁶ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁷ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

maybe, for sure after the war the people are still speaking about what happened in Bleiburg.⁸

There are a lot of myths that are present in the minds of the people, and to a large extent it is also being built into the education. They're fostered through education into their heads, saying myths how Serbs love freedom and their freedom-loving nation, and they are always on the right side, and the Croats are like this and like that.⁹

It's not going better, it's going worse. Probably two weeks ago, one week ago in [X], it's a pretty big city, about 35000 people there, they beat two Serbs, they beat them, it was ugly to see their faces in the newspaper, only because they are Serbs.¹⁰

A pop-singer, he has been around for quite a while [...] He sings not only anti-Serb-songs, but anti-Semitic-songs, his supporters attend [...] in black shorts [as a reference to Ustashe], give the Nazi salute or the Ustashe salute. [...] He's been here, he is extremely popular, nobody really does anything about him, they play his music on the radio all the time.¹¹

In the light of such animosities, territorial partition of the conflict parties might be suggested as a presumptive solution. Paris (2004: 181- 5) warns against this option since it sends wrong messages, i.e. it signals that living together

⁸ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁹ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹⁰ Activist T of local peacebuilding organisation C in Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

¹¹ Activist of a local peacebuilding organisation in Vukovar, Croatia, July 2007

is impossible, thereby entailing that people are forced out of their homes. Along these lines, an activist argued that additional secessions (discussing the case of enclaves in Kosovo) might instigate further upheavals in the region. The alternative suggested by this activist, and by the norms of peacebuilding, is multiethnic cohabitation under the condition of mutual recognition.

[Serbian enclaves in Kosovo] becoming part of Serbia [...] is not a good recipe because this will just trigger another domino effect in the Balkans and Former Yugoslavia, it will not end with that. [...] there is an Albanian community, majority living in the Southern part of Serbia [...] If Serbs in the North decide to secede from Kosovo, this will trigger a reaction whereby Albanians of Southern Serbia will want to join Kosovo, and other secessions like this. So, the challenge of the International Community is clear. Trying to keep the boundaries of Kosovo as they are, by introducing and implementing a multi-ethnic culture, to make this project become alive.¹²

Corresponding to the aspects of enemy images outlined above, trustbuilding endeavours by the LNGOs can be described as aiming for at least one of the following changes: A) amend those assumption about characteristics or practices of the other group which imply that antagonism between the groups determines the only form of possible relationship, B) render intra-group diversities visible and foster the unearthing of personalising information, to challenge the perception of an homogenous outgroup, and to uncover

¹² Activist of a local human rights organisation in Pristina, Kosovo, June 2007

deviations from prejudices; C) bringing commonalities with the opponent to the foreground, either by collaborating collectively on shared aims and needs, or by unearthing interpersonal overlaps e.g. common war-related experiences, feelings, and motivations; D) undermine the sense of the own side's moral superiority by reflecting on war events and recognising the crimes and suffering inflicted by the own side. These aspects A to D will reappear – to varying degrees depending on the field of LNGO activities – within the subsequent section I.

I) Improving intergroup relations by reducing enmity and by challenging dichotomous group categorisations

The NGO activists' experiences suggest that the reduction of intergroup mistrust can be mediated by multifarious routes, which will be re-encountered across multiple LNGO measures presented in this major section. As just mentioned, LNGO measures which will be encountered can be categorised in the following way: Creating encounter settings in which the initial interaction context redefines or reframes the interaction in the direction of more cooperative interaction patterns than suggested by the interaction norms of the past; reduction of dichotomous categorisations by personalisation, by the perception of commonalities such as group-overarching/superordinate goals or similar war-related experiences and feelings, by challenging the perception of the own group's moral superiority, by rendering commonalities visible which cross-cut group memberships, and by shedding light on the internal heterogeneity of the groups.

One commonality between LNGO projects that are working towards intergroup trustbuilding is that they comprise a redefinition of group interaction patterns by 'setting the tone' at the initial stage of project-related interactions, in the form of a framework which is conducive to norms of respect, understanding, and cooperation. The approaches introduced above as '1a)' to '1e)' comprise two central aspects: the creation of a more respectful, cooperative atmosphere is created by setting a communicative framework oriented on listening, transparency, and exchange in order to encourage recognition and understanding, plus a focus on 'connectors' instead of 'dividers' (to borrow the terms of Anderson, 1999). While some activists stressed the significance of addressing most contentious or 'hot' issues as well, discussions of these contentious issues were preceded by trustbuilding measures.

The following sub-sections will look at specific trustbuilding approaches in more detail, covering ways via which LNGO activists attempt to buttress change in the direction of improving intergroup relationships by breaking down enemy images and building trust.

I.A) Improving intergroup relations by projects on the community/municipality level

1) Approaching local residents with respect and transparency, with an emphasis on listening towards their experiences, needs and interests, to impart a sense of recognition, which also could promote trust in the project as a basis for following intergroup encounters

Some LNGOs conducted laborious projects around common interests and needs, which were initiated by laborious needs assessments in local municipalities and refugee or IDP settlements of Kosovo and in multi-ethnic communities in Slavonia (Eastern Croatia), the latter having been selected by the NGOs predominantly due to the strained intergroup relationships there in the past. The activities in these municipalities commenced with lengthy house-to-house visits, during which the residents' aspirations and expectations were elucidated.

In the case of the activities conducted in the area of Kosovo, where the belongingness to ethnic groups is easier noticeable than in Croatia, it was taken care that the teams contacting the municipalities were heterogeneous, thereby ensuring that on a superficial ethnic level similarity between activists and residents was granted, in order to easing initial contact building.

During these house-to-house visits, the conversations were centred on listening to the residents' feelings and aspirations, asking about experiences in the past, about the present situation and the outlook to the future. The activists' enactment of openness and acceptance was already setting an

atmosphere of respect and recognition for feelings and concerns, probably also conducive to establishing trust in the project.

[Going from house to house, listening] was very useful first of all for getting down tensions in this very early post-war period between peace-worker and peace community members and inside the community'¹³

Before we made an interview, we ask specific questions, different topics like – our general questions – like how people lived before the war, how they lived, spent their time during the war, and now, today, how life is there. [...]first you have a first contact with the people, and you try to listen to them. And then they are ventilating everything, like emotions.¹⁴

So we visit the receiving community on the ground, but we also visit refugees and IDPs in the camps or other places where they work. [...] We have spent quite a lot of time in working with both communities to gain their trust, so it was mainly family visits and discussion with the community leaders and talking with them, so after some time now we are quite well accepted by both communities, so now it's going much easier, and we have their trust, so they are willing to take part in our process.¹⁵

it was from the point that we met, to try to understand what happened and what we can do. So it was from this, to listen what happened to the other side and to everybody, to listen to personal stories, and not to judge, to be open to understand and to listen to what happened to them.

¹³ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁴ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁵ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

Where they are now at this moment in their lives. How it was for them before; and how it is now.¹⁶

The strong emphasis on listening during this initiating phase also comprises refraining from (or at least deferring) judgements about past actions of the recipients. (This element reappears in section B1a, which portrays how activists emphasised the importance of approaching ex-combatants with an attitude of respect, without blaming them for their decisions to join former wars, while believing in their possibility of changing.)

it was more the questions that would enable us to understand exactly [...] to listen to personal stories, and not to judge, to be open to understand and to listen to what happened to them.¹⁷

Establishing initial contacts is possibly less complicated when the activists approaching the local residents are of mixed group affiliations, thereby functioning on the one hand as a role model of intergroup cooperation, and on the other hand offering different local groups points of initial identification or connection via a shared group membership with some of the activists.

it was a very, quite mixed coordinator team, and it was very successful, because the municipality officials accepted us as a partner who implemented this¹⁸

¹⁶ Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁷ Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁸ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Pristina, Kosovo, June 2007

the most important thing is that in the trainers teams or organisers team is mixture, as well. So for example, if we are organising some event were people from different sides will be present, then the trainer team has to be mixed. So we often asked our colleagues and activists from former Yugoslavia to join us in these training teams.¹⁹

This project-related trustbuilding is of course easier when it relies on pre-existing relationships or pre-existing networks, to the effect that organisations tend to try to build their activities on their established contacts when possible.

We just came, went to them to visit, what are they doing [...] We just visited them all [...] we are all from [X], people know us, and we know people. And one of our colleagues used to live in that neighbourhood. So, that's where she went, and talked to them. Mostly it was informally.²⁰

The first phase was the delivery of some questionnaires. [...] Actually, before delivering these questionnaires [...] And there were about 280 villages selected Kosovo-wide, from five implementing partners, in all these villages then we created some groups of interest for the villagers, they were mostly existing structures, like village leaderships or whatever, and then we informed them about the purposes of the project. And then these groups of interest between villagers helped us to deliver the questionnaires.²¹

¹⁹ Activist Y of a peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

²⁰ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

²¹ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation A in Pristina, Kosovo, June 2007

But in the places where we work, everybody knows our staff. And they know what we are doing and the idea.²²

Two or three people would go. [...] They would first go, and talk to some people there and see from those people who would be interested in gathering as a group and talking about problems that they are facing in [X] [...] we contacted [...] some people we knew from before there.²³

A variety of this approach consists of working at the outset in less controversial fields within a community for an extended period of time in order to establish rapport, before initiating projects which touch on topics of more delicate nature.

we started these smooth projects. We really didn't dare in the village to say, we were even careful ourselves not to say that we work with Serbs, in order not to be accepted. Gradually, gradually we just developed at first just small initiatives: We supported, we gave some money for culture, sports, and for children activities. After two years we managed to bring Albanian kids there to work together, play each other's music.²⁴

These direct visits to residents in Kosovo and Croatia did not only contribute to building relationships between residents and activists and building trust in the projects, but were also designed to investigate local interests and needs,

²² Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

²³ Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

²⁴ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

which could then be addressed by searching for mutually accommodating arrangements or by cooperative projects, as outlined in the following section.

2) Initiating intergroup projects based on common needs and interests: conducting a *pre-analysis* of specific needs and interests, on whose basis an interaction can be fostered, in order to initiate intergroup *projects* to address *common interests* and *needs* within a cooperatively defined framework; this renders cross-cutting nominal group memberships obvious, enables personalisation of the group members, and at the same time manifests respect through taking people's inclinations serious

The interests and needs expressed during these visits and interviews formed the ground from which the search for future arrangements or further activities were started. Depending on the context of the project under consideration, different approaches for addressing these differences and needs were taken. In those projects in Eastern Croatia and Kosovo which were striving for the improvement of intergroup relationships within communities, the expressed needs and interests were the starting point for the planning and implementation for the cooperative activities.

Importantly, activists emphasised that the endeavour of connecting groups of former opponents is necessarily of a long-term nature, as the past wars left a legacy of deeply tensioned intergroup relationships. The expectations on

peacebuilding projects should be correspondingly set by adopting a long-term and multi-issue perspective, instead of pressuring towards change. The speed and direction of the process depends on the preferences of the project recipients:

something we learned in our proposal to non-violent conflict resolution which also has to do with all of this is that it is [...] a very long-term process²⁵

Going directly to them, telling them what we do and telling them what is our idea, inviting them to our seminars, having discussion, not imposing anything and not expecting anything, I think this is very important because what happens as a mistake in several people initiatives is that there is something expected from participants and this is a post-conflict region, so it's natural that relationships are not good and it might take much more longer time for relationships to improve [...] we do have expectations, but we don't push people to fulfil our expectations. So we are there as a support to them and they will be the one to lead the process. So the process will go in a direction that both sides decide to go.²⁶

we will definitely have to adapt [...] to their needs [...], so we have to be adaptable and not push it from our side, but see is it that what they really want, not what we want, because sometimes as peacebuilders we tend to push what we think people would, I mean [youngsters] are easy to be manipulated with, but again if it's not sustainable and it's not natural, it's

²⁵ Activist of a local peacebuilding organisation in Vukovar, Croatia, July 2007

²⁶ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation A in Mitrovica, June 2007

not really what they want, then we successfully have that. That's why we tend to not push the process ourselves, but be flexible and see what kind of activities really or projects or what kind of income-generating projects could be [...] our main methodologies of [name of organisation] is to not really push, because in peacebuilding we do understand that's a process, you cannot really have cheap results in a matter of a week or a month or a year, it is a process, it depends on the local context, or constellation, or the issue that you are working on. [...] we discovered through our analysis, it was unbelievable how much issues youth on both sides share [...]we had a joint conference with all secondary schools from Mitrovica, and we took the school youth counsel representatives in this meeting, and the whole idea of the project was come up with a joint project together.²⁷

The significance of providing settings for intergroup encounters was emphasised by some activists, referring to a recent past characterised by a low level of interest in contacts or contact opportunities, which was in some areas of Kosovo contingent on the security situation.

our facilitation is there to provide [children from the different parts of Mitrovica] with a neutral, friendly and safe space, because Albanian children can't walk on their own in Mitrovica North, and vice versa Serbian children can't walk to Mitrovica South. 85% of Mitrovica North Serbian population didn't cross the bridge as of 1999 [...]

²⁷ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, June 2007

Here they printed out a list of the Serbian people from that village which are not living in the village presently, but they are keen to return [...] out of these 33 names we have people which died in '97, they were not even alive. [...] they are saying, if they return, they will be killed.²⁸

people can exchange all this and they have the information from the first hand. And many people haven't ever met other people from the different side. For example, someone never met someone from the Albanian side, or some people have never been in a Muslim town, because our trainings take place in different parts of Bosnia and Montenegro. So some people have never seen a mosque, for example.²⁹

The first chapter of this dissertation indicated that mere intergroup contact is not sufficient for the reduction of animosities. As mentioned, former studies (cf. Brown, 2000; Kassin et al., 2008; Sherif et al. 1961) suggested that an element which increases the prospects of an improvement of intergroup relations appears to be cooperative intergroup work on common interests. Projects of the NGOs investigated in the present study covered a wide range of activities on common interests and needs, comprising the provision of sports facilities, sports clubs, cultural events, media projects, educational programmes, skill trainings, or income generating projects. All these projects were designed as community-wide projects, (re-) introducing group-overarching activities. These projects bolstered the tangibility of an overarching/superordinate community identity, e.g. through interethnic sport

²⁸ Activist of local peacebuilding youth organisation A in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

²⁹ Activist G of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

clubs which carried the name of the entire community and were open for all citizens, or media which explicitly attempted to address topics of interest for all groups of the community.

Those activities which support interaction of a personal level can have the additional significant effect of personalising members of the respective outgroup, even when the initial motivation to join an activity was an interest in the activity *per se*. Personalised encounters around a common goal, in turn, can not only render intergroup commonalities visible, but also assist “decategorisation” (Brown, 2000), i.e. reducing the prevalence of group categorisations which are related to prejudices, while fostering a perception of the participants as individuals instead of as members of a disdained group. Examples of activities on joint interests are:

they also submitted a petition to the Mitrovica municipality department for youth and non-resident issues about the problem of lack of extra-curricular activities, especially with the use for sports facilities at it is the sports hall that across here that you can see ³⁰

Especially in culture, in sport, [...] we were running first cabaret, also we were running the first newspaper [...]we were running the radio Mitrovica, working in the media, and after that we go with TV. [...] we established with support of [...] basketball club Mitrovica³¹

And through the magazine we managed to change quite some things and manage to bring lots of people together; we had like white and black

³⁰ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, June 2007

³¹ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation M in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

page that works in the South better than in the North, and in that way people were consulting each other³²

What we do in this regard is, we do some social activities, like education programmes. And we for example invite female doctors to talk about pregnancy, let's say. And then we invite Serb and Albanian and Ashkali females together, and then they will come [...] But then, indirectly you will help that they talk with each other. So this is an indirect way of connecting them. And this is the best possible, like you have to organise football or games with Serbs and Albanians, the direct purpose is not that they talk with each other, but the game, but in the meantime, of course, they have to talk, and you know, so this have this creative ways of linking people. ³³

The process of analysing interests and needs which can function as a bridge for intergroup cooperation constituted in some projects an extended phase in itself, which partially consisted of lengthy workshops, partially of laborious house to house visits.

So this [listening in house to house visits] was our main tool for approaching community members and also to, how to say it, gather the ideas and to start some activities and gather volunteers and include

³² Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

³³ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation A in Pristina, Kosovo, June 2007

them in our work. [...] then you bring them to a level of generating ideas, how to do some things.³⁴

Try to find in one village what is common for all.³⁵

there are so many commonalities and joint issues that we can work on together. So, for two years we provided them with technical trainings on peacebuilding and youth, advocacy, peacebuilding related topics. We also paralleled that at that time with mini-grants. And that was also interesting, because we had similar mini-grants that they proposed to do, like they have school magazines on both sides, we have radio stations on both sides, there were commonalities [...] actually they decided they want to form a multi-ethnic party, which is called “the city-wide [...]”³⁶

We ask specific questions, different topics [...] and ideas of some kind of activities that can help the community prosper [...] gather the ideas and to start some activities and gather volunteers and include them in our work.³⁷

Based on the needs and the issues that are propagating their constituency within the school, so “what are the problems”, so after they gathered all the data, they prioritised seven issues that they felt that they can have impact or work on them, solving them. So the issues like school tidiness, security, lack extra-curricular activities, lack of cabinets,

³⁴ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

³⁵ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

³⁶ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

³⁷ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

lack of libraries, those were the issues that they prioritised to address them jointly.³⁸

One approach for identifying common needs and interests was to induce in the respective communities the development of a vision for the future, reminiscent of the suggestion of Boulding (2000: 373-5; cf. Lederach, 1997, 2003), thereby supporting the articulation and awareness raising of own priorities and delivering as a guiding image, enabling the creation of strategies for change. This practice of envisioning the future was partially preceded by a process of providing a space for the participants to get acquainted with one another.

stakeholders would go to some place outside their place, for four, five, six days, and then they would go through some kind of workshops, they would have activities of meeting each other, knowing more about each other, and about their own, their community, and slowly, trying to think about the future of their place, what they would like or to look like in ten years or so. And then in the end they would have this picture or plan, what they would like their community to look like in ten years. And of course some of them would then also commit to working on some of these things.³⁹

Before going to the debate, [we asked what their dreams are], and we used these words during the debate to touch them on their dreams, not

³⁸ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

³⁹ Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

to destroy their dreams, but to judge the support to fulfil their dreams, but on a realistic way.⁴⁰

it was useful having dialogue and planning, and implementing joint community actions [...] very useful was dialogue on participatory planning of a common desirable future. It is a methodology: through dialogue to a desirable future. This method was very useful; not only method, but really this approach to involve people in dialogue about how they see the common future in which they can agree about common future. They are doing things together.⁴¹

Planning and implementing projects on common needs and interests on the one hand renders similarities more tangible, thereby challenging dichotomous stereotypic thinking, while at the same time these planning and implantation phases constitute a framework in which inter-ethnic cooperation can take place (cf. Kassin et al. 2008 on superordinate goals). This buttresses getting to know the other during ensuing interactions, and recognising that the members of the former enemy group can be of assistance in the realisation of the own goals. This realisation can help to disseminate the recognition that cooperation can, at least in limited areas, be conducive to win-win outcomes (cf. Deutsch, 1973; 2006).

And also [X] has organised to clean some rivers, [...], like Albanians and Serbs together, I think in Mitrovica, it was also very successful. You know, you work but sometimes you have to say something to your

⁴⁰ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Pristina, Kosovo, June 2007

⁴¹ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

person who is nearby you, so these are really some creative ways [...] if you mix [it's] really successful.⁴²

it's an activity which is not focused on just reconciliation, for when to speak about reconciliation, this is not a good activity to have people who are really very much different. But, any kind of community activity that both sides think is contributing to them, when they have an interest just to participate, is good. So you just have to determine what this is. It can be learning English, it can be computer skills, it can be cleaning the waste, it can be some kind of education. So, it's just giving a chance for people to meet people, to know each other on a normal level, not to put first, "OK, I'm a Serb, I'm a Croat", but to have a chance for them to know each other before putting these labels in front.⁴³

including like core people to do some project together. To write a project together. To share responsibilities, like "you will write this, I will write this, you will do this", so, like make a team.⁴⁴

3a) Improving the material conditions by intergroup income

generating projects for economic well-being, thereby imparting new perspectives and opportunities

A remarkable class of activities conducted by some LNGOs are income generating projects, which on the one hand improve the local economic situation, while at the same time cultivating interethnic cooperation. The

⁴² Activist of local peacebuilding organisation A in Pristina, Kosovo, June 2007

⁴³ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁴⁴ Activist of a youth organisation in Vukovar, June 2007

concern for the material basis was shared widely by communities in whose areas the LNGO projects were situated, which is not too surprising considering the strained overall economic situation in these areas.

Common for [the communities] was something related to really good living, meaning having possibilities for earning money, for good living, with unemployment, economical depression [...] this existential.⁴⁵

or people would generally speak about societal problems, like in Croatia, like unemployment and low wages and this kind of stuff.⁴⁶

the main problem is the economical situation⁴⁷

You are helping people to start thinking about their common future, if you improve their everyday life, immediately after the conflict.⁴⁸

They said, "we need first [a place for intergroup contact for those who are already willing to meet]" and then said, "do some income generating project"⁴⁹

The strong potential of economic projects to function as an intergroup bridge or as a field for cooperation was indirectly illustrated by the following indication:

All the time, before the war and during the war and after the war, before the NGOs' activities, we had a lot of black market activity [...] They did

⁴⁵ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁴⁶ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁴⁷ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation A in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

⁴⁸ Activist of local peacebuilding youth organisation A in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

⁴⁹ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

not stop the contact through, Serbian-Albanian contact. All the time, before the war, in the time of the war and after the war. Small business. And we must follow up that business, enormous need, through the economy more.⁵⁰

Given that the motivation of locals to participate in LNGO activities is most likely a function of the degree to which these project resonate with the life world of the local residents, the need of economic well-being imparts to projects addressing these needs special relevance. Examples of projects which were designed to contribute to the improvement of the local material basis, while at the same time hosting the potential of intergroup cooperation, were e.g.: sewing and tailoring courses⁵¹; the dissemination of greenhouses and training in cultivation methods⁵²; basic training in economy and project management coupled with the offer of mini-grants.

we tend to not push the process ourselves, but be flexible and see what kind of activities really or projects or what kind of income-generating projects could be, are they doable, if not, then it's fine, I mean, we will have to continue separately, but at least we tried in bring some bridges and some natural relationship with them.⁵³

by the end of the internship processes, we demand from youth to submit us some small business plan, and [name of organisation] in partnership with [name] provide some kind of small grants donation to them, to

⁵⁰ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation M in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

⁵¹ Annual Report 1997 of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia

⁵² Annual Report 1997 of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia

⁵³ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation A in Mitrovica, June 2007

create some small income generating projects, so it's pretty much for the youth on both sides of Mitrovica, projects are strongly encouraged to be of multi-ethnic origin, linked⁵⁴

3b) Improving the material conditions to reduce frustration as a potential source of scapegoating, and to impart new perspectives and opportunities for the future

The relevance of the economy for the conflict dynamic was indicated by activists who see a precarious economy as one of the contributors to hostility, mediated by the degree of frustration precipitated by unemployment. Correspondingly, it was argued that an improvement of the economic situation would reduce frustration and give a future perspective, thereby reducing the susceptibility to nationalism and scapegoating. This points to the significance of quickly improving the economic situation in a post-war context, to reduce further processes of radicalisation and to build the fundament for the improvement of intergroup relationships.

You are helping people to start thinking about their common future, if you improve their everyday life, immediately after the conflict. [...] The fact that you still have so many young people unemployed and with so much free time, that they can use in one direction and one direction alone, conflicts, hostilities. I'm also saying you haven't created a fruitful

⁵⁴ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, June 2007

economic ground for their employment, because they wouldn't be unemployed, if you invested heavily and adequately in the economy.⁵⁵

maybe more important than the status [of Kosovo] is the economical situation, because the situation where people are very bad economically, there is a huge potential of lead the mass in one or in another direction and usually is very human that it's quite easy to accuse the other side for the problems that people are having, even the economical ones. And not having jobs and not working also somehow, people can think more about having protests or not being satisfied with others as much, like that. So the life itself normalised, they are not working and they don't know what will tomorrow bring before the status is not decided. So, all of this abnormality is blocking the re-building of the relationship.⁵⁶

there is a lot of hatred, and there is a lot, Kosovo situation again: If the economic situation is better and everything is living better, he is not going to think if he is a Serb, or he is or that. He has his life and everything is ok. But when nothing is ok, you are not working, there are lot of war veterans, they are not working, you know. What can they talk when they are drinking, they are nice places, what, who is guilty for this, Serbs, so. We can see in the last, eighty five I think, I'm not going to see my statistics now, but eighty five cases of minority crimes in 2006, eighty five. And 2005 and 2004 about forty. So it raised, you know, especially in

⁵⁵ Activist of local peacebuilding youth organisation A in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

⁵⁶ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation A in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

this hinterland [name], last year much more these ethnic crimes, than two years before.⁵⁷

the economy, the poor economy of Kosovo even makes it worse, especially in the case where Kosovo is right now, I mean, people do not really see any hope, they are frustrated firstly, because of the general situation, the economic situation, and then of course everybody just blames the others for not having this economic prosperity.⁵⁸

The following indication about the conflict fuelling effects of a deterioration in the economic situation is reminiscent of Collier's (2000; Collier et al., 2005) reference to the centrality of changes in the economic well-being:

From the richest region we went to the poorest region of Kosovo. And a lot of frustration here was concentrated.⁵⁹

Equivalently, economic deterioration was also referred to in Eastern Slavonia as a central factor involved in the current problematic constellation.⁶⁰

The hostility reducing function of an improvement in the economic situation was partially depicted as stemming from the effect of distraction arising from the creation of jobs.

There is some place for factories, for bakeries, for something, if you work, you don't have time to think, who you are or what you are like⁶¹

⁵⁷ Activist T of local peacebuilding organisation C in Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

⁵⁸ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, June 2007

⁵⁹ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation M in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

⁶⁰ Informal conversation with an activist of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, May 2007

⁶¹ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

economy can be one of the keys, by improving the economy I believe people will tend to have less time to think about the past, they will be more focused, oriented to creating their own future.⁶²

The positive side of the coin is that a growth of employment can entail a change in the perspective, increasing work-related opportunities, while re-orienting the outlook more towards the future, thereby reducing one source of scapegoating. It was pointed to the function of building intergroup bridges which an overall improvement of the economic situation can have, by increasing the opportunities for economic cooperation.

You are helping people to start thinking about their common future, if you improve their everyday life, immediately after the conflict.⁶³

Economy should be globally as one of the quite effective tools in introducing inter-ethnic dialogue as everyday practise in conflict areas. Improve the everyday life of the groups in conflict, while improving that, they will along time and quite short period of time find some common links which are economical, and on their own, on their own [...] they will find their own joint common interests, in further developing the economical situation⁶⁴

Mostly offer them to work and you will not have a problem. Really, they just said, first they said we need first something to meet and then said

⁶² Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, June 2007

⁶³ Activist of local peacebuilding youth organisation N in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

⁶⁴ Activist of local peacebuilding youth organisation A in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

"do some income generating project" [...]we will not fight definitely if we work together⁶⁵

In summary, an improvement in the local economic situation can influence intergroup dynamics via multiple routes, i.e. by directing the outlook more towards the future which could reduce the orientation on past grievances, increasing economic opportunities which provide an alternative to a fixation on competitive nationalism while countering frustration as a source of blame allocation, and creating options for intergroup cooperation.

4) Projects of intergroup interaction in the form of cooperation and of spending leisure time together, which are at the same time signalling to newcomers and to the outside that living together is possible

The potential beneficial effects of activities which encourage in some way interethnic cooperation are not limited to those directly participating in the projects, but can extend to a wider constituency via these participants. This can happen by rendering the option of living together visible and tangible, as well as by participants functioning as intermediaries between the (former) opponent group and the more prejudiced individuals within their immediate social network.

Presenting the alternative of joint intergroup activities provides a role model which demonstrates to newcomers and to the public the lived alternative of

⁶⁵ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

intergroup collaboration. In addition to the projects of working on common community interests and needs (such as economic needs), activities comprised e.g. youth projects based on intergroup socialising. In the course of such youth projects, youngsters could function as informal mediators when informing their less intergroup-oriented parents about the ease of this informal way of intergroup cohabitation.

When the [youngsters] who come to the Youth Club to spend their free time [...] the first time they came, they saw a lot of, I mean they didn't see, but through the talking with the people, [...] they see you have several nationalities at one spot working together, playing together, talking together. That was like a good first step, because then they realise that there is not any problem of being together. [...] When they saw all that, then they changed themselves, like, "look, they are all together, they are not fighting, they are drinking beer together, [...] sharing everything, eating together, listening music together, talking about music, talking about video games", some basic stuff, and then they changed a bit. [...]

travelling together to another country, and then they see how the kids react there, how they don't have these prejudices, and everything, so they see it in front of them, they see it that's possible, they need to see an example, to feel it, and then they change their thought. [...]

You invite people on a barbeque, to come to eat and like drink a glass of beer, to talk and then, slowly, step by step. I believe that this exchange was one of the best ways, I believe now, like when they have examples,

how do young people react in another environment, then they see that it is possible here also.⁶⁶

It was described how those participating in practice examples of intergroup collaboration and socialising can accomplish successes as intermediaries, influencing the opinion within their social network.

And then they started to ask their parents, because, some of the people who were coming here, some of the members, some of the volunteers, were coming here, their parents didn't know that they were coming here. And then we found out that it was like terrible for us, like "why didn't you say to your parents that you are coming" "you know, I am a bit afraid because my father is nationalist." And then with the time, you know, then the person became older and older[...] then they started to talk with the parents, start to change them. And we were so happy, because some of them succeeded.⁶⁷

Another example for signalling that intergroup cooperation is a real option was encountered above in the description of projects analysing community interests and needs. As mentioned, when the interviewing and organising team of these community projects was of mixed nominal ethnic group membership, they functioned as role models of intergroup collaboration.

⁶⁶ Activist of a youth organisation in Vukovar, Croatia, June 2007

⁶⁷ Activist of a youth organisation in Vukovar, Croatia, June 2007

it was a very, quite mixed coordinator team, and it was very successful, because the municipality officials accepted us as a partner who implemented this⁶⁸

the most important thing is that in the trainers teams or organisers team is mixture, as well. So for example, if we are organising some event were people from different sides will be present, then the trainer team has to be mixed. So we often asked our colleagues and activists from former Yugoslavia to join us in these training teams.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Pristina, Kosovo, June 2007

⁶⁹ Activist Y of a peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

I.B) Working with people who were very seriously affected by the war

In this section B the following major aspects of LINGO work with war wounded individuals will be repeatedly encountered: Setting communicative frameworks which promote listening and exchange of idiosyncratic backgrounds of participants for personalisation, cultivating the expression of emotions and enabling reflection as a step towards *individualisation* of group members, *understanding of the 'other'* and *understanding of the past war dynamic*; this exchange promotes the perception of *commonalities* in war experiences and roles between the own and the other group(s), and promotes via empathy the recognition of the opponent's humanness; based on a reflection on the past, the self, and the other, setting *new aims for an orientation towards the future* is encouraged.

Creating a framework in which norms of listening and exchange are emphasised, in order to enable an individualisation of the group members, is a way to initiate direct intergroup interactions. The similarity to the approaches focusing on common goals and interests – outlined in preceding sections – is that in all of these cases a redefinition of the relationship is aspired to, attempting to reduce the mistrust and competitive interaction norms which are entailed by enemy images, through undermining enmity.

Personalisation can therein work in various ways: On the one hand, personalisation can render intra-group diversities more visible, challenging the pre-conceptions of homogenous groups, fostering understanding for differences, and challenging some of the stereotypes. On the other hand,

(analogously to an approach focusing on common needs and interests) the process of personalisation can bring more attention to commonalities, thereby reducing the fixation on dividers; for example, similarities can be brought to the surface when a space is provided in which listening to the other's suffering supports the empathic recognition of the humanity in the other.

Importantly, these exchanges do not replace the dealing with the 'hot' conflictual issues. They can either be trustbuilding steps to prepare the ground for these sensitive issues, when the latter are deferred to subsequent stages, or can constitute the modality by which sensitive issues are addressed, i.e. by focussing on personal experiences instead of engaging in confrontational debates.

The work with war victims and ex-combatants can be classified into three elements which aim at a transition from intergroup mistrust to mutual understanding, and comprise the setting of new aims as a last step. The activities of the LNGOs by which they are working with war victims and ex-combatants will be presented in the following sections correspondingly as classified into the following three categories:

- 1) Setting communicative frameworks which promote listening and exchange of individual backgrounds of participants (/getting to know the other) for personalisation, so that the heterogeneity of the outgroup can be recognised, and intergroup similarities become visible**
- 2) Understanding the other's behaviour in the past; understanding the past war dynamic; understanding the past suffering of the other, so that the moral superiority of the own group becomes challenged**

3) Based on a reflection on the past, the self, and the other, setting alternative aims for an orientation towards the future

1) Setting communicative frameworks which promote listening and exchange of individual backgrounds of participants (/getting to know the other) for personalisation and imparting a sense of respect, so that the heterogeneity of the outgroup can be recognised, and intergroup similarities become visible

1a) approaching ex-combatants with an attitude of respect, without stigmatising them for their decisions to join former wars; believing in the universal capacity of people to change

The importance of imparting a sense of respect to the individuals with whom one is working was already addressed in section A1 in the context of intergroup projects on the community level. In the case of work with ex-combatants, this respect encompasses abstaining from stigmatising them due to their choice of fighting in past wars, combined with the conviction that everyone has the potential to change. This avoidance of blaming people is related to the norm of avoiding the classification of people – a norm central to peacebuilding work:

For me it has to do something with my understanding of nonviolence, avoiding to put people into categories, saying you are good or you are bad, or he is bad, just because he has done something. I believe that

people should be made accountable for what they do and responsible for what they do, but give people a chance to change, and this is a mistake I think, committed also by many people engaged say in human rights work or peace work, that they consider even whole groups of people, not only individual, they are judged upon what they have done in the past.⁷⁰

if you have this approach of rejecting anyone with minuses, with certain characteristics, not liking, or something like that, it's discrimination, and of course, you can tell yourself that people with whom you want to work at the beginning will reject you 100%, it's a very painful and slow process, but the very necessary thing is your own integrity, the respect⁷¹

The belief in the changeable nature of people can be buttressed by the assumption that the behaviour of people is highly context specific, and by the assumption that everyone has some sense of righteousness:

one thing is that, as I said before, this identity [...] people change roles in the situation, somebody can be in certain situations a hero, and that very somebody can be a killer in a different situation. People can, the same very individual, can be really an honest and heroic person, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde situation [...] In all human – even very black – personalities, there is a safe place.⁷²

Instead of categorising people based on deeds, the belief in the possibility of change translates into an potentially empowering emphasis on activities in the present and future:

⁷⁰ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

⁷¹ Activist of a local war veteran and peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, June 2007

⁷² Activist of a local war veteran and peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, June 2007

despite of my conviction as a war-resister and conscientious objector, I do not blame those people or feel on any higher moral ground than they are. I was not in that situation [...] it is about how we deal with things now.⁷³

One of the factors influencing the capacity for change – from war related animosities towards a future cooperative orientation – is possibly the association of hostilities with emotional discomfort and distress. In this direction point statements which indicate that even those with very hostile attitudes have a potential for change, not least due to the uncomfortable emotional position entailed by the feeling of hatred. The feeling of hatred appears often to be traceable to sources such as fears, wounds, and needs, to the effect that addressing these sources can erode the basis of the hatred. These references suggest that even with so-called extremists there is a chance for change.

when you come with let's say "extremists", you just need some time to convince them that they are not so extreme. For example, just to use some phrases, "all Serbs" or "all Croats are bad" "they disgust me", for example, and you can call this person an extremist. But really in everyday life maybe he is not so extreme, [...] this feeling of aggressiveness, it's not a good feeling, and you don't feel comfortable if you are always angry; no, people don't want to feel like that. But you find a support, spend some time with them to understand why they are speaking like that, and then, for the other half of their being to go front.

⁷³ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

It's like mad Max, I will be mad Max outside, but inside I'm something different.⁷⁴

And [ex-combatants] don't have the hatred, they have a fear, and it's a different level. If you have a fear, you can work on de-grading this fear. You can see where it comes from, you can look at the sources, and hatred is often irrational, and I don't think that many people hate, because first of all it's difficult for them, it's difficult to live with that [...] At the moment, when they feel or hear something or do something that emotionally really hurts them, then probably yes. But, it is not an attitude or ideology they would stand for.⁷⁵

1b) Personalisation/Getting to know the other

The initial phase of the intergroup contact is characterised by getting to know the other, which consists of exchanges on the personal background, personal expectation, perspectives, and emotions. This initial concentration on the individuals imparts at the same time a sense for the importance of the individual and opens opportunities for perceiving cross-group similarities. The procedures for personalisation of the in- and outgroup members lay the ground for subsequent work on the more sensitive issues related to the war past.

In the beginning it is like this: the gathering of the group, getting to know each other. So we are doing in this order, people are getting to know each other, and then the topic; we want to express by this, that it is very

⁷⁴ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁷⁵ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

important for us who the people are, the people are important for us; not only the level of facts, but the people. And then this thing with asking for expectations follows, and then these group rules. Like this, "which rules can help us, so that everybody in the group feels good, and that we are working satisfied."⁷⁶

there was a lot of talking going on, on dialogue, and different exercises that supported, and also a lot of small exercises that would encourage talking about yourself. So that people could get to know each other better [...] I know what we did was to, I think, with many groups, about their identity. [...] At the beginning also [...] the thing is that you think about yourself who you are, what are all of your roles, and then to share with the group what you want from this. So, for example, "I am a mother", I was then a wife, I was a peace-worker, so people felt it is also national identity and religious what they then would talk about. So, this is also an opportunity to say, "I'm a..." you know, to say more about yourself and to a sort of prepare for difficult topics. To say something about your religion or about, your nationality, to say that, you are a Croat, you feel like a Croat, or you feel like this, or you don't know how to feel because you are from a mixed marriage and this war made things difficult, and this is the things to say, sometimes you don't feel accepted by any group.⁷⁷

The first step was introducing to each other, "I am ...", and after that the rules, the first step usually has been my identity. [...] Everybody listened

⁷⁶ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

⁷⁷ Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

to each other. So, I am really a human being, I have value, “I am a farmer”, “I am a professor”, “I am a carpenter”, “I didn’t finish primary school”⁷⁸

we have an introduction, we want to hear their expectations, we talk about rules and talk about that programme, we talked about health, but using some creative way of expressing, some games, just for people to relax. So that was that first one.⁷⁹

at the first phase of this local training you need to open the space for people to talk about something and to create safe space for them; to feel safe to express what they want to. [A safe space is created by talking] in my name. It means I will talk about my feelings, about how I see the world, about my perception [...]

This is a kind of storytelling. So, at the beginning of the training, people tell their stories. It doesn't last long, but they can, if they want, talk about their past, what happened to them, and other people hear them and then they approach the others with a different perspective. For example, when they hear I was refugee, or I spent some time here or there, they will understand me better.⁸⁰

we also took them somewhere aside, where they had their own time, like one day or two days workshop, they would be completely committed to that.[...] We are really careful to facilitate to give space to everyone.

They would be mixed in the group, so in pairs on, interchangeably, so

⁷⁸ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁷⁹ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁸⁰ Activist G of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

they have chances to get to know each other and hear each other, and understand each other, it helped. And I think the complete system of that thematically focused interaction, that the individual is important and the group is important, and all the philosophy of our work, everyone is respected and that they can pick and recognise that.⁸¹

The importance of creating a safe space for exchange and listening is illustrated by the observation that exchanges on these sensitive issues are even rare in those places where members of nominally different groups live side by side, as was mentioned in a preceding paragraph:

When people from Sarajevo come, they already have encountered others, but still, they do not talk about this in everyday life [...] they do not talk about values over a tea, or about attitudes, or like we start in the day during the course.⁸²

people can exchange all this and they have the information from the first hand. And many people haven't ever met other people from the different side. For example, someone never met someone from the Albanian side, or some people have never been in a Muslim town, because our trainings take place in different parts of Bosnia and Montenegro. So some people have never seen a mosque, for example. So, all this is very

⁸¹ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁸² Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

important for them: to have people from different sides and to talk about some issues.⁸³

1c) Seeing the internal heterogeneity of the outgroup by recognising multiple identities and multiple internal perspectives

The exchange on the personal background and personal experiences demonstrates that the opponent group is not as homogenous as presupposed, by bringing multiple characteristics or identities to the fore. Seeing this internal heterogeneity appears to be of special significance in a post-war context, after national or ethnic identity has been massively intensified by escalation dynamics of the war, to the effect that identity has been narrowed down.

Another characteristic is that [identity] has been very manipulated by the media. It's been filtered down into ethnic identity rather than a wider concept of identity which you would get, let's say, in the West, which would include personality, which would include religion, which would include profession, which would include some sense of personal spirituality and so on and so forth.⁸⁴

When becoming aware of the multiple roles and self-assigned group memberships of individuals, the dominance of categorisations based on ethnicity or nationality are challenged. Fostering personalising exchanges on

⁸³ Activist G of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

⁸⁴ Activist of a local peacebuilding organisation in Vukovar, Croatia, July 2007

multiple identities can thereby render internal group heterogeneities visible. The following example, which was mentioned above, illustrates such an exchange on multiple identities.

the thing is that you think about yourself who you are, what are all of your roles, and then to share with the group what you want from this. So, for example, “I am a mother”, “I was then a wife”, “I was a peace-worker”, so people felt it is also national identity and religious what they then would talk about.⁸⁵

In addition to rendering multiple group memberships of the same individuals visible, the perception of the heterogeneity of groups can also be buttressed by challenging the assumption that a political attitude or ideology is shared within a certain group. During exchanges on personal experiences and motivations related to the war past, political orientations of the participants can shine through as inherent parts of personal motivations and assessments of the broader social-political contexts. These exchanges on the respective personal backgrounds and motivations can also foster the recognition that not only the other groups, but also the own group is more heterogeneous than has been assumed.

expressing our disturbance, our standpoints and reasons for that, is the way bring it out [...] these confrontations arise also within the people who have been in the same army or are of the same ethnic group, and this is something which then clearly breaks the picture of them as being all one. They have different opinions. One thing that also fosters

⁸⁵ Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

breaking up this image “they are all the same,” is that they speak of motives to join the war. These motives are very different. How it all happened. [...] What they have gone through, you cannot look at them as a “they are all the same”. [...] it’s not a problem to break this picture when you bring them together. [...] when [ex-combatants] experience [ex-combatants from the opponent side] in real life, they go through it very quickly, because they look at them as members or say supporters of certain ideologies, those are the images. When they meet them and hear them, and hear their personal emotional stories, they understand that they are honest, and they understand that they are not all quite one ideology or that probably not at all of that ideology that they have seen them as being a part of.⁸⁶

The perception of the outgroup as a homogenous mass can also be challenged by directly shattering the assumptions which are part of the respective stereotypes. This challenge can either take the form of getting direct feedback on these stereotypes from the respective group, or by questioning the moral superiority of the own group when recognising the victimisation of outgroup members brought about by the own side.

bring out, also talk about these prejudices, which exist in our societies, write them down. “What are the Albanians like, what do you hear?” Write them down in a purely Serbian group, and a purely Albanian group on the other side. And then talk a bit, and when people hear, they get offended, they get really, sometimes aggressive about it. And it is a

⁸⁶ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

shock, it is also a shock for these that have written, because for them they hear it all the time in their environment, and now somebody from the other side hears it and is certainly totally offended. They are totally unaware how others perceive this [...] It is really not that much bad intention, it is just that, say some sick climate, which is still holding on from the war time, that people do not really question.⁸⁷

we had some moments where somebody from Croatia would say “oh, I never knew that this is how people in Serbia think or how they see us, we thought we are the victims in this war, now you hear that there are other victims as well, you’re not” situations like this.⁸⁸

This latter point of undermining homogenous group images and challenging the perception of the own moral superiority by perceiving victims of the other group will be deepened in the course of the following section and in section B. The focus in the following section will be on personal encounters, which provide the opportunity to understand the past behaviour of the other better, whereas section B addresses societal processes on a more general level.

2a) Exchanges on past experiences and past sufferings for a better mutual understanding

After this phase of getting to know the others during which some level of mutual trust was able to develop, explicit or implicit norms manifesting a communicative framework, which emphasises exchange instead of

⁸⁷ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

⁸⁸ Activist Y of a peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

confrontation, are conducive to understanding the experiences and emotions of the former opponent.

This better understanding of these motivations for the former adversary's past behaviour, in turn, can be conducive to insights into the dynamics of the past war. Activists indicated that the attitude with which participants are approached should be characterised by respect and a belief in the power of reflection. Correspondingly, the activists' task is to provide a framework for exchange and reflection, instead of trying to change opinions by blaming participants and pushing for change.

You must not teach them, but inspire them to use their heads, of course emotions, [...] you must give them an opportunity to educate themselves, and you must, through this process, you must explain them, what the dealing with the past is. And this is not putting a finger towards any war-veteran and saying, "you belong to the war veterans and you are responsible for war crimes."⁸⁹

If they are not ready to talk or participate, they can be, if they are ready, they can be, we give them time, so I think, that's what they need.⁹⁰

you can stop [the organisation's programme] any time that you want [...] we are not trying to change somebody's opinion in that way, but give people the possibility to work on themselves and to listen what those teachers and the teachers have to say, and to share some information,

⁸⁹ Activist of a local war veteran and peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, June 2007

⁹⁰ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

knowledge and so on [...] small steps are sometimes bigger steps than big steps.⁹¹

(Under some circumstances, respecting the local emotions and needs can even mean that planned projects with potential recipients are downsized and partially deferred:

in one village where lot of Croats were killed during the Serbian control, when they came back in the first year, so there were really incidents between some of Croats coming back and some Serbs there, a really tragic one with a killing of a person. So, when we listened to all families, it was not many, maybe 60, 65, so there was a need for mourning, so Croats used to say: “Just let us alone.” “We came back, we found our houses empty, destroyed, we found out that this of my neighbours and that one and that one is killed or missing. And what we need now is just being let alone. We are sad, we don’t hate anyone, we need some space for being sad, mourning.” At the same time, they expressed a need for young people, particularly for children, that they would need support, that giving them a possibility to have a better quality of life.⁹²)

When recipients are ready to participate in a communicative engagement together with members of the former opponent group, the provision of a space directed towards exchange and reflection is needed for dealing with emotional wounds related to the war. Such a space can be manifested

⁹¹ Activist of regional peacebuilding organisation W, Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

⁹² Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

through informal interaction norms oriented on listening instead of mutual condemnation, enabling the openness of expression, thereby imparting a sense of cooperative interaction.

They need someone to really listen, not to judge,[...] they need space, a safe surrounding, [without] judging⁹³

When I said communication, I think really an element of compassionate communication, non-violent and compassionate, [in the sense of] listening with empathy, active listening with empathy. Recognition and expression of emotion⁹⁴

I see that among the group [...] people are more and more open and cooperative, and willing to learn from each other and do things together. [...] some people knew each other from before, and this is their surprise how some of them are open, even though they have had a lot of traumas from the war. I think we have a high level of trust in the group.⁹⁵

The behavioural norms which manifest in listening and an open exchange do not necessarily have to be formulated on an explicit level, but can be introduced implicitly by a focus on expression, after some initial cooperative framework has been built.

we have an introduction, we want to hear their expectations, we talk about rules and talk about that programme, we talked about health, but using some creative way of expressing, some games, just for people to relax. [...]

⁹³ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁹⁴ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁹⁵ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

They did not blame anyone [...] not because of the rules, but, we don't lead the workshop in that way; we give space for people to express themselves, but not to discuss or argue or whatever. And what they said, they said that they are very satisfied that there are people who can facilitate that, that's why they feel secure and open. And they said they think they need it, because they [carry] some really hard feelings⁹⁶

This atmosphere of a cooperative interaction conducive to trustbuilding is presumably the precondition for the open expression of emotions related to war wounds. This exchange in turn appears to spawn empathy in the form of mutual understanding of the other participants' grave experiences. This process of enabling the perception of the others' sufferings on the one hand embodies individualisation as de-categorisation; on the other hand it addresses the sense for human similarities via rendering commonalities of emotional reactions across groups tangible, supporting a sense for the suffering of "fellow human beings" (to borrow the term from Ramsbotham et al., 2005: 244), so that empathy can unfold.

Empathy seems to entail that, when former adversaries describe their suffering from acts of brute violence inflicted upon them, the justification for violence against the former enemy becomes undermined. Empathy with the outgroup members and the recognition of the other as a 'fellow human being' seem to be thereby interrelated.

we discussed their own hurts and their own wounds [...] we asked them for their own personal experiences, it was a very tensed atmosphere, because all people started telling their deep hurts[...] Just as a whole

⁹⁶ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

group we were there, we listened, we cried together, when people told their different stories, and we just processed that, we let them say, where are the hurts [...] We also had a big space of time for just wherein the hurts go on, and I think the trainers, and also the group, they were very compassionate, so I think it was a very healing experience when they did see that other people also cried and that they all feel. [...] we give space for people to express themselves, but not to discuss or argue or whatever. [...] they said that they are very satisfied that there are people who can facilitate that, that's why they feel secure and open.⁹⁷

[members from a peacebuilding organisation] constantly have workshops on Dealing with the Past, and it's amazing when women from "both sides" – quotation marks – from different situations, national, situations of other parts of the region and sides, sit together [...] how they change, not so much their thinking, their opinions, this pure humanity that's comes out⁹⁸

Someone said "I have been raped", "I have been beaten", "I lost my family, because my mother, father, or children have been killed". Both had a problem that this happened, and everybody of them said their own opinion about this⁹⁹

we had some moments where somebody from Croatia would say "oh, I never knew that this is how people in Serbia think or how they see us,

⁹⁷ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

⁹⁸ Activist of regional peacebuilding organisation W, Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

⁹⁹ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

we thought we are the victims in this war, now you hear that there are other victims as well, you're not" situations like this.¹⁰⁰

**2b) Understanding of the behaviour of the other in the past;
understanding the group interaction in the past war**

When interactions between members of the different groups comprised aspects which signified antagonism, entailing emotional irritations, directly expressing frustrations about past interactions appeared to be helpful, provided this exchange occurs on the basis of previously established trust. Addressing concretely past interactions which ensued hurts appears to be conducive for mutual understanding. An improved understanding of past behaviours of the other can constitute the foundation for apologies and for expressing disagreements with the past behaviour of ingroup members.

we listened to them and tried to give them some empathy and also to give them the opportunity to describe what is going on with them at the moment; and people from the "other side" would then react and also say how they felt and why; and how this affected them, so it was a kind of healing to open this, for them to hear each other. That is was difficult for both sides. And how they felt and why and in what situations. Like for example, when the other person saw him or her on the street and turned the head at the other, they didn't want to say "hello", and stuff like that. And then they would say, how they felt coming back there and didn't know what to expect and felt pressure from their group, and stuff like

¹⁰⁰ Activist Y of a peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

that. So, kind of they explained why they acted the way they acted, and what it meant for them. That it was also difficult for them in this situation to choose and to do the right thing.[...] people felt hurt, and at the beginning they didn't have enough trust to ask questions that were bothering them. So it was kind of important to get to know each other better in the group, then to build some trust and then to ask questions, "why did you leave", "why this, that", and to tell each other how they felt when they were from this or that side, and what bothered them.¹⁰¹

they [carry] some really hard feelings [...] some people are surprised by someone else's feelings and they say "well, I'm sorry, I didn't know that, but I don't think I was like others", so things like that, people try to apologise to each other, [...] people try to clarify why they felt like that and things like that, but it's not that they blame each other¹⁰²

A further aspect in need of being addressed is the perception of the role of the opponent's group within the war dynamics, since the pre-war and war dynamics usually entail that the adversary is seen as having been driven by motivations which were far inferior to the motivations of the own group, and since war actions of the opponent are assessed differently from similar actions of the own group.

As was mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter, within each group which was a war party there appears to be a wide-spread tendency to perceive war motives of the own group as firmly located in the pure interest of defence.

¹⁰¹ Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁰² Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

If you ask the Bosnians, they will say the Serbs were the aggressors, they didn't defend, they attacked something. But if you ask Serbs, they will say, we were defending our people, we were afraid that the same thing would happen as in World War II ¹⁰³

A Croatian will say "somebody attacked us first so we retaliated". Serbs will say, we are not blame, because we were trying to defend Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁴

Serbs are declaring that they were defending Yugoslavia. Croats say that they are defending their country, their right for independence. And Bosnians are saying that they are defending their own lives, because Croats and Serbs attacked them. [...] Every single ex-combatant will say to you "I went to war to defend" something. ¹⁰⁵

[All sides] take the attitude that [...] they were victims ¹⁰⁶

After a phase of personalisation has built a basic ground of trust (as depicted in preceding section 1b), the homogenised picture of the own side as defending and the other side as aggressing can be challenged by creating the framework conditions for an exchange in whose process the disparate perspectives of the various sides can emerge. These various perspectives appear to have the capacity to induce a process of reflection which erodes formerly held dichotomous and internally contradictory views.

¹⁰³ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹⁰⁴ Activist of a local war veteran and peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, June 2007

¹⁰⁵ Activist M of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹⁰⁶ Activist of a local peacebuilding organisation in Vukovar, Croatia, July 2007

everybody felt they were defending [...] the things that we organise and provide space for can foster [ex-combatants] to help themselves [...] They see ways of getting out of their roles, they discover things, they understand some things that were not clear to them. Basically, they find material to sort their distorted pictures in their heads, to put the puzzle together, in a way which makes sense. Most often, what they have in their head is this puzzle, it's violently put together, it doesn't really fit, and somehow they feel it. Going through this experience helps them to put this puzzle together ¹⁰⁷

[Towards the end of a workshop series an ex-combatant said:] "At the beginning, I was very afraid of what will happen, I was very against any new information and I was fighting inside of me, and during this programme, I found out that my responsibility is to share my experience that I have deep inside, and experience of education that I got here, and those puzzles that I put together, and I want to be an activist."¹⁰⁸

Helpful in the process of challenging formerly held hostile images of the adversary might be to recognise that the own perception as well as the other side's perception had been distorted by the government and/or through the media.

People are, I think, starting now to see the others not only as enemies, not only as blood enemies, but as humans who are also manipulated by the media, by the governments, by some causes ¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹⁰⁸ Activist of regional peacebuilding organisation W, Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

¹⁰⁹ Activist M of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

A better understanding of war dynamic of can also be promoted when ex-combatants have an exchange on the process of being imbued by the logic of war. Feelings of guilt and being imbued by the seemingly inevitable automatism of fight series appear to entail that combatants' opportunities for reflection during war were minimised. When ex-combatants have an exchange on this perceived automatism, the recognition of the similarities in experiences can widen the perspective on the past war events. This way, the previously exclusionist allocation of guilt on the opponent for the war dynamic can be questioned.

Many of them are feeling the guilt that they survived, because many of their friends died. And many of them went during the war through the phase of wanting to get killed, to get killed in combat; for afterwards, when this comes to that, when you cannot adapt to civil life. [...] when this madness grips you, it goes on and on, and you don't have time for anything else [...] Madness of war: travelling, sleepless nights, fights, losses; you cannot distance yourself from what is all going on, what you are doing, what others are doing.¹¹⁰

One significant aspect for an improved understanding of the past war dynamic regards the interpretation of the other side's nationalism. This interpretation is of special relevance when assuming that antagonistic exclusionist rhetoric of the opponent constitutes part of the heart of an escalatory dynamic. When all sides recognise, however, that nationalist

¹¹⁰ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

exclusionism has its roots partially in fears, hurts, and perceived needs, space is opened for dealing with these aspects.

There are some nationalist ideals, Great Croatia, Great Serbia, Great country, tall Serbs inside, or with tall Croatians inside, but there is a pretension. Some territories, also the crimes which were happening, some people are still hurt, still have a pain deep inside themselves, and they don't talk about that. The great thing is to talk about that to give the pain out, that's why the other side will see what are the real needs and are the real thoughts of me, for example, and then we can start to talk. Until the period in which I put under the carpet my deep fears, my deep needs, my visions, and not to go transparent to the other side, with always danger of conflict.¹¹¹

An integral element of the endeavour of breaking the perceived homogeneity of the outgroup consists of establishing individual responsibilities for war crimes, so that one of the sources for perceiving the outgroup as inherently and homogeneously bad in character is challenged.

individualisation of guilt, in this sense would help them a lot. To say, "yes there were war crimes, and these and these people are responsible for that". And of course in general, politics, but for their situation in their village, or their concrete case, is that war crime trials are very important for those people as well, so they can get some kind of satisfaction if the

¹¹¹ Activist M of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

perpetrator, at least that he is known and he is convicted, at least by public, if not by court.¹¹²

A pivotal process in the assessment of war events is the removal of double standards. Group members seem to have a tendency to evaluate the war actions inflicted on the opponent group by a different standard than the actions perpetrated by members of the own group. Solely bringing these double standards to the surface of consciousness seems to have the capacity of inducing a shift in the assessment, as will be further discussed below.

people justify violence depending on the context. If you would just ask them for a situation: "There is a military intervention. The army from one country liberates the territory, which was held by rebels. 150 000 flee. Thousands of houses are burnt. Do you consider this violence or justice?" They will all say "violence". But when they project it onto their country, then they call this "legitimate action". And the point of the training is actually to remove this context and to make people look in a fair, judge by the same criteria, whatever you judge. It doesn't matter whether it's Albanians, Serbs or Croats or whoever. You must have the same criteria, because it's human beings. And they get ashamed actually, when they realise this. And withdraw, and it changes some things.¹¹³

¹¹² Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹¹³ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

3) Based on a reflection on the past, the self, and the other, raising awareness for basic priorities or values, in order to set alternative aims for an orientation towards the future as a form of empowerment

Assisting people with war wounds in clarifying their basic priorities and life orientations is obviously an aim in itself, while at the same time constituting another component of the LNGOs' endeavours of improving intergroup relations. After some basic trust towards the former opponent has been built and a better understanding of the past war dynamic has been achieved, a (partial) orientation towards the future becomes more likely. When assisting victims in being more future orientated, connections and commonalities with members of the former adversary groups can become visible, contributing to a fundament for more cooperative future interactions.

An aspect which appears to motivate a movement in the direction of change, away from group enmities towards more cooperative orientations, is constituted by an interest in aspects of more peaceful alternatives as an answer towards the grave war experiences.

[We] give people some theories and workshops, a way of dealing with violence and speaking about peace, teaching about peace, human rights, so they are very curious [...] And they have so strong experiences, and then, after the war, when they have so much trauma and experience about war, they are very curious what actually is peace

movement and peace theories. And I can see, this motivation here is very strong.¹¹⁴

This willingness towards changing the own aims in the direction of more peaceful cohabitation seems partially to be grounded in a motivation to contribute towards the wider well-being of society. (The latter of the following quotations, referring to the motivation of contributing towards the well-being of society, was already cited above in a different context.)

If we would approach them with an idea, oh now you should do this or that with them, they would ask why. Why would we do that, they are enemies, we don't want to do that. No, meet them and make your own decision and I seriously mean it, because it makes no sense that nobody joins in unless they do have the proper motivation to do it, unless they really feel it, and when these responsibilities are re-awaken or a way to handle is re-discovered, then it is the right thing, and then they really change habits, and this helps them, because they feel happier with themselves, they feel, they are not did something good, everybody wants to do something good.¹¹⁵

[An ex-combatant:] “during this programme, I found out that my responsibility is to share my experience that I have deep inside, and experience of education that I got here, and those puzzles that I put together, and I want to be an activist.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Activist of regional peacebuilding organisation W, Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

¹¹⁵ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹¹⁶ Activist of regional peacebuilding organisation W, Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

For individuals who have experienced the dark abysses of war, alternative ways of cohabitation seem to possess an inherent attraction, with the potential of imbuing individuals with a liberating perspective of hope. These alternative perspectives of living and cohabitation can either take the form of being presented as a societal vision, or can be more directly related to the local everyday life of the respective participants.

And it's a progress on human rights and progress in rights in general and these theories of peace and war and, peace in general, what is peace, what is war, and I am completely emotional when I see this progress in these people; how this educational progress – cannot cure them, of course, because it's so a big trauma inside - but it's a little easier to live for them, and explain themselves something, and to believe in some other possibilities of theory and practise ¹¹⁷

people told their different stories, and we just processed that, we let them say, where are the hurts, and then of course we make a break and calm down and relax. And then we continue with more positive things, where they can see the other side, the hope ¹¹⁸

The workshop interaction itself can therein function as an alternative role model of collaboration, when openness and cooperative elucidation of a problem are practiced.

¹¹⁷ Activist of regional peacebuilding organisation W, Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

¹¹⁸ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

I see that among the group [...] I see that people are more and more open, and cooperative, and willing to learn from each other and do things together. [...] they are very surprised, some people knew each other from before, and this is their surprise how some of them are open, even they have had a lot of traumas from the war. I think we have a high level of trust in the group.¹¹⁹

When addressing the everyday life of emotionally wounded participants, one route for transformation – from a fixation on the past towards an orientation on a more cooperative future – appears to consist of envisioning ideal perspectives of their daily life. As a form of empowerment, building on this envisioning of desired daily lives, new identity aims can be developed, when participants are supported in distinguishing chosen vs. non-chosen parts of the identity, for the identification of areas of influence. This support can take the form of assisting reflection processes on understandings of a healthy life, or of raising awareness for basic priorities or values which can give orientation for future societal activities, potentially aiming at the improvement of intergroup relationships, while reducing the fixation on the past.

While supporting people with war traumata in clarifying their basic priorities and life orientations is obviously an aim in itself, it also constitutes a component of the LNGOs' endeavours of improving intergroup relations. By assisting victims in being more future orientated within an intergroup settings, focusing on visions and priorities, connections with the other groups become visible and new relationships can be established.

¹¹⁹ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

In these interethnic settings a common exploration process can take place, in the process of which participants become aware of their multiple identities, reflect on their priorities, and develop more explicit orientations for their future lives. Awareness for the multiple identities can be raised by the following process:

Just to be aware that some identities are, that it's very complex, it's not simple, you are Croat, or whatever [...] They make their own posters, showing their identity. And they said it helped them because they realised what things are important for them, various parts of their life. And some people said they don't even know what their identity is, they are still searching for it. But it's helping them to, like some refugees who were somewhere else and they just returned to [X], and they still don't know what to do and how to organise their lives, so they are trying to figure it out [...] what is their chosen identity and what is was imposed on them, they couldn't chose, like being unemployed¹²⁰

For empowerment, it seems to be helpful, as mentioned when participants reflect on the question which parts of their identities are chosen, and which were imposed by outside conditions, in order to prepare the grounds for reconsidering priorities, so that the own energies can be directed into those spheres that are transformable:

talking about health, and then we discuss, we try to define what health is, and what contributes to a healthy person, and of course they define that for themselves, what they would like to see and experience, what

¹²⁰ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

kind of healthy life [...] and then little by little, we touch the topics they have problems, [...] through the workshops we try to exercise with them, from being hurt, how they can practise and then try to be more assertive, fight for their needs, for example [...] For some people the identity is that they are members of families whose members are lost, or they disappeared. [...] then they try to see how some things that they haven't chosen [...] how they can accept that and some things are chosen, so they can maybe work more on things they can choose, be encouraged, try to live a healthy life through healthy food, and develop friendships or whatever. We just encourage them to be aware of their identities and identities of others¹²¹

When working towards everyday interactions of participants, the perspective is needed that the process of changing the routine patterns should be conceived as long-term in nature.

They discussed about their own personal things, where they tried to use the skills they learnt on. But as they recognized, and I think we recognized, it is the process. They cannot just have it like that. They try and then they have feedback, and then they try. But at least now they know some other ways how they can react on hurts, on lack of communication or whatever. So I cannot brag that they know everything and they are wonderful learners, but I think they are struggling to use that. And it's going to be a process."¹²²

¹²¹ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹²² Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

On a more general level, focusing the attention of victims on capacities by looking at past achievements and current strengths is conducive to empowerment.

it's quite important that people begin to get that kind of a picture of themselves, that they see themselves as successful in some sense [...] make them aware of their own internal resources; both psychological and knowledge, skills and so on, and to build on that [...] To getting them to look at themselves, encouraging them to look at who they are, to look at what they accomplished and to look at that, to look at that in a positive way, if that's possible [...] The whole point is self-reflection, the whole point is looking at strengths, looking at inner resources and building up those ¹²³

One possible element of empowerment is disseminating skills of communication which entail mutual listening and the articulation of needs, visions, and emotions like fears and pains. As mentioned, bringing fears, pains, and needs, which partially are at the root of intergroup enmity, to the foreground, enables more constructive engagements with these sources of animosities. At the same time, disseminating communicative skills which facilitate the expression of needs and emotions are integral to an empowerment process. Part of this empowerment process consists of awareness raising for own priorities, visions, and needs, in order to escape from being trapped in the past and in images of fixed identities. This

¹²³ Activist of a local peacebuilding organisation in Vukovar, Croatia, July 2007

awareness for needs and change wishes is the precondition for being more assertive and proactive in striving towards the own aspirations.

When I said communication, I think really an element of compassionate communication, non-violent and compassionate, [in the sense of] listening with empathy, active listening with empathy. Recognition and expression of emotions and needs.¹²⁴

The great thing is to talk about that to give the pain out, you know, that's why the other side will see what are the real needs and are the real thoughts of me, for example, and then we can start to talk, until the period in which I put under the carpet my deep fears, my deep needs, my visions or something, and not to go transparent to the other side with always danger of conflict.¹²⁵

through the workshops we try to exercise with them, how they can, from being hurt, how they can be assertive, how they can practise and then try to be more assertive, fight for their needs, for example. So, in different topics, like identity, how can they affirm their identity, and still be cooperative with others to, how they can be tolerant. And still don't lose their own identity. And some things are very important for them, so they share, they discuss, they have a chance to process things in the group.
[...]

we did teach them some skills of acknowledging their own feelings, acknowledging their own needs, and asking for what the need is, without saying ahead of time, there are perceptions, without saying, well, I think

¹²⁴ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹²⁵ Activist M of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

you are a bad person, but they will say, well, I have a feelings of this or I'm afraid of this and my need is this and when I'm asking you or saying this or that, and then on the next workshop, we just continued in that direction and we taught them assertiveness, in a way how they can, again, say what they need without, so it was like they had the chance to practise several times ¹²⁶

this is only one bit of the training we want to talk about, at the end of the training say of, what would they want to change? Why? What do they think can be done? And we try to point them out that personal example and courage is very important. That maybe you cannot move hills with your actions and change governments and the total policy, but what you can change definitely, if you want, is your behaviour. And your behaviour at work, your behaviour in your family, so not only when you meet the others, but change your attitude. Start from yourself ¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹²⁷ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

I.C) Challenging enemy images in the wider public

by presenting examples which deviate from stereotypes, by presenting role models who have learnt from the war experiences, and by raising awareness for the suffering inflicted by members of the own group

While the preceding sections .A and .B covered LNGO projects focusing on war affected communities or on war affected individuals, this section addresses the mechanisms through which changes can be effected on a more general societal level. Although this section also draws on projects which primarily focused on war affected individuals or communities, the main orientation of this section is on more general processes of change in the wider society.

1) Challenging enemy images in the wider public by presenting examples which deviate from their stereotypes, by presenting role models who have learnt from the war experiences

Amongst the projects addressing a wider public are public forums with ex-combatants from different former warring groups. In the framework of these forums, a panel consisting of ex-combatants from different sides of the former war are presenting their war-related experiences and views. Due to ex-combatants' conspicuous former taking of risks and bearing sacrifices for the "national" or "ethnic cause", their stances possess special legitimacy, thereby potentially serving as role models.

You [as ex-combatants] have a great power and legitimacy in society to change things, because you cannot be stamped as traitor as easy as I can. You have given maybe a part of your body or five years of your life for your country, and somebody calls you a traitor; it's a bit tough. That's why they are so important.¹²⁸

During the process of these forums, homogenous pictures of the nominal groups are undermined in front of the eyes of the audience, when the audience recognises the individuality of the ex-combatants' views, through a) seeing deviations from the expectations towards the outgroup(s) in the form of individualising accounts; or through facing ex-combatants who b) describe how they learnt from the war and c) engage in self-criticism. The following quotation illustrate each of these points:

- a) There was a series, we called them four views, because we wanted to avoid the situation to have one combatant from each side, so they would think they are representatives of this side. [...] they spoke in their own name. They are not representative of a nation, they are not representatives of their former combatant formation or army. They speak for themselves as someone who has been in war.¹²⁹
- b) These forums basically went in a way that we spent about an hour on: four of them telling their stories of how they perceived things when the war started, why they went to war, their motivation, and how they see things now, a self-critical view is very important. So not

¹²⁸ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹²⁹ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

pointing of the finger on the other, speak for your own community. And it has been on television shows, it has been on newspapers, radio and stuff like that, they were also several extra TV shows where they were invited as guests and stuff like that. And within the forums we used the opportunity to have about an hour for these personal stories and interaction with the audience ¹³⁰

- c) And then the audience receive something, which they don't expect [...] When they see a group of ex-combatants, they expect they would be spitting on each other, on each others side. When they don't get it, they initiate, normally, not always, not 100%, normally it initiates the process of self-reflection.[...] And when they hear the story they see something that they totally don't expect, and they get confused ¹³¹

Creating spaces which allow the expression of views which are oriented on peaceful cohabitation is obviously of special significance when the wider public discourse is dominated by radical nationalistic voices. When there is an over-representation of radical voices in the public discourse, which is likely to be a wide-spread characteristic in situations of intergroup conflict, promoting the expression and dissemination of other views could be a crucial ingredient to the endeavour of changing public perceptions.

there is a clear, an absolute majority of people who are pro-peace oriented, there is potential for that, but you have to approach them in the

¹³⁰ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹³¹ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

right way, to encourage them, and to give them a chance to join in. And often it means that it is a minority of, say, extreme radicals, which is loud. And this is the picture that we get of each other's societies: very negative. Ordinary people are afraid of radicals, or they are afraid of being rejected [...] many people are afraid that whenever they state their opinion, which differs from nationalistic, that they will be attacked, that they will have embarrassing or difficult situations, [...] you have a loud, very nationalistic minority, extremists, that are basically shying in the silent majority. The silent majority is afraid of them. And we have a different, a wrong picture, actually, without the reality of each others' countries. If you would ask an average person in Sarajevo, Bosnia, he would probably think that half of Serbia are Chetnik, Fascistic, want to kill all Muslims and stuff like that and vice versa, which is totally rubbish, it simply doesn't correspond to the reality.¹³²

2) Recognising the victimisation of members of the opponent group by the hands of members of the own group

The recognition of victims within the opponent group can be buttressed by the following steps, undermining the feeling of the moral superiority of the own group and promoting empathy and the humanisation of the other. These steps are not necessarily sequential, but the former is likely to be easier achievable than the latter.

¹³² Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

2a) Hearing first hand reports, either directly or via the media, from victims of war crimes which were committed by the own side and violated *jus in bello*.

This can break down the 'good' vs. 'evil' aspect of enemy images.

2b) Hearing first hand reports, either directly or via the media, from victims of war actions which were committed by the own side and did not necessarily violate *jus in bello*, to recognise the suffering brought about by members of the own group, and to increase understanding.

2a) Hearing first hand reports, either directly or via the media, from victims of war crimes which were committed by the own side and violated *jus in bello*. This can break down the 'good' vs. 'evil' aspect of enemy images.

An integral component for the process of challenging the dichotomous group categorisations, underlying enemy images, consists of the recognition that the war actions did generate innocent victims not only within one's own group, but also on the enemy's side. This can raise awareness for the injustices inflicted by the own side's actions, challenging a "good vs. evil" view. On a group level, the process of undermining the perception that one's own side solely defended itself with justifiable means can be classified into several steps, even though these steps do not necessarily occur in a chronological sequence.

One potential first step is constituted by the recognition that actions classified by international *jus in bello* as war crimes were not exclusively committed by the former enemy, which requires the recognition that certain acts are war

crimes irrespective of which side committed them with which justification. Such recognition can be assisted by several approaches. One process reaching wider parts of the society (compared to the limited number of people participating in direct encounters within LNGO projects) is constituted by court proceedings, which increase publicity for war crimes. As the ICTY suffers from a lack of recognized legitimacy in the public, national courts who are prosecuting own citizens are of particular significance, especially when members from the own group are indicted.

International Criminal Court in Den Hague, their legitimacy is disputed when they are dealing with our people, so to say. So in Serbia it is disputed when it deals with the Serbian war. But in Croatia it is disputed when it is about crimes committed by the Croatian side [...] there is a lack of acceptance of this most important truths [...] the Hague tribunal has collected a lot of evidence on various crimes, but only some of them have been pursued by Hague, but the collected evidence is now being transferred to the national courts who will continue on this process, and it's a very good thing [...] it is also important that most of these processes are led against people who are their citizens, which means, in Croatia most of the processes, not only, but most, are against those who have committed crimes against Serbs; this is very good for the Croat society. In Serbia most of the processes are against Serb citizens, Serbian citizens, who committed crimes, either in Bosnia, Croatia or Kosovo. [...] And this is much, much less disputed. Some Fascistic forces are of course always trying to discredit, but it is much less

disputed than the Hague tribunal, and it is much more present, and it is our country. It's much more right. This is a very good thing.¹³³

The procedures during these national and international court proceedings are followed and documented by some NGOs, in order to ensure that the comprehensiveness of the criminal investigations corresponds to high standards. At the same time, the reports on these proceedings render more visible that crimes were committed by members of the own side as well.

we have actually drafted a report on transitional justice for the last year [...] And there we will look how things with criminal prosecution of suspected crimes either in our countries Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, or in front of international criminal institutions, being the international criminal court for war crimes in Former Yugoslavia [...] When you look at courts, it is very important to ensure that there is on the one side monitoring of war crimes trials, independent monitoring of war crimes trials, and I guess civil society organisations can provide monitoring and are as far as you can get in declaring that this is independent monitoring. You know, how can it be 100% independent when war crimes matter to all of us? You cannot say that human rights organisations can be 100% independent, because we really believe that these trials are important, and that makes us maybe very keen to see perpetrators prosecuted¹³⁴

¹³³ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹³⁴ Activist of human rights organisation A in Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

And I think that Croatian civil society association took the standpoint that criminal process is important. Why, because there was no awareness that war crime against civilians, women, wounded persons or prisoners committed in war from Croatian soldiers is a crime. The public opinion, supported or built by key-politicians or by key-persons in the judiciary was that Croatian soldiers were not able to commit war-crimes, because Croatia was in a defensive war. So, in that situation, in you would like to have a Truth Commission or Reconciliation Commission, the first we should recognise our own role in that and then you could do something. Our reasons were that we should first insist on changing this perception and really acknowledge that war crime is war crime.¹³⁵

One element of this work on ensuring high standards of court proceedings is offering assistance to (potential) witnesses prior to the court proceedings. This work is especially relevant when individuals are testifying crimes which were committed by members of their own identity group, as these witnesses are likely to play a crucial role in encouraging broader parts of the society to concede that crimes were perpetrated by fellow group members. These witnesses are thereby in a position of being conducive to breaking the perception of ingroup homogeneity and of the own group's moral superiority.

The other thing is support to witnesses in particular victim witnesses, because it's very difficult to speak up about crimes committed by their own side in the war, and I would say that the environment for this kind of testimonials might be hostile and very unfavourable, so witnesses need support in order to actually get the courage and speak up also in front of

¹³⁵ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

the court about what they have seen, what has happened, how it was, because war crimes trials can go on only if there are material proofs in actually witnesses are able to speak up [...] you need to prepare a person, how to testify in court, role play, present the whole situation, what she will be exposed to, and to have a lawyer with her all the time.¹³⁶

The recognition of war crimes perpetrated by members of the own group is an essential step. However, even when it is recognised that war crimes were committed by the own group, this does not necessarily imply that responsibility for these crimes is assigned to the perpetrators of the own group. Instead, a process of scapegoating which shields the self-image of the own group can take place, consisting of attributing the primary responsibility of the own group's crimes to the crimes of the (former) opponent.

"ok, that happened, we did that thing, but they have also done that thing to us".¹³⁷

I heard about many places in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia that people talked about the crimes and in what way they talked about. [...] "yes, happened", but of course, there is this "but". [...] "ok, we killed them, but how many they killed of us", in this way.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Activist of human rights organisation A in Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

¹³⁷ Activist M of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹³⁸ Activist G of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

Correspondingly, a normative stance needs to be fostered which classifies certain actions as not acceptable, to effect that responsibility for own actions and thoughts is taken, irrespective of others' actions.

Serbs are declaring that they were defending Yugoslavia. Croats say that they are defending their country, their right for independence. And Bosnians are saying that they are defending their own lives, because Croats and Serbs attacked them. [...] And if you hear that you will conclude that in the region of ex-Yugoslavia all wars were defending wars. But it's a mechanism to approve war. When you say "it was defending" it was automatically approving that, "I was only defending myself", "I killed the other people, because I needed to defend my own life". Everybody is defending that. So it's some kind of mechanism, in which people are trying to approve violence, approve legitimacy to war. And we are fighting against that [...] to try to create an atmosphere in which every side will take responsibility for their own acts, for their own thoughts¹³⁹

And one step, first was, "that happened in my country? – no", we avoid that, that is what is happening, denial. The second step is "ok, that happened, we did that thing, but they have also done that thing to us", you know. And I think the truth that we can do, it's to concentrate on what happened in Serbia for example. [...] What happened in my country, what did my government, what did my army, my police, all the people which did some war crime in the name of my people and exactly under my name, I need to deal with that. I don't care what happened in

¹³⁹ Activist M of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

Croatia. I care from a human point of view. I need to know also. But I don't use these things as an approval or justification for what I am doing. And then we start cleaning in front of our neighbourhood, in our houses, then we can go further [...] The third step is that we learn to make a judgement, banish the crime as it is a crime against a human being, not a crime against a Croatian, a crime against a Muslim, but to think that every crime against a human being is a crime that will punishment. That's it. No matter on which side, from whom to whom.¹⁴⁰

Drawing public attention to war crimes, as constituted by investigations in court proceedings, is one of the elements by which awareness for crimes of the own group can be raised. Another element is the reduction of double standards, mentioned shortly in preceding section B. The reduction of double standards can be supported by inducing participants to evaluate past crimes in the abstract; i.e. by abstracting the controversial actions from their context and comparing the assessments of these abstracted actions to the assessment of the same actions in particular contexts. This means comparing participants' evaluations of crimes in the abstract to participants' evaluations of crimes which were perpetrated by members of the own group. On the abstract level, there appears to be a far-reaching convergence on which actions are judged as unacceptable, whilst group members appear to be partially blinded by enmity when assessing actions perpetrated against an adversary. The possibility of removing double standards seems to grounded in this concurrence of judgements when actions are evaluated in the abstract. These common standards entail that discrepancies to the

¹⁴⁰ Activist G of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

evaluation of concrete actions become visible when the context is restored. By raising awareness for double standards, the dissemination of quasi-universal assessment criteria can be cultivated, and reflection processes on societal ideologies can be supported.

people justify violence depending on the context. If you would just ask them for a situation: There is a military intervention. The army from one country liberates the territory, which was held by rebels. 150 000 flee. Thousands of houses are burnt. Do you consider this violence or this justice? They will all say "violence". But when they project it onto their country, then they call this "legitimate action". And the point of the training is actually to remove this context and to make people look in a fair, judge by the same criteria, whatever you judge. It doesn't matter whether it's Albanians, Serbs or Croats or whoever. You must have the same criteria, because it's human beings. And they get ashamed actually, when they realise this. And withdraw, and it changes some things. [...]

When it comes to specific contexts, because of ideology or because of born in identities or influences, we will differ, because somebody will justify, I don't know, violence against Albanians, but if you don't mention it is Albanians, if you talk just about people being in that position, suffering that kind of action, they will say "yes, this is violence". [...] You start in the abstract, so don't put into a local context, you start always from the abstract.[...] But then, immediately get back to the local context. Don't stay in the abstract. Because if you stay in the abstract, nothing

will change. Bring it back and reflect, looking “what does it mean in our society, what we live, with the situation we live in.” What is glorified in our societies, in our countries. ¹⁴¹

Related to this work are activities which directly address a broader audience, trying to raise the sensibility of the public for double standards in the evaluation of war crimes, in order to foster the unbiased application of quasi-universal norms.

there was no awareness that war crime against civilians, women, wounded persons or prisoners committed in war from Croatian soldiers is a crime. The public opinion, supported or built by key-politicians or by key-persons in the judiciary was that Croatian soldiers were not able to commit war-crimes, because Croatia was in a defensive war. [...] we should first insist on changing this perception and really acknowledge that war crime is war crime. ¹⁴²

war veterans were asking with a petition for this abolishment of the war crime [as a chargeable offence, when a general of the own side was to be prosecuted,] and then at the same time we organised ourselves from different peace and civil society organisations, in the action “a crime is a crime is a crime, whoever did it”, and that was the most, 10,000 people were at the main square at one point at the demonstration against this law that was tried to be passed on, and with the request that war crimes should be prosecuted whoever did it ¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹⁴² Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁴³ Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation C in Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

I'm attempting in my work to give people a chance to make up their own decisions. I will never tell anyone, this should be done or this is wrong. Let's discuss it, let's look at it from different perspectives, and then your sense of justice will tell you what to do ¹⁴⁴

2b) Hearing first hand reports, either directly or via the media, from victims of war actions which were committed by the own side and did not necessarily violate *jus in bello*, to recognise the suffering brought about by members of the own group, and to increase understanding.

A further step on the journey towards breaking down enemy images is formed by the recognition that suffering was caused also by those war actions which were not necessarily violating international *jus in bello*. For this to occur, it is essential that the humanity in the former enemy is recognised to some degree, so that suffering ceases to be perceived as contingently “deserved” and can be acknowledged. Such a process of re-humanising the other side can take many forms, being facilitated for example by the recognition of similarities between the own and the other side.

The discovery of similarities can wherein happen in different ways: either during personal encounters – such as those described above, enabling the perception of similarities in aspirations, needs, personal war stories, and values – or mediated by reports of victims' suffering, which might, via empathy, enable the recognition of a common humanity. Reports of victims'

¹⁴⁴ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

suffering, in turn, are potentially disseminated on the one hand by national and international court proceedings, and on the other hand by the “oral history” project. During this project, individuals from different parts of the region are visited, and their war experiences are documented.

What is also important is truth about missing persons and also I think that people have a need for acknowledgement of their own experience. How they feel and what they have been passing through during the war. And this is not – even during war crime trials – these needs are not really fulfilled; because, a judge or court needs just to approve certain things on a level of is the person guilty or not. And really how people felt or what each of the victims went through, is not really the mission of a court. So, it is not enough, and I think that this needs many publications on Croatia from different associations about testimonies what happened to people, so it is going, this kind of oral history, writing down and collecting or expressing. That is also what is needed and it’s good to have it¹⁴⁵

This process can be regarded as a overlapping with some aims of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission by its focus on multiple perspectives on war experiences, suffering and traumata. It thereby gives the previously anonymous or unknown victims of the opponent’s side a tangible human appearance, which can buttress the process of rehumanisation, and promote a deeper apprehension of the consequences of the own sides’ action.

Now, there are some experiences in Bosnia, they had this trust commission for Srebrenica [...] So we started in Croatia this oral history

¹⁴⁵ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

as a kind of truth saying mechanism, and I think that probably this kind of smaller commission for different locations could be one of the approaches, and a kind of regional approach which will take into account different measures and also what is important, this next step after truth commissions ¹⁴⁶

A further context in which hearing the war-related suffering can occur was mentioned in section B, wherein personal encounters between victims of different sides were described. When hearing the war experiences directly from the victims in these personal settings, the suffering brought about by war actions is expressed, so that empathy can entail the corresponding moral evaluations of war actions precipitating such losses:

we had some moments where somebody from Croatia would say “oh, I never knew that this is how people in Serbia think or how they see us, we thought we are the victims in this war, now you hear that there are other victims as well, you’re not”, situations like this.¹⁴⁷

Someone said “I have been raped”, “I have been beaten”, “I lost my family, because my mother, father”, or “children have been killed”. Both [sides] had a problem that this happened¹⁴⁸

An important distinction, however, should be drawn between improving relationships between groups and attempts of reconciling perpetrators and victims. All the activities discussed here focus on activities of the former

¹⁴⁶ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁴⁷ Activist Y of a peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁴⁸ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

category, i.e. on measures which are aiming at reducing animosities between people who had not perpetrated acts of direct violence against other people participating in the respective LNGO activities. Whether 'reconciliation' between perpetrators and victims can occur is dependent on the individuals involved, and it might be far too much to be asked from victims to engage in such a process "on demand":

reconciliation was very hard word for them. Just to hear "now reconcile". "Should I reconcile with the murders of my family?" or "family members?", "no, no, please, no"¹⁴⁹

Correspondingly, when reconciliation is declared to be an aim of peacebuilding, it should chiefly be referring to the group level, in the sense of reducing enemy images as generalised animosities and prejudices. Amongst the steps towards this goal are those just outlined, viz. the recognition of the suffering inflicted by members of the own group, so that the belief in the moral superiority of the own side can become eroded. At the same time, a heightened awareness for the sufferings brought about by the past war casts doubt on the legitimacy of war on a general level, even when waged in the faith of defence.

The following section will address how societal processes of reflecting on national histories of wars and cohabitation can inform the envisioning of future forms of cohabitation.

¹⁴⁹ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

I.D) Learning from the past and planning for the future:

creating spaces for joint intergroup reflections on the past of the societies; envisioning desired future societal states, which can support the discovery and development of common values

Addressing past war events is not only essential on a personal level, as was covered in section .B, but also on a societal level. The preceding section .C focused on processes which support the recognition of others' victimisation, as a pivotal element for undermining dichotomous group categorisations.

This section further addresses societal mechanisms of dealing with the past. The section's focus is on the importance of wider and more abstract societal reflection processes on the past. In such reflection processes, the perspectives for desired societal constellations can be sharpened.

Envisioning the future can supplement these reflection processes, so that values for desired societal states can be discovered and developed. Central motivational forces underlying these reflection and envisioning processes are: a form of deterrence when repulsive sides of national histories are brought to awareness, and an appeal or attraction function of desired norms when societal states are envisioned.

Engaging with the past is of course not only important for the aim of learning from national histories, but also for transforming those nationalist narratives which spawn intergroup animosities. Measures for raising awareness for the victimisation engendered by members of the own side – as presented in the previous section – are an integral part of this transformation of nationalist narratives. This section elucidates further measures which aim at

transforming nationalist narratives, while facilitating the possibility to learn from national histories. Bringing public attention to the malicious sides of national history and questioning nationalist self-serving myths, undermines enemy images by rendering the internal heterogeneity of groups visible, and by challenging the perceived moral superiority of the own group.

Several activists warned against the dangers of neglecting to deal with the malicious sides of the own national history, as histories entail old fears and nationalist arrogance, which form the ground for hatred. Addressing the past of intergroup enmity is correspondingly of substantial importance for intergroup cohabitation, even in times when on the surface there are no immediate intergroup tensions visible.

There are people who say “you should forget what happened all together”, I think that people should never forget what happened, but not on a way to get lost in the past, but learning from the past with a step forward. You have to really discuss what has happened and if you don't discuss, sooner or later it will come again, because you just left it there, you didn't discuss, always open questions, if you do not talk about what happened [...] if you are not ready to listen, then it will never be a sustainable constellation, because people will say “ok, we are now reconciled”¹⁵⁰

when communists came, they had a method “we are all brothers and sisters, we punish the fascists, we throw them away, and now we need to forget what happened, because better to forget, better to not speak

¹⁵⁰ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

about that ugly past, we need to build our country, to build our future on that.”¹⁵¹

maybe six months or a year before the war started, all sorts of issues from the past came un-ground. So this was the period when the atmosphere was pumping up with fear, with this kind of stories. There was “Ustasha” and there was “Chetnik” and again “Yugoslavia will fall apart” and “Croats will be Ustasha, and they will redo the crimes to the Serbs that they did in the previous war.” and “This is what has happened in NDH”, this independent Croatian state during WWII, “They will do that”. This was just the period before the war, when this was very intensive [...] When Vukovar fell down, it’s like one platoon of these people, with beards, and with a black flag, like singing, a song like “we will have meat, we will have meat, we will slaughter the Croats”. [...] And these kind of symbols were re-appearing to the present. [...] you can see, for example, black T-shirt or shirts, it’s like the symbol of the Ustasha [...] for example, the right-wing party in Croatia, they were all, from the beginning, they were all in black. [...] using these symbols just put up the flames; before the war, during the war, and for sure after the war the people are still speaking about what happened in Bleiburg.¹⁵²

I think it has to be realised that Eastern Croatia and pretty much all of Bosnia and Kosovo, as far as that’s concerned, all are powder kegs, waiting to explode. If they don’t explode today, they will explode in ten years, or 25 years, or 30 years time, if nothing is done. [...] This was not

¹⁵¹ Activist M of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹⁵² Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

dealt with after the Second World War, this region; Tito swept the ethnic issues under the carpet, did not confront them, at the psychologically from the point of narratives, that's one of the causes of this here. The evidence is when we seeing it now that precisely the same is happening now. This is a repeat of what happened after the Second World War. And to me it's very worrying to watch it, extremely worrying.¹⁵³

As nationalist narratives and intergroup hostilities appear to be still widespread in the societies under consideration, a process of transformation towards more collaborative intergroup cooperation is potentially long-term. A transformation is likely to require efforts on multiple levels of the societies, i.e. the climate would be ideally changed by grassroots activities as well as by supplementing top-level national policies.

I think that politicians are a bit hostages of their own nationalistic politics. Because they don't allow them to make moves in the pro-peace direction or pro-cooperation direction, because they are afraid of the climate that they created themselves. [...] [Politicians] are afraid of [...] distancing themselves from nationalistic policy; so they are very cautious about, gradual, even those who want this, are very careful. There are some who don't want. And it's a process, it's a very slow process. But we can help them, because we can change the climate which allows more space, and they can help us.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Activist of a local peacebuilding organisation in Vukovar, Croatia, July 2007

¹⁵⁴ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

The appalling aspects of national histories and the grave corollaries of past wars can have the function of deterrents, when a learning process is initiated which comprises thorough reflections on the societal pasts. These sides of the history are frequently ignored in a self-serving manner. Correspondingly, one of the basic preconditions for a learning process is to unearth the appalling sides of national histories, in order to counter the distorted self-serving narratives.

black sides of Croatian history were overshadowed by nationalistic euphoria and nationalistic self-advertisement or self-propaganda.¹⁵⁵

bringing of facts and truth about things that happened, and working on a different kind of social memory [...] There are a lot of myths, that are present in the minds of the people, and too a large extends it is also there being built into education, there fostered through education in their heads, of saying myths how Serbs love freedom and their freedom-loving nation, and they are always on the right side and the Croats are like this and like that, it's a kind of stupid generalisation how all nations; and I think it is very present still. And then a very important point I should have mentioned: de-victimisation. Because the process of victimisation is something which has grasped us all, really, all of our societies. All of the societies deal with victims. And if you are a victim you need help, and it is powerful role; because you can only bid.¹⁵⁶

There is a so-called hegemony of nationalistic self-understanding, it is somehow a state of autism, lacking of contact with real historical and

¹⁵⁵ Activist F of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁵⁶ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

political world, and that lack of responsibility, that lack of ability, that lack of political competence ashamed the Croats as a nation. And in that sense it could be told of a collective responsibility, not guilt, but I believe in collective responsibility.¹⁵⁷

that's a very important thing in dealing with the past, because to put aside mythology, that's one of the most important things [...] why should we look into the past? Because it's very necessary for us, because of our presence, to know what to do in the very short future, or long-time future, not only for the prevention of war, but to make us constructive and stable societies, healthy. [...] all nations, all states have these black years in several parts, and if you leave them there, they will always be there. We need to face ourselves with our legacy, which is very rich, for example European, but also face ourselves with our bad things in our European history [...] make a proper way of interpretation of me and past at all, and build on a healthy basis the society. And on that, you can build relations, individual groups, NGOs, civil society, and so on. But avoiding this processing makes us repeating the former mistakes.¹⁵⁸

Part of this engagement with the dark sides of history is bringing the destruction and sufferings, entailed by war events in general, to the surface, to induce a reflection on war on a general level.

¹⁵⁷ Activist F of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁵⁸ Activist of a local war veteran and peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, June 2007

[Members of an organisation whose relatives were killed in the war] lost everything, and they devote their lives now only for working on themselves, on dealing with the past, and sharing this mission of “it shouldn’t happen again.” [...] to share this experience with other people and help other people. [...] the mission is “a different world is possible”, “we have to stop”, “it mustn’t happen again”.¹⁵⁹

these forums basically went in a way that we spent about an hour on: four [ex-combatants] telling their stories of how they perceived things when the war started, why they went to war, their motivation, and how they see things now, a self-critical view is very important.¹⁶⁰

[young activists] were preparing the theatre of the oppressed throughout the whole training, and then they performed the “theatre of the oppressed” on the main square in [*city*] and lots of tourists and other people from Croatia were there, asking “what is this, what’s going on” and then they realised that these were the youth activists from all over Croatia trying to send a message about how war is stupid and silly and how it ruins the lives of everybody¹⁶¹

Another obvious requirement for a fruitful learning process consist of gaining a better understanding of past societal dynamics, by increasing the knowledge about events of the past as well as connections. On a more abstract level, learning from the past can occur by comparing the

¹⁵⁹ Activist of regional peacebuilding organisation W, Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

¹⁶⁰ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹⁶¹ Activist Y of a peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

experiences of the own country to that of others, and also by reflecting on values and practices of cohabitation during different historical periods of the own country.

We have such a bad historical experience that there is actually so much to learn from it.¹⁶²

talk about even collective: what can we do together, how can we approach this together, how can we look at the past [...] “learning from the past and going toward the future”¹⁶³

I would say that what is also important is that in the human rights discourse, what might happen is following the justice for victims path, and that path has complementary spheres, so that one part is the human rights path, and part of justice for the victims, but the other part is understanding causality. Historical causality. What is actually before and what is after. What are causes and what are the consequences. So this has to be a complex process.¹⁶⁴

how we compare our private, group and national stories and histories with the groups and nations we are neighbouring with. That is the crucial point why I can't accept any kind of national history as valid and fruitful and justified in itself. I think that the danger of an auto-referential context of interpretation has the danger of being idiotic, of being without reference in context. Let us learn. [...] There is half a sentence and half a joke, that we had a better past, and I think that there is a lot of truth in

¹⁶² Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹⁶³ Activist of a local peacebuilding organisation in Vukovar, Croatia, July 2007

¹⁶⁴ Activist of local human rights organisation A in Zagreb, July 2007

such a sentence. We, as a nation, really had a better past, but that past was developing within an unthinkable broader geographical context. [...]

I can't see that we as a nation can properly cope with our political problems of so-called European integration not to keep in mind the rich or more fruitful part of our political heritage. [...]

many important – even crucial – parts of our recent history were not enough – in the sense of “factography” – known.¹⁶⁵

Some of the potential measures through which these self-serving narratives can be addressed were already encountered in section .B, when the importance of understanding the other side's perspectives on the war was outlined. An exchange of perspectives seems to be an essential ingredient for dealing with the past, under the condition that former trust-building has taken place, so that the source of the alternative perspective is perceived as sufficiently credible. The necessity of such an exchange of concurring perspectives is illustrated by the previously used example of the disparate views on the motivations for past wars. More generally, after initial trustbuilding has occurred, the exchange on different perspectives held in the past war can impart lessons on common dynamics of war.

their motivation, in 95% or more probably, was to defend something. If you ask the Bosnians, they will say the Serbs were the aggressors, they didn't defend, they attacked something. But if you ask Serbs, they will say, we were defending our people, we were afraid that the same thing

¹⁶⁵ Activist F of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

would happen as in WWII, and it was violent act that Bosnia has become independent, because the referendum for example was boycotted by Serbs [...] So, if this would have gone on, you know, people have seen in this way, or they will say, well, I was just mobilised, I didn't want to go to war at all.¹⁶⁶

As argued in previous sections, exchanges on personal experiences of war-related violence can raise awareness for shared values, when the direct exposure to victims renders the consequences of violence tangible. Empathy is related to a sense for the moral implications of certain war events, when the victimisation of the other is recognised, like in the process of exchanges on personal sufferings discussed in previous sections.

One significant way of learning from the past can be found in activities, presented in the preceding section, which are discussing past war actions by comparing the assessment of war-related actions in the abstract to concrete war actions in context, in order to remove double standards. Questions of justice as well as questions of moral rightness were not very controversial when discussed very abstractly, as mentioned, but much more controversial when discussed in the concrete context of actions of named conflict parties. The relatively low level of conflict in terms of abstract principles compared to the deep disagreements about concrete conflict situations might indicate that processes of emotional dismay and dehumanisation of the former enemy are

¹⁶⁶ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

more decisive for the phenomenon of disagreement about the past than disagreements about abstract concepts of rights and justice. In other words, the problem seems to be more the selective application of principles of rights and justice, than the acceptance of the principles themselves. The own interests and the past suffering of the own side seem to contribute to an exclusion of the other side from these principles. The ethical principles themselves are potentially very similar.

And when we talk of the sense of justice, 95% of the people will find that it is very, very similar.¹⁶⁷

the potential for peace which is a huge alliance and pro-peace energy in the society. So if you ask people “are you for war or peace” 95% will say “peace”¹⁶⁸

Another potential source for discovering a common value ground is constituted by the Abrahamic religions present in the region. This work is of special relevance when considering how differing religions can feed the field of contestations within evolving conflict dynamics. While religion was not necessarily at the heart of the conflicts in the Balkans, the fact that religious affiliation largely coincided with ‘ethnicity’ indicates that religion plays a role in the self-definitions of the respective identity groups. The religious differences might have functioned as mediating catalysts by deepening the cleavages between conflict groups and thereby contributing to escalation, without forming the primary field of contestation.

¹⁶⁷ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹⁶⁸ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

Due to this conflict-fuelling potential, religious differences deserve special attention within the domain of peacebuilding, which can be addressed by on the one hand increasing mutual understanding and respect for differences, and on the other hand by raising awareness for similar values:

Not arguing about what is the best and who is right, but just being open and sharing my own values, and trying to hear, what are your values. And finding what values we have in common, what values are different, but still with respect. And we did work or research for aspects of nonviolence in our own religious background. And it was very helpful, because we all found tools in our faith for nonviolence. [...] So we are now very much deeply rooted in that awareness that our personal faith is connected with non-violence from religious background.¹⁶⁹

Building on values which are shared amongst adherents, or ideally representatives, of religious communities, the awareness of a broader public on these fundamental commonalities can be raised by information campaigns:

[T]he whole campaign was developed, which was running through stations, by promoting respect, by highlighting the commonalities that religions have, Catholic, Islam and Orthodox Church, especially on the topics of peace and tolerance. All of the religions do promote tolerance,

¹⁶⁹ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

by respecting the others, issues that they're really highlighting in these media campaigns.¹⁷⁰

Some activists expressed a relatively high level of trust in the moral sense of the societies in terms of assessing the moral implications of violence and societal activism, which is indicative of activists' trust in the broad dissemination and appeal of values conducive to a more peaceful coexistence.

I will never tell anyone "this should be done or this is wrong" [...] your sense of justice will tell you what to do [...] And when we talk of the sense of justice, 95% of the people will find that it is very, very similar [...] then these responsibilities are re-awaken or a way to handle is re-discovered, then it is the right thing, and then they really change habits, and this helps them, because they feel happier with themselves, they feel, they are not did something good, everybody wants to do something good.¹⁷¹

One of the important aspect is that one does not take the events like "the things had to occur as it occurred", but to see, how I do something, and that, I would say, I have always a stomach, even if the situation for choice is very narrow - the final situation is that I either give my life, as

¹⁷⁰ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

¹⁷¹ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

the most extreme, or I take this other life - this is also a choice. To put it very extremely.¹⁷²

The centrality of a discovering and developing a joint value basis – for the assessment of the past and as an orientation for steps into a common future – points back to the role of civil society as a value based enterprise.

Civil society is deeply connected with respectfulness of so-called universal human values, traditionally connected with leading world religions, with the dignity of every human being, of life as a whole.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Activist B of local peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁷³ Activist F of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

II. Dealing with differences

A few of the mechanisms which were outlined in previous sections are not only relevant for the reduction of intergroup animosities, but are also conducive to nonviolent processes of dealing with conflicts and differences in general. A central commonality of these spheres is that both require communicative practices which cultivate in-depth exchanges on experiences and needs for a better understanding of the other.

Whereas the previous main section I covered mechanisms aiming for the reduction of generalised intergroup animosities in relation to past wars, this section II focuses on dealing with conflicts in general, and on dealing with those differences on a group level that persist even when the removal of animosities and intergroup trustbuilding were successful.

Section .A addresses general mechanisms for dealing with conflicts, focusing on communicative practices and on the analysis of the conflict situation.

LNGOs attempt to disseminate these mechanisms in their endeavour of building capacities for nonviolent ways of dealing with conflict. Section .B is directed towards dealing with those differences between groups persisting independently of the war past, by elucidating similarities and differences, by searching for common values, and by considering options of cohabitation.

II.A) General mechanisms for dealing with conflicts

This section presents communicative and analytical practices for addressing conflict situations, spread by LNGOs in their attempt to build capacities for dealing with conflicts, in order to counter the societal roots of forceful ways of conflict handling. These practices are disseminated during a variety of activities of LNGOs, whose main topic stretches across e.g. inter-religious dialogue, forums on community problems, leisure programmes for youngsters, or mediation in interpersonal problems. Underlying some of these LNGO measures is the rationale that a thorough societal presence of these skills would ideally substitute the occurrence of violence as a means for addressing conflicts.

 this peace work happens during times of peace; now, when there is no war. Now I am doing the exercises, now I am fortifying myself, when I calmly train my composure by skills. Since, when a critical situation arises, then I have rehearsed steps, like in case of, I don't know, Aikido or something like that [...] This is also the case for trainings for non-violence. I am practising now in times of peace, and not "now there is no war, now no problem" [...] Then these various political quarrels are arising; then, when it is going too far, then suddenly the people take knives or arms. Also for violence, everyday, in the traffic, in companies, oppression and so on, and that is "yes, one has to" and that's it. It has not to be.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Activist B of local peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, July 2007

It was emphasised, however, that a societal – and even an individual – change in communicative practices should be conceived as a project with a distant time horizon.

for nine months we cannot give the culture of the debate, the culture of education or something like that. [...] But we think that we did a very good job with that project, but we must have in mind that it's not good to stop this kind of work with the people.¹⁷⁵

when you are a little bit relaxed, you don't [engage in learnt nonviolent practices for dealing with conflicts]. I want that to be an integrated part of me [...] I think that really you need much experience, [...] because, when you grow up, you just have a kind of patterns imposed to you. [...] it's a way of life that I'm still learning and would like to accept fully, because it's just opening the doors to a different kind of world that we are now living in. [...] I can't say you just learn mediation¹⁷⁶

Amongst the principles which are taught during some of the LNGO activities is an integral principle which is reminiscent of – and partially referring to – an element of Lederach's (2003, 2006) "conflict transformation", i.e. the principle to approach conflicts with the attitude that conflicts are an inherent part of human interaction, which should be approached with a problem-oriented mind-set, instead of defining the co-conflictant as a threatening problem.

¹⁷⁵ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation B in Pristina, Kosovo, June 2007

¹⁷⁶ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

we have some rules of communication, “we will not attack the person, but the problem” [...] avoiding the term conflict resolution because conflict is encountered in everyday life¹⁷⁷

We state times and again that our vision is not to drive away the conflict, but to transform the conflicts. And the conflicts in turn are always new possibilities to start something together; so, not "you are the problem" or "I", but that "we" have a problem. And it will always be like that, in the future. But what do I do, what do you do in the future, that's what is important; explain or act anyhow. In this direction, that a conflict is approached without fear, [...] approaching it without judging/condemning.¹⁷⁸

Emphasised as significant for dealing with conflicts in general were (similar to the principles when having exchanges on severe war experiences mentioned in section I.B): Establishing a communicative framework with an emphasis on listening and I-messages as parts of “non-violent communication” (as partially inspired by Rosenberg, 1983). This can be conducive to exchanges on personal perspectives and to the expression of wishes and needs, as a precondition for mutual understanding and subsequent cooperative problem solving. In dealing with conflicts which involve disagreements about concrete events or arrangements, the analysis of underlying interests and needs can facilitate the search for accommodation.

¹⁷⁷ Activist Y of a peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁷⁸ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, July 2007

nobody should interrupt anybody, we should all raise our hands in order to speak up, I should talk from my own shoes, in my own name, trying not to use “we this, we that, we think, we should”, but talking from the I-perspective, “I would like to do this and that” [...] we teach active listening [...] “I”-speech-messages, [...] empathy [...] As long as we think and use this methodology of nonviolent communication, we can transform conflict, so it's really connected. [...] What are our needs¹⁷⁹

[when consciously working as an LNGO activist on conflicts,] I listen better, and I try to speak non-violently, ask open questions, everything that I learnt. [...] Focus [...] on what she wants to tell me, what if she is angry, what needs are behind¹⁸⁰

we are working on the communication and repeat times and again “it is not only important, what you want to say, but how you say it, so that it is received what you want to say.”¹⁸¹

Three elements [of peace education]: How to deal with strong emotions and trauma, communication and theory of conflict transformation. When I said communication, I think really an element of compassionate communication, non-violent and compassionate [in the sense of] listening with empathy, active listening with empathy. Recognition and expression of emotions and needs.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Activist Y of a peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁸⁰ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁸¹ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, July 2007

¹⁸² Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

The orientation on a analysis of aspirations and needs is of course traceable to Burton's (e.g. 1990, 1997) idea that a conflict between interests can be solved when looking and underlying needs. LNGO activists, however, did not refer to a set of fixed "basic" needs, as conceived by Burton (1990, 1997; cf. Azar, 1986, Kelman, 1999), but were more open in their description of analysis.

win-win approach, meaning to fulfil needs of both sides ¹⁸³

[a method in the process of mediation] often is summarizing and then in that way talking or making a list of needs and interests [...] most of the time they have similar interests, in some cases, and that what is important for them, needs and maybe values that they would like to, they are also pretty much similar sometimes. And then when we go to solutions¹⁸⁴

working creatively with the conflict for us; that you are listening to the other, and then you are getting the ideas, that you are listening to yourself, what [B] is talking about, about needs, that you have a vision at all, that you can do something new, not only what you are used to, but you listen into yourself and you see "ah, I also have this option" ¹⁸⁵

Whether needs can be conceptualised as "basic" and universal – as opposed to individual or culturally idiosyncratic – is partially related to the level of abstraction on which needs are formulated.

¹⁸³ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁸⁴ Activist Y of a local peacebuilding organisation in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁸⁵ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

you can formulate a need on different levels. All needs that can be said through words can be maybe put down to several basic needs, I don't know, but I'm not writing on a flipchart just, I don't know, security or recognition, just that. We are trying to use their words [...] for example, "I have heard that you are really concerned about your kids, you are concerned about their security" or "their financial difficulties". So I put it more in this concrete sense, related to the case, not just in general, need. [...] "you have a need to have a good relationship with your ex-wife and to be able to talk to your ex-wife". It doesn't have to be, "you need recognition from your wife", but it can be. But it's not just recognition or just, I wouldn't write, human relations or, but I would make it more concrete.¹⁸⁶

This statement points to a central ramification in theories of universal human needs. Burton's (1990, 1997) "relationship needs" – i.e. "recognition", "security", and "identity" (amongst his "basic needs") – are formulated so abstractly that they allow the subsuming of a very wide array of aspirations under these concepts. This abstract formulation renders the concept rather resistant towards falsification, while entailing that the meaning of the concepts becomes very diffuse or even empty. As was apparent in the community projects presented in section I.A2, as well as in the statement just quoted, LNGOs conduct laborious analyses of needs and aspirations, in order to find commonalities which are more concrete than those listed by Burton. Thereby doubt is cast on the usefulness of Burton's reference to "basic needs".

¹⁸⁶ Activist Y of a local peacebuilding organisation in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

The approach of cultivating open communication for an in-depth analysis of needs and aspirations is obviously only viable when communication partners are willing to engage in an open exchange. This willingness can be limited due to emotional involvement in the topic and/or spirited attitude towards the respective other.

we did set up this, but you know how it goes, I mean, in these things, when people are not so motivated for the process to end constructively, they then stop respecting rules at one point.¹⁸⁷

When the animosity between conflictants is primarily rooted in an enmity directed towards the outgroup, then trustbuilding measures as those presented across section I might be required. When, in contrast, the animosities are primarily related to the conflictants' emotional involvement in the *topic*, calm and patient listening and directing conflictants' attention towards a concrete wish for change might be helpful.

[when encountering furious individuals] be calm¹⁸⁸

[in such situations of hostilities] remain calm and try to talk to the people. I would ask them what is the problem and to tell me more about what upset them and trying to think out loud and I need trying to think with them what can be done¹⁸⁹

There were sometimes moments when people were very angry, but then always the group gathered, and then tried to solve this problem [...] "ok,

¹⁸⁷ Activist Y of a peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁸⁸ Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁸⁹ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

what is your problem? If it's something personal, let's solve that. What do you want to do, how do you to change?"¹⁹⁰

When the cleavages between adversaries are very deep, it might be impossible to reach any kind of arrangement by a short-term approach. In such situations, it appears to be helpful when a mediation is conducted by individuals who are already situated in an intermediary position, i.e. who are possessing thorough pre-existing relationship to conflict parties. Additionally, some constellations might require long-term trustbuilding measures which are external to the actual conflict topic, to the effect that the actual conflict handling needs to be deferred to a later phase. (This approach has its parallels in the community projects, section I.A, and in the projects with ex-combatants and war victims, I.B, as in all these cases trustbuilding measures are preceding the handling of the conflict's core.)

[there was agreement] that some young people will do a graffiti on the school walls. [...] They did the graffiti, but then the school and the neighbours around didn't like the graffiti [...] so they wanted to paint it over. So there was a big fight [...] We tried to have a real mediation, but it didn't work out [...] Then the parents were the main agents, key actors, in the process, because they were a kind of link between the neighbours and the kids [...] this graffiti stayed, nobody touched it. Afterwards, it kind of came down. We did also some gatherings and public actions of cleaning the parks, and things around the area, so everybody was kind of calming down, seeing that kids are actually doing a good thing. [...]

¹⁹⁰ Activist of a youth organisation in Vukovar, June 2007

over the time, [the neighbours] kind of stopped looking at [the graffiti] as an enemy or anything, they stopped, and I think that parents talked to the problematic neighbours about it and trying to explain to them what is it about, I think this was the main thing.¹⁹¹

if you want to start dialogue with the a completely opposite group, effectively it is impossible to start immediately with them [...] your message should be taken to them by this intermediate group, and then feedback should also, and intensifying this kind of process, then either of them will go into this mid-space of dialogue¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Activist Y of a peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁹² Activist of a local war veteran and peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, June 2007

II.B) Dealing with deep intergroup differences

Even when measures aiming at the reduction of enmity – such as those presented in section I – have been successful, there can be intergroup differences which persist, and which cannot be sufficiently addressed by looking at underlying needs and aspirations. When dealing with cultural and religious differences, the following measures are possibly conducive to peaceful cohabitation:

- 1) Fostering the exploration of intergroup commonalities and differences
- 2) If disagreements remain despite a basic understanding of the differences, tolerating these differences in values, practices, and beliefs is one route towards cohabitation; this tolerance can be based on respect following from understanding the background of these differences, and on an acceptance of differing beliefs as equal in valence
- 3) Discover joint values within intergroup exchanges to raise awareness for normative commonalities and for options of cohabitation with differences; disagreements which cannot be solved might be continued within an accepted communicative framework which is based on these shared values

1) Fostering the exploration of intergroup commonalities and differences

One family of measures aims to elucidate commonalities and differences between groups. An improved understanding of the intergroup contrasts and overlaps could ideally remove wrong assumptions/stereotypes about the other group and assist in the understanding of the details of differences in

values and practices. This could contribute to reducing alienation and encourage re-humanisation.

Part of the exploration process on commonalities and differences between groups consists of raising awareness for the content of stereotypes and having exchanges on this content, in order to let the other stereotyped side correct misinformation.

Knowledge and also exercises about personal, for example, cultural differences, or prejudices or, for example, hooks and triggers for me, what would trigger me into some reaction¹⁹³

talk about these prejudices, which exist in our societies, write them down. What are the Albanians like, what do you hear? Write them down, so purely Serbian group, purely Albanian group on the others or stuff like that. [...] when people hear, they get sometimes offended or aggressive about it. And it is a shock, it is also a shock for those that have written, because for them they hear it all the time in their environment, and now somebody from the other side hears it and is certainly totally offended, they are totally unaware how others perceive this. It is really not that much bad intention, it is just that, say some sick climate, which is still holding on from the war time, that people do not really question [...] We talk about it¹⁹⁴

we can list what did you think about the others side, [...] to let them first list the stereotypes, and then giving the other side the chance to explain

¹⁹³ Activist Y of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁹⁴ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

what it is, what was wrongly informed, providing the right data first hand for each other¹⁹⁵

people can exchange all this and they have the information from the first hand. And many people haven't ever met other people from the different side. For example, someone never met someone from the Albanian side

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Providing first hand information is not only useful to correct stereotypes, but also to foster an in-depth understanding of intergroup similarities and differences in the domain of culture or religion.

you can talk about our differences, building trust, listen that I am Croatian [...] I like these songs [...] [show] our differences¹⁹⁷

finding what values we have in common, what values are different [...]

we did ask Muslim representatives about [Sharia] [...] about marriage [...] We discussed and we asked questions, because it was new for us and we wanted to learn more about that, but it was interesting for us [...] we discussed about trinity and other theological things, and then we realised from the Christian side that for [the Muslim side] it's very strange

¹⁹⁵ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

¹⁹⁶ Activist G of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

¹⁹⁷ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation Z in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

[...] they probably heard some misinformation about that, and we were glad that we asked and that we can say how.¹⁹⁸

In this inter-religious encounter [...] “how do I express my problem and how do express what I appreciate on you” in an I-form. And then something follows which is called “the hot chair” [...] that means, everyone can sit down on the chair, for example, I sit down, and everybody in the group may ask me something about my belief, what he is interested in.¹⁹⁹

The subsequent sections will outline strategies for dealing with those differences between groups which remain after a deeper understanding of the positions, practices, and beliefs has been reached.

2) If disagreements remain despite a basic understanding of the differences, tolerating these differences in values, practices, and beliefs is one route towards cohabitation; this tolerance can be based on respect following from understanding the background of these differences, and on an acceptance of differing beliefs as equal in valence

For dealing with those intergroup differences in values or attitudes which persist or become apparent during intergroup dialogues, the normative framework of the encounter setting focuses on an exploration of the

¹⁹⁸ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

¹⁹⁹ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, July 2007

differences, instead of on attempting persuasion. Apparently, a balance can be reached in which enraged debates are avoided while giving space for the expression of disturbances. By focusing on exploration, allowing the expression of disturbances, and avoiding a confrontational style, respect for each others' positions can be implied in the communicative framework.

if [tensions occur] within the workshops, then it is the topic. E.g. on the last day about this question, "is peace only the peace of Jesus", it came up, the Muslims said "well, but this is a view which is sound for you, but not for me"; and then this exchange is supported by us, mostly by questions, until the different opinions are clear, and then by a summary.²⁰⁰

trying to hear, what are your values, and finding what values we have in common, what values are different, but still with respect [...] so we did disagree about some things, but [...] we did not try to persuade someone that they should think like everyone else, we did give freedom for different opinions, tolerance. But we did have open discussion about everything we wanted to discuss. [...] the workshop was not organised in the way of arguing, but in a way of sharing and asking question [...] we did talk a lot, but we never fought²⁰¹

And there are these hot issues. And then we discuss them, our perceptions of it. So not persuading each other that they are wrong, not referring to each other, but saying, how to I perceive things, and why.

That's important. [...] when we are fostering criticism and confrontations

²⁰⁰ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, July 2007

²⁰¹ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

in a constructive manner, not trying to persuade each other, but also trying to hear, but expressing our disturbance, our standpoints and reasons for that, is the way to deal, bring it out, put your cards on the table.²⁰²

In some cases in which a disagreement in values remains, promoting attitudes of equipollency between values, i.e. disbanding the ranking of particular values, could be an option. This stance towards values and beliefs, regarding them as of non-ordinal valence, potentially enables to live with diverse values and beliefs, provided that the values and beliefs under consideration are regarded to be compatible.

we were more focused on interreligious cooperation and dialogue [...] Not arguing about what is the best and which is, who is, right, but just being open and sharing my own values, and trying to hear what are your values.²⁰³

A similar principle, but more comprehensive in the valence implication, is the attempt during peace education with children to foster an understanding of differences while imparting to the participants a sense of full recognition of each person.

you have a line of exercises were you are showing to the kids that we are all different but all important²⁰⁴

²⁰² Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

²⁰³ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

²⁰⁴ Activist of local peacebuilding youth organisation N in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

The position of accepting differing values and beliefs as equal can be encouraged by initiating reflection processes on the relative importance of these values and beliefs.

when [...] you say, "this is the best", then I can ask you or the group, "why is it so important to you, that you are in the superlative, why cannot you say, that it is good, why do you need the best?"²⁰⁵

Another possible element for disseminating the equal acceptance of different values is constituted by awareness raising for the potentially forceful and narrow-focused nature of declaring one's values as more important than others.

It is often the case that they do not perceive this forcing of it on others; they are occupied so much by the fact that it is the choice for them, and they are so confident in their choice, that they do not take care of the other people, how is it received.²⁰⁶

Even when an exchange does not precipitate an immediate acceptance of the valence of multiple values, there is some possibility that the auditing of new perspectives could lead to some change in the long-term.

one person, times and again: [...] "but after all truth is..." and so on.

However, this is not like it was before, when he did not talk to anybody

²⁰⁵ Activist A from peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

²⁰⁶ Activist A from peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

about this, now we have various, several people, and then, by this interaction, he got new aspects; and he will then brood on it.²⁰⁷

Having an exchange on the background of values, as on the reasons why certain values are important for the people concerned, might be able to assist in the acceptance of disparate values as not being suitable for rankings. As soon as the importance of the disparate values are mutually accepted, there is scope for planning on a future of cohabitation in which these diverging values can be accommodated.

The answer would be tolerance [...] when we discussed our theology, [...] all of us did have emphasis on some parts [...] we don't comment your values. Each person talked about their own values, and then if you hear it from the person whose values they are, and how important they are for that person, you can only see that it is important for that person.

²⁰⁸

it happens easily that I take something which I see as positive, in order to force it on you, because it is good. On what we are working is “how can I stick to that which I find good, and follow that, and at the same time give some space to you, so that the things may occur, which are wanted by you.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Activist A from peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

²⁰⁸ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

²⁰⁹ Activist A from peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

through the workshops we try to exercise with them [...] how can they affirm their identity, and still be cooperative with others to, how they can be tolerant, and still don't lose their own identity.²¹⁰

3) Discover joint values within intergroup exchanges to raise awareness for normative commonalities and for options of cohabitation with differences; disagreements which cannot be solved might be continued within an accepted communicative framework which is based on these shared values

Section I.D discussed how common values can be discovered in a process of reflection on the past and when envisioning a common future of cohabitation. Such common values are particularly relevant when intergroup differences are remaining in spite of extensive exchanges aimed at mutual understanding. While raising awareness for commonalities on the one hand contributes to a reduction of alienation, it also potentially enables envisioning arrangements of living with the persisting differences.

The principle possibility for finding common values amongst individuals and groups could be closely related to the appeal of values, which was already addressed in preceding chapters. It was mentioned previously that even some of those individuals described as extremists do not feel comfortable in their position of animosity. This can be interpreted as suggestive of a widespread desire for peaceful co-existence. Other statements referred to shared values more directly.

²¹⁰ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

Sometimes, when you come with a, let's say "extremist" [...] for example people just use some phrases, like "all Serbs" or "all Croats are bad", "they disgust me" [...] But really in everyday life maybe he is not so extreme, because he has one neighbour who [...] when he was little that he was taking care of them and helping them and giving them candies, and he said "but (name) is OK" [...] this feeling of aggressiveness, it's not a good feeling, and you don't feel comfortable if you are always angry; no, people don't want to feel like that. But you find a support, spend some time with them to understand why they are speaking like that, and then, for the other half of their being to go front. It's like mad Max, I will be mad Max outside, but inside I'm something different.²¹¹

I don't think that many people hate, because first of all it's difficult for them, it's difficult to live with that. And it's also with deflexed reality, that many people hate. At the moment it's probably, when they feel or hear something or do something that emotionally really hurts them, then probably yes. But, it is not an attitude or ideology they would stand for.

²¹²

the potential for peace which is a huge alliance and pro-peace energy in the society. So if you ask people "are you for war or peace" 95% will say "peace" [...] and when we talk of the sense of justice, 95% of the people will find that it is very, very similar.²¹³

²¹¹ Activist C of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

²¹² Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

²¹³ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

Someone said I have been raped, I have been beaten, I lost my family, because my mother, father, or children have been killed. Both had a problem that this happened²¹⁴

I'm attempting in my work to give people a chance to make up their own decisions. [...] Let's discuss it, let's look at it from different perspectives, and then your sense of justice will tell you what to do, or what to change in your life, in your attitudes. [...] when these responsibilities are re-awaken or a way to handle is re-discovered, then it is the right thing, and then they really change habits, and this helps them, because they feel happier with themselves [...] everybody wants to do something good.²¹⁵

these theories of peace and war [...] peace in general, what is peace, what is war [...] this educational progress – cannot cure them, of course, because it's so a big trauma inside - but it's a little easier to live for them, and explain themselves something, and to believe in some other possibilities of theory and practise.²¹⁶

These references to a wide-spread sense for common values – whether this common sense is regarded as cultural or as quasi-universal – is a potential basis for planning future societal arrangements, as discussed in section I.D. Common values which are discovered and developed by reflecting on the past and envisioning the future can function as basic principles for future cohabitation. These principles can then suggest arrangements for dealing with differences, such as value differences between religions. During LNGOs

²¹⁴ Activist of local peacebuilding organisation Z in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

²¹⁵ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

²¹⁶ Activist of regional peacebuilding organisation W, Zagreb, Croatia, July 2007

projects on inter-religious dialogue, common values of tolerance, respect, and non-violence were emphasised, implying that these value commonalities are sufficient in terms of suggesting to deal with persisting differences non-violently. At the same time, finding common values can hint at areas of collaboration, as is apparent in the following quotations (partially mentioned above), with the potential of reducing alienation and mistrust.

And actually one comes back to this non-violence times and again, in order to liven up, activate non-violence in the inter-religious dialogue²¹⁷

we did work or research for groups of nonviolence in our own religious background. And it was very helpful, because we all found that the tools in our faith for nonviolence. So it was very interesting for me, very nice. So, I think it was very successful for all of us who participated, so we are now very much deeply rooted in that awareness that our faith, personal faith is connected with non-violence from a religious background.²¹⁸

they also had [in school] this project, respecting the others' religions, beliefs and customs [...] It's very interesting, because the graveyards in Mitrovica are in the opposite side. Albanians who are Muslims, that they have their graveyards on the North, while the Serbians who are Orthodox, the graveyard is in the South. [...] Those graveyards are desecrated or not properly maintained, and the [youth initiative] actually developed a campaign by demanding from the local authorities to have much better care about the graveyards, by preventing the people to desecrate or destroy the graveyards, by ordering people to take actions

²¹⁷ Activist A of local peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, July 2007

²¹⁸ Activist I of local peacebuilding organisation A in Osijek, Croatia, May 2007

in cleaning the graveyards, by respecting the other ones' beliefs and religions. [...] the whole campaign was developed, which was running through stations, by promoting respect, by highlighting the commonalities, the promotions that religions have, Catholic, Islam and Orthodox Church, especially on the topics of peace and tolerance. All of the religions do promote tolerance, by respecting the others, it's already, issues that they're really highlighting in these media campaign.²¹⁹

Even after a deeper understanding of intergroup differences has been reached, and even when there is an agreement that dealing with differences should be based on the principles of non-violence and mutual respect, some differences can persist whose tolerance can be hard for some individuals or groups. In cases in which the equal valence of different positions cannot be accepted because of stark incompatibilities inherent in these values, an option could be to continue the controversy non-violently in a framework of exchange, while bringing forward the own conviction.

Previously cited statements suggested that such a communicate framework needs to be characterised by an emphasis on listening and expression of the own conviction, while refraining from directly endeavouring persuasion. However, there is no obvious border between attempts of convincing the other and expressing the own position and disturbances. Decisive is probably the form of communication, which should manifest sufficient mutual respect, so that the focus of the discussion remains on exchange within a

²¹⁹ Local activist of international peacebuilding organisation B in Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 2007

cooperative atmosphere, without sliding into an enraged debate. Defending the own challenged values was described by some LNGOs as part of the journey towards a more peaceful society, under the condition that such a communicative atmosphere oriented on exchange is created.

people will really understand that your message and your attitude is nonviolent, human, strong, you will not allow anything, if you are with this group [of nationalists] “ah” [applauding], that is not respectful, that is not principled, moral, but if you create the atmosphere that you can with the opposition talk and discuss or even work together, knowing that there is an area for not only negotiation, but for quarrel ²²⁰

we had a discussion on the action "storm", military action storm of Croatia [...] So 150 000 people fled [...] And I said, for me it's a synonym for violence; burned houses, murders of civilians, hundreds of thousands of refugees [...] expressing our disturbance, our standpoints and reasons for that, is the way to deal, bring it out, put your cards on the table ²²¹

it is important for me to bear witness, why violence is not an option for me, but also to bear witness, that I do respect other options. [...] However, at the same time, I understand my role, my activity, that I say openly and clearly, why violence is not an option for me. ²²²

These references to the activists' readiness of defending the own peacebuilding values is indicative of their trust in this value foundation. It can

²²⁰ Activist of a local war veteran and peacebuilding organisation in Zagreb, Croatia, June 2007

²²¹ Activist D of a local peacebuilding organisation in Belgrade, Serbia, June 2007

²²² Activist A from peacebuilding organisation S in Zagreb, Croatia, May 2007

also be related to the wide-spread appeal of some values, on whose basis multiple peacebuilding activities appear to rest, as outlined above. Thereby, this readiness to vouch for the own value basis is reminiscent of one of the tenets of this dissertation, i.e. it is a reminder to the principle that any peacebuilding activity – by belonging to the class of activities striving for change – is inherently a norm-guided activity. The desired approximate direction of peacebuilding activities (and research) is thereby set in advance to the activity.

The mechanisms leading towards these normative aims, however, are maybe not fixed, but must be investigated in interaction with the societal groups under consideration. Such investigations inform thereupon the factual assumptions on viable ways of peacebuilding. This dissertation contributes to this investigation by having examined the experiences of LNGOs activists whose factual assumptions on peacebuilding mechanisms developed in long-term interactions with their respective recipient groups. As argued above, human action without values would be void of direction, and without factual assumptions it would be void of a way. Values and factual beliefs are therefore forming jointly the inevitable basis on which action (and language) become possible.

Discussion

Introduction

Moving war-shattered societies from intergroup animosities towards more peaceful interactions, as a strongly normative vision of social change, is a long-term endeavour, requiring peacebuilding activities which involve manifold sections of the societies concerned. Most of the multiple activities presented in the previous chapter could only address a small proportion of the general population and could correspondingly be labelled as piecemeal. The experiences of NGO activists were, however, frequently formed in the course of year-long engagement with various communities and groups, thereby embodying cycles of action and reflection. Correspondingly, such experiences can provide points of departure for reconsidering classical theories of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Like all locally and numerically bound studies, the presented research project can obviously not claim to engender sweeping conclusions in the form of general corroborated theories, since the local and historical/temporal conditions of the investigated contexts as well as the interview settings could have been peculiar. Some of the investigated activists' experiences, however, cast doubt on some details of existent theories on intergroup relations and peacebuilding, to the effect that the study contributes some small building blocks to the wider circle of theory development and research, not least possessing heuristic value for future research on peacebuilding

practices by suggesting to pay some attention towards potential relationships between specified elements of peacebuilding.

As presented, the research project was situated in the wider framework of peacebuilding, conceptualised as moving societies from intergroup enmity towards – ideally – peaceful cohabitation. The research foci were specifically looking at the following broad areas: I) Improving intergroup relations by reducing enmity and by challenging dichotomous group categorisations, and II) Dealing with differences. The link between these areas on the research agenda is that even after intergroup prejudices and mistrust have been reduced, there will remain differences within and between groups which are the potential breeding ground for further animosities with the danger of drastic escalation, as long as adversarial conflict handling styles continue to be wide-spread. On the normative side, the wider aims of peacebuilding, when understood as comprising the acceptance of the others' possession of equal rights, imply that "solving" conflicts by the imposition of the more powerful is not an option. Correspondingly, the research project also comprised an investigation on potential mechanisms for dealing with inter- and intragroup differences.

The following sections will discuss the implications of the produced research outcomes in relation to theory development, structured thematically. It will commence by analysing ramifications concerning theories on prejudice/stereotype reduction, followed by an examination of classical conflict theories in the light of the research outcomes, and conclude by a discussion on potential processes for dealing with deep disagreements.

Improving intergroup relations by eroding enmity

A frequently misunderstood foundational theory on the reduction of intergroup animosities is the so-called “contact hypothesis”, established by Allport (1954; reviewed in Brown, 2000, and Kassin et al. 2008). As presented in the first chapter of this thesis, the contact hypothesis was formulated at the time when the US Supreme Court’s ruling in 1954 instigated the de-segregation of schools (Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Brown, 2000). Initially, however, desegregation did not procure clear positive results in terms of intergroup relations (Stephan and Stephan, 1996: 78). This experience in combination with further studies led to scepticism on whether contact was useful at all in reducing enmity.

The original contact hypothesis, however, does not assert that mere contact is sufficient, but contains conditions to be fulfilled for the intergroup contact to be successful, like “personal interaction” and “cooperative activities” around a “superordinate goal” (Kassin et al., 2008: 173), and a “prolonged” period of contact (Brown, 2000: 342). A classical study of Sherif et al., (1961) suggests that the cooperation around superordinate goals can indeed have some potential of improving even erstwhile hostile group interactions, and Stephan & Stephan (1996: 64) reviewed more recent studies which “provide strong support for the proposition that intergroup cooperation improves intergroup relations.” This potential effect of cooperation appears to be dependent on further framework conditions, as e.g. the cooperation has to be successful in the eyes of the participating group members (Schofield & Eurich-Fulcer, 2004; Deutsch, 2000).

Extant theories of intergroup encounter settings for the reduction of prejudices reviewed

Even if intergroup encounters are successful in reducing prejudices towards fellow participants, this does not imply that participants are in general less prejudiced towards members of the other group. “Even under the best of conditions, the changes in attitudes toward individual outgroup members brought about by cooperation may not generalize to the outgroup as a whole” (Stephan & Stephan, 1996: 64). As mentioned in the first theory chapter, Brown (2000) discusses four attempts of coping with this problem of generalisation, all of which “try to change the salience of existing group identities” (ibid.: 347), viz. “deategorisation”, “reategorisation”, a third approach relying on the salience of the problematic group membership during intergroup contact, and, as a variety of this third approach, the “dual identity approach” (ibid.: 347-60):

The “deategorisation” approach tries to shape the intergroup encounter as personal as possible, so that the salience of the group membership is reduced. It is based on the rationale that when group members get to know each other as individuals, discriminatory behaviour towards outgroup members will be diminished, as the attention of the participants is supposed to be focused away from the group stereotypes to an interpersonal level. In this vein, Stephan & Stephan (1996: 66-7) claim that “considerable research indicates that providing people with information about the behaviour of individual group members influences judgments of those individuals and that social categories are de-emphasized in this process.”

The “recategorisation” approach shares with the former approach the idea that reducing the salience of the group memberships is beneficial for the intergroup relations. In contrast to the endeavour of “decategorisation”, however, which attempts to eclipse group categories, when aiming at “recategorisation” it is tried to induce among participants a feeling of belongingness to a common group. Kassin et al. (2008) for example claim that “the experience of intergroup cooperation increases the sense of belonging to a single superordinate group” (ibid.: 295).

The fact that both decategorisation and recategorisation rely on the rationale of reducing prevalent group categories is seen by Brown (2000: 349) as problematic in terms of possible generalisation. When the tangibility of the group membership of participants is minimised, the chances for extrapolating positive encounter experiences towards outgroup members are likely to be diminished. Correspondingly, Brown (2000: 352-3) delineates a third approach – termed in this thesis “group membership salience approach”.

This approach is supported by studies suggesting that cooperative interactions with outgroup members lead to more positive generalised attitudes towards the outgroup when the group belongingness of this outgroup still possesses some salience.

This result in turn points to the possibility of a “dual identity approach”, in which it is tried to “[maintain] some degree of subgroup distinctiveness *within a strong superordinate identity*” (Brown, 2000: 356; original emphasis). This approach was investigated through special constellations which comprise not only that the original group identities remain visible, but also that each group or participant is able to uniquely contribute to the group effort by means of

individual knowledge or skills which relate to their original group membership (ibid.: 256-7).

Discussing the relative merits of these approaches, Brown (ibid.: 354-5) indicates that the effectiveness of the decategorisation approach is questionable, as those studies supporting this approach “mostly employed ad hoc laboratory groups”. In “real intergroup contexts” (ibid.) group identities are likely to be much more significant for group members, so that the relevance of these studies for intergroup conflict situations is limited.

The recategorisation approach is better supported by empirical findings (Brown, 2000: 355-6), but only as far as the reduction of prejudice towards those directly encountered is concerned. In contrast, the generalisation capacity inherent in this approach is weak empirically, and put in doubt by Brown (ibid.: 349-54, 356) on conceptual-logical grounds, i.e. due to recategorisation’s mentioned reliance on reducing the salience of the original group memberships.

Based on the idea that reduced visibility of the group memberships is responsible for a lack of generalisation capacity, the remaining two approaches (i.e. the “group membership salience approach” and the “dual identity approach”) attempt to retain the tangibility of the original groups during the intergroup encounter. One of the problems with this suggestion is that intergroup encounters can be perceived as threatening, so that the encounter situation has a higher risk of being experienced as unpleasant (Brown, 2000: 345, 354). This could be especially detrimental, as the strength of this approach, viz. the generalisation capacity of encounter experiences, can turn into a serious weakness when severe intergroup

differences and antipathies appear during intergroup encounters, so that “negative attitudes can be generalized. Indeed, if the cooperative interaction goes wrong [...] then structuring the interaction at the intergroup level could well make matters worse” (Brown, 353). Due to the intrinsic difficulties of every one of these approaches, Brown (2000: 360) concludes that “some combination of them” might be the best option, without specifying how such a combination could look like.

The following section will discuss these approaches further in the light of the study underlying this thesis, indicating potential combinations of the mentioned approaches, accompanied by additional potential mechanisms for reducing intergroup enmity.

Models for the reduction of prejudices reconsidered

The NGO activities presented in the preceding chapter comprised a broad variety of measures for reducing intergroup hostilities. While some aspects of these measures coincide conceptually with the approaches just described, the projects as a whole embodied particular varieties and combinations of approaches, supplemented by further measures. In particular, several projects entailed a combination of the “group membership salience approach” with mechanisms from either decategorisation or recategorisation approaches, or both sequentially. From crossing aspects from the de- and recategorisation approaches with high vs. low group salience result the following additional categories, forming part of a more comprehensive taxonomy which does better justice to the NGO projects:

The personalisation approaches:

- *Classical Decategorisation approach*: in the form of personalisation/“getting to know the other” combined with low group salience during an encounter setting, steering the attention towards an interpersonal level (Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Brown, 2000) to individualise the group members
- *Fragmentation/ Internal Heterogeneity approach*: Personalisation/Getting to Know combined with high salience of the original groups, focusing e.g. on personal war-related experiences in order to individualise group members while their group membership is conspicuous, so that the internal heterogeneity of groups is more obvious. The difference to Brown’s “group salience approach” (2000: 352-3) is that the emphasis in case of the “internal heterogeneity approach” is on the exchange on personal experiences, feelings and motivations, instead of relying on cooperative interaction around an arbitrary task.

Both of these forms of personalisation provide personalised information, which can entail that commonalities which are cross-cutting the nominal group memberships can become visible.

The “superordinate group” approaches:

- *Classical Recategorisation approach*: offering a superordinate group identity which substitutes for individual group identities, with low salience of the original groups, attempting to support “the sense of

belonging to a single superordinate group” by for example “the experience of intergroup cooperation” on a shared goal (Kassin et al. 2008: 295)

- *Multiple group identities approach*: offering superordinate identities while the original nominal group memberships are salient
 - one variety of this approach corresponds to the “*dual identity approach*” (Brown, 2000: 356) from above; within this dissertation’s study, this approach is exercised when e.g. similar people (youngsters, ex-combatants, war victims) from various groups are joined while the nominal ethnic group membership is a topic of exchange;
 - another variety of this approach is the “*manifold identity approach*”, when original group memberships remain salient while exchanges unearth multiple cross-cutting commonalities; this variety can ensue from the “personalisation with high group salience approach” from above when the personalisation precipitates the discovery of multiple cross-cutting group memberships

These mentioned approaches can be further differentiated by particular aspects they contain, whose degrees vary from approach to approach. These additional ingredients will be presented in the following section, being subsumed under the category “Redefining the intergroup relationship”.

Redefining the intergroup relationship

This section comprises those aspects of approaches which change the conceptualisation of the intergroup relationship by either changing the self-image of groups, or by changing the image of the relationship directly. The following categories form part of the taxonomy of measures aiming at the reduction of intergroup animosities.

Cooperation on relevant commonalities

As mentioned above, intergroup cooperation is one condition specified by the original formulation of the “contact hypothesis”. Cooperation is assumed to be a critical ingredient in encounters aiming at the reduction of intergroup animosities. Correspondingly, both the classical de- and re-categorisation approaches contain cooperation as a conceptually constitutive element. What the formulations of these approaches do not necessarily sufficiently address is the question of the quality of these cooperative tasks. Deutsch (2000: 62) suggests that severe intergroup animosities necessitate “mutually beneficial cooperation”, from which it could be assumed that the cooperative activity is required to possess a certain degree of relevance for the group members.

This probable condition for cooperative interaction concurs with the practices of the NGOs’ practices investigated in this study. Whereas some of the studies on the de- and recategorisation approach mentioned above (Brown, 2000) made use of comparatively arbitrary intergroup cooperation exercises, the NGO projects built on local needs and interests. As was outlined, these

projects e.g. consisted of activities on e.g.: interests in education and training (such as language or computer skills), needs (of war victims and ex-combatants) relating to dealing with the past, income generating projects (agricultural or tailoring courses), or leisure time interests (e.g. sports, youth clubs). Importantly, projects working on community interests and needs were not initiated in a top-down fashion with an orientation on a preconceived list of activities, but were preceded by laborious local need assessments to elucidate relevant community priorities, so that the relevance of future cooperative projects was ensured.

It is important to note that these cooperative activities precipitated direct intergroup contact, entailing opportunities for personalisation and decategorisation, while also providing options for recategorisation in the form of strengthening a community identity. The effects however can be multiple, while the substance of communalities might not always be sufficient for allowing the perception of a superordinate identity. As mentioned, personalisation renders internal heterogeneity of groups visible and can render multiple cross-cutting identities (“female”, “war victim”, “farmer”, “basketball player”, etc.) visible, while also intergroup differences could be noticed. A clear demarcation between de-, re-categorisation, or of another singular approach appears therefore to be impossible in such *en vivo* settings.

Whether participants of cooperative intergroup activities perceive their commonalities as sufficient to form the basis of a superordinate category depends of course not least on the constitution of the group. On this background it is relevant that NGOs often work with relatively similar

individuals from the conflict sides, i.e. they convene from various conflicts sides for example ex-combatants, war victims, or youngsters. In such groups of relatively similar individuals, personalisation is likely to entail that participants get opportunities for perceiving themselves as belonging to a common category (such as ex-combatant, war victim, or the next generation of citizens).

The aspirations of local citizens seemed to display a broad variation, depending on the time elapsed since the war, the history of the community under consideration and other context factors. A topic area, however, which kept reappearing in the reports of the activists from peacebuilding NGOs, ex-combatant and victim organisations, regarded material scarcity and material injustices. Given the relevance of these material interests, projects working on these interests are of special interest. This area of material or economic factors will be elucidated in a separate section below, after addressing the symbolic function of intergroup cooperation by the next section.

Signalling the feasibility of cooperative intergroup activities

Intergroup cooperation on relevant shared interests or needs does not only provide participants with personalising information on the others, but also signals tangibly the possibility of a more constructive intergroup relationship compared to the relationship of the past. This way, the beneficial effects of activities which encourage in some way interethnic cooperation potentially extend to a wider constituency beyond the immediate participants.

Presenting the alternative of joint intergroup activities provides role models which demonstrate to newcomers and the public the lived alternative of intergroup collaboration. LINGO activities involving intergroup role models with the capacity for such a signalling function comprise: projects on intergroup community interests and needs, addressed in the previous section; youth clubs spawning joint leisure time activities, and youth councils coordinating city-wide youth interests; mixed teams of activists – consisting of individuals from “different” conflict sides – which initiate intergroup projects; mixed groups of ex-combatants presenting without internal debate their individual motivations and learning experiences related to the war past. Each of these practices of intergroup cooperation is likely to possess specific strengths in each particular context. Projects on intergroup/community-wide needs and interests can reduce tensions in the respective community by providing opportunities of personalisation, and by offering the community as a category for a superordinate identity. Providing community members with the opportunity to experience and observe that intergroup cooperation with mutually beneficial outcomes is possible, facilitates a redefinition of the intergroup relationship.

Youth clubs and youth councils with participants from nominally different groups can analogously provide contact opportunities for personalisation, raising awareness for cross-cutting common interests, while youngsters can function as informal mediators when informing their less intergroup-oriented parents about the ease of this informal variety of intergroup collaboration or cohabitation. Mixed teams of activists asking local residents about their experiences and their current concerns can buttress rapport and trust by

providing contact persons from the same group and by enacting an introductory example of intergroup cooperation. Mixed groups of ex-combatants have a special legitimacy in challenging nationalist discourses due to their past sacrifices to the “national cause”, so that their role-modelling of intergroup cooperation constitutes a conspicuous contrast on the background of conventional expectations, imbuing their reports of learning and their criticism of nationalistic policies with special significance.

Material interests or needs as a potential source of frustration and as a common basis

Of substantial interest in the context of intergroup cooperative encounters are those projects which are based on common economic interests, given the relevance ascribed to material interests by some theorists (e.g. Duffield, 1997; Collier et al., 2005; Sambanis, 2005), as mentioned in the first chapter.

Due to this potential significance of material interests/needs, and due to the nearly universal reference to material scarcity in Kosovo and Eastern Slavonia by the NGO activists (which is not very astonishing considering the precarious economic situation of these areas, especially in Kosovo), projects which are organising intergroup contact by working on common material needs can fulfil multiple functions. On the one hand, centring intergroup cooperation on material interests/needs ensures that high relevance is imparted to the cooperation. On the other hand, as mentioned in previous chapters, reducing material scarcity undermines one of the grounds for frustrations and tensions.

Interestingly, some activists emphasised how the economy in Eastern Slavonia and in some regions of Kosovo declined with the demise of Yugoslavia and that the local economic situation was still precarious, especially when compared to the development of other regions of Croatia or of the Former Yugoslavia respectively. It was also suggested that local residents faced with unemployment and material scarcity are more susceptible to ethnocentric leaning, inclining towards scapegoating, i.e. blaming other nations or ethnic groups for the precarious current condition.

This interpretation of activists corresponds to the concept of “relative deprivation”: as Brown (2000: 233 et seq.) indicates, the tendency of people towards rioting seems to be especially high when they behold their group as unjustifiably disadvantaged relative to other groups. Moreover, it points in the direction of a factor figuring in the analyses of Collier’s (2000, Collier et al, 2005), viz. the deterioration of the economic situation as a violence fuelling aspect. These indications, which are resonating with the mentioned perspectives of activists, suggest that the material well-being of locals as well as the local economic development demand special attention. Activities supporting cooperative interaction around an economic project, as conducted by some NGOs, can correspondingly not only have the potential to reduce animosities among the respective participant, but can at the same time improve the local material well-being, thereby countervailing a potential breeding ground for scapegoating and relative deprivation.

The references to scapegoating and frustration provide an interesting basis for reconsidering Collier’s (2000, Collier et al., 2005) discussion on the relative role of economic opportunity vs. deprivation factors. If economic

deterioration *per se* is able to create frustration and scapegoating, then a correlation between economic deterioration and violent conflicts suggests an interpretation different from Collier's. Collier (ibid.) points to a correlation between violent conflicts on the hand and economic decline, high proportion of uneducated young people, plus the availability of "lootable" resources on the other hand. Collier interprets this finding as indicating that the opportunity for self-aggrandizement is much more decisive in inciting violent conflicts than grievances related to economic inequalities.

In the first chapter it was indicated that this interpretation is dubious, not least because Collier's studies did solely include measures of vertical instead of horizontal/intergroup inequality (Sambanis, 2005). The suggestion that economic deterioration can entail scapegoating and frustration adds another aspect, as the decisive *mediating* factor could be *frustration about economic injustices*, even when the degree of inequality is comparable to other – more stable – regions. Economic deterioration could thereby function as a catalyst for the outbreak of unrest. This interpretation would be compatible with the finding that e.g. natural resources do not seem to be so much at the root of war onsets, but that their role appears to be mainly based on their function of enabling the conflicting groups to sustain their struggle (Sambanis, 2005: 309-10).

The combination of these findings suggests a scenario in which both horizontal inequalities (Sambanis, 2005) in combination with economic deterioration (Collier, 2005) are virulent factors for inciting violent conflict, while Collier's (2005) remaining "opportunity" factors are more decisive in rendering prolonged fighting feasible. Such a scenario would also explain

why at any given point in time it is much more likely to find ongoing violent conflicts in which “opportunity” factors are involved.

As argued, the likely conflict fuelling capacity of economic scarcity and economic deterioration imparts special significance to income-generating projects of local NGOs, functioning at the same time as opportunities for intergroup cooperation with high motivational potential. These NGO projects are of course very limited in terms of economic impact. The better option would obviously be an improvement of the economic framework conditions on a much larger scale, potentially fostered by direct international investments into economic growth programmes. In the preceding chapter the assumption was cited that an improvement of the general economic situation would precipitate strong economic incentives for further areas of economic intergroup cooperation, with the potential to improve intergroup relationships. A combination of local intergroup projects with large-scale economic growth programmes would of course be the most desirable option.

In summary, increasing opportunities for economic intergroup cooperation could have the following effects: 1) conflict-fuelling frustration could be reduced, 2) encounter opportunities for the reduction of prejudices would be created, 3) visible examples of intergroup cooperation could gradually re-define the intergroup relationship by manifesting the possibility of mutually beneficial interactions, while 4) rendering individual anticipations of the future living conditions less bleak.

Correcting directly the characteristics ascribed to the opponent

While the projects mentioned in the preceding sections change the image of the former opponent largely indirectly by providing opportunities for getting to know the other better, and by rendering commonalities as well as the possibility of cooperation visible, other measures are addressing prejudices more directly. Amongst these measures are exchanges amongst war victims and ex-combatant on war-related issues. When e.g. ex-combatants perceive similarities between themselves and the former enemies in terms of motivations and war experiences, those enemy images become questioned which define the other side as purely motivated by aggressive agendas directed from the outset at the subjugation or even destruction of the own side. Similarly, when community inhabitants exchange their perspectives, e.g. by expressing their motivations for unfriendly behaviour in the past, material is provided that can change potential past misattributions.

Even more direct are measures which induce ex-combatants to list the content of stereotypes and present these lists directly to the stereotyped group, so that the target group can react directly to these stereotypes, can provide corrective background information, and express their emotional dismay about the content of the stereotypes. Analogously, during some interreligious encounters assumptions about the other denominations were expressed, misinformation corrected, and background information provided.

The image of the opponent as bearing the responsibility for the atrocities inflicted in past wars, while the own side is depicted as having behaved morally appropriate, can be undermined when the suffering of the other inflicted by the own side becomes visible, as frequently mentioned in the

preceding chapter. The element of undermining the perception of the own side's moral superiority is presented in the following category-stipulating section.

Undermining the pretension of Moral Superiority of the own side

An important role in societal conceptions of the intergroup relationship is obviously played by the self-images of the respective groups. Glasl (1997) argues that during the process of escalation the conflicting parties perceive the respective other side to an increasing degree in a negative way, forming the contrasting background on which the own side appears in brighter colours. During stages of high escalation, the social identity of one group tends to contain the "denigration of the Other" (Zartman, 2005: 50) as a constitutive element, so that the members of the own side are seen "as superior to the other side's members" (Kriesberg, 2005: 69).

For the redefinition of the intergroup relationship it is correspondingly significant how the own group and other group are perceived in terms of moral standing. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a wide-spread assumption on each side of the past war(s) was the conviction that the own side was in a position of defence, this way implying moral righteousness, since the war was conceived as forced on the own side by the offensive moves of the enemy. Under this premise of seeing the own side as pulled into the war by the opponent's actions, the losses inflicted upon the own side are likely to be perceived as conspicuously unjust and outrageous, while being attributed to the malicious characteristics of the opponent (cf. Bar-Tal, 2000; Kriesberg, 2005).

NGO measures which unearth the dark parts of the own group's past seem to be a central route in challenging this image of the own side's moral superiority. As presented in the preceding chapter, NGO activities with a potential to undermine this conviction of moral superiority comprise the following measures: 1) Monitoring and publicising the procedures of war crime trials, while assisting witnesses from the own side who are testifying against the own side, so that the own party's violations of *jus in bello* gain publicity; 2) Supporting the perception of the own side's crimes through reducing double standards, via eliciting assessment of war actions in the abstract in order to raise awareness for double standards 3) Disseminating stories of suffering inflicted on the opponent's side through war actions which were not necessarily against *jus in bello*, e.g. on a societal level via the oral history project and on an interpersonal level by direct intergroup encounters with victims; 4) Broadening the societal perspective to include the more distant history of the own group in the public consciousness, by comparing intergroup relations across epochs and seeing brighter and darker parts of the own history, while gaining awareness for the costs of war more generally and for societal possibilities.

Respect and recognition as a framework for intergroup contact

A significant aspect of the work on intergroup encounters is the creation of an atmosphere of respect for participants inherent in the framework conditions of the measures. Imparting a sense of respect for the participants took various forms. Respect was manifested for example through activists' enactment of openness and acceptance when approaching local

communities, signalling recognition by giving space for the expression for feelings and concerns. This attitude was 'setting the tone' at an the initial stage of project-related interactions, and appeared to be not only conducive to the building of rapport and to a better understanding of local concerns, but this recognition could also have been valuable for supporting the self-esteem of the participants.

In a similar vein, the communicative framework conditions for inter-religious dialogues, as well as the encounter settings amongst war victims and ex-combatants, were characterised by an emphasis on exchanges of personal experiences, hurts, and perspectives, thereby imparting recognition. As intergroup encounters can be perceived as threatening, entailing the high risk that the contact is experienced as unpleasant (Brown, 2000: 345, 354), the setting of framework conditions which support the self-esteem of the participants by signalling respect and recognition is likely to be essential.

The sequence of NGOs to first focus on listening to concerns and experiences as steps for trustbuilding and for fostering the participants' sense of being respected could correspondingly be crucial in enabling later intergroup discussions on more contentious issues. This sequence possesses some similarity to the approach of Bush & Folger (2005), who recommend to stabilise the self-esteem of participants as a precondition for mutual recognition.

Fostering an orientation towards the future

The final aspect of the taxonomy – for classifying measures for the improvement of intergroup relations which contribute to the reduction of animosities – consists of fostering an orientation towards a more positive future. This development of visions for the future is partially interrelated with reflecting on the past. This process of learning from the past can be analytically divided into two principal domains, which consist of learning either through being deterred by some sides of the past which motivate avoidance, or through identifying valued elements of past intra- or intergroup interaction which motivate for the wider dissemination of these elements.

Some community projects for example involved the practice, in the style of Boulding (2001), of envisioning a desired future for the community, to derive realisable concepts for change from these visions. In this vein, the work with war victims comprised exchanges which worked towards an improved understanding of past individual behaviour patterns and apprehension for the suffering of the other. This was followed by awareness raising for own priorities and those aspects of life which are amendable. This awareness raising for realisable aspirations formed the basis for envisioning new aims, enabling the individuals to be less fixated on those aspects related to the past which are unchangeable, and focusing more on the future.

Analogously, in the projects with ex-combatants a session on imagining a desired future was included. In this context, the visions were developed through devising a societal or regional future. The development of more comprehensive visions was at the same time interacting with the awareness

raising for common intergroup values which manifested in these large-scale visions of desired cohabitation.

The fundamental values emerging in such processes can either be values which the participants hold already, or could be values which have the potential to exert an “appeal” (Putnam, 2008) which could be recognised or felt by the participants, while “appeal” can refer to the values itself and/or to a larger framework in which these values are embedded, as discussed above.

Concluding consideration on reducing enmity: A sequential employment of encounter settings for recognition and trustbuilding

The idea of avoiding the most contentious aspects during the initial phase of intergroup contact, manifest in the activities of the NGOs, can be found in numerous workshop approaches. Burton (1990), in contrast, proposes to initiate intergroup contact by a joint analysis of the conflict, ascribing to this discussion a trustbuilding function. The early phase of workshops in the style of Doob, on the other hand, consists of analysing the interaction styles of the group participants (Fisher, 1997). Both of these classical approaches might be problematic in situations characterised by intergroup animosities:

Doubt is cast on Burton’s approach of initiating the encounter situation by analysing the conflict constellation when considering Ramsbotham’s (2010) indication that in situations of intense conflict the parties do not have a detached perspective on the conflict constellation, to the effect that conflict parties can become infuriated by the opponent’s view on the conflict right from the start; “It is the *fact* of the *outrage* that immediately elicits *indignation* and the steely *will* never to rest until the wrong is righted” (ibid.: 126; original

emphasis). Due to this highly emotional charge which can be intertwined with several aspects of a conflict constellation, it is dubious whether basic trust amongst disputants can be built through a Burtonian initial phase of conflict analysis.

The workshop philosophy of Doob, on the other hand, which relies on an initial phase of working on personal and group interaction styles, explicitly puts up with the regular experience that this initial phase is characterised by “confusion, anxiety, and anger being expressed at the lack of structure and the lack of discussion about the conflict itself” (Fisher, 1999: 40). While this is not seen as much of a problem by the proponents of this approach (ibid: 39-43), Brown (2000: 254) reviews studies which indicate that anxiety within encounter situations has detrimental effects on intergroup relations. An additional shortcoming of this approach is that the transfer from the initial work on group processes towards the work on the conflict constellation can be limited, even when the initial phase manifested some basic level of trust: “[A]lthough the [early] group activities involved candor, mutual learning, and creativity, there was little transformation of participants’ attitudes and attachments to the problem itself, and the exercise came to naught as national prerogatives asserted themselves” (Fisher, 1999: 42).

These limitations of the classical sequence of workshops, initiated either by an analysis of the conflict constellation or by working on interaction styles, point towards the benefits of the presented approaches taken by the NGOs. These NGO approaches possessed relevance for the participants so that the interest in the group activities was sustained, as activities were based on common needs or aspirations. As mentioned, activities imparted respect and

engaged in trustbuilding by e.g. 1) listening to personal experiences and needs, 2) creating projects on joint community aspirations, 3) inducing dialogue on similar war-related experiences, motivations, and hurts, in a communicative framework manifesting respect by centring on listening and exchange.

Activists' enactment of openness and acceptance when approaching local communities, while giving space for the expression for feelings and concerns, appeared to be conducive to building rapport at an early stage, while possibly supporting the self-esteem of the participants. In a similar vein, the communicative framework conditions for inter-religious dialogues, as well as the encounter settings amongst war victims and ex-combatants, were characterised by an emphasis on exchanges of personal experiences, hurts, and perspectives, thereby imparting recognition for these experiences and convictions.

By focusing on experiences, needs, and aspirations, the NGO activities had from their outset the potential of being perceived as relevant. At the same time, projects contributed to intergroup trustbuilding by personalisation, and/or by increased visibility of commonalities (of experiences, values, feelings, motivations) as well as a better understanding for the other sides' experiences, while partially engaging with conflict-related topics, instead of taking the detour of teaching lessons in group dynamics, or instead of jumping into the conflict analysis without building some initial intergroup rapport.

Dealing with differences

As argued in previous chapters, the very possibility of intra- and interstate war is dependent on the willingness of people to kill others (and to accept the killings of others) solely on the grounds of the perceived group membership of the ones to be killed. The reduction of dichotomous enemy images is in turn an inevitable stage on the route towards a more peaceful society in which conflicts are supposed to be solved through open communication and collaboration amongst the various sides. Even when, however, the reduction of prejudices and the building of some basic trust has been successful, differences between individuals and groups will remain.

General Conflict handling mechanisms

As perceptions of social categories will not altogether disappear, given the organisational structures of societies and widespread self-definitions related to history, some conflicts are likely to emerge from time to time. The assumption that conflicts are an inherent part of everyday life is part of the basis of Lederach's (2003, 2006) concept of "conflict transformation", which is linked to the suggestion to institutionalise mechanisms for dealing with these inevitably re-appearing conflicts.

In the first chapter it was indicated that the understanding of being part of an intergroup conflict and the assumed distinctions related to these group memberships are likely to be mutually reinforcing. According to Deutsch (1973), a competitively understood situation of group interaction does not only precipitate an increase in the perceived difference assumed to separate the groups, but also has the capacity to precipitate mistrust and animosities

between the groups. This danger of intergroup differences to potentially lead to escalation implies that the availability of mechanisms for coping with such differences is crucial.

Consequently, some NGO activities are aiming at the dissemination of conflict handling skills, while referring to or being reminiscent of Lederach's (2003, 2006) concept of conflict transformation. Sharing the assessment that conflicts are an inherent part of human interaction, some NGO projects are trying to disseminate the attitude to approach conflicts with a problem-oriented mind-set, instead of perceiving the co-disputant as a threatening problem. (This orientation corresponds to a recommendation of Fisher and Ury, 1999). This conceptualisation of conflict handling as problem solving is, however, somewhat deviating from Lederach (2003, 2006), who introduced the term "conflict transformation" precisely in contrast to the more conventional term "conflict resolution", based on his emphasis on seeing conflict as a chance (or even "gift", 2003: 18), which can induce reflections on, and changes of, relationships and structures. The activists' description of conflicts as problems in contrast might be indicative of a less romantic conception of conflicts, conceiving them as troubles which acutely require remedy. The activists' principle to disseminate an attitude of seeing the conflict as a problem, instead of seeing the other disputant as a problem, is closely related to this conflict conception. Given the acuteness of some conflicts requiring solution, reflected in the description of activists, it is dubious whether there is any need for Lederach proposed change in the nomenclature.

Lederach's other argument for a terminological change possesses as well only limited substance: Lederach (2003) objects to the term "conflict resolution" partially on the ground that he sees it as implying quick fixes instead of deeper (relational, structural, cultural) changes. This contrast, however, is somewhat artificial, since Burton (1990, 1997), one of the central founding figures associated with "conflict resolution", did conceive deep structural re-arrangements as sometimes essential for "solutions". Correspondingly, there do not seem to be strong reasons for trying to establish "conflict transformation" as a standard term.

Burton (1990, 1997) in turn argues that conflicts are best resolved by satisfying the "basic human needs" of all involved. According to Burton, "there are human needs more compelling in directing behaviours than any possible external influences", and refers to "the individual's need for identity and recognition, and these relate to the need for security" (1990: 33). It is, however, questionable whether this reference to basic human needs is of much relevance for the practice of conflict handling.

As mentioned, the aspirations of local citizens displayed a broad variation, according to the experiences of LNGOs, depending e.g. on the time elapsed since the war, and the history of the participants' community. Partially due to these differences, activists – working for an improvement of relationships and living conditions in communities – conducted the mentioned laborious need assessments, instead of working with a preconceived list of activities and needs. Also when describing their work with interpersonal conflicts, activists did not refer by themselves to a set of fixed "basic" needs, as conceived of

by Burton (1990, 1997; cf. Azar, 1986, Kelman, 1999), but were more open in their description of analysis.

Whether needs can be conceptualised as basic and universal – as opposed to individually or culturally idiosyncratic – is partially a question of the level of abstraction on which needs are formulated, as argued in the previous chapter. Burton's (1990, 1997) "relationship needs" – i.e. "recognition", "security", and "identity" (amongst his "basic needs") – are formulated on such an abstract level that they allow the subsuming of a very wide array of aspirations under these concepts. This abstract formulation renders the concepts rather resistant towards falsification, while entailing that the meaning of the "needs" concepts become very diffuse or even empty.

However, the principle of analysing interests and needs related to sentiments as a way for dealing with conflict was widely reported by activists as very useful, which was practiced within a framework of listening and I-messages. This indicates that the principle of deeper analysis seems to be productive, provided that the analysis is open instead of oriented to needs stipulated in advance.

As outlined in the previous chapter, there might be situations in which cleavages between adversaries are too deep to enable the reaching of any kind of arrangement by a short-term approach. Some constellations might require trustbuilding measures which are not directly involving the actual conflict topic, to the effect that the actual conflict handling needs to be deferred to a later phase. This sequence of initiating the contact by trustbuilding steps is the approach typically taken by measures aiming at the reduction of intergroup animosities. The time horizon amongst measures,

however, differs. In the sessions with ex-combatants, war victims, and community members, personalising exchanges were followed within the same session series by the addressing of the more controversial topics. A far longer time perspective is involved in cases when disputants are not willing to talk to each other. As addressed previously, one possible route in such situations appears to consist of long-term trustbuilding measures, e.g. consisting of social activities which are initiated by one conflict party. Such activities, which are benefiting the community, indirectly contribute to mutual reevaluation. This measure is ideally combined with informal mediation, conducted by individuals who are already situated in a middle position, i.e. who are possessing a pre-existing relationship to conflict parties.

Dealing with intergroup differences

Even when trustbuilding measures between groups have been successful, there can be intergroup differences remaining which cannot be sufficiently addressed by looking at underlying needs and aspirations. When dealing with cultural and religious differences, a contingency classification for NGO activities as possibly being conducive to peaceful cohabitation was proposed in the previous chapter; a summary of this contingency approach is presented in the following paragraphs.

1) Fostering the exploration of intergroup commonalities and differences

A useful first stage for dealing with intergroup differences is constituted by a diagnosis consisting of an elucidation of commonalities and disparities. An improved understanding of these intergroup contrasts and overlaps has ideally the effect of removing wrong assumptions about the other group. It can support the understanding of differences in values and practices, which could help to reduce alienation. Removing wrong assumptions about the other group can take the route of raising awareness for the content of stereotypes and having exchanges on this content, in order to let the other stereotyped side correct misinformation. Analogously, an more in-depth understanding of intergroup similarities and differences in the domain of religion can be fostered by exchanges on these differences, which as well correct wrong assumptions and provide background information on these differences.

The next two sections will address ways for dealing with those differences between groups which remain after a basic understanding of the positions, practices, and beliefs has been reached.

2) If disagreements remain despite a basic understanding of the differences, tolerating these differences in values, practices, and beliefs is one route towards cohabitation; this tolerance can be based on respect following from an acceptance of differing beliefs as equal in valence, and on an understanding of the background of these differences

After intergroup differences have remained or have become apparent during intergroup dialogues aiming at the correction of wrong information, some of

these (now more specified) differences in values or attitudes can obviously still be controversial. For dealing with these differences, a process of further exploration can be conducive to mutual understanding, while enabling the airing of reservations and disturbances. An important element for avoiding enraged debates appears to be that these disagreements are occurring in a communicative setting which focuses on expression and exploration instead of persuasion. By focusing on exploration, allowing the expression of disturbances, while avoiding a confrontational style, respect for each other's positions can be manifested in the communicative framework, which might be an essential ingredient for keeping the exchanges topic-oriented without sliding into a relational battle.

In some cases in which a disagreement in values remains, promoting attitudes of equipollency between values, i.e. disbanding the ranking of particular values, could be an option. This stance towards values and beliefs, regarding them as of non-ordinal valence, potentially enables to live with diverse values and beliefs, provided that the values and beliefs under consideration are regarded to be compatible. This position of accepting differing values and beliefs as equal can be encouraged by initiating reflection processes on the relative importance of these values and beliefs.

These reflection processes consist of critically questioning the idea that the values under consideration can be ranked, while experiencing during these exchanges the diverging strong attachments to these different values. Even when an exchange does not precipitate an immediate acceptance of multiple values' valence, there is some possibility that the auditing of new

perspectives could lead to some change in the long-term. Having an exchange on the background of values, as on the reasons for why certain values are important for the people concerned, might be able to assist in the acceptance of disparate values as not being suitable for rankings. As soon as the importance of the disparate values is mutually accepted, there is scope for planning a future of cohabitation in which these diverging values can be accommodated.

3) Discover joint values within intergroup exchanges to raise awareness for normative commonalities and for options of cohabitation with differences; disagreements which cannot be solved might be continued within an accepted communicative framework which is based on these shared values

It was previously discussed how common values can be discovered in a process of reflection on the past and envisioning a common future of cohabitation. These approaches for identifying common values are particularly relevant when intergroup differences are remaining in spite of extensive exchanges aimed at mutual understanding. Raising awareness for commonalities can contribute to the planning of arrangements of living with the persisting differences. The possibility for finding common values amongst individuals and groups is directly related to the presumed appeal of values. These references to a wide-spread sense for common values – whether this common sense is regarded as cultural or as quasi-universal – is a potential basis for planning future societal arrangements. Common values which are discovered and developed by reflecting on the past and envisioning the

future can function as basic principles for future cohabitation. These principles can then suggest arrangements for dealing with differences, such as value differences between religions. During LNGOs projects on inter-religious dialogue, common values of tolerance, respect, and non-violence were emphasised, implying that these value commonalities are sufficiently suggesting to deal with persisting differences non-violently.

Even after a deeper understanding of intergroup differences has been reached, and even when there is an agreement that dealing with differences should be based on the principles of non-violence and mutual respect, some differences can persist whose tolerance can be hard for some individuals or groups. In cases in which the equal valence of different positions cannot be accepted because of stark incompatibilities inherent in these values, one option is possibly to continue the controversy non-violently in a framework of exchange, while bringing forward the own conviction. Decisive is according to activists the form of communication, which needs to manifest sufficient mutual respect towards the other, for the focus of the discussion to remain on exchanges in a cooperative atmosphere, without sliding into an enraged debate. Defending the own challenged values was described by some activists as part of the journey towards a more peaceful society, under the condition that such a communicative atmosphere oriented on exchange is created.

The edge of reason: Intense conflicts as a challenge to peacebuilding

Most challenging for approaches of conflict resolution in particular and peacebuilding in general are obviously situations when the differences between conflict parties are very deep, in terms of their contested factual and evaluative claims. To define the linguistic level of those conflicts that have appeared (so far) to be insensitive to any attempts of “settlement and transformation”, Ramsbotham (2010: 1; cf. 17, 253) uses the term “radical disagreement”. Ramsbotham (2010) argues that these “radical disagreements” have been under-studied and under-theorised. It is stated that “[t]here is no theory or philosophy of radical disagreement” (ibid.: 133) and that conflict resolution/transformation theories would not have proposed appropriate approaches for situations of “radical disagreement”.

The conceptualisation of “radical disagreement” on an abstract ontological level is of course interrelated with the practical recommendations for addressing these differences. Before examining this conceptual question abstractly further below, it is now discussed under which conditions particular approaches to dealing with these conflicts are conceivable, before combining elements from various approaches into an integrative model.

Within the preceding section on dealing with differences, it was argued that, according to NGO experiences, exchanges on mutual differences can lead to higher mutual tolerance, when the background of these differences is better understood and/or differing beliefs are accepted as equal in their valence. It was also indicated that some disagreements might remain after the

background of mutual differences has been elucidated. In order to address these differences, the possibility was sketched to continue these unresolved disagreements in communicative frameworks oriented on exchange and manifesting mutual respect, within which also those values of peacebuilding NGOs activists can be advocated when challenged.

Respect for the other as a prerequisite for dialogue work

The first of these steps just proposed, namely the exchanges on the background of these differences to foster tolerance, is similar to conventional “dialogue and safe space” approaches. These approaches are criticised by Ramsbotham (2010: 80) as presupposing conditions which were not fulfilled in radical disagreements: “if we take radical disagreements seriously, my conclusion is that we cannot encompass it within the usual canons of dialogue and safe spaces work. A common rule in dialogue work, for example, is that each should listen to the other with mutual respect so that differences can be *tolerated*, if not celebrated. But we can see how, in radical disagreements, *such conceptual/emotional space does not exist*. [...] *we simply do not respect what the other says – or the other as sayer of it* – in such circumstances” (emphasis added). If mutual tolerance for the contested differences is the aim of the encounter arrangement, then respect for the other and for what the other says is indeed a prerequisite. As was argued in theory chapter two, conversation does not automatically engender understanding. As was mentioned there, Bohm (1996) indicates that often the other side’s prejudices are regarded as responsible for the fact that the other does not agree with the own side. Correspondingly, the willingness of

attempting to understand the respective other is far from obvious when the other is not respected, which is characteristic for the context of highly escalated conflicts.

However, an important analytical difference should be considered between “respect for what the other says” and for “the sayer of it” (Ramsbotham, op.cit.). Whereas a lack of respect for the other is likely to entail that the words of the other are not respected either, situations are well conceivable in which the disputants respect one another, but regard one another’s opinions on a particular issue absurd. An example of this latter situation might be a “family quarrel” portrayed by Ramsbotham (2010: 8-13), which involved a deep disagreement between two family members; in this disagreement, the disputants found the opinion of the opponent utterly wrong and even offensive, while, hopefully, still respecting the other to a degree of “thick recognition” (Allan & Keller; 2006: 199- 201) – to use the term from chapter two – “[fully accepting] the humanity of the other” (ibid.). When recognition of the other is present, there might be willingness to understand the other in spite of the absence of willingness to respect the other’s position; but even when there is no apparent willingness to understand the other, there can still be willingness to convince the other, as displayed by the protagonists in Ramsbotham’s (2010: 8-13) “family quarrel” who were engaging in intense debate.

Alternatively, there is still scope for searching for a *modus operandi* based on common interests. As the particular instance of the “family quarrel” in the example was ignited by the question of how to educate children, a central challenge of the dispute can be conceptualised as finding an option for

designing the environment for the growing-up process in such a way that the children could autonomously recognise the truth. If both disputants were really confident in the clarity and accessibility of what each of them defended as the truth, they should in principle be able to agree that the children should have the option to recognise the truth by themselves when growing up in an enriched and diverse environment. (Agreeing on the details of such an arrangements, however, is admittedly likely to be a long-term struggle, given the depth of the underlying disagreement.)

In general, some degree of recognition of the other is a *sine qua non* for the engagement in a discursive exchange. If such a minimal recognition is missing, as is typical for constellations of violent conflict, the interest in discursive exchanges on mutual differences with an agenda of mutual understanding is likely to be absent. In these situations, Ramsbotham's indication that "we simply do not respect what the other says – or the other as sayer of it" (2010: 80) fully applies, to the effect that the scope for tolerance is very narrow indeed. That is why the re-humanisation of the other through trustbuilding, which was covered at length in previous sections, is so essential for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Only after the other is recognised at least to some degree, scope opens for dealing with differences.

As in the "family quarrel" (Ramsbotham, op.cit.) just mentioned, dialogue between disputants can occur even when the other's positions are regarded as unacceptable, provided that the other is respected as a person. In this constellation of respect for the other and a lack of respect for the other's position, tolerance for the other's position and mutual understanding is not an

immediate option, so that dialogue work in the form portrayed by Ramsbotham (op.cit) is indeed impossible: "A common rule in dialogue work, for example, is that each should listen to the other with mutual respect so that differences can be tolerated, if not celebrated." Dialogue can, however, continue when disputants keep trying to convince the other, as mentioned above. This dialogue, in whose process own standpoints are defended, ideally proceeds in a communicative framework oriented on exchange and manifesting mutual respect, as depicted by NGO activists. The sequence of fostering mutual recognition as a basis, on which thereupon a space oriented on exchange can be built, is therefore central. Correspondingly, when the aim of the participants of dialogue work is towards convincing the other, dialogue work can be continued even when the other's position is not tolerated, provided that solid respect for the other was already present or has been established.

Establishing mutual respect is of course far easier said than done in situations of highly escalated conflicts. Especially when the border to killings had been trespassed in the past course of the conflict, animosities can be extreme, as was argued in previous chapters, to the effect that the reduction of enmity can be an endeavour with a distant time horizon. The NGO mechanisms towards trustbuilding discussed in this dissertation were for the most part situated in a post-war setting, after comprehensive violent intergroup confrontations had largely subsided.

The situation is of course quite different when violent conflict is still in progress. In this context, it can be expected that the general willingness to engage in direct dialogue with the other is reduced, while the view is

widespread that a violent victory over the opponent is the required and only possible way to deal with the conflict.

Strategic thinking in intense conflicts

When war events have precipitated fury and wrath on both sides and have eroded mutual respect, the basis for dialogue work is weak indeed. At this stage of a conflict, attempts of dialogue between opponents are likely to be futile, meeting the mentioned characterisation of Ramsbotham (2010: 80): “in radical disagreements, such conceptual/emotional space [for listening to the other with mutual respect so that differences can be tolerated, if not celebrated] does not exist. [...] we simply do not respect what the other says – or the other as sayer of it – in such circumstances.” Ramsbotham (2010: 132) argues that there is no sufficient common ground for mutual understanding in cases of radical disagreements: “the phenomenology of radical disagreement shows that conflict parties are, *not nearer*, but *much further apart* than was supposed” (original emphasis).

Due to these deep cleavages between disputants which define situations of radical disagreement, Ramsbotham (2010) concludes that “dialogue for mutual understanding [...] often proves premature in these cases” (164), and that “the practical implication [...] is to abandon attempts at promoting *dialogue for mutual understanding* altogether. There is no point of persisting. There is no conceptual or emotional space for it yet” (ibid.: 166, original emphasis). For the engagement with radical disagreements, Ramsbotham (ibid.) introduces as an alternative to dialogue for mutual understanding an approach with a rather different rationale: “the main effort shifts to the

promotion of *dialogue for strategic engagement*, not less radical disagreement, but more. What is required is the *strategic engagement of discourses*".

One defining feature of this proposed approach is that the process for dealing with this form of intense conflict is initiated through fostering strategic deliberation within conflict parties: "The strategic engagement of discourses begins, not with dialogue between conflict parties, but with inclusive strategic thinking *within* each conflict party considered separately [...] Only in the light of sustained inclusive strategic thinking within each conflict party, and as a natural extension of the logic of strategic thinking itself, can the process evolve into the strategic engagement of discourses *between* conflict parties that is made possible as a result. [...] where there is strategic engagement, each party's main aim is [...] not to understand the other, but to win" (ibid.: 168, original emphasis).

Benefits of strategic thinking

The evident rationale of Ramsbotham's (2010) proposal to focus on strategic thinking is that the approach for engaging with radical disagreement must, of course, correspond to the disputants' motivations. While little interest in dialogue can be expected when conflict parties are not respecting one another, their motivation to win is obviously compatible with the proposal to engage in internal reflection processes on aims and strategies. The hope linked to this proposal is that the extension of the discussion towards wider sections of the (intra-party) population, in combination with an emphasis on strategic considerations, leads to more rational and weighted decisions:

“Strategic thinking chooses the most appropriate strategic and tactical means to attain its overall strategic ends” (ibid.: 180); “[an inclusive internal strategic engagement of discourses] is more likely to lead to wise, flexible and realistic strategies for attaining transformative goals including back-up strategies in case first preferences fail” (ibid.: 202).

There are good reasons for believing that a process of intense reflections about strategies and a discussion including large sections of the own party improves the quality of decision making. Thinking systematically about various strategic options and expected consequences renders, by definition, the decision process more reflected. Widening the discussion process by including various parts of the own group, on the other hand, is likely to reduce the dangers of “group polarisation” and “groupthink”.

“Group polarisation” describes the phenomenon that opinions of group members within relatively homogenous groups can jointly become more extreme instead of moderating one another in the process of intra-group exchanges, i.e. “[c]onservatives become more conservative, liberals more liberal, radicals more radical”, etc. (Brehm & Kassin, 1996: 426-7).

“Groupthink” is related to this potential homogenisation of opinions which can be engendered by intra-group discussions. The term “groupthink” refers to the idea that homogenous groups under time pressure for decision making and with little exchange with other groups are particularly prone to producing under-deliberated decisions (ibid: 428-30); as historic examples Brehm & Kassin mention “Kennedy’s approval of the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba”, and “Nixon’s attempt to stonewall the Watergate scandal” (ibid.: 428).

Research results on “groupthink” are somewhat mixed, but indicate that

there is indeed a tendency for time pressure and isolation from other groups to lead to under-deliberated decision (ibid.: 430).

Given these tendencies, it appears to be reasonable indeed to foster wide and reflected intra-group discussions on various strategic options in relation to expected consequences.

Limitations of strategic thinking

The quality of decisions, however, depends obviously on the premises on which the strategic deliberations are based. Unfortunately, a wide intra-party discussion is far from being a guarantee for the realistic assessment of the opponent's intentions and expected reactions. In highly escalated violent conflicts, the views of conflict parties can be expected to be polarised and isolated to a large degree, so that strategic thinking does not necessarily entail realistic assessments and wise decisions, even when involving a wide inclusion of various sections of the same party. As mentioned in the first chapter, once the border to killings has been trespassed in the course of a conflict, the mutual perceptions can be extreme: "once the killing actually starts, irrational fears, suspicions and hatreds escalate to a point of near irreversibility" (Curle, 1990: 85). During the ensuing process of killings on both sides, the responsibility for the appalling development of the war is assigned to the "adversaries' character, ideology, or leadership" (Kriesberg, 2005: 77).

This does not imply, of course, that all the fears, indignations, and reactions of war parties can be regarded as irrational. Once killings become part of the

conflict, the hatred on each side is a sufficient reason to be fearful of the other, while the negative perceptions and actions can be mutually reinforcing, partially in a self-fulfilling way, as argued in theory chapter one. What is essential for the question of strategic thinking, however, is the indication of Curle that within escalated violent conflicts the field of rationality is frequently left. As a consequence of the escalated violence, “the logic and arrangement of ‘normal’ life are abandoned for exaggeration and fantasy. The ‘reasonable’ fears and worries engendered by war and violence change into paranoid myths” (Curle, 1990: 87). “As the conflict intensifies, so does the bitter unreasonableness of the hatred. I remember how, during the war in Sri Lanka, the feelings of the Sinhalese for Tamils grew increasingly exaggerated and grotesque” (ibid.: 90).

When strategic thinking is based on such radicalised fears and prejudices, realistic assessments are thwarted. A realistic assessment of the opponent’s intentions and expected reactions is, however, a *sine qua non* for wise decisions. As long as mistrust, paranoia and hatred are rife, neither dialogue for mutual understanding, nor strategic messages or deeds as envisioned by Ramsbotham (2010), are likely to improve the relationship. There does not seem to be any possible roundabout way that would omit trustbuilding work on the journey towards improving intergroup relations.

The dangers of strategic thinking in situations of escalated conflicts are illustrated by passages from an example of intra-party deliberations of the “Palestinian Strategy Group” (in Ramsbotham, 2010). As a product of strategic thinking, the group developed the following threat scenarios for the

case that the negotiations with Israel are not developing in the desired direction:

“[Switching to] the elevation of ‘smart’ resistance over negotiation as the main means of implementation for Palestinians [...] The central aim will be to maximise the cost of continuing occupation for Israel, and to make the whole prospect of unilateral separation unworkable” (ibid.: 172); “if current negotiations fail, Palestinians will be driven to replace the 1988 offer by a new strategy, not just rhetorically, but in reality. The negotiated two state outcome will then be definitely cancelled. [...] Israel will have lost a historic and non-recurrent opportunity to end the conflict and to secure its own future survival on the best terms available for Israel. [...] An empty threat is strategically no threat. A mere bluff does not work” (ibid.: 173).

It is far from clear how these threats will contribute towards easing the intergroup relations. The danger inherent in these words is obviously that Israel will react in a way typical for escalated conflict situations, viz. taking the threats as evidence for the danger emanating from the opponent (Glasl, 1997). As the threats of opponents are only perceived in terms of their intimidating effects while the intentions behind are not directly accessible (Kempf, 2003), mistrust and escalation are likely to be fuelled even if the opponent attempts, as envisaged by Ramsbotham (2010), to couple the threats with the communication of intentions. Looking at the Israeli side, in turn, it could be argued that strategic thinking is their default modus of operation for top-level policy decisions (with the known outcomes), as these policies are partially generated through a parliamentary procedure, and are a matter of wide discourse within the Israeli society.

Ramsbotham (2010: 194) does not claim that strategic thinking will always lead to an improvement of intergroup relationships: “there is no reason why [strategic engagement of discourses] should be conducive to positive management of peacemaking. [...] dialogue for strategic engagement does not assume that more contact means more understanding. It may result in the opposite.” It is hoped, however, that the quality of decisions is increased by the mentioned methods of an intra-party discursive inclusion and strategic deliberation. “The process [of an inclusive internal strategic engagement of discourses] does not dictate which particular outcome will prevail. But it helps to ensure that the pilots are not flying blind and that the rapidly opening and closing opportunities for a safe landing are noticed in time (ibid.: 203).

Strategic thinking and intra-party inclusion can indeed be expected to be better than ad-hoc decisions produced in small isolated groups, but when the underlying premises are based on “exaggerations” and prejudices, it is not clear whether “opportunities for a safe landing” will be spotted in the first place. Strategic thinking based on wrong premises can even lead to the maintenance and escalation of the conflict via the communication of threats, as insinuated above. The well-known security dilemma in turn is a reminder of how strategic “defence” actions can propel the spiral of mistrust and “counter-measures”.

Consequently, fostering strategic thinking amongst conflict parties is likely to improve the quality of decisions (when “quality of decision” is understood as “conducive for the aims of the own party”) only under the condition that the opponents’ intentions, aims, and strategies are well known. Even if, however, the opponent is assessed realistically, strategic thinking does not necessarily

lead to nonviolent policies, of course. When a party does not care for the other party's well-being and is convinced that the opponent can be kept under control due to a considerable power asymmetry, then the strategy of choice could well be the power option. Ramsbotham (2010: 200) indicates that a chief "challenge" of "third-party peacemakers" is to "[persuade] the conflict parties that their undefeated political and moral-religious aspirations are from now on best pursued non-violently."

Describing a concrete process of mediation (partially hypothetical, but mainly assembled from various real cases), Curle (1990: 65) illustrates how fostering the reflection on potential courses of action, in an attempt to buttress the nonviolent route, can look like: "I understood when we last spoke that you were interested in mediation because you felt that to go for a purely military solution was too costly. Also it wouldn't be a good solution because you would be left with a sullen and rebellious population which would continue the struggle by sabotage and industrial unrest and perhaps later by a renewal of violence. I was proposing a solution that is more likely to stick and if you want that, you'll have to do it together with W."

Importantly, Ramsbotham (2010: 200) indicates that the nonviolent route can be more conducive to the interests of a conflict party even if this conflict party does not believe in the immediate option of a settlement jointly developed with the opponent. Specifically, Ramsbotham points out that nonviolence can be more effective via increasing the own side's legitimacy: "A key argument [...] is that a definite giving up of violent resistance will put *more* pressure on [the opponent] to shift in the desired direction, not less" (ibid., original emphasis). The prospect for success of such an attempt of persuasion is, of

course, dependent on the conflict parties' assessments of relative power. Only if conflict parties recognise problems in the route of forcing the own preferred outcome on the opponent, they are likely to consider alternatives. Doubts about the use of force can, as insinuated, either stem from care for the well-being of the opponent, or, probably more typical for violent conflicts, stem from scepticism on the practical long-term feasibility of powerful repression or containment of the opponent.

As far as violent conflicts are concerned, the question under which conditions the stage of seeing violence as not conducive anymore is reached, is the subject of the "ripeness" debate (Coleman, 2006: 550; Ramsbotham et al., 2005). Curle (1990: 91) points to the plausible dependence of the choice of means – violence vs. bargaining – on predicted success. "Factions certain of victory over their opponents are most likely to reject mediation. [...] It is only when they are less successful than they had expected and feel the cold winds of fear and failure, that they will countenance mediation."

In sum, the practical recommendations of Curle (1990) regarding third-party interventions in the form of mediation contain elements of both strategic thinking and reduction of prejudices. Strategic thinking, however, which is central to Ramsbotham's (2010) approach of "strategic engagement" as well as to Curle's (1990) approach to mediation, promises to reduce the likelihood of violence if and only if conflict parties are in a process of doubting the feasibility or desirability of the violent route.

Correcting the basis of strategic thinking

As was argued, inclusive strategic thinking can avoid the dangers of badly deliberated decisions, but needs to be based on an appropriate image of the

other. Outlining the task of reducing prejudices, Curle (1990: 64) points out that “[m]ediation has to go on struggling unceasingly with the profound suspicion, laced with fear and hatred [...] Only by constant reiteration of the arguments and erosion of prejudices in different contexts, and by pointing to specific incidents that convey a different impression, can a slow, and perhaps only slight, change be wrought.” The correction of the image of the other is described as the endeavour “to change the perception of protagonists concerning each others’ motives, feelings and intentions. If they can be brought to see that these are less vindictive, implacable, irrational, bloodthirsty and aggressive than they had thought, they may decide to negotiate seriously, sensibly and constructively” (ibid.: 82).

As an essential aspect of correcting the image of the other, Curle (ibid.: 86) points to the requirement that conflict parties acquire a better understanding of how the opponent’s motivations have developed in the course of the conflict: “It is of utmost importance that they should grasp intellectually and emotionally if possible, what is happening. For example, they should realise why their enemies are afraid of them and that much of their violence springs from fear rather than brutality. [...] They should see how it is that the pressures of war make us all desperate and that in our desperation we are apt to become violent, vindictive, tunnel visioned and irrational.”

Compatible with Ramsbotham’s (2010) focus on strategic thinking, Curle (1990) emphasises that a reflection on potential courses of action and their associated costs is a central ingredient of mediation. Curle, however, links this process of deliberation to the necessity of grounding this reflection on a realistic basis of information. For building a realistic basis Curle points not

only to the importance of correcting the image of the other, as covered above, but also indicates that parties need to reflect on their true interests. Only after the image of the other has been corrected and the own interests have been reflected, the process of weighting alternative routes of action in terms of their costs and benefits has a realistic basis. "Active mediation is also directed towards helping each protagonist to clarify and assess his or her objectives. How valid are their aims; what level of sacrifice is reasonable to achieve them? Such goals can easily obtain a sort of mythic sanctity completely unrelated to the true needs of a nation" (ibid.: 83-4). "The task of mediation, always, everywhere, is to find ways of reducing tension and enabling the opponents to stand back from the obsessive fears, suspicions and hatreds that have come to dominate their minds; to see each other and their dispute more rationally in terms of what is of real interest to them and others involved" (ibid.: 98).

Seeing mutual hatred and distrust as essential in fuelling the conflict spiral, Curle (1990) indicates, as already cited, that prejudices need to be eroded by arguments and "pointing to [those] incidents" that deviate from the negative expectations. As such incidents can be rare in contexts of violent struggle, an enormous significance accrues to trustbuilding steps. While the examples of Curle (1990) are chiefly drawn from the level of main political decision-makers, there are evident parallels to the rationale of trustbuilding and exchange endeavours by NGOs, presented at length above. On both levels, reducing enmity is arguably essential to render cohabitation an option that is conceivable for the parties, and is the precondition for collaborative measures and future exchanges.

Curle (ibid.: 78) describes through means of a conversation (partially hypothetical, but mainly assembled from various real cases) how a third-party can try to convince conflict parties' decision makers about the requirement of such steps: "the fact that both of you dislike and distrust each other so much makes [a confidence-building step] necessary, if you are really interested in a negotiated peace instead of continued reciprocal slaughter, to make a gesture of good faith." When the option of initiating trustbuilding steps is considered, the third-party's assistance to deliberating the consequences of alternative actions is pertinent. "[E]verything you do in war is risky, including doing nothing or making the automatic conventional response. But it's really a question of odds. In this case you might lose a little if things went wrong. But if things went right, you might gain peace. So it could be a worthwhile gamble" (ibid.: 68). In the process of the ensuing deliberations of alternative routes of action, Curle described how a third-party mediator can attempt to accompany this deliberation by constantly assisting in considering the opponents' likely reactions, through statements as: "your offer probably seemed more like a threat; something which could never be accepted without loss of face." (ibid.: 65)

Finding temporary settlements on the route towards solutions

In the above discussion of Ramsbotham's (2010) focus on strategic thinking in relation to Curle's (1990) recommendations of mediation, four categories of constituents for dealing with intense violent conflict have been encountered: Fostering inclusive strategic thinking on the alternative routes of action, under consideration of their costs and likely consequences; correcting conflict parties assumptions about their opponent; reflecting on the

true interests of the own side; and encouraging disputants to venture trustbuilding steps in order to demonstrate to the opponent the own side's willingness to sound jointly the scope for a solution.

To these four constituents of third-party intervention a fifth one is added by Ramsbotham's analysis on the requirements for a aspired (intermediate) settlement. Ramsbotham (2010: 200) indicates that "the challenge" of "third-party peacemakers in relation to the two chief components of any future settlement", is constituted, on the one hand, by the mentioned attempt to convince "conflict parties that their [...] aspirations are from now on best pursued non-violently." Interrelated with this requirement is a similar task, consisting of finding a settlement in the form of a "political framework" (ibid.) which can convince the parties that this settlement, even though it cannot address all of their interests, is a useful step towards a more comprehensive fulfilment of their aspirations: "The settlement is not itself the terminus or end of conflict. The conflict – and the radical disagreement that goes with it – continues. The precious gift that third-party peacemakers have to offer is *hope*" (ibid.: 201). This fifth constituent or task of third-party intervention thereby consists of trying to find a intermediate solution to the conflict constellation which signals to the involved conflict parties that momentum is kept or created towards their desired state of affairs.

This constituent roughly corresponds to the recommendation of Burgess and Burgess (1996; in Coleman, 2006: 550), who propose, in the words of Coleman, "creating [in a situation of intractable conflict] a process of confrontation that disputants find to be both effective (in terms of minimizing the negative costs of the conflict and maximizing the benefits) and fair or just

(in terms of broad moral concerns).” Coleman (ibid.) points out that this is “[t]o a large extent, [...] what emerged with the Good Friday peace agreement in Northern Ireland, where a political process was established (home rule and a power-sharing arrangement between the communities) whose agenda it was to tackle some of the substantive problems associated with the conflict”.

Shifting from the idea to find a comprehensive settlement to an approach which conceptualises settlements as intermediate stations on the way towards a more complete solution has also a further, maybe most decisive, advantage. While a conflict constellation can consist of competing aspirations which are too contradictory to be accommodated in any potential settlement, Michels (1994) indicates that a partial settlement can change the aspirations themselves. Michels (ibid.: 36) claims that it is unrealistic to expect that the convictions of conflict parties can change through negotiations, arguing that “changes [...] must seem to take place outside negotiations and within acceptable limits set by national [desires]”.

Correspondingly, Michels (ibid.) praises the Oslo agreement for “wisely [postponing] negotiations that will require significant alterations in Israeli or Palestinian [convictions], and modestly [striving] to provide a stepping-stone for further agreements.” The rationale is that through a step-by-step approach of successive agreements the self-definition of the own party as well as the image of the conflict constellation will change, to the effect that topics on which currently now settlement is in sight should be deferred to later stages. “After the first stage of implementation is completed, and both Palestinians and Israelis begin to see the tangible results of the agreement,

two factors should make further negotiations somewhat easier. The first is that changes in [the realities on the ground] inevitably result in both reconsideration of [what has led to these realities] and changes in the national vision (what is acceptable and what is 'national')” (ibid.: 37).

Although this step-by-step approach seems to be highly plausible and promising, the experiences after the Oslo agreement suggest that it is not a panacea for dealing with such deep conflicts. The reasons for the Oslo agreement's lack of success are of course likely to be manifold, but obviously indicates the dissatisfaction by sections of the conflict parties. Part of this dissatisfaction could relate to a weakness in the step-by-step approach, which is indicated by Coleman (2006) and Ramsbotham (2010). Coleman (ibid.: 550) suspects that “establishing a constructive process might be a particularly useful strategy in the early phases of a conflict resolution process to create a sense of possibility, but that eventually, if the stakes are high, the disputants will demand a focus on the substance of their concerns”. In a similar vein, Ramsbotham (ibid.: 210) indicates that in the context of intractable conflicts there can be constellations of asymmetric power which entail that “the question of ‘incremental’ vs. ‘final state’ processes is part of what is at issue”, when the currently advantaged conflict party “favour[s] the first”, and the disadvantaged “favour[s] the second”.

A comprehensive solution which addresses all the substantive aspirations of the conflict parties through one final settlement is, of course, the most desirable result of third-party intervention. Obviously, however, the defining feature of an intractable conflict or radical disagreement is that so far no such mutual acceptable settlement could be devised. It is, of course, always

essential to exhaustively sound the scope for win-win solutions, which is e.g. the rationale of the application of need theories – discussed in chapter one – or of proposals aiming at the creation of innovative concepts, such as Galtung’s (2002: 140) ideas of “non-territoriality” and “joint sovereignty”. Such proposals and ideas for comprehensive win-win solutions are always highly desirable. Ramsbotham (2010: 203) hopes that strategic thinking might enable the detection or creation of such solutions within an environment of changing contingencies, as cited above: “[an inclusive internal strategic engagement of discourses] does not dictate which particular outcome will prevail. But it helps to ensure that the pilots are not flying blind and that the rapidly opening and closing opportunities for a safe landing are noticed in time.” As acknowledged above, this hope linked to strategic thinking is one of the reasons why strategic thinking seems to be promising as an element for dealing with highly escalated conflicts, alongside with the other tools mentioned.

When however the current differences are too immense to allow any construction of a mutually acceptable settlement, there is no evident alternative to deferring some contested issues to the future, and hoping that trustbuilding measures will yield changes in the convictions and aspirations that will some day open new opportunities. An essential ingredient for this endeavour is plausibly the task, mentioned above, to design an intermediate settlement in such a way that it can be seen as sustaining momentum towards a more comprehensive solution, keeping alive the conflict parties’ hope that their aspirations will be more fully addressed in the future. This task is obviously more likely to succeed if the – so-far intractable but

substantial – issues can be addressed at least partially by the intermediate settlement, and when a basic level of trust has been built.

In summary, trustbuilding measures can consist of correcting the assumptions of the political decision-makers, of changing conflict parties' assumptions by incremental settlements, as well as of intergroup projects conducted by NGOs on the local level. Mediation can correct the assumptions of decision-makers about their opponents, thereby improving the basis on which the costs of potential courses of actions are assessed (Curle, 1990). Incremental settlements can change "the realities on the ground", as Michels indicates (1994: 37), and thereby have the potential to "precipitate both reconsideration of [what has led to these realities] and changes in the national vision (what is acceptable and what is 'national')" (ibid.). NGO work can help on the societal ground to improve rife assumptions about the opponent, thereby changing the wide-spread premises on which the conflict behaviour is founded. All these varieties of trustbuilding measures are able to change the conflict parties' assumptions about the opponent and modify their aspirations, thereby creating a more realistic basis of premises for strategic thinking. The quality of this strategic thinking in turn, founded on this more realistic basis, is further increased by fostering thorough and inclusive deliberation processes, increasing the likelihood that new opportunities are detected as envisaged by Ramsbotham (2010).

Dealing with persisting differences revisited: An integrative model for dealing with deep disagreements

The ideal to which this combination of measures aspires is a de-escalatory spiral of mutually reinforcing steps, constituted by trustbuilding measures on various levels, intermediate settlements, and thorough deliberations, while preparing future opportunities for win-win opportunities, which in turn can be spotted easier by a systematic elucidation of options. A further additive to this process is the essential sphere of dealing with the past. In interaction with steps of trustbuilding and personalisation, the undermining of double standards – in the assessment of atrocities committed by the own side vs. those committed by the opponent –, changes the image of past war events and thereby the image of the own party relative to the other party, thereby decreasing a central obstacle to mutual recognition and to the conceivability of peaceful cohabitation.

Even if the long journey of trustbuilding has corrected wrong assumptions about one another and yielded mutual respect, however, some differences might persist, as was argued in the section on “Dealing with intergroup Differences” above. These differences, which are now between disputants who respect one another as equal in value, can be of a religious, cultural, or ideological nature. The problems faced with such remaining differences are likely to be analogous to the deep disagreement encountered in the mentioned “family quarrel” (Ramsbotham 2010: 8-13). As sketched above, this quarrel involved a deep disagreement between two family members; in this disagreement the disputants found the opinion of the other utterly wrong and even offensive, while, hopefully, still respecting one another’s humanity

to a comprehensive degree. This example alongside with the intergroup differences covered above indicate that respecting fully the humanity of one another is not necessarily sufficient for arriving at an agreement. In cases of such deep differences, the only alternatives to forcing one position upon the other are the options mentioned above, viz. construing a *modus vivendi* enabling the cohabitation with these persisting differences, or to continue exchanges on the topic of the disagreement in the hope for a future agreement.

The *modus vivendi* option necessitates some degree of tolerance for the other's position, while a continuation of the disagreement would require that a long-term change in one or both of the positions is deemed realistic. For cases in which solely the latter option is feasible, NGO activists emphasised the importance of establishing a communicative framework which manifests sufficient mutual respect towards the other, as mentioned, for the focus of the discussion to remain on exchanges in an open atmosphere.

When this orientation towards exchange has been created, the willingness for continuing dialogue is an indication of the disputants' conviction that the own arguments and value orientations possess convincing power due to their factual rightness and/or because of the appeal of the involved values. This topic will be further examined in the following section "Theoretical frameworks in relation to radical disagreement."

This latter option, suggested by NGO activists, is thereby analogous to the described element contained in Ramsbotham's (2010: 201) approach, consisting of the attempt to convince the conflict parties that a devised intermediate settlement is a useful stepping stone on the route towards a

fuller realisation of their aspirations. In both cases, it is the hope that the future will enable a solution that might keep alive the nonviolent exchange. The essential watershed between these two approaches consists of the degree of mutual respect. As long as the other is not fully recognised, an intermediate settlement might be necessary which can increase mutual respect and trustbuilding by a demonstration that both sides are interested in nonviolent collaboration. If, on the other hand, mutual respect is present or has been established, the hope consists of the possibility that one or both sides will somewhat move in their positions, or that one day an mutually acceptable innovative option for accommodating the differences can be devised, depending on the nature of the disagreement, as will be discussed in the following section.

Theoretical frameworks in relation to radical disagreements

As mentioned, Ramsbotham (2010: 133) argues that “[t]here is no theory or philosophy of radical disagreement”. The central argument for this claim appears to be that no extant philosophy sufficiently incorporated the logical contradiction which separates the statements of radically disagreeing parties, rendering radical disagreements “polylogical” (ibid.: 119): “At the heart of radical disagreement itself in written notation is a contradiction, a logical scandal:

p not-p

But in the normal ‘third-party’ convention this is written:

‘p’ ‘not-p’

And now the notation of inverted commas – the usual notation for conversation in general – reduces the scandal to a banality” (ibid.: 129).

From this definition of the essence of radical disagreement it is deduced that “[t]here is no adequate third-party monological depiction” (ibid. 130).

Theories in relation to logical contradictions

Everything depends of course on the criteria, which are stipulated for a philosophy or theory, to be fulfilled in order for a philosophy or theory to be accepted as encompassing radical disagreements. According to Ramsbotham (2010: 130), a defining characteristic of radical disagreements is that “third-party account[s] [are] *explicitly rejected* by [...] conflict parties [...] that is what lies at the heart of the linguistic intractability.” The fact that third party descriptions cannot be accepted by all of the conflict parties follows logically from Ramsbotham’s defining aspect of radical disagreement just cited, i.e. from defining radical disagreements as consisting of the confrontation of claims that are logically incompatible.

The fact that a third-party account is rejected by conflict parties is, however, no argument for its incorrectness, and is therefore not a logical criterion for disregarding a theory. If one expects a theory of radical disagreement to imply that the statements of the radically disagreeing parties are of equal epistemic/ontological standing, i.e. are equally true or valid, then of course one is asking for an impossibility. Asking for a theory which is not just describing a logical contradiction, but is containing a logical contradiction, is asking for an internally inconsistent theory.

Due to the inherent contradiction of radical disagreements, a position of relativism, e.g. in the variety of social constructionism (e.g. Gergen, 1999),

might appear attractive. Such relativism is inherent in Ramsbotham's reading of the notation "'p' 'not-p'" just mentioned (Ramsbotham, 2005: 129).

However, it should be noted that even such a social constructionist description constitutes a definite statement, which claims that 'p' and 'not-p' are on the same ontological level. This perspective, however, is marred by even two logical contradictions. If both 'p' and 'not-p' are regarded as possible perspectives, the initial logical contradiction has not been dissolved. Unless such a theory neutralises the contradiction by changing the actual meaning of the statements 'p' and 'not-p', the logical clash inevitably remains intact.

A philosophy of relativism contains, furthermore, the related logical contradiction that consists of positing a clear claim on the relative status of statements in general, viz. declaring the content of all statements as ontological equal. However, this claim is a statement in itself. As there are obviously theories which contradict relativism, relativism practically makes the logically impossible statement: "it is correct and false at the same time that the content of all statements is ontologically equal". As elucidated in the methodology section, Wittgenstein (1969) taught us that every statement and action is based on trust in some premises. Declaring the content of all statements as ontologically equal – so that those which contradict the own convictions are equal to the own statements – is a variety of a hyperbolic doubt, which was identified by Wittgenstein (*ibid.*) as logically inconsistent. When everything was doubted, this would include doubt on whether words have meanings, to the effect that the basis for expressing any statements would be dissolved by such universal doubt. In other words, doubting

everything would be like saying: “Everything can be doubted – the content of all statements is ontologically equal – but this sentence can be meaningless or wrong.”

As outlined in the first chapter of this thesis, the art of conflict resolution partially consists of finding creative solutions to apparent contradictions. Such apparent contradictions, however, for which an accommodating solution can be found, cannot be logical contradictions, even when they might appear on the surface as such. Ropers (2008: 17-19) for example claims that the “binary logic of the European tradition” can be overcome by introducing more options to a conflict, but misidentifies the nature of a formal-logical contradiction. Ropers’ (ibid.) example for “overcoming binary logic” turns out to be of the form “if party one favours self-determination for the region and party two wants the region to stay part of a larger country, a third position is to establish a federation”. This, however, is not a logical contradiction.

In the context of formal logic, the statement “A” implies by definition that “not A”, rendering “A and not A” an impossibility. A case within a conflict constellation closer to a logical contradiction would be “party one favours self-determination, and party one does not favour self-determination”. Such a statement, however, is simply wrong or incomprehensible, unless its meaning is specified in such a way that the logical contradiction is dissolved (Putnam, 1994: 255-8). As logic is fundamental to the definition of reasoning, asking for overcoming logic would imply asking to overcome the basis of thinking. Consequently, it is indeed impossible that there is a “theory or philosophy of radical disagreement” (Ramsbotham, 2010: 133) when such a

theory is supposed to neutralise the logical contradiction inherent in the disagreement.

Theories taking sides on factual and normative disagreements

Is all what can be said philosophically about radical disagreements that there cannot be a theory incorporating the mutually exclusive positions constitutive of the radical disagreement? There is much more to say if one gives up the idea that such a philosophy needs to be incorporating logically contradictory positions. Only when it is required that both sides of the radical disagreement are to be accommodated as epistemologically and ontologically equal, a *cul-de-sac* is reached. As soon as it is accepted that the factual and/or evaluative claims of one side, or both sides, can be at least partially wrong, the realm of theoretical options re-opens.

Comparatively easy for conceptualisation are those disagreements which centre on the world of objects. In the history of humankind there were radical disagreements involving factual beliefs about all sorts of things on which we nowadays are happy to take sides, as in the disagreement between the Heliocentric vs. Ptolemaic worldview. This factual disagreement clearly fulfilled the criterion of involving a logical contradiction, as the sun and the other planets cannot orbit the earth when at the same time the sun is orbited by the planets including the earth. These are mutually exclusive positions, and during some period the accessible observations seemed to be compatible, albeit with varying plausibility, with both systems of factual beliefs. Still, we are happy nowadays to declare the Ptolemaic model as mistaken, as it violates observations related to factual beliefs which are nowadays basic. The reference to this profane example does not imply, of

course, that most of today's radical disagreements can be decided or will be decided by future factual beliefs. It illustrates, however, that radical disagreements centring on the world of objects typically involve clear criteria to judge under which conditions one side of the disagreement is wrong.

Barring theories of radical disagreements from the possibility to contradict one or both sides of the disagreements is also analytically impractical when there are indications that misunderstandings are involved within a particular disagreement. As Ramsbotham (*ibid.*: 130) argues, “[a]gain and again under the moment of alignment, conflict parties find that the question whether they are each arguing about the same thing becomes what is at issue: |‘You have misunderstood me.’ ; ‘I have understood you perfectly – you are wrong.’|” It is important to note that there can be situations in which third-parties become convinced that one party is indeed misunderstanding the other, even though one of the conflict parties contests that there is a misunderstanding, or even when the misunderstanding is not noticed by any conflict party.

The intervention strategy of these third parties would most likely consist of trying to clear this misunderstanding. This intervention would thereby differ to those interventions whose analysis would by choice be oriented towards agnosticism in this regard, motivated by the wish to give primacy to the contradiction of the conflict parties. In practice, third-parties regarding a confrontation as a misunderstanding would typically try to dissolve the misunderstanding by trying to show the conflict parties that they are missing one another's points. The intervention strategy is likely to be different when the confrontation is regarded as a disagreement on substantive content.

Third-parties should obviously always choose the approach which seems to

be most promising given the analysis of the conflict constellation. If they would limit themselves in their theoretical description of the conflict in an attempt to accommodate the disputant's positions, despite of the conflict parties' contradicting analyses and convictions, third parties would practically act against their best knowledge. More generally, if primacy is given to the definitions of the conflict parties, it is not clear why third-parties, with their partially contested interests and values, should become involved in the first place.

Radical disagreements with which conflict resolution and peacebuilding attempts deal are, of course, not chiefly about the world of objects, thereby involving a different level of complexity than the example on the heliocentric model just mentioned. They usually involve the moral judgements of actions – which in turn are frequently interrelated with religious, ideological, or metaphysical questions – and are thereby much more complicated.

Ramsbotham (2010: 126) states that in situations of radical disagreement facts, values, and emotions are closely intertwined, illustrated by the mentioned example of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict: "It is the *fact* of the *outrage* that immediately elicits *indignation* and the steely *will* never to rest until the wrong is righted. The *indignation* felt by Palestinians is not separable from the *fact* of what happened in the *Naqba* and the fundamental *norms* of natural justice that were thereby violated and must now be restored. [...] Emotion is woven through the fact/value complex at the core of radical disagreement" (original emphasis). Assessing this side of the radical disagreement from a third-party perspective is clearly not just a question of deciding on the basis of factual beliefs about the world of objects. Involved

are not just questions on movements in the world of objects, but questions on the morality of actions.

Evaluative terms used to describe social actions are often embedded into a particular evaluative perspective, as Putnam (1990, 2005, 2007) indicates. The employment of such evaluative terms implies that particular contextual details, potentially involving the intentions of the actors, are present. These evaluative terms are thereby themselves a manifestation of how description and evaluation fuse, as illustrated by Cavell's analysis (1979, 264-5, original emphasis; cited in Putnam, 2007: 10): "If [...] we take the case of some specific action, then we might take a case in which the 'action' in question is described in ethically prejudicial terms (e.g. 'Ought he to have murdered him' rather than '...killed him?', or 'Was he wrong to betray him?' rather than '...to refuse to do what he said?'), or else we might feel that any agreement about the morality of an act will turn on some agreement about how the act is to be described. Was it really breaking a *promise*? [...] Apparently, what the 'case' in question is *forms part of the content of the moral argument itself*".

Theories on disagreements in relation to Facts and Values

This entanglement of moral evaluation and description of actions renders it indeed more complicated to arrive at an agreement about which actions took place and how to evaluate them. As there can be differences in norms specifying which actions are under particular conditions legitimised, the disagreements in facts and values can constitute a complex compound. Given this close relationship between facts and values, it is tempting to accept their "fusion" (Ramsbotham, 2010: 125-6) in situations of radical

disagreement. “The distinction between fact (reference to the one objective world) and value (reference to norms in the shared social world) is regularly invoked. But the moments of radical disagreeing have shown that in the intense heat of radical disagreement they are fused together from the beginning.[...] This already-achieved complex exists prior to any explicit challenge and is carried as an amalgam into the ensuing radical disagreement”.

A third-party analysis, however, can profit from keeping facts and values conceptually separated. While in the case of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict some of the facts are highly contested, there are others about which agreement seems to be possible, at least in principle. Importantly, one defining aspect of factual beliefs is that it is clearly specifiable under which conditions a factual belief is assertable. There are relevant aspects involved in this specific conflict about which there is probably little disagreement, as for example how many people are living inside of certain areas or refugee camps. There are certainly other factual beliefs involved in this conflict which are highly controversial, but due to the nature of factual beliefs, it is defined which conditions would render a particular factual belief assertable.

Even when, however, a topic area is controversial due to the involvement of moral evaluation and intentions, such as in the case of the term “forceful evictions”, the concept is largely defined by linguistic practice, to the effect that conflict parties should agree at least in the abstract which conditions would define a forceful eviction. Even though there can be deep disagreements about how an action in the past should be termed, this is not a clash of arbitrary “Humpty Dumpty definitions” (of the sort “When I use a

word [...] it means just what I choose it to mean”, Carroll, 2009: 190 [1872]), but a disagreement on what context conditions were present. Going one step further: when the values of the conflict parties were similar, actions in the abstract would have to entail similar evaluations. This was the basis for NGO measures, presented in previous sections, which aimed at reducing double standards. The possibility of moving closer towards an understanding in situations of radical disagreements is therefore dependent on the degree to which values, at least in the abstract, are shared. If some values really possessed a “wide” nearly-universal “appeal”, as claimed by Putnam (2008: 385), there would be a ground for hoping that the reduction of double standards could in principle be successful in a variety of settings.

The inevitability of the involvement of convictions in any theory

The involvement of values in even the description of social actions suggests that there is indeed no neutral third-party position of description of radical disagreements, if neutral is supposed to mean independence from third-party values and convictions. However, as was argued in previous chapters, values are anyway universally involved in any actions, including language. The use of language already implies, as Wittgenstein (1969) indicates, that certain factual assumptions and values are trusted. Without trust in factual assumptions, language use would not be possible, as, minimally, at least trust in the meanings of the used words is required. Without trust in values, language use and other actions would not have any direction.

This inevitability of an involvement of factual beliefs and values in the creation of *any* propositions sheds a particular light on the statement that

“third-parties, whether as analysts or as interveners, are not discursively impartial” (Ramsbotham, 2010: 165). It does solely follow that “[t]here is no adequate third-party description or philosophy of radical disagreement” (ibid.) if such a third-party philosophy would be required to embrace logically contradictory positions of conflict parties, as argued above. As soon as evaluative and factual convictions of the third-party are allowed to enter the stage, a third-party philosophy of radical disagreement is possible.

Such conviction-guided third-parties will not be “impartial” in the sense of neutral towards violations of values, and not free from own factual convictions. These evaluative and factual convictions entail that third-parties are likely to frequently contradict, in thought and/or deed, conflict parties on also essential issues. However, this does still allow them to be impartial in the sense of applying their convictions (and carrying these convictions across contexts of conflicts) independently of which conflict side contradicts elements of these convictions. Ramsbotham’s (2010: 168-9) indicates that “[third party discourses are] yet further discourses struggling to occupy the whole of the discursive space and to dictate the course of unfolding events.”

This insight on the status of third-party descriptions and evaluations is essential for the conceptualisation of third-party roles in radical disagreements, but from this insight does not follow that third-party descriptions and evaluations cannot be true.

The fact that third-party descriptions and philosophies are contested by the conflict parties is no criterion for stipulating such descriptions as inappropriate. Third-party descriptions and philosophies of radical disagreements will be rejected by some, but that is a characteristic for any

statement and any philosophy. When a factual and/or evaluative statement is produced, it is inherently claimed that the statement is true (cf. Habermas' "validity claims", 1995). What renders it true is not that everybody will agree with it.

Universal agreement cannot be a criterion for the truth of a statement, since, on the one hand, it is practically never achieved (Putnam, 2008), and, on the other hand, since the concept of "truth" does not mean "potential to yield universal agreement", but implies absolute rightness. Habermas' (1995) strict orientation towards discursive agreement in describing how factual and evaluative conflicts are typically addressed in everyday life should not be misunderstood as the view that the essence of truth was social agreement. Habermas (2004: 291-2) explicitly rejects such a conceptualisation of truth, and indicates that "the meaning of the truth of assertions is not reducible to even the most demanding conditions of corroboration: truth goes beyond idealized justification". As was argued above, once a third-party description or philosophy is freed from the requirement to become fully accepted by conflict parties of a radical disagreement, such a third-party philosophy becomes possible.

What, then, is an appropriate philosophy of radical disagreement? A philosophy of radical disagreement is a philosophy – on particular aspects of the world – which is true. On which aspects of the world? This depends on the reach expected from the theory, potentially including factual and evaluative convictions alongside with theories of sciences, theories on history, sociology, psychology, etc. Ramsbotham (2010: 131) states that "what makes this *my* opinion is – precisely and only – the fact that it is a *true*

opinion. A *true* opinion is *my* opinion. And *that* is what is carried, as a single complex, into the radical disagreement – to be torn apart” (original emphasis). The truth of statements and philosophies can be contested indeed, and within radical disagreements statements on essential elements of the conflict will be contested by definition, but controversy does not compromise truth. Authors always claim to know best and to utter the truth; that is the point of propositional statements. As Habermas (2004: 249) indicates, “communication cannot work, unless the participants refer to a single objective world, thereby stabilising the intersubjectively shared public space”.

It might appear pretentious to conceptualise a philosophy or description of radical disagreement as true, but in fact it is inevitable. It is not clear why third-parties should try to become involved in a radical disagreement in the first place if they would not trust in their convictions, interests, and values. As was outlined repeatedly in previous sections, any action and any utterance implies trust in some premises, as Wittgenstein (1969) elucidated, while doubting anything needs reasons. As argued, our actions, including our statements, require values that give them direction and are based on factual assumptions that provide the connection between this action/statement and the aspired direction. Thereby, all assertions imply trust in truth, so that indeed every speaker implies that his opinion is a true opinion. Others will judge the truth of the utterance by its relationship to the fundamental beliefs, values, and empirical propositions held by them, with an orientation to truth that is not reducible to mutual agreement. The theory of radical disagreement proposed here must correspondingly be claiming truth, and is constituted by

the above argumentation on radical disagreement, of which major points are summarised in the next section.

Concluding summary on dealing with deep disagreements

Main aspects of this argumentation on deep disagreement outlined were, drawing chiefly on Ramsbotham (2010), Curle (1990), Burgess and Burgess (1996), Michels (1994), Putnam (1990, 2005, 2007), Wittgenstein (1969), and the experiences of the investigated NGOs:

Depending on the conflict constellation being intertwined with a particular radical disagreement, the appropriate combination of elements of approaches varies. Essential watersheds are constituted by the degree of mutual respect amongst disputants and towards the opponent's position.

If mutual respect is present and the opposing positions can be mutually tolerated, the clash of positions or principles does not challenge cohabitation.

If mutual respect is present but the other's position cannot be tolerated, creative solutions are required. Either an innovative *modus vivendi* can be devised which is based on parties' common interests and accommodates the parties' adherence to their convictions, or a conversational framework has to be found which enables the continuation of the disagreement with an orientation on exchange, in the hope that one or both sides' positions will move in the long-term.

In cases of escalated intergroup conflicts, when neither respect for the opponent nor for its position is present, fostering inclusive strategic thinking on the alternative routes of action through consideration of their costs and

likely consequences (Ramsbotham, 2010; Curle, 1990) improves, by definition, the quality of a decision, when “quality” is understood as being more informed and reflected. A task of third-party interveners at this stage can be, depending on the context of the conflict, to convince the parties that a nonviolent strategy is most effective in accruing legitimacy to the own side (Ramsbotham, 2010).

Such a well-deliberated choice, however, can still precipitate catastrophic conflict escalation, especially when the decision is based on exaggerated and wrong assessments of the opponent’s intentions and underlying interests, as well as when there is a lack of reflection on the own interests. Correcting views about the opponent and increasing reflection about the nature of the own interests is therefore essential (Curle, 1990). Approaches to trustbuilding can take different routes, depending on the context of the particular conflict. When the political decision-makers on both sides assess the option of unlimited force as (becoming) too costly, there can be scope for mediation (cf. Coleman, 2006: 550; cf. Ramsbotham et al., 2005), which can enable third-parties to directly correct the view on the other and the view on the true interests of the own side (Curle, 1990). It can also encourage disputants to venture trustbuilding steps in order to demonstrate to the opponent the own side’s willingness to sound jointly the scope for a solution (ibid.).

These trustbuilding measures on the level of political decision makers are highly relevant, but the scope for political decision makers is limited by the fears and aspirations of their political constituencies (cf. Curle, 1990). That is why it is so important that moves are initiated which can change the

assumptions about the opponent and induce reflections on the own role in the conflict (Michels, 1994; cf. Curle, 1990). These moves, however, do not need to be instigated at the top, when local NGOs have the political space to engage in intergroup trustbuilding (cf. Lederach, 2003). These local initiatives are of particular importance, of course, when the top-level is unwilling or unable to improve intergroup relations. Amongst the array of trustbuilding measures which were encountered in previous sections were: cooperation projects on relevant commonalities such as similar interests and needs; encounter situations in which prejudices were corrected; induced changes in the assessment of the conflict parties' roles in the war by recognising crimes of the own side, partially through unearthing and reducing double standards; and an orientation towards a more promising future based on common values.

In any case, it is the rife assumptions about the opponent and about the own side in highly escalated conflicts that need to change, and this change would ideally be brought about initiatives from the top as well as from the bottom, supplementing one another.

Intermediate settlements do not only have the potential to redefine the mutual relationship by changing mutual assumptions (Michels, 1994), but must also function as an indication for the conflict parties that there is some momentum towards their aspired aims, by creating a political process through which the disagreement can be continued (Burgess and Burgess, 1996, in Coleman, 2006; Ramsbotham, 2010). This orientation towards a continuation of the disagreement through a political process with the aim of winning (Ramsbotham, 2010: 200-1) is analogous to the NGO approaches of

continuing the disagreement in a framework orientated towards exchange with the aim of convincing the other. In both cases, it is the hope towards long-term change in the parties' positions and/or context factors that is on the basis of continued engagement.

When a philosophy or theory on radical disagreements is proposed, it necessarily involves factual assumptions and values, since, as Wittgenstein (1969) indicates, *any* statement requires trust in assumptions and values. (Without trust in factual assumptions, language use would not be possible, as, minimally, at least trust in the meanings of the used words is required; without trust in values, language use and other actions would not have any direction.) The form of a theory on radical disagreements depends on the reach which is expected from such a theory. As radical disagreements are defined by Ramsbotham (2010) as involving a logical contradiction amongst the disputants, a theory which is supposed to comment on the substance of a particular disagreement will be inevitably contradicted by at least one of the conflict parties. Expecting a theory to embrace a logical contradiction is asking for an impossibility, since this request amounts to asking for giving up reasoning. Correspondingly, any theory which is supposed to substantially comment on the content of a radical disagreement will have to contradict one or both of the conflict parties in some respect, when a radical disagreement is defined as containing a logical contradiction.

If third-parties would not disagree with at least one of the parties on aspects of either this parties' ends or means, there would not be a motivation for any intervention in the first place either. Even when a third-party expresses that a contested area should be approached with agnosticism, it utters a factual

(meta-)statement referring to the basis of the assumptions involved in the particular radical disagreement, by expressing the proposition that the factual or normative basis of the contested issue is insufficient to enable a decision. In general, any theory commenting on the substance of a topic will by definition involve a factual or evaluative statement, thereby inherently claiming to know best, irrespective of any others' disagreement with the theory. As Habermas (2004: 291-2) indicates, the meaning of the concept of truth points beyond discursive agreement.

The requirement on theories of radical disagreements from a perspective of conflict resolution or peacebuilding is, by definition, that a route is found for addressing conflicts which reduces the likelihood of a (continued) violent confrontation. Such a route is of course most desperately needed in situations of highly escalated conflicts. Ramsbotham (2010: 125-6) argues that these conflicts frequently are characterised by a fusion of facts and values. Persisting in differentiating facts and values analytically is, however, beneficial for the ensuing intervention strategy. Even though descriptions of actions are frequently implying an evaluative standpoint (Putnam, 1990, 2005, 2007), a conflict on e.g. how a past action is to be described does not necessarily reflect a conflict between underlying values/evaluative standpoints themselves. As NGO activities indicate, there is often intergroup agreement in the evaluation of violent actions, as long as these actions are evaluated in the abstract.

Disagreements on concrete past actions were often rooted in applying a different standard when actions directed against the enemy were under consideration. Discussing values in the abstract and raising awareness for

these double standards was often sufficient to undermine the differential assessment, being indicative of a common intergroup value basis. On a general level, even though certain actions are entailing very strong moral evaluations, trust in the own value basis and in the “wide appeal” of some of these values (Putnam, 2008: 385) is the ground for hoping that the reduction of double standards can in principle help to tackle disagreements on violent conflict actions in a variety of settings.

Due to the values and factual assumptions of third-parties that are necessarily involved in any description and intervention attempt, it is indeed impossible that third-parties are neutral, in the sense of being detached from contested actions and contestations. If, however, these factual and value convictions are applied independently of which side is violating these convictions, third-parties can be impartial towards the disputants while being *partisan with respect to their convictions*.

Values of nonviolence and equality of people constitute the minimal value basis which third-parties oriented on conflict resolution or peacebuilding attempt to promote. These values give direction to – and motivation for – their activities. A rejection of either these values by disputants, or a rejection of third-parties basic factual convictions, is no reason for compromising these convictions, as the truth of factual convictions (Habermas, 2004) and the rightness of value convictions (Putnam, 2005, 2008) is not bounded by partial disagreement.

As Habermas (2004: 361) indicates, an agreement on “mutual rights and duties” is not dependent on the “mutual appreciation” of “cultural lifestyles”, but solely requires the assumption that “every person as a person has the

same value” (original emphasis). As argued previously, such a mutual recognition of human equality is not compatible with forcing the own convictions on the opponent, to the effect that recognition entails nonviolence.

When conflict parties appreciate or are able to recognise the “appeal” (Putnam, 2008) and/or positive implications of nonviolence and mutual recognition, these values can form a general framework for dealing with conflicts. As Habermas (2004) indicates, tenacious disagreements can be continued within such a framework without the danger of escalating into violence, while the conflict parties can hope that a long-term change in the parties or the context can bring them closer to a solution (Ramsbotham, 2010), e.g. hoping that the promotion of the own values will in the long-run ensue that the other party can fully or at least partially recognise the worth and importance of these values.

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