

20 YEARS IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

©Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue 2015 - 2. opplag

ISBN: 978-82-690157-0-6

Published by the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue
Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons gate 2
2609 Lillehammer
Norway

Published with support from the Norwegian Peace Council and the
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Opplysningsarbeid for fred.

20 YEARS IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

THE NANSEN DIALOGUE NETWORK 1995-2015

Edited by Kim Sivertsen

Lillehammer 2015



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20 YEARS IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

– *Kim Sivertsen* –

In July 1994, Inge Eidsvåg, then headmaster of the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer, travelled to Sarajevo. The city was under siege, and Eidsvåg went there to deliver collected money and medical equipment to the paraplegic centre at the Koševo hospital. Eidsvåg travelled on behalf of Lillehammer Olympic Aid, which had established a connection with Sarajevo during the preparations for the Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer in February 1994. Sarajevo was the host of the Winter Olympic Games in 1984 and the initiative to reach out from one Olympic City to another was taken by Line Urke in the Lillehammer Olympic Organizing Committee. Eidsvåg spent five days in Sarajevo, witnessing conditions not seen in Europe since World War 2.

On the way home, Eidsvåg had to seek shelter in a bunker underneath the airport. The reason for this was Serbian troops closing in on the city – there was fear of shelling of the airport. For almost nine hours, Eidsvåg, a teacher and author living in peaceful Lillehammer, sat in the bunker waiting for the plane to be cleared for take-off, the reality of war in Europe all around him. When he finally entered the plane home, he had come to the conclusion that something had to be done.

But what could he do? Eidsvåg, and the Nansen Academy he represented as well as Lillehammer Olympic Aid, were not political players. The Nansen Academy, founded in 1938 to counter the fascism developing in Europe, was a folk high school for students of the humanities. Eidsvåg reached for the one thing that he felt the Nansen Academy could provide that could make a difference under these dire circumstances: peaceful conflict resolution – dialogue.

As needed and necessary as the humanitarian aid was,

Eidsvåg wanted to address the root cause of what he saw in Sarajevo – the urge to take up arms to resolve political conflicts. The current humanitarian crisis in the Western Balkans could only be resolved if another way of dealing with the grievances between the different ethnicities in Bosnia Herzegovina could be provided. Eidsvåg believed that dialogue – a method long employed by the Nansen Academy – might be able to achieve this.

The foundations for dialogue work were well in place. The Nansen Academy had been a meeting ground for different religions, political ideologies and cultures for 50 years prior to the war in the former Yugoslavia. In the early nineties, the academy arranged yearly seminars on life stances and world views seeking to create personal bonds between members of different religious and spiritual societies. The idea was to have these members convey knowledge of their faith to each other, explore the possibilities of a basic, common ethic for a multi-cultural Norway and seek solutions to the conflicts that inevitably arose as different religions and views on life met and lived together.

Eidsvåg's engagement for Bosnia Herzegovina was also there from the start of the wars in the former Yugoslavia. In the Nansen Academy's yearbook of 1993, in the welcoming speech to that year's students, he had written:

“Two to three hours by plane from here, in Bosnia, the most extensive war crimes on European soil since the Nazi Holocaust are taking place. At least 200 000¹ have been killed, mass graves, concentration camps, deportations, starvation, bombing. There is no lack of documentation. Every night, we are updated on the latest atrocities. We turn our eyes down and shrink, feel how the despair and

1 The number has since been adjusted to approximately 100 000, see for instance: THE 1992-95 WAR IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: CENSUS-BASED MULTIPLE SYSTEM ESTIMATION OF CASUALTIES' UNDERCOUNT Jan Zwierzchowski and Ewa Tabeau February 2010 Conference Paper for the International Research Workshop on 'The Global Costs of Conflict' The Households in Conflict Network (HiCN) and The German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin) 1-2 February 2010, Berlin

powerlessness make us numb. (...) Confronted with the intrusive and close reality, we shut down and opt for inner exile. Every day becomes an exercise in forgetting.

Never did we think that what now goes on in Europe could happen again. We thought everything were to move forward, that enlightenment and culture would conquer the intransigence of intolerance, that blind and primitive violence at this scale never again would be reported from Europe. But we were wrong.

Once before in our century, a people have been hounded and hunted, locked away and killed. We always felt contempt for those who, without lifting a finger, allowed this to happen, who excused themselves by saying they did not know.

We know. Then, as today, most of the victims are not Christians. "Our wrongdoing is that we are Moslems. We have to be Moslems, whether or not we want to. But now, Europe decides what kind of Moslems we shall be: peaceful or radical", says the leader of the Moslem community in Bosnia, Mustafa Ceric.

What is being besieged and attacked in Bosnia today is something more than a people. It is the very idea of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious state. Sarajevo has, through five centuries, shown that people of different ethnic and religious affiliation can live together. Chauvinism and intolerance were tamed by the practical demands of the neighbourhood. Ethnical and national barriers were broken to advance the enrichment that lies in the multi-cultural and boundary-transgressing society. Sarajevo became the symbol of Europe in its best moment. (...)

What happens in Yugoslavia is of course no natural disaster. It is not the inexorable wheel of history that out of necessity grinds the people and the country to pieces. This is not how it necessarily must go when people of different faiths shall live together. This, as all other wars, is made by men. It is made by political leaders with intolerance as their fundamental attitude and lust for power as their motivation. It is made by ignorance and media-manipulated enemy images. It is made by the invisible power lines of history in a cynical and ruthless game. (...)

I think the outcome of the civil war in the former Yugoslavia will depend on the will on all sides to build bridges – in the heads and between the hearts, the will to choose dialogue instead of the sword. (...)

The life at the Nansen Academy and the civil war in Yugoslavia are seemingly without connections to each other. And still parts of a greater whole that today is connected.”

It would require courage and persistence to include the opposing parties from the former Yugoslavia in dialogue sessions.

From idea to action

As soon as he came home from Sarajevo, Eidsvåg contacted the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC), the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee to explore the possibilities of cooperating on a dialogue project for people from the former Yugoslavia. The replies were positive. A few weeks later, a tentative program had been drafted and financial support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) applied for. The International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) was later invited to the steering committee. September 1995 saw the first group of 14 former students from ex-Yugoslavia arriving at the Nansen Academy for dialogue sessions. In one year, Eidsvåg’s idea had been transformed into reality.

The project in which these dialogue sessions took place was called “Democracy, Human Rights and Peaceful Conflict Resolution.” The intention was to create an educational program motivating and strengthening the participants to work for peace and reconciliation upon returning home. The first group of participants was mainly from Bosnia Herzegovina.

Dialogue was established as a method, but it was not formalized into a methodology. There was no dialogue manual that could be handed out to the participants, stating how anyone could easily enter into dialogue with their opposing party in a given conflict. Dialogue was a practical approach to talking together, showing yourself

and your views and history, while seeing the other and listening to her views and history. As Eidsvåg would later write:

“Dialogue presupposes that one has a suspicion of seeing oneself only partially. That is a useful suspicion. It doesn’t mean an easy relativism or that we lower the rate of our own values. Rather, it involves an insight into my culture being one of many. I will patiently strive to understand the others better. But I will not give up what I maintain to be true and right, unless strong reasons convince me to do so.”

At the Nansen Academy, the man who would become the most important figure in the development of the Nansen Dialogue Project, the Nansen Dialogue Network and ultimately the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue had become headmaster in the autumn of 1995. Steinar Bryn held a Ph.D. in philosophy and had, as early as 1973, visited one of the Nansen Academy’s founding fathers, Kristian Schjelderup. Bryn was attracted to Schjelderup’s message of action for humanistic principles, and wrote the former bishop and editor of the Norwegian humanistic newspaper *Fritt Ord* a letter conveying a wish to visit him. He was immediately welcomed to Schjelderup’s home in Kristiansand.

When Bryn summed up Schjelderup’s legacy at the 75th anniversary of the Nansen Academy in 2013, he phrased it like this: “Step into to your time, look into yourself, embrace responsibility – do something, do something about that which threatens human dignity.” Bryn cites the visit to Schjelderup as a powerful experience that has influenced his work ever since

In the same speech, Bryn also said that he and others thought Inge Eidsvåg had “gone mad” when Eidsvåg initiated “Democracy, Human Rights and Peaceful Conflict Resolution.” in 1994. The brutality, chaos and sheer scale of the wars in the former Yugoslavia stood in stark contrast to the peaceful, reclusive life at the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer. The academy was small, its students living in a dormitory that could house 70 people all together. Lillehammer had been the host of the Winter Olympic

Games in 1994, and had attracted worldwide attention because of the local communities' engagement in the games. The whole future of the town seemed to be about winter sports and the kind of friendly competition it encourages. Even the humanitarian connection with Sarajevo through Lillehammer Olympic Aid was not envisioned as permanent. This connection would prove to be of great importance in the years to come.

Bryn, and many with him, felt powerless. Having returned from the US the year before, he had recently finished his Ph.D. and was substituting for Inge Eidsvåg as headmaster of the Nansen Academy, a position he wished to apply for permanently. He was also in the middle of a bitter divorce that drained him emotionally and left him feeling unequipped to deal with other peoples' grievances. His respect for and loyalty to Eidsvåg made him support the project anyway.

As the project "Democracy, Human Rights and Peaceful Conflict Resolution" neared its first seminar, Eidsvåg and Bryn had constructed a three month program to analyse the causes of the break-up of Yugoslavia and whether it was possible to rebuild trust, communication and cooperation between representatives of the ethnic communities there. No one at the time envisioned what it would evolve into during the next 20 years.

This collection of articles is to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of what is today the Nansen Dialogue Network. The title is based on the Danish LIVIA prize awarded to Steinar Bryn and the Nansen Dialogue Network in 2010, "for entering the eye of the storm – and staying there."

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FROM IDEA TO ACTION

– Inge Eidsvåg –

“No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom (1995)

The Nansen Academy

When the Nansen Dialogue Project was initiated in 1995, it was not by accident that it was developed at The Fridtjof Nansen Academy in Lillehammer. This institution, founded in 1938, was itself a manifestation of the belief that ideas can change the world. Not ideas as pure ideas, but as inspiration for dedicated action.

It all began in Easter 1936 when two Norwegian friends, Kristian Schjelderup (1894-1980) and Anders Wyller (1903-1940), met in a small flat in Paris. Dark shadows were creeping across Europe. Hitler had taken over power in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, Stalin in the Soviet Union and Franco in Spain. The two intellectuals, Schjelderup with a Ph.D. in theology and Wyller with a Ph.D. in literature, were disgusted at and scared by what they saw might come. Was there anything they could do to stem the tide of the totalitarian ideologies? They might of course have continued their academic work, each in their field. Most of us would probably have done that and left the big issues to politicians. But Schjelderup and Wyller found that option to be less than satisfying. They wanted to do something. Something that could make a difference.

Something that could prevent totalitarian ideologies from taking root also in our country. Their deepest conviction was that we are all responsible for the world that we belong to.

Schjelderup and Wyller decided that their contribution in the fight against totalitarianism was to found an academy based on the Greek credo “Know thyself” and the Christian “Love thy neighbour”.

Five principles should be the basis of all activities:

1. Love of one’s neighbour
2. Respect for all human beings – regardless of nationality, religion, class or ethnicity
3. Faithfulness to truth
4. Freedom and responsibility
5. Democracy.

These values may sound obvious today, but was not so in 1936 – not even in Norway.

The Nansen Academy in Lillehammer was formally inaugurated on 18th March 1939. War was approaching, a fact which was reflected in Anders Wyller’s inaugural speech:

“Europe of today is one hundred people believing in culture and spirit against one thousand believing in violence. It is a few hundred who love freedom against ten thousand who are mocking freedom.”

But there existed another Europe:

“No commander of any army has enough soldiers to wipe out the footsteps of love that the holy Francis of Assisi left behind. There are not drums and trumpets enough to drown Descartes’ calm words “I think, therefore I am.” No laws, no caustic liquid, no fire can erase the old sayings that has marked European culture: The Oracle’s message «Know

thyself» - and Christ's message «Forget thyself». This is the true face of Europe – and that is what The Fridtjof Nansen Academy will strive to keep alive also for the Norwegians.”

The aim of the school was to «play a decisive role in the struggle against violence, racial prejudice and intolerance”. The teachers had a moral obligation to stand up for “the freedom of speech and the defence of a state ruled by law”.

“Since wars begin in the minds of men”

The surface of civilization is thin and fragile. Civilisation is not transfused through blood or by the genes. It is built through a process of upbringing and education. What we teach, how we teach and where we teach will form the kind of world we all will live in tomorrow. In the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) constitution (1946) this is expressed in this way: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that peace must be constructed.” Or to use the words of the sixteen years old Malala Yousafzai, when she spoke before the United Nations General Assembly on July 12, 2013: “Education is the only solution. One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world.” (One year later the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to Kailash Satyarthi from India and Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan “for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education”.)

In 1996 the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century presented to UNESCO their final report. Chairman of the Commission was the former French Minister Jacques Delors. The name of the report was “Learning: The treasure within”.

The conclusion of this report is that education has a fundamental role to play in the twenty-first century. It is not a miracle cure or a magic formula opening the door to

a world in which all ideals will be attained. But it is one of the principal means to foster a better and more harmonious form of human development – and thereby reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war.

Four pillars should be the foundations of education:

- Learning to know
- Learning to be
- Learning to do
- Learning to live together

Learning to know means a broad and general knowledge of what is needed to know in a modern society. Included in this should also be learning to learn, so as to benefit from the opportunities education provides throughout life.

Learning to be is to develop one's personality so as to be able to act with a sound moral judgement and personal responsibility. "Know thyself" was once carved into stone in the Apollon temple in Delphi. It is equally important today. None of the talents which are hidden like buried treasures in every person should be left untapped.

Learning to do is to acquire the competence to deal with a variety of situations and to work in teams. It also means learning to do in the context of young peoples' various social and work experiences.

Learning to live together means developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of our own dependence of the others. Knowledge of others is more important than ever before. How can we learn to live together in 'the global village' if we cannot manage to live together in the communities where we naturally belong – the nation, the region, the city, the village, the neighbourhood? This question is crucial both for teachers and for politicians. (More and more often our neighbourhood itself has become a 'global village'.)

These days we see that racism and intolerance are

gaining strength throughout Europe. Now “the red peril” has disappeared, we are often urged to believe that it has been replaced by a green Muslim threat. I fear that this image will be exploited to reinforce a feeling of a pure Christian European unity, forgetting that Europe is – and always has to be – characterized by pluralism and diversity. In that perspective I see the Islamic community as a positive contribution to European culture – and a bridge between Europe and the rest of the world.

“Plurality is the law of the world,” the Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) once said. A main part of the curriculum in all schools should therefore be the teaching of tolerance. Not the kind of tolerance which relativizes all moral issues and eventually leads to indifference. I speak of a tolerance which makes pupils able to discern and evaluate, and at the same time respect the right of other people to hold beliefs that are different from their own.

There is every reason to place a renewed emphasis on the moral and cultural dimensions of education – and thereby steering the world towards mutual understanding, responsibility and solidarity. It is important but not sufficient to teach pupils reading, writing, mathematics and natural science. In 1945 – after the atrocities committed during the second world war, where more than 50 million people were killed, a letter was found in Auschwitz. We don’t know the name of the writer, but it was a letter written in deep honesty to teachers:

“Dear teachers!

I am a survivor from a concentration camp. I have seen things that no man should witness:

Gas chambers built by competent engineers.

Children killed with gas by highly educated doctors.

Babies killed by experienced nurses.

Women and their babies shot dead by men with exams from high schools and universities.

I have become suspicious to education, and I beg you: Please, help your pupils to become humane. Your work must

never produce well educated monsters and Eichmänner.

Reading, writing and arithmetic is important only if it serves to make our children more humane.”

The legacy of Fridtjof Nansen

In April 1920 an unexpected telegram from the Council of the League of Nations reached the world-famous Norwegian polar explorer and scientist Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930). He was asked to be a special Commissioner for the prisoners of war that were still in captivity in foreign lands. There were more than 250 000 war prisoners in Russia and 200 000 Russians in Germany. After thinking it over Nansen accepted the appointment.

In 1922 Nansen reported to the Assembly that 427,886 prisoners had been repatriated to around 30 different countries. The responsible committee recorded that Nansen's work could be compared to “the crossing of Greenland and the great Arctic voyage”. Through his successful work Nansen had also saved the new organization, the League of Nations, from being a mere talking shop.

Even before this work was completed, on 1 September 1921, Nansen also accepted the post of the League's first High Commissioner for Refugees. One and a half million Russian refugees were displaced due to the Russian Revolution and the following civil war. Lenin had signed a decree which deprived those Russians who were living abroad without permission of their nationality. Most of these refugees were lacking proofs of identity or nationality, and were therefore unable to go anywhere else. To overcome this Nansen devised a document that became known as the “Nansen passport”. This form of identity was accepted by 52 governments, and the refugees were allowed to cross borders legally. Among the more distinguished holders of Nansen passports were the artist Marc Chagall, the composer Igor Stravinsky, the dancer Anna Pavlova and the composer Sergej Rachmaninov.

At the same time Nansen tried to tackle the urgent

problem of famine in Russia. “Never in my life,” he said, “have I been brought into touch with so formidable an amount of suffering”. Millions were threatened with starvation and death. Nansen appealed to the governments in the League of Nations in Geneva to support the “Nansen Aid” – but in vain. Russia’s revolutionary government was distrusted internationally. The western governments feared that the Soviet government would exploit the opportunity to consolidate their position. Nansen appealed as strong as he could to the hearts of the representatives:

“Do try to imagine what it will be when the Russian winter sets in in earnest, and try to realize what it means when no food is left – men, women, children dropping dead by thousands in the frozen snow of Russia. Try to realize what this means, and if you have ever known what it is to fight against hunger, and to fight against the ghastly forces of winter, you will realize what it means and understand what the situation will be. I am convinced you cannot sit still, and answer with a cold heart that you are sorry and cannot help. In the name of humanity, in the name of everything noble and sacred to us, I appeal to you, who have women and children of your own, to consider what it means to see women and children perishing by starvation. In this place I appeal to the governments, to the peoples of Europe, to the whole world for their help. Hasten to act before it is too late to repent.”

And to those who accused him by organizing this aid to strengthen the Soviet Government, Nansen’s reply was:

“I do not think that we shall strengthen the Soviet government by showing the Russian people that there are hearts in Europe, and that there are people there ready to help the starving Russian people. But suppose that it does strengthen the Soviet government? Is there any member of this Assembly who is prepared to say that rather than help the Soviet government, he will allow twenty million people to starve to death? I challenge this assembly to answer that question. “

The Assembly did not answer and they did not

act. Nansen had to trust on fundraising from private organizations. He was terribly disappointed and wrote in a letter to his wife Sigrun: “I knew that the world was wicked, but so much heartless villainy is too much.”

At home Sigrun observed that her husband had “become an idiotic Good Samaritan”. He started cutting down their own expenses. He had worked out that £1 saved a Russian from starvation and so, as Sigrun recorded after a trip to Berlin: He “travelled 2nd class ... thus saving [£5] = 5 human lives!”

Another challenge came in his way – a Greek tragedy: After the Greco-Turkish wars of 1919-1922 there were thousands of refugees, mainly ethnic Greeks who had fled from Turkey after the defeat of the Greek army. The impoverished Greek state was unable to take them in. Nansen devised a scheme for a population exchange whereby 350 000 Turks in Greece were returned to Turkey. That made it easier to absorb the one and a half million Greek refugees coming from Turkey. This was not an ethnic cleansing but a religious cleansing. The problem was that the alternative might have been worse. Nansen’s biographer Roland Huntford states that this was “his greatest achievement as an international statesman”. Not all would agree with him in that.

In November 1922 the Nobel Committee announced that Fridtjof Nansen was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1922. The committee referred to “his work for the repatriation of the prisoners of war, his work for Russian refugees, his work to bring help to the millions of Russians afflicted by famine, and finally his present work for the refugees in Asia Minor and Thrace”.

When he received the Nobel prize he began his speech with these words:

“As I stand here today, I must confess that I had hoped now to be able to turn back to my scientific work, to all that has been accumulating. But I have a feeling that I have done so very little, and this great reward binds me to the

work I have begun.”

Nansen decided to spend all his Nobel prize money on establishing two model farms, one in the Volga region and one in the Ukraine – and to help Greek refugees.

One more international effort should be mentioned: His effort to establish a national home for Armenian refugees in Soviet Armenia. The Armenians had been victims of genocide by the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. One and a half million people were killed. In 1929 Nansen had to realize that the Russians rejected his plans. He had given years of his life to a lost cause, something that may have shortened his life.

Nansen’s last years were difficult. He had planned to reach the North Pole by airship, but once again he was beaten by Roald Amundsen who flew over the pole in Umberto Nobile’s airship *Norge* in May 1926. Amundsen became the first man to reach both Poles of the earth.

In February 1930, Nansen and two old friends went up to a mountain hut at Geilo for skiing. They noticed that Nansen, who always used to be far in front, this time lagged behind. Going back to see if all was well they found Nansen leaning on his ski sticks with a resigned expression on his face. Coming back to Oslo, Nansen went to bed. He was found to have phlebitis, a blood clot in one lung, and his heart was beginning to fail. But he refused to rest and continued to press on with his work. His son Odd and his wife were called home from the United States. Also King Haakon visited his sickbed.

Nansen seemed to recover, even taking little walks. On 13 May 1930 he was sitting on the balcony with a lot of notes on his lap. He wanted to write an article and started like this: “Further and further to the north ... “Then his pen dropped and his head fell forward. Nansen was dead.

In spite of his great triumphs, Fridtjof Nansen probably died with the feeling of a life strangely unfulfilled. “I am lying here thinking about that there still is so much I should have done,” he told a friend that visited him. There still were so many dreams to follow: going to the North Pole in a balloon, giving the 300 000 Armenian refugees a

permanent home, helping suffering people.

Even though Fridtjof Nansen had achieved more in his life than most people can dream of, it seems as if he never was able to enjoy his achievements. He always wanted to be somewhere else, with someone else, doing something else. His strongest desire was not to have lived in vain. Today we clearly see that he certainly did not.

Nansen's legacy and our obligation

The legacy that Fridtjof Nansen left for us – as I see it – is this:

1. It is our duty to help suffering people wherever they are and whoever they are. Human suffering is the same all over the world. It doesn't matter whether we are Christians, Muslims, Jews or Buddhists.

I don't know what would have been Nansen's solution to the problems of refugees fleeing from Africa and the Middle East today. What I know is that he would have acted. Maybe he would have quoted his own words from his speech for the League of Nations in 1922: "I am convinced you cannot sit still, and answer with a cold heart that you are sorry and cannot help. (...) Hasten to act before it is too late to repent."

2. We should never accept that war is inevitable. War is a manmade disaster and the most primitive way of solving conflicts. When people in the 22nd century look back, they will probably say: How stupid they were! Killing each other instead of talking together. Why didn't they learn from history? Why didn't they succeed in achieving the aim of the Charter of the United Nations, which proclaimed that the peoples in the world were determined "to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war"?

War is the shame of humanity. If we can start wars, we can also end wars. When Fridtjof Nansen had the presentation speech at the award ceremony for the Nobel Peace Prize 1925, he chose the headline "No more War".

In his speech Nansen underlined that it was “the duty of all members to unite in the task of abolishing war, to participate positively in this work, not to wait passively but to act. If we really want to put an end to war, if we want to be rid of heavy armaments, the governments must, as I have said, stake everything upon the policy of the League of Nations without thinking about any lines of retreat”.

3. We should never accept that something is hopeless or impossible. Indifference should be fought, wherever we meet it. Nansen said that “the difficult is what takes a little time; the impossible is what takes a little longer.” He not only said this. He lived it. His life was his strongest message.

Not all of us can be a Nansen. But all of us can do something to make the world a better place to live. Nansen’s legacy of courage and compassion has always been a source of inspiration – and will remain so for future generations. Now it’s up to us.

Inge Eidsvåg is an historian, writer and former director of the Fridtjof Nansen Academy in Lillehammer. He was the initiator of the Nansen Dialogue Project in 1995.

CAN DIALOGUE MAKE A DIFFERENCE? - THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NANSEN DIALOGUE NETWORK

– Steinar Bryn –

Originally published in the CEU Press publication: Civic and Uncivic Values in Kosovo - History, Politics, and Value Transformation, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet, Albert Simkus and Ola Listhaug. Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2015. Reprinted by kind permission from Central European Press.

This chapter is an elaboration of the Nansen dialogue approach to peacebuilding as it has been developing over the last 20 years. The wars in the Western Balkans in the 1990s left many communities ethnically segregated and Nansen dialogue is a concrete approach to rebuild trust and communication in these communities. As a direct outcome of this work, hundreds of people are currently working on creating dialogue spaces in educational and political institutions, and where necessary working toward changing these institutions. What started as an idea in Lillehammer in 1994 during the Winter Olympics has consequences in multiple municipalities in Kosovo today, as well as in other ex-Yugoslav republics. This chapter draws from my personal experience as a dialogue worker during these 20 years.

1a) The Lillehammer – Sarajevo connection

The Winter Olympics connected Lillehammer (1994) and Sarajevo (1984) and brought a strong awareness about the ongoing war in Bosnia Herzegovina to Lillehammer. Line Urke, a young woman working in the Lillehammer Olympic Committee, was watching the evening news.

While the war scenes from Sarajevo were rolling in front of her eyes she came up with the idea of Lillehammer Olympic Aid. That effort took the solidarity spirit of the Olympics seriously and collected 71 million NOK.¹

The Nansen Academy in Lillehammer was founded in 1938 as a counterforce to the dehumanizing forces of Nazism and Fascism. When Europe again came on fire more than 50 years later, the challenge was “what can we do?” In the fall of 1995, the Nansen Academy invited 14 potential future leaders from Bosnia-Herzegovina to come and discuss the breakup of Yugoslavia; why did it become so violent and what could be done to rebuild the basis for communication and cooperation? It is important to recognize that it was the Olympic connection between Lillehammer and Sarajevo and the money from Lillehammer Olympic Aid that gave the Nansen Academy a door opener into Sarajevo. It was the strong moral and financial support from the Norwegian Red Cross, Norwegian Church Aid, the International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) that made it possible.

1b) 1995-2000: Educational seminars in Norway

We immediately realized that to have a proper discussion of the breakup of Yugoslavia we needed voices from Ljubljana to Skopje and in the second group all 6 republics from ex-Yugoslavia were represented. The Nansen Dialog approach grew out of the experience of listening to these initial groups. When people from Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Priština, and Skopje came together to

1 This connection was revitalized recently in the opening ceremony before the unique chess match between Magnus Carlsen and Borki Predojevic, Bosna Chess Club, Sarajevo on 28 June in Lillehammer. The mayors in the two towns were communicating live on big screens in Lillehammer and Sarajevo. The connection was made to the Youth Olympics in Lillehammer in 2016 and the European Youth Olympics in Sarajevo in 2017. The date 28 June was of course consciously chosen. Info and further references about match on the world leading www.chessbase.com.

discuss this breakup, it started as a bitter fight between people all of who believed they had the most appropriate understanding of recent events, while they assumed that the others to a large degree were the victims of political and nationalistic propaganda.

As organizers, we had important learning experiences during these years. We started out placing a high priority on the transfer of knowledge from Norwegian lecturers to the participants, but gradually realized that the main value of the seminars was that the participants were coming together and sharing stories and comparing notes. During the years 1995 to 2000, around 170 people participated in three-month-long dialogue seminars in Lillehammer. Several of these participants have today attained important positions in governments, political parties, and supreme courts or leadership positions within their respective religious communities.

1c) 2000-2005: The build-up of Nansen Dialogue Network

During the summer of 2000, there was a real concern that the war in Kosovo would spread to South Serbia and Macedonia. There was also a fear of outbreak of violence in Montenegro. The process of reconciliation did not move forward as expected in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In cooperation with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), ten Nansen Dialogue Centres (NDCs) were set up in Osijek (Croatia), Banja Luka, Sarajevo, and Mostar (B&H), Podgorica (Montenegro), Priština and Mitrovica (Kosovo), Belgrade and Bujanovac (Serbia), and Skopje (Macedonia). The participation in a Lillehammer seminar was a prerequisite to become a dialogue worker in one of the centres. During these five years, much of the energy was spent on organizing local dialogue seminars and building good communication between the centres. Network meetings were organized once a year and a steering board (Netcom) focused on organizing joint activities between the centres.

1d) 2005-2013 The Shift from a Network Focus to Community Peace Building

As the competence and capacities were built in each centre there was an organic growth from a focus on the network itself to locally oriented projects that could lead to structural changes. There was a change from a focus on educational seminars and workshops to institutional changes. The Nansen Centres in 2013 are more concerned with intervention in the fields of education and politics, than organizing the old classical dialogue seminars. They are in the forefront of fighting segregation and creating new innovative integrated arenas. The classical dialogue seminars are still continuing out of necessity in some places, particularly in those communities where the segregation has become accepted as a normal condition.

The seminars in Lillehammer continued, but changed from three-month-long seminars to much shorter seminars, and focused on professional groups from target municipalities (i.e., teachers from Vukovar or politicians from Bujanovac). As we built a reputation, we could recruit participants in higher positions, but these could rarely leave home for more than a week at the time. This development led to a huge increase in participants in the Lillehammer seminars. Close to 2500 people have participated in Lillehammer seminars since 1995.

The seminars in Lillehammer worked as a jumpstart of the activities in local communities. Over the last eight years the centres have built up more or less formal Nansen Coordination Boards in the communities where they have been active. These “boards” consists of central citizens with authority and they are people who have entrance to an arena for action (teachers, health care personnel, politicians, journalists). They are responsible for carrying out much of the local activity.

One can envision a leverage stretching from the financial support from the Norwegian MFA via the Nansen Academy/Nansen Dialog Centres (NDCs) to the local Nansen Coordination Boards (NCBs). This cooperation

became the backbone in the strategy for reconciliation. Each component was essential to secure the desired outcome. The financial support from the MFA secured continuity and long term planning, but without the strong local groups carrying out the work, we would not have seen the institutional changes in the communities themselves. The seminars in Lillehammer played a crucial role in the formation of these Nansen Coordination Boards. The combination of a warm host community (Lillehammer), the relaxed atmosphere at the Nansen Academy, time together in a neutral space and the Nansen “spirit” – prepared the ground for thinking new thoughts not always allowed back home.²

2) Nansen Dialogue: Inter-ethnic Dialogue in Divided Communities

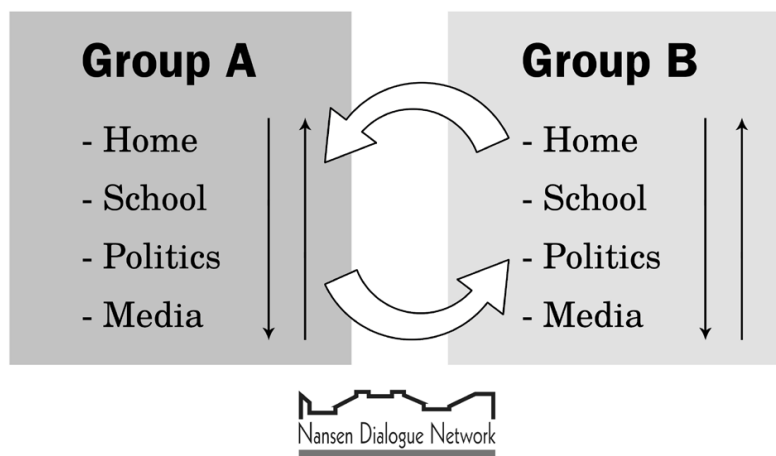
The NCBs are formally organized in Prijedor, Sanski Most, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Jajce, and Zvornik, but they also exist in a more informal way in Vukovar, Stolac, Prozor-Rama, Kosovo Polje, Obilić, Mitrovica, Štrpce, Bujanovac, and Jegunovce. I have described the content and the methodology in these initial seminars in an earlier publication,³ where I showed how parallel stories, opposing ethnic “truths” and different perceptions of the same social reality coexist and create an ideological basis for divided communities.

The propaganda (defined as one sided truths) flourishes on both sides, and the enemy images are often transferred to the generation coming of age through the soft institutions of the homes and the schools.

2 The last external evaluation of the Nansen Dialogue work is Vera Devine, Varja Nikolic and Hugo Stokke. “Keep on Talking! Review of the Nansen Dialogue Network in the Western Balkans”, CMI Reports R2008:16 (2008)

3 Steinar Bryn, “Inter-ethnic Dialogue between Serbs and Albanians in Serbia/Kosovo, 1996-2008”, in Ola Listhaug, Sabrina P. Ramet, and Dragana Dulić (eds.), *Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the post-Milošević era* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2011), pp. 369-397.

Context: Divided Communities



The existence of these opposing perceptions of reality is a solid argument for dialogue. How can a perception be corrected if the other stories are excluded? Ann Kelleher and Kelly Ryan⁴ develop a conceptual framework of the Nansen Dialogue approach and call it “Sustained Dialogue through Relational Power”.

What characterizes Nansen Dialogue is an emphasis upon transforming conflicting relationships and not on the more instrumental development of institutions, although the work to change dysfunctional institutions often follows from the changed relationships between people in divided communities.

Kelleher and Ryan relate the way Nansen Dialogue emphasizes changing conflicting relationships into healthy ones with the work done by Harold Saunders and John Paul Lederach.⁵

4 Ann Kelleher and Kelly Ryan, “Successful Local Peacebuilding in Macedonia: Sustained Peacebuilding in Practice”, in *Peace Research-The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*. Forthcoming. Issue undecided.

5 Harold H. Saunders, *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue To Transform Racial And Ethnic Conflicts*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1997).

Amanda Feller and Kelly Ryan give an academic contribution to the understanding of dialogue based on their knowledge of the Nansen dialogue practices.⁶

2a) The Essence of the Nansen Dialogue

The very concept of dialogue has been used in too many different contexts which have resulted in confusion about the meaning of the concept. Superficial interpretations flourish. One diplomat once said, “The problem is, dialogue is too womanish”, while another once said, “Anybody will dialogue as long as Norway pays for the coffee”. I hope to show that both comments undermine the essence of dialogue. Jonas Gahr Støre, Norwegian Ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs, argues, in «Taming Summit Mania»⁷, that too many of the high level summit meetings do not lead anywhere. It was reported in parts of the Norwegian Press that Gahr Støre is tired of dialog.⁸ This is a frequent misinterpretation of dialogue as equivalent to political talks. When I invited five Palestinian filmmakers to a dialogue meeting with five Israeli filmmakers, they refused. To participate implied recognition of the other side which they were not ready to give. After long talks, in which I explained that dialogue is making yourself visible, in their case through showing their movies to them. They responded “Is that dialogue?” They had been convinced that dialogue was what took place at Camp David. When I explained that political talks and dialogue were different ways of

6 Amanda E. Feller and Kelly R. Ryan. “Definition, necessity, and Nansen: Efficacy of Dialogue in Peacebuilding”, in *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* Vol. 29, no 4. (Summer 2012):351-380. DOI: 10.1002/crq.21049. These are two serious efforts to apply the Nansen experience to peacebuilding theory

7 Jonas Gahr Støre, “Taming Summit Mania”, *Harvard International Review*, summer 2012, Vol XXXIV, No.1. pp.12-15. http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/whats-new/Speeches-andarticles/speeches_foreign/2012/mania_taming.html?id=697198

8 Klassekampen (Oslo) 13 September 2012. Lars Unar Størdal Vegstein «Nå er Støre lei av dialog»

human communication, they accepted the invitation. But I had to promise not to call it dialogue. This confirms the importance of being more specific when we define dialogue.

Dialogue is a tool to understand why the conflict is so difficult to solve and why the emotions are so negative on both sides. I start every dialogue seminar by defining dialogue through three concepts: 1) movement, 2) visibility, and 3) relations. This is done to distinguish dialogue from the often referred to “political talks” -- which of course is necessary but it is a different way of communicating characterized by 1) positioning, 2) argumentation, 3) negotiation, and 4) a problem-solving focus. It is this confusion of dialogue with political talks that has led to a frustration with dialogue, and made some people conclude that dialogue doesn’t lead anywhere. But the way we define it, dialogue is not a tool to solve problems/conflicts. It is a tool to improve the understanding between the parties in a given conflict.

2b) Dialogue is Making Movement

When we have “frozen” conflicts, we need to create movement. When negotiations come to a standstill we need to create movement. The curious child is a good example of a dialogue-oriented person. The child moves through the day, both mentally and physically. An essential element of the child’s communication is asking questions, not rhetorical questions but open questions to which the child honestly wants an answer. The child lives in dialogue with its surroundings. Q&A is a fantastic way of communicating, but we often ask the questions too fast and we answer them too fast.

Dialogue is both an attitude toward the world, and a way of communicating. A successful dialogue seminar between Serbs and Albanians from Kosovo does not “solve” the political issues, but most participants leave with a better understanding of why those issues are so difficult to solve. They leave with a better understanding of the pain

and the suffering of the other side. This might increase the possibilities of reaching more sustainable solutions in the long run.

2c) Dialogue is making yourself visible

Some participants argue that dialogue is in the interest of those in power, because it doesn't challenge them. My experience is the opposite. Those in power are often visible; it is the minorities that are invisible. When they enter the dialogue with those in power and their life conditions become visible, they challenge the very structure of power that discriminates against them. When those structures are not in accordance with internationally agreed upon principles of democracy and human rights, it creates a political basis for changing the current conditions. To enter into dialogue means to make oneself visible to others and to allow others to become visible to oneself. The Palestinian filmmakers mentioned above were confronted with the question whether they believed their life conditions were visible to the Israelis; they answered "No, that is part of the problem." Through becoming more visible, they become a challenge to Israeli dominance.

To work for inclusion and integration follows from the dialogue attitude toward life. In a segregated society, people live with reduced knowledge of each other. In a segregated school system, as in Kosovo, Serbs grow up with reduced knowledge and experience of the Albanians and vice versa. This lack of knowledge of each other weakens the democracy. The lack of knowledge and understanding between ethnic groups living in the same state weakens the representative system in that state. The generations of Serbs and Albanians coming of age in Kosovo are not learning each other's language, and little about each other's cultural and spiritual heritage. This will reduce the functionality and reduce the effect of democracy of the new state.

2d) Dialogue is Building Relations

Henning Bang in his examination of 431 managers from 75 different management teams documents that there is positive relation between dialogue and the quality of relationships.⁹ This corresponds with my experience. Dialogue builds respect in a group. Dialogue does not produce agreements or for that matter compromises, but it does strengthen the relationships. The Nansen Coordinators in Kosovo fundamentally disagree on major political issues, but they have developed a deep respect for each other and an understanding of why and how it is possible to reach different conclusions based on one's position in society. In this perspective it is actually very understandable that Serbs and Albanians fight for different political goals.

From such a position where the parties recognize their right to disagree, they develop a deeper respect for each other and develop a more pragmatic attitude toward finding solutions. Based on this understanding, it follows that a dialogue worker is relationship-focused. If two neighbors are fighting over the position of the fence, a solution-focused mediator will focus on the fence and feel rather pleased if he/she actually finds the right place for that fence. A dialogue worker will be more focused on the relationship between the neighbors. If the relationship is sour, the conflict will most likely continue after having agreed upon the fence, but shift the focus to something else.

In this perspective it might seem naïve to believe that the Serb-Albanian conflict will be solved with some territorial agreements, it is the very relationship between them that has become poisonous. The same goes for the economic argument; "if we just can join EU, provide jobs and get the economy going things will fall into place". First of all, to get the economy going is becoming an increasing problem within the EU itself but secondly, although Norway

9 Henning Bang and Thomas Nettet Midelfart, «Dialog og effektivitet i ledergrupper», Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening, Vol. 47, number 1 (2010), pp. 4-15

quickly rebuilt after World War Two, our attitude toward Germans has remained distorted. This has been mainly due to the lack of a reconciliation strategy.

Kosovo seems to lack a reconciliation strategy today; instead locals seem to accept mutual apartheid, which increases the chance for creating a frozen conflict transferred to the generation coming of age.

2e) Dialogue vs. debate

The following model summarizes the differences between dialogue and debate (fig.2). The participants rather quickly learn this difference, and they recognize that debate strengthens defense and positioning while dialogue creates movement. This does not mean that people say good bye to the debate and embrace the dialogue. A normal dialogue seminar probably has 80% debate. The need to argue and to confront is strong, and neither can nor should be avoided. Rather the opposite, intense debates bring out the different viewpoints, release energy, and can prepare the ground for dialogue.

DEBATE

Goal: To win

- Convince
- Argue
- Look for the weak argument
- Hunter
- Moral Judge
- Make opponent insecure
- To change opinion is a sign of weakness
- Confronting language

DIALOGUE

Goal: To understand

- Explain
- Listen
- Look for the strength in the opponent
- Self-discipline
- Tolerance
- Make opponent feel safe
- To change opinion is a sign of maturity
- Supportive language

In a debate, people defend their positions, and change is often seen as a weakness. One could not argue well enough, was badly informed, or one's argument might seem inconsequential. In a dialogue, change is very acceptable. Through listening to you, I understand you better and your actions make more sense to me. Dialogue will never replace debates or negotiations, but I argue that a strong dialogue component in the beginning of negotiations could increase the chances for more sustainable outcomes.

3) The Anatomy of a Dialogue seminar

We started with three-month-long seminars in Norway in 1995. That gave us plenty of time to talk. But obviously such long seminars were rather exclusive. In order to involve working people with family responsibilities, we started already in 1997 with three-day seminars in the Balkan region. These are described in the aforementioned chapter I contributed to a collection published in 2011.¹⁰ They had a stronger academic component (using Dessler's methodology), than what was normally assumed when people heard the word dialogue.

During the period from 1995-2000 the focus was on the roots and causes of the breakup of Yugoslavia and why it turned into such violent wars. But a decade has passed and we have moved into the 2010s. The focus of the conversations first shifted from the roots and the causes to the more long term consequences and the need for reconciliation, and then toward (re-)integration. The main question became: Is it possible to rebuild a future together? This shift was also reinforced by the fact that a new generation was coming of age, for whom the war was only a vague memory and not necessarily a lived experience. For this generation, the stories from parents, grandparents and teachers became more important than their own memories.

10 Bryn, "Inter-ethnic Dialogue" [note 2].

3a) Building trust and not becoming a judge

As a dialogue facilitator I need to spend the first moments to build up trust in the group. That is done through giving a brief introduction to the development of the Nansen Network, and putting this development into the historical context of the breakup of Yugoslavia and the brutal wars that followed. This comes easy since I have listened to first-hand experiences of these events over many years. Indirectly, I present an argument for dialogue. When I stress how the participants from Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Priština, and Skopje all had different perspectives, particularly on the breakup of Yugoslavia, people understand my argument: Although all the participants defended their positions in the beginning, it became obvious to them that their own politicians, teachers, and journalists had not told them the whole story. They simply learned through experience the value of listening to the other stories, allowing the others to become more visible to them and thereby experienced how dialogue could create movement in their own mental understanding.

The victim mythology is strong on all sides. Often people believe there is only one truth. We know it. They deny it. We are correctly giving high priority to punishing war criminals. But too many false accusations have been flying around. When people meet again after ten years, their stories have been told and retold so many times that they hardly question their validity anymore. I have witnessed several times how accusations have crossed the room, “How can you even think about returning after what you did to us?” The structure of segregation allows the false accusations to exist simply because they are never confronted with opposing views. Dialogue challenges this structure.

I am often asked to become a judge, but this is a trap that I must avoid if I want to keep my authority in the room. The way out is to use “If I were you.....I would probably have thought along the same lines”. This is a fairly

logical sentence. If I fail in creating trust, the dialogue will deteriorate. I have experienced that half the group has gotten up and left the room, but that has only happened when I started arguing with participants. I felt I argued on behalf of basic principles of dialogue, still an argument is often perceived as choosing sides.

3b) Three essential conversations

In the dialogue room we start by breaking into smaller groups and the first conversation is sharing how the conflict itself has affected people's lives. This is a conversation not about the causes, but about the consequences of war. How do you experience these consequences 15-20 years later? When people share how their personal lives, how their family lives, how their working lives are, how their hopes for the future and how the way they raise their children are affected by the conflict, they often discover through listening that "the other side" has suffered more than they were aware of.

This is the radical dimension of dialogue work; it alters perceptions of reality by making alternative truths and alternative explanations visible. It is harder to argue "Our police would never do that" when the person in front of you has scars after being beaten by those very same police. As long as one believes that "the others" got away too easily after what they did to us, one is not motivated for a win-win solution. Actually, one can rather sacrifice a little if one knows the other will pay more. Lose/lose is preferable to win-win as long as one believes the other side was not punished enough. When it becomes visible that the others have suffered too, and maybe tasted too much of their own medicine, then it becomes more acceptable to discuss win-win solutions. Dialogue literally moves the positions in a group into more openness toward synergetic solutions.

The second conversation is sharing the perception of the current inter-ethnic communication and cooperation in the fields of politics, education, religion, business, sports,

culture, and social life, and at times the participants themselves add drugs and gambling.

These are participants from divided communities. In February 2013, I sat in three consecutive seminars with participants from Obilić, Vučitrn and Štrpce. They were asked to rank the level of communication and cooperation from 1-7 in the different arenas. What often happens is that a situation that is perceived as rather normal doesn't seem so when you start to talk about it with the people from the other side. To have separate soccer teams for boys 8 years old or divided kindergartens with ethnically homogeneous staff looks strange when discussed openly and when confronted with the questions: "What is the justification for this segregation?" "What are the legal criteria on which this is based?"

There are obvious reasons why communities are divided. The war crimes and the evil actions committed also by civilians are only part of the explanation. Politicians have gained their positions using victim rhetoric and made ethnic division into an organizing principle of everyday life. The argument that an Albanian doctor takes better care of an Albanian than a Serbian doctor can be very seductive when put into political rhetoric. But we do not need to refer to Hippocrates to emphasize any doctor's professional interest in performing optimally on the job. And there are always stories in divided communities about those who cross the ethnic divide when the need for professional help is strong enough and the potential help is on the other side of the river. When you really need the best eye doctor you do not care to know his/her ethnic background.

I often refer to European soccer clubs that have completely abandoned the ethnic principle. They do not ask to see the passport of a professional player, but they ask to see his professional skills. To a large extent, the dominant soccer clubs like Barcelona and Manchester United have become more popular with their multiethnic teams than the national soccer teams of Spain and England. But the loyalty of the fans is extremely strong anyway. My son is a devoted Manchester United fan. The explanation of that

is simple. When he was five years old he sat down on my lap when I watched a soccer game and he asked; “Whose side are we on daddy?” I said the red, not the blue. That sentence from his father became decisive for his support to the red the next 20 years. (Ref. fig.1).

The third conversation is about how to improve the quality of inter-ethnic communication and cooperation. In this moment something interesting happens in the dialogue groups. It moves the focus on reconciliation toward one of the largest political challenges in Europe: integration vs. segregation. Through moving reconciliation into this dimension, the local conflict bubble is reduced and it becomes to a larger extent a common human problem. It is like some doors and windows are opened – and things are not as special and unique as one first thought. It even brings out some smiles when I remind participants that the homeland of the EU capital, Belgium, was without a government for 500 days. The reasons for this are complex, but it is clearly related to their segregated school system. Still, Brussels sends out European standards to the rest of us, like the standard of an inclusive school system.¹¹

3c) Segregation vs. integration

In the recent seminars the conversations consequently have moved in this direction. The participants belonging to the minority often respond to the discussion about integration with the fear of being assimilated. Inclusion, which in a dialogue perspective would imply becoming visible, is often met with the alternative response of self-exclusion, thereby making oneself less visible to the majority. At this point in the process, I use my American Studies background and share how the United States believed in the politics of assimilation until the late

11 My use of Brussels is not completely correct since some of these standards come from the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, but it works in lifting the participant’s perspectives on divided communities.

1960s. The model was the “melting pot” – where new immigrants became Americanized and melted into the American mosaic. The revolt during the 1960s developed the hyphenated American -- the African-American, the Norwegian-American, the Native-American and so forth -- and the metaphor describing the American society shifted from the melting pot to the salad bowl. This shift is significant because in the salad bowl one can recognize the different ingredients. The goal is not to melt in, but to recognize and respect the differences.

After the breakup of Yugoslavia the people belonging to the majority population had the nationality which corresponded to the name of the state. The Croats became the majority in Croatia, the Macedonians the majority in Macedonia, the Serbs the majority in Serbia etc. and these nationalities behaved as if they had a stronger birthright to the state (first class citizens). The Macedonians made their language the official language, their religion the official religion, their flag the official flag, thereby reducing the other minorities to second-class citizens. This is the danger of democracy when mixed with ethnic politics; it gives a false legitimacy to the ethnic majority’s dominance over the ethnic minority. Although democratic theory is developed to protect minority rights, its practices tend to legitimate the majority feeling of being “right”. During the breakup of Yugoslavia, referenda were popular among the ethnic majorities, less so among the minorities.

Inclusion is sometimes wrongly perceived as assimilation; to give up one’s identity and melt into the dominant culture. Parallel structures, segregated schools, enclaves, and ghettos are developed partly as a defense against being assimilated. In Kosovo, the Serbs who cooperate with the current government are seen as quislings, not protecting Serbian rights or the Serbian identity. But the counter-argument can just as easily be made; it is through making Serbian interests visible in the current government that one keeps the Serbian identity alive. It is through becoming visible to the other citizens

that you can make a democracy work, and from a more existential point of view, it is through becoming visible to others that you define your own identity.

The dominant attitude throughout the 1990s was to fight for education in one's mother tongue and the minorities' right to education on their own turf. This led to the OSCE model of "two schools under one roof" in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the development of Albanian universities in Macedonia, segregated education in East Slavonia and complete segregation in Kosovo. This can be called mutual apartheid, voluntary segregation based on ethnicity.

3d) Questions & Answers as essential in a dialogue

The dialogue attitude is based on the understanding that the use of pre-judgments has a limited validity. We do not know all the answers, which is why the art of questioning is so central. The dialogue attitude is an important correction to the more instrumental attitude toward life, spelled out in the instructions, the blueprints and the handbooks. This part of our work is explained by the concepts developed by the Nobel Prize Winner Daniel Kahneman in his book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.¹²

We base our life on predictions and expectations. Our knowledge and experience have taught us how life works and most often life works out as expected. When we turn the key in the car, we expect the engine to start and most often it does exactly that. Predictability has become a prerequisite for the modern world to function, and the amazing thing is how predictable the world actually has become. Although we complain about trains and planes being late, the amazing fact is that most of them are not.

12 Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, fast and slow*, (London: Allen Lane & Penguin Books, 2011).

The organization and running of airports, hospitals, and postal services are so successful that we actually believe the instrumental approach itself is the magic solution to making things work. Expectations and predictions are a good thing – they make the modern world work. It is the expectations of the four drivers who approach the intersection and the instrumental function of the traffic light that makes the traffic flow safely.

Kahneman describes two ways of thinking he calls them system 1 and system 2.¹³ The first is things we just know. We switch on the light and the room brightens up. We don't really know how it works. But it works. If I ask you how much is 2+2 you answer 4 without even thinking about it. You just know. But if I ask; how much is 17 times 35 you have to stop and wonder, you actually have to stop and think.

The problem is not that we run our lives according to efficient instrumental principles, but that we expand the arenas of where we believe these principles do apply, without sufficient evidence that they really do that. Let me illustrate. To drive the trains you need a specific set of skills and you follow the handbook.

That is why the trains mostly run on time. The individual hardly makes a difference – because the way you start and stop, speed up and slow down, follows instrumental rules based on knowledge and experience and not the individual mood swings of the driver. In this context, the rotating principle works well; people work in shifts. The trains come and go independently of the individuals driving them.

The same rotating principle allows for a high fluctuation of individuals in foreign missions (embassies, KFOR, Red Cross, etc.). Rotation is perceived as unproblematic as long as the handbooks, the job descriptions, the routines and the guidelines are solid. I experienced recently that the whole Norwegian staff in one of our embassies in the Western Balkans were replaced (rotated). We had worked

13 Ibid, pp. 19-30

closely with the previous staff in several of the local communities we were involved. The staff had built relations to key individuals in these communities. These relations could not be transferred in an instrumental way to the next team.

One of the dramatic consequences of war is the breakdown in trust and communication between people. An important element of peace-building is rebuilding this communication and trust. This is a relational and not an instrumental task. Newcomers often lack local experience, and they discover that their authority is not anchored in the positions in the international organization, but in the relations they develop with local people over time. The discussion is not what is better - instrumental or relational thinking - but when to use each facility. The instrumental approach works best when we know the answers beforehand and our expectations are correct.

In the discussions following the massacre on 22 July 2011 in Norway, the police were criticized for being too instrumental, while actually some civilians acted very relationally through using the practical wisdom often not accounted for in the more instrumental guidelines. The police left their first arrival spot, because according to their instructions they could not establish their base so close to a civilian camp ground. They thereby removed themselves farther from the island, while civilians from the camp ground actually went out on the lake to help.

In the dialogue seminars, I often divide the opposing groups and give them 1-2 hours to formulate essential questions to each other. They hand over the questions and reflect 1-2 hours on how to answer them. In this way, the participants set the agenda; because the questions they raise are the issues they most desperately want and need to talk about. I never use energizers, ice-breakers, or simulations, since there is more than enough raw material in the conflict itself to energize the group and to stimulate the conversation. The conversation developing through giving enough time for questions and answers often develops the conversations from predictable fast thinking

to a more dialogical slow thinking. In addition dialogue invites a meta-logue, reflection on how we communicate (Bateson).¹⁴

4) Peacebuilding

Peace-building is a relative recent concept, although the content is rather old. It was first formally introduced by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros- Ghali in his 1992 report to the Security Council, “An Agenda for Peace – Preventive Diplomacy, peace-making and peace-keeping”.¹⁵ In addition to the three pillars mentioned in the title, the report added peace-building. In this report, peace-building was defined mainly through security issues. Over the next decade the understanding grew to include economic and political development and slowly the international community became more aware of the complexities and contradictions in the area of ethno-political wars. In 2004, a report by PRIO gave a solid and inclusive definition of peace-building.¹⁶ In the figure, “The Peacebuilding Palette”, the four different areas -- Security, Socio-economic Foundations, Political Framework and Reconciliation -- were included (fig.3):

14 George Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972; reissued 2000).

15 *An Agenda for Peace. Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping.* Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992 http://www.unrol.org/files/A_47_277.pdf. Last reviewed July 20, 2013.

16 Dan Smith, *Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together.* Overview of the Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding, *Norad Evaluation Reports, No.1* (April 2004).



The interesting fact is that the study was authored by Dan Smith, the current head of International Alert. During the years 1996-2004, Dan Smith was my closest colleague in the Nansen Dialogue seminars. Between the two of us we facilitated 100+ seminars during this period. His main contribution in the theory of peacebuilding is the additional strong emphasis on reconciliation and justice. But although the palette is composed of four equally important areas, we still hear the echoes from Boutros Ghali's report from 1992 in many of the international efforts, specifically his assertion that "security is the most important element of peace-building." The major peace-building efforts in BH and Kosovo so far in the 21st century have focused on institution- and state-building, and not on reconciliation and dialogue. It is my experience that this neglect is directly reducing the impact of the institution-building efforts, i.e., by not instilling loyalty toward the state among the citizens.

The Vice President of the United States Joe Biden expressed the concern that peace-building efforts did not create the expected results in addressing the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo on 19 May 2009:

“Today, we are worried about the direction your country, your future, and your children’s future are taking. For three years, we have seen a sharp and dangerous rise in nationalist rhetoric designed to play on people’s fears, to stir up anger and resentment. We have seen state institutions – which must be strengthened for Bosnia to meet the challenges of the 21st century and to advance toward EU and NATO membership – openly challenged and deliberately undermined. We have witnessed attempts to roll back the reforms of the last decade - the very reforms that prompted EU and NATO to open their doors to the citizens of this country. We have heard voices speaking the language of maximalism and absolutism that destroys states - not the language of compromise and cooperation that builds them. The results are predictable – deepening mistrust between communities, deadlock on reforms, and dangerous talk about the country’s future that is reminiscent of the tragedies the people of this country have worked so hard to overcome.”¹⁷

This statement by Joe Biden is quite clear in stressing that the international community, after all its peace-building efforts during the period from 1995-2009, is not seeing the results it hoped for. Kahneman explains how we use heuristic thinking, interpreting new situations in light of the old. The question at hand is peace-building, and there is a discrepancy between all the human resources, money, research going in and the peace coming out.

One might say that this is a rather trivial and banal reflection, that the dialogical attitude is obviously more important for a peace-builder than for a train driver. But we have to address the issue. Our efforts in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle-East, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina have not paid off as expected; one must therefore be allowed to ask: Has there been something wrong with our peace-

17 Joe Biden, “Address to the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina”, White House Website (19 May 2009), at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Prepared-Remarks-Vice-President-Joe-Biden-Addresses-Parliament-of-Bosnia-and-Herzegovina [last accessed on 24 July 2013].

building approach? Has it become too heuristic and too instrumental? Has it become too focused on security and state building – at the expense of the people living in the state? Can it be that we assume we know what to do, while we actually should spend much more time obtaining local knowledge before we start to act?

The ten Nansen Centres that are active in divided communities in ex-Yugoslavia use a more relational approach. Dialogue is a soft, long-term, slow way of working. It is not a magic fix creating results in a fortnight, but over the years reshaping the relationship between previous enemies. But sustained dialogue is not only verbal interaction, it leads to taking action: citizens acting together because they start to realize they have a common interest in changing the institutions.

4a) A case study illustrating the Nansen Dialog approach to peace-building

Several of the Nansen Centres are deeply involved in the politics of integration. It seems appropriate to say that our work in dialogue and reconciliation has undergone a transformation and several centres work toward integration. The difference between assimilation and integration is often not recognized, and the fear of assimilation leads to self-exclusion through the establishment of parallel systems. NDC Skopje cracked the code and turned this understanding upside down.

The municipality of Jegunovce experienced war-like actions in 2001. As a result, after the war, the schools became completely segregated. There was little or no communication and cooperation between segregated schools when NDC Skopje got involved in 2005.

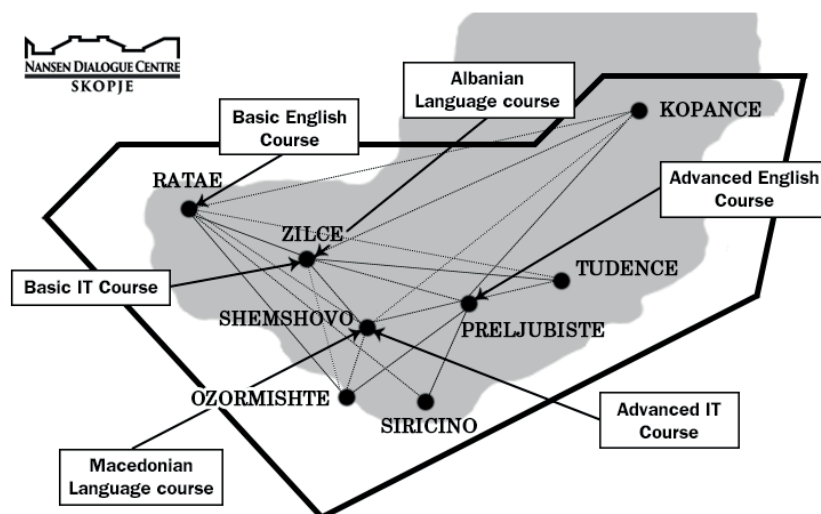
They started by listening to the local needs of the citizens. This was done through a need assessment. NDC Skopje selected certain needs to which they could respond. Through cooperation with the Norwegian Embassy, some toilets and some classrooms were fixed. This built trust. They offered classes in IT and English. The classes could

only be offered in one village each, but, through long confidence-building conversations with the parents, safe transportation (“bussing”) was offered from the other villages to the educational site. The classes in IT and English were given in two separate villages, and advanced classes were offered in another two new villages.

In this way no village was shown special favour and the children got familiar with the situation outside their own village. As a consequence, the children developed a curiosity about each other’s language and after a new process including long conversations with the parents, language classes were offered in Albanian in the Macedonian village Zilche and in Macedonian in the Albanian village of Semshevo. The level of inter-ethnic education outside the classroom reached such a high level that it became meaningless to continue with segregated schools.

This led to the establishment of the first bilingual multi-ethnic school in Jegunovce. It opened on 1 September 2008. It was the first bilingual school in Macedonia. The following figure (fig.4) shows how the offering of classes offered rebuilt certain networks and connections between the villages, and this process was a prerequisite for making the school possible.

Joint activities between Macedonian and Albanian pupils in 2008



The Nansen Model of education builds on integration not assimilation. Education in the Western Balkans is most often either an assimilation model (the minority enrolls in the majority schools) or a segregated model (different schools and different curriculum for minority and majority). The Nansen Centre in Skopje clearly distinguishes between assimilation and integration. The Nansen Model of Integration is based on respect and awareness of the differences -- the salad bowl not the melting pot. Most of the education takes place in the mother tongue, but joint sessions and multiple extracurricular activities makes both cultures very visible to each other and the children learn each other's language. This model has been embraced by the Ministry of Education and has spread to the Macedonian-Turkish area around Strumica and Valisevo. Assimilation is a one-way street of becoming adopted into the dominant culture, while integration is a two-way street of mutual development of respect and recognition of differences.

This model correlates with the European Council's definition of quality in education as inclusion. Inclusion is the starting point if you want quality. It further correlates with the Ljubljana guidelines for integration, the set of guidelines developed by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) on the integration of diverse societies. This correlation should surprise no one since NDC Skopje in October 2011 received the Max Van der Stohl prize of 50,000 Euro from the office of the HCNM for its work against segregation. A recent report from the OECD also concludes that integrated schooling is better for the economic development of a given country.

But this work was far from only applauded, there were strong opposing forces. In Macedonia we experienced that Izair Samiu (Commandant Baci) reacted negatively to the fact that Albanian children were going to school with Slavic children. Commandant Baci was the self-proclaimed leader of the village. His authority was anchored in his fighting during the war in 2001. He opposed the integrated school with threats, stopping the school bus and put up road blocks. We contacted all the strong institutions, but the

OSCE, the EU, and the UN had no mandate to intervene, the police were afraid they would intensify the conflict, and the embassies could do nothing. It was the parents who showed the strength and saved the school.

They questioned this authority and demanded an election in the village council. This election took place in October 2009. NDC Skopje knew it would need at least five supporters among the nine members of the council, but even then it could be hard to continue the school. With only four members of the council, the school would most likely have to close. It was therefore another break when the counted votes showed seven supporters of the school in the new village council. The commandant realized he did not have support in his own Albanian village.

This “case study” from Macedonia shows that it was the “soft” institution of the home that was strong when the “strong” institutions were too weak to act. It was the solid relationship building between the parents through numerous dialog seminars, including trips to Lillehammer, which gave them strength to stand firm under pressure. They believed in the school, and that integrated education is the way to secure equal access to resources and opportunities in the state. With such an equal distribution it is easier to enlist loyalty to the state among the citizens. This process should therefore be seen as a contribution to the implementation of the Ohrid agreement, the agreement that stopped the potential war in 2001 by giving the Albanians equal status with Macedonians in Macedonia.¹⁸

4b) The development of multi-ethnic states

The following model divides responsibilities between the nation and the state. It is based on the understanding of integration developed through our dialogue work (fig.5).

18 Ian King and Whit Mason, *Peace at Any Price: How the World Failed Kosovo* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006). They argue that the bombing in 1999 was necessary, but that it is basically afterwards things went wrong. In this book they argue that the failure to include the soft institutions in peace building, can explain how the hate is cultivated on both sides.

A MODEL FOR MULTIETHNIC STATEBUILDING

Goal: Protect citizens

- Citizenship
- Human Right
- Secure infrastructure (roads, hospitals, schools)
- Politics (protect human rights, democratic elections)
- Equal distribution of resources and opportunities
- Develop European state standards
- Develop obligations (taxes, participation, common good)

Goal: Provide identity

- Belonging
- Choice (Cosmopolitan)
- Soul and Spirit
- Inspire superstructure (traditions, ceremonies)
- Culture (Literature, Music, Dances, Food - Clothing)
- Freedom of choice (Religion)
- Allow varieties
- Develop supportstructures (Clubs and organizations)



It breaks up the nation state that leads the majority to believe they have birth rights stronger than others. Citizens' rights are independent of ethnic or national background. The model further redefines the purpose and meaning of both the state and the nation to cover more separate dimensions. The strength of this model is that the state is built on European standards with a definition of politics as equal distribution of resources and opportunities. But this does not mean that Europe is becoming more equal, the cultural variety expressed in religion, ceremonies, music, dances, food and literature will of course continue to flourish.

This model is currently presented in all dialogue seminars I have with groups from mixed municipalities in Kosovo.

I stress that, while many states in Europe often have a dominant nationality with older roots, and more recent immigrant cultures, Kosovo has an advantage in the sense that both ethnic groups have strong historical roots in the same country. It becomes meaningless to discuss whether Serbs or Albanians have a stronger right to live in Kosovo.

Kosovo of course belongs to both of them. And nobody can take Kosovo away from either of them. It is equally unlikely that Kosovo Serbs will be assimilated. The idea of making Kosovars out of all citizens has not taken off. The model allows for many interesting discussions. Instead of discussing which the right flag to use is, one can use the new state flag on state institutions, but allow for the Albanian and the Serbian flag in cultural celebrations. When the Norwegian flag is used in the United States it is most often not as a state flag, but as a national symbol.

The model furthermore stresses that, while different people can agree upon the standards that are the basis for running their common state, at the same time that common state can allow for the flourishing of different cultures. When certain politicians claim that multiculturalism has failed, it is mainly because they have confused integration with assimilation and view the current assimilation as rather unsuccessful.

4c) Reunion - creating spaces for dialogue

The challenge is often how to create the arena where people can meet and talk. My experience is that people do have a strong need to talk. My job is not as difficult as people think. The main difficulty is recruitment. How to convince people that it is worth their time to spend a weekend or a week talking with the enemy? It is not true that everybody wants to come as long as Norway pays the coffee. In South Serbia we waited for four years before the radical Serbs wanted to participate. But when they finally arrived in the room, the conversations flowed more easily than expected. A normal reaction is “Why did we not come together like this ten years ago?” or as a policeman from Prijedor put it “imagine if we had these words in 1992.”

We often need a lucky break to get started. One such break was created by the Norwegian film maker Jon Haukeland. He filmed a dialogue meeting between Serbs and Albanians facilitated by myself and Dan Smith in Herzeg Novi, March 1999. The film “Before the Bombs

Fall” was shown on Norwegian television in April 1999, but due to the war we never got the chance to show it to the participants themselves. Ten years later, we started to think about a reunion and we decided to search for the participants we could find and we invited them back to the same hotel in Herzeg Novi to see the first film. I facilitated this dialogue meeting and Jon Haukeland made the second film “Reunion - ten years after the war” which won the Norwegian Amanda award for best documentary in 2011.

The break came when the film was shown on DocuFest in Prizren in July 2012. It was the first public showing in Kosovo which started a series of showings in the Western Balkans in 2013. In Prizren there were also representatives of the FreeZone Festival in Belgrade and they put Reunion on their program for November 2012. The Cultural House in Belgrade was completely packed; more than 400 people saw the film on 4 November 2012, revealing that the movie responded to what had become a political trauma in Serbia. The next day 300 students from First Beograd School saw the movie. The film shows the Nansen approach, but might be a disappointment for those who believe dialogue is a magic fix. The film shows clearly how Serbs and Albanians have different perceptions about what happened and why, and shows the obvious difference in how they experienced the events in 1999. But it also points toward the future. Is a joint future possible?

The film is not an illustration of the effectiveness of dialogue; although you see the participants become more visible to each other and slowly build a relationship. The strength of the movie is that it works as a door opener for dialogue. It becomes possible to have an exploratory conversation about causes and consequences rather than the more bombastic reproduction of the nationalistic propaganda surrounding the war. The response in Belgrade initiated showings in 35 Serbian towns in April 2013. It will be shown on national television in October 2013. Similarly, the film will be shown in Kosovo and stimulate the important conversation, “How do we deal with the past?” and:

5) Where Do We Go from Here?

Nansen Dialogue work for integrated educational activities, on reintegration of refugees in their home communities and on developing multi-ethnic coalitions in politics. On 12 September 2012, NDC Osijek presented its work in a meeting with President Ivo Josipović in Croatia and his Minister of Education, Željko Jovanović. Both expressed, in the press conference after the meeting, the will to support a joint school for Serbs and Croats in Vukovar. This town has been deeply divided since 1991. This will was reconfirmed in a recent meeting on July 16, 2013.

NDC Osijek has worked 10 years for the realization of this school. The municipal assembly in Vukovar in a vote on 5 February 2013 did not support this process. It means that we are still up against strong counter forces. And it might take another 2-3 years before the school is implemented. But Croatia cannot continue to integrate abroad while segregating at home.

In B&H the minister of education, Damir Masić, has asked us for help to get rid of “two schools under one roof”. The Minister of Education in Herzegovina-Neretva canton, Zlatko Hadžiomerović asked us in September 2012 to help eliminate divided schools in Čaplina, Stolac, Mostar, and Prozor-Rama. The main reason he asked us is that he has seen how our slow patient dialogue work in Stolac has started to show results. Stolac is a deeply divided community, but dialogue seminars with students, parents, teachers, and local politicians are slowly transforming the conflictual relationship among them. The schools are still divided but joint school papers, joint closing ceremony at the end of the year, joint student exchange programs with Lillehammer, and cantonal cooperation between Herzegovina-Neretva and Oppland County are all small steps in the right direction.

In Macedonia the Ministry of Education has asked us to educate the whole administration within the Ministry in the concepts and ideas of integration. This will be done

through the Learning Centre for Integrated Education established by NDC Skopje to educate teachers in bilingual and multicultural education. On 12 December 2012, the NDC Skopje presented its model for integrated education in Oslo; Norwegian Directors of schools in Norway have visited Macedonia to learn from the NDC model of integration.

The work done by NDC Skopje provides a practical example that integrated education is possible. It has informed the OSCE strategy document for national education that has been developed in cooperation with HCNM in Hague and this has been embraced by the Macedonian Ministry of Education.

On 8 June 2012, the Albanian mayor of Bujanovac, Nagip Arfeti, formed a multi-ethnic coalition with two Serbian parties. He got 12 seats in the Assembly but needed nine more to secure a majority. He could have secured those nine seats in a coalition with two Albanian parties, but chose a coalition with Stojanca Arsic "Group of citizens" and Nenad Mitrović "Serbian Progressive Party-SNS".

In Kosovo, we have been deeply involved in the mixed community of Mikronasalje. In a community in North Mitrovica where 48 Albanian families live together with Serb families. We have worked for the last eight years for the return of Serb families to an Albanian village in Kosovo Polje/FKP. Most internationals have expressed lack of belief in this project, but the key ceremony is now planned in the fall of 2013, and the houses have been financed and rebuilt by the Ministry of Return in the Kosovo government.

5a) The Future of Kosovo

To most people involved, it seems difficult to work for integration in Kosovo. We must think long term, probably in terms of generations. The arguments, the dialogue experiences, and the reflections in this chapter lead to the conclusion that the citizens of Kosovo must take integration seriously. To be a member of the European Community involves certain legal obligations, such as inclusion in education. The problem is that it looks too far

from here to there. It is too far from the current system of segregation to a future model of integration. But one must start somewhere. Therefore, the people-to-people approach, involving the ethnically mixed summer camps, the joint activities, multicultural film festivals, go-and-see visits, trips to the coast - it all points in the same direction. But such events must be followed up with strategic thinking around structural changes, particularly in politics and in education.

One reason why I have been drawing on multiple examples from the region is that people in a conflict area tend to believe that their conflict is special, unique, and almost impossible to escape. With a larger horizon, people in Kosovo can see that they struggle with the same issues as all of Europe. If Poland managed to reconcile with Germany and Russia after what its people experienced during World War Two, then most people can. If the people of Vukovar can reconcile, then people in Mitrovica can.

Kosovo is not in a political vacuum. All one need to is to think about the triangle Macedonia, South Serbia, and Kosovo. The Macedonian model of integrated education has already won political support in South Serbia. If we succeed in implementing it in Bujanovac (a Serb/Albanian/Roma community) it has transfer validity to Kosovo. This is not primarily a question of the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia, the big mistake both Serbs and Albanians have made is to allow parallel structures to co-exist and through exclusion create a society where the minority does not feel welcome. Sooner or later such policies lead to explosions and change of borders.

As a principle, it is in the interest of a minority to become more visible to the majority, to make its hopes and dreams known. This chapter has shown that there are roads toward reconciliation, no short cuts, no instant solutions or quick fixes, only the slow patient walk down the road of rebuilding trust and communication. I have then tried to show the logical connection how dialogue leads to the conversation about and the efforts to move toward larger integration. It is an illusion to believe that dialogue has

had a high priority in the peace-building processes of today. Our target groups are high municipal officials. Too often do I meet people who have never participated in serious conversations over several days with people on the other side. If the international peace-builders had had the courage to examine the mantra of security and hard institutions and had given dialogue between people a higher priority in peace-building, my experience tells me that we would have seen more powerful results. As in the famous words by Nansen; nothing is impossible “the impossible only takes longer.”

Serbs and Albanians must both be able to take an honest look at the recent past before they can consider and develop a more integrative political and educational development. But the international community is an actor in this process as well. They also have to take an honest look at the recent past in order to learn from their mistakes. If all three shared what they saw in the mirror – it could be of great value to future peace building missions.

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Bryn is a renowned expert on dialogue facilitation, working on documenting his experiences on peace and reconciliation work. He especially focuses on transferring his experiences from the Balkans to other conflict areas, including Norway. He has received numerous awards for his work in war-torn societies like Vukovar, Prijedor, Srebrenica, Mitrovica and Kosovo Polje.

FOUR METHODS FOR TALKING DURING CONFLICT

– *Dag Hareide* –

“The first to use a torrent of words against his enemies instead of hitting them on the head with a club should be considered the founder of civilization.”

John Cohen

“The essence of democracy is not determined by referendum, but by conversation, dialogue and negotiation, by mutual respect and understanding, and by the growing sense of the interest of the whole.”

Hal Koch

We have certain habits for talking in conflicts. Some tend to quarrel, other tend to mumble, some turn arrogantly rational and other hysterically emotional. These habits in our personal life resemble patterns of conversation in the public sphere. Our two quotations above tell us that democracy and peace depend upon how these methods of conversation in public are nurtured and developed. I try in this article to classify four methods of talking in conflict situations in public. They tend to function in different areas, and they have clearly different objectives and results I will distinguish between *debate*, *discussion*, *negotiation* and *dialogue*.

1. Debate

The word comes from Latin “*debatere*” and signifies “to knock down”. The point in a debate is to win. The method is both to convince through your own rhetoric as well as by weakening your opponent. The latter is repeatedly preferred to the former. Metaphors describing

debate are often retrieved from war: “Your claims cannot be defended”, “He attacked all the weakest cases”, “I crushed his arguments”, and “His speech was aimed at the target group”. The approach is to declare things as sharp as possible to reveal contradictions. The debate appeal to emotions and cultivate the “striking” remark. This typically takes place in political TV debates before elections. It is the dominant method of conversation in the “hard news media” and flavours the debates in the three power bases in a democracy: parliament, government and court. In a private context, the debate could be called quarrelling. We might then define debate as “systematic quarrelling with listeners in public”. Debates rarely nurture the ethos of listening. I remember once I should participate in one of my first radio debates. A friend advised me: “Dag, pick out three things you want to say – and say it repeatedly whatever happens”. It is a rational advice for a debate, but it stops me from effectively listening to the other. I will however caution against totally moralizing away the debate. The debate has a rational function in clarifying contrasting positions, and sometimes an emotional function in a ritual of aggressive catharsis.

2. Discussion

The word comes from the Latin “*discutire*” which means to separate, to tear apart. The focus is to look closely at and distinguish the words and arguments. It is essential 1) to be precise with definitions of your concepts and 2) to refer to empirical evidence, which shows that what you say agrees with reality. Your personal feelings are not relevant. Discussion makes a clear distinction between the personal and the matter-of-fact. In this sense it should not appeal to emotions. Ideally factual argument wears the gravity and directs the discussion. The goal is not necessarily to agree, but to gain knowledge through disagreements. Discussion typically takes place in academia and research. They appear in political public debate through comments from “experts” with a claim of the authority of objectivity. This

is however not easy in heated debates. Roger Fisher and William Ury in their famous book: “Getting to yes” focus on discussion in their method for negotiation. In their four step method the first and last point build upon the ethos of discussion. They start with “Separate people from the problem” and end with “Insist on using objective criteria”. Discussion is especially useful as an element when there is a rational atmosphere and a possibility for a win-win solution.

3. Negotiation

Negotiation comes from the Latin words “*neg*” + “*otium*” which mean “not leisure” or rather “business activity”. In Norwegian “for - handle” refers to the same. Negotiation happens before the action and prepares for action. Negotiation can be used as a name for the whole process of conflict resolution – and as such it might include debate, discussion and dialogue. Or it might be used – as I do here – as a typical manner of conversation. It is a conversation where the goal is to agree on what to do or not do. The talking will therefore be pragmatic and functional. One does not speak about things that are irrelevant to what should be done. Parties can choose to be tactical and deliberately hide relevant information. The focus will be on your own interests and what is possible. Negotiation has an inbuilt calculated element of distrust. Negotiation as a manner of conversation happens everywhere. It takes typically place in decision-making bodies in business, bureaucracies, associations and families. In Norway the upbringing in families seems to have moved from an authoritarian command-culture to a negotiation-culture between adults and children.

4. Dialogue

The word comes from the Greek “*dia logos*”; through the word. Thus, it might simply be another word for a conversation. The concept has become popular in many

countries and has in recent years experienced inflation with increased confusion. In Norway these days it signifies hardly anything more than that we talk together. It is probably used because it sounds slightly more serious and thoughtful and gives a better connotation than simply to say “talking”. Some Norwegian debaters’ have started to dislike the popularity of the word: Sarah Azmeh Rasmussen talks about “stillborn dialogues”, Nina Witoszek about “a cult ... for the tender souls” and Knut Olav Åmås has written a book wanting more confrontation rather than dialogue. But they have not given any serious consideration to a definition of what they mean by using the word: “dialogue”. I would probably have joined the sceptic choir if I haven’t had the experience from Nansen Dialogue. Here the word certainly is neither stillborn nor something for the tender souls. I will use a definition which draws on the experience from the work of Nansen Center for Dialogue and Peace in Norway in Balkan as well as in Norway. Here the word dialogue has a narrower and deeper meaning than simply a serious conversation. The aim and purpose is to understand the other. It differs from the three others modes of conversation.

Unlike the debate, the point is not to win or to knock down the other. And metaphors of war are unsuitable. But alike the debate it easily evokes feelings. It might however be a richer spectre of feelings. Debate fosters feelings like anger, indignation, envy and the sweet taste of success. All this might come forward in a dialogue, but there is also room for feelings like empathy and vulnerability.

Unlike the discussion there is no distinction between fact-of-the-matter and the personal. The person with her history and her needs and feelings is the fact of the conversation. You should meet the other, not only her opinions. There is an opening for the personal and thus also the spiritual.

Unlike the negotiation the goal is not necessarily to agree. We may even find out that after the conversation the parties are disagreeing even more than in the beginning. But still the dialogue may turn out as a success according

to its purpose. You may understand and know the other part better than before, and this human aspect might have a reconciling long term effect.

To participate in dialogue, I must be willing to listen on several levels. And I must be open to change not only my opinions but also my world views and personal dislikes. I believe dialogue is the riskiest form of conversation, and the opposite of cowardice. Dialogue therefore happens mostly between people who are close to each other – like family and friends. It is rare in public life, and exceptional between opponents and enemies. The tragedy is that it is least used where it is most needed.

Nansen Dialogue - unique and precious

The experience of the Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue is unique and precious. Before I became principal and director of Nansen Academy and a participant in the Peace Centre – I used to tell people that the Nansen Dialogue is the most beautiful work of peace I know of in Norway. There is a lot to learn from a couple of hundred dialogues between enemies and adversaries during the Balkan crisis. Other articles in this book communicate some of this wisdom. It is important to remark that not only dialogue, but all of these methods of conversation mentioned have been used during the 20 years of the Nansen Centre. In the beginning there was a belief in lectures and discussion and the transmission of rational knowledge. Then it has been transformed more towards the personal dialogue. But a so called dialogue session might still be dominated by debate – according to my experience. It sometimes seems unavoidable when new people arrive to “let out an emotional pressure” through debate. Then it is important to have several days and weeks. You were angry and yelled yesterday – today we can start again.

When there has been dialogue for some time, the parties will turn to negotiation when actions are needed. You need other forms of talking to create a school together or make street lights in the community. All methods of

talk are therefore needed in a process of reconciliation. It varies according to the phase and place. But of the four methods to my experience: dialogue is the precious one and the forgotten one. It should be given much more time and prestige in our work for democracy and peace. The uniqueness of The Nansen Centre is how it stubbornly has kept to dialogue as the key communication if you want reconciliation in conflict.

Experiences from Norwegian dialogues on religion

I will include some thoughts on the use of these different types of conversations in Norwegian dialogues on religion. The Nansen Academy, with support of the Gandhi scholarship from the Ministry of Culture, conducted the first survey of religion and belief conversations in Norway the last 20 years. (“Styrke i mangfold” Nansenskolen 2009) It included a survey of participants in over 30 organized seminars and meetings. The word dialogue was the preferred word for these conversations, and signified then just “serious organized conversation”. The survey shows that all the four methods of talking were used in these conversations.

When talks on religion and life stance began in the Nansen Academy between secular humanists and Christians in the 1980s, the debate was dominating. But gradually, most people found that the debate format gives smaller yield than the other three forms. In our survey, there are only a few traces of debates. Debate may have its place. It makes things clear, and do not hide disagreement which often might be tempting in religious dialogues. But the problem is that it blocks the space for “long thoughts” and leads to poor listening and misunderstandings. The good dialogue may develop forms of “non-violent language” where participants can give a clear controversial message including presentation of your feelings without this being deemed as an attack on another person.

All methods of conversation may be scary for different people in different ways. Some are frightened of the heat of the debate; others feel intellectually inferior in negotiation or discussion while still others feel too shy to open up for a dialogue. The use of all methods therefore might open up where one method blocks.

Participants in religion and belief discussions highlighted three objectives for talking together: First, they wanted to know more about the belief of the other groups, secondly they wanted some common actions and agreements, and thirdly: They wanted to personally meet and understand people from other beliefs and life stands.

It is interesting that three of our four types of conversation correspond with these stated goals for the religious seminars. Knowledge needs discussion. Action needs negotiation. Meeting people needs dialogue.

Talks choose their form accordingly. An example can be taken from the national religion and life stand dialogue arranged by The National Values Commission. Around 100 participants from more than 20 different faith communities were divided into working groups. The groups that worked with schools and state church question was a typical negotiation groups. They developed compromise proposals that later have been significant for changes in Norwegian society. For example, for the first time we got a key formulation for the objectives of the state school system in Norway. Later a similar version was adopted unanimously in Parliament. The group that worked on violence and war discussed the views of the various religious communities in a factual manner. They tried to define concepts like jihad, pacifism and just war. The group that had the most antagonistic and sensitive theme: sex and gender (including homosexuality), opted for a personal dialogue. This group had the most enthusiastic and satisfied participants, despite the fact that they were left with the biggest differences in opinion.

It should however be stated that all groups gave time for a personal dialogue approach where the participants

before discussion got to know each other better. A comprehensive study on conflict mediation within different fields like families, schools, organizations, courts, local communities in the five Nordic countries underline the same conclusion. (“Conflict Mediation. A Nordic Approach” Dag Hareide 2006) The use of dialogue as the fourth form of conversation is a key to move from conflict to reconciliation.

A good religion and belief conversation and a good conflict mediation will probably use all four of these methods. The debate is the provoker that secure that we do not hide our opinions. Things should be said clearly. The dialogue lays the foundation for the other methods to work better. Dialogue is the heart that open up the personal involvement, the discussion is the brain that clarifies matters and negotiation is the hand that takes action.

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EVALUATING THE WORK OF NANSEN DIALOGUE CENTRE SARAJEVO: SEVEN FACTORS OF ITS SUCCESS

– *Eva Komlossyova* –

Back in 2012, I had the opportunity to spend almost two months with Nansen Dialogue Centre (NDC) Sarajevo, to observe their work, visit the local communities of Srebrenica, Bratunac, Jajce and Zvornik and talk to people NDC Sarajevo is working with, and later to participate in a dialogue seminar facilitated by Steinar Bryn. I tried to understand their approach and evaluate whether their initiative is actually contributing to any positive change in the municipalities they are involved in.

At the beginning, NDC's approach seemed very abstract to me. So they meet and talk and go for a trip to Norway, but how should this lead to any sustainable change in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with all the problems the country is facing? And where are the results of all this talking? It is not that easy to comprehend how their model works, and without spending those two months in BiH and without talking to people involved in NDC's work in local communities, I think I would not be able to really see the difference NDC Sarajevo is making and why is it succeeding. Luckily, I had enough time to spend on the evaluation, to conduct a survey among participants of NDC's activities and interviews with the staff of NDC Sarajevo, with members of local Nansen Coordination Boards (NCBs), teachers and municipality representatives, students involved in Nansen Forums of Young Peacebuilders (NFYPs) and other stakeholders in all four municipalities. Based on the findings of this independent external evaluation I identified several distinguishing features of NDC Sarajevo's approach that makes it successful and, in the long run, contributing to positive development in BiH.

This article will describe these “factors of success” that all combined have contributed to the positive results.

1. Careful analysis of the situation

Over the time, NDC Sarajevo developed a model for their involvement that is well thought-through from the very beginning. The selection of municipalities for the project was not random, but based on clear and relevant criteria and careful research. In 2005, staff of NDC Sarajevo organized a series of round tables with representatives of municipalities, civil society, youth, local citizens and other actors in several major towns, mainly in Eastern BiH. The purpose of this field research was to analyse the situation in each individual municipality, its recent history, the level of communication and cooperation among the citizens of different ethnic groups and the problems people in these regions were experiencing. In the four municipalities Srebrenica, Bratunac, Zvornik and Jajce, NDC Sarajevo found the level of the interethnic communication and cooperation to be the lowest and, at the same time, they met with the interest of the local citizens to get involved in improving the situation in their communities. The round tables also helped NDC to understand the most acute problems and identify the key areas they would become involved in: the work with local municipality councillors and administrators and with schools.

2. Involving key and highly motivated people

The participants for the projects representing these two areas of involvement were carefully selected as well. By interviewing the potential participants before involving them in the project, NDC Sarajevo succeeded in identifying and engaging important and highly-motivated actors, people that are well known and respected in the local communities and can have broader influence on the society in their municipalities. Many interviewees approached for the evaluation acknowledged that this factor has played

a crucial role in the process. Municipality administrators and councillors in municipal assemblies have decisive roles in the municipalities and usually represent other sectors of society as well, such as health sector, education or business. Local politicians, mayors, directors of schools, representatives of civil society and others became members of Nansen Coordination Boards (NCBs), local bodies responsible for the coordination of small-scale activities in their municipalities. Working with local authorities is especially important if a project aims at, in the long term, influencing the political structures. In the second area of work, NDC involved teachers, school administrators, students and their parents. Working with schools is highly relevant for peacebuilding process in BiH. Since many of the elementary schools are either monoethnic or so called “two schools under one roof”, the contact among pupils of different ethnicity is very scarce. This contributes to further reproduction and strengthening of ethnic divisions and prejudices.

3. Dialogue seminars as a tool, not as the primary goal in itself

Dialogue seminars played crucial role in the process NDC Sarajevo initiated. Participants from different ethnic groups and with different perceptions of past events in BiH had the opportunity to discuss these differences, see what “the others” experienced during the war, and also talk about the challenges in their communities and what they could do about them. For most of them it was the first time they discussed the past conflict with “the others” and challenged their own truths with the truths of “the others”. The goal of the seminars was not necessarily the reconciliation of these very often opposing views on the recent history. The aim was to bring people together, initiate a good dialogue, rebuild communication between them and show them that, despite of the different views they might have on their past, they can still work together to make their communities a better place for everyone who lives there.

No matter how important these dialogue sessions were, with no follow-up activities not more than the change of attitudes of those participating in the seminars would be achieved. People would go home, maybe talk to their families about the interesting discussions they had during the weekend, and that would be it. But thanks to sustained encouragement and support NDC Sarajevo succeeded in activating local people to become more engaged in improving the situation in their local communities. Participants created local Nansen Coordination Boards (NCBs), students gathered in Nansen Forums for Young Peacebuilders (NFYPs), and both bodies have initiated a number of local small-scale multi-ethnic activities. Participants in Srebrenica and Bratunac even proposed the creation of a new NGO, Dialogue Centre Srebrenica-Bratunac, assisting local NCBs with the implementation of their activities. Hence, dialogue was used as a powerful tool in this process, but the process did not end after the seminars were finished. Quite contrary, dialogue allowed the whole range of other processes to begin in the local communities. Due to this approach, NDC's project achieved broader impact on the societies in the four municipalities, not only on the people directly involved in the dialogue seminars.

One of the numerous examples of processes dialogue has prompted is the case of the Petar Kočić elementary school. NDC started to work in this ethnically divided school in Bratunac municipality in 2006. The school comprises of two school buildings. The main building attended by Bosnian Serb children is located in the village of Kravica and the field school, attended by Bosniak pupils, in Konjević Polje. Parents choose the school for their children according to their ethnicity, not according to the proximity of the school building. As a result of the division, there was no interaction between the children of different ethnic groups. NDC organized dialogue sessions first for teachers and, after initial hesitation, also for parents. After the training, parents of both ethnicities initiated several activities together, such as cleaning of the school yard, celebrating the

school day together for the first time since the war ended, and organizing extra-curricular multi-ethnic classes of IT and English. They showed that multi-ethnic education is possible and provided kids with more opportunities to meet and build friendships. One of the multi-ethnic classes is taking place in Kravica, the other one in Konjević Polje and parents are even helping each other with the transportation of pupils to these classes. The director of the school became an active member of NCB Bratunac. Activities in this school are now organized completely by the teachers and parents; NDC Sarajevo is not directly involved in the school anymore. Similar model is currently being implemented in Srebrenica/Potočari elementary school.

4. Not coming with a prescribed set of activities

In most projects, the implementing organization would create the whole plan of activities beforehand, when applying for the funding. Later on, the participants would be “recruited” for the activities and would have little opportunities to change the already decided set of activities for the project. NDC Sarajevo’s approach was quite different. The series of seminars and study visits to Norway were planned beforehand, but apart from that it was up to the participants what kind of activities they would initiate as long as citizens of different ethnic groups were to be involved. In the interviews, the participants appreciated this open and flexible approach to a great extent. They contrasted it with other projects of external NGOs where they did not have that much space for contributing with their own ideas. NDC Sarajevo’s philosophy was that people who actually live in these communities are the ones familiar with their own situation and can see what could be done to improve the interethnic cooperation, not someone from Sarajevo. Hence, all the small-scale multi-ethnic activities were planned and realized by the local participants, mostly teachers, students, parents and members of Nansen coordination boards. NDC Sarajevo provided financial support and advice and supervision when needed. The

feeling of ownership of these initiatives has been much bigger among these people and their involvement in the project has been very active. The probability that such activities will be sustained in the future is much higher than in the case of projects more or less developed by an external NGO. In many of these activities, they cooperated with other local organizations, such as local environmental NGOs, mountaineering and youth associations to involve bigger number of people and achieve larger impact on the communities.

The activities project participants implemented focused on many different topics. NCBs organized several public discussions in order to improve the communication between the inhabitants and the municipalities, and different cultural events. Nansen Forums of Young Peacebuilders (NFYPs) have been closely cooperating with teachers. In each of the targeted high schools, the Nansen classrooms have been established and used for the multi-ethnic activities organized by NFYPs. For example, teachers and students in Jajce are organizing regular multi-ethnic theatre classes and culinary sessions. Several trips of NFYPs to other project municipalities and to Sarajevo were organized, providing the students from all different municipalities the opportunity to meet and interact. A multi-ethnic volleyball team called Nansen Jajce was established, as well as multi-ethnic football team consisting of pupils from schools in Srebrenica and Bratunac, of both Serb and Bosniak ethnicity. All these activities promote interethnic cooperation at different levels and thus contribute to the improvement of the situation in local communities.

5. Long-term commitment and relationship building

NDC Sarajevo started to work outside the Bosnian capital in 2002, providing training on interethnic dialogue, peaceful conflict resolution and facilitation of open, non-discriminative and democratic educational process for teachers in schools around BiH. Thanks to this project,

NDC had the opportunity to learn what the situation in smaller, rural communities of BiH was when it comes to the interethnic relations and make the first contact with these communities. In 2006, after organizing the series of roundtables in mostly Eastern BiH, they started with the new approach described above. First, NDC worked in Srebrenica and Bratunac, local communities of Jajce and Zvornik entered the project in 2009. Hence, NDC Sarajevo has been in close contact with these communities for longer period of time, observing the situation there, continuously working on rebuilding the cooperation between different ethnic groups and building and sustaining the personal contacts with local actors. Interviewed participants appreciated that NDC did not come with one- or two-year project with no follow-up activities, as some of them experienced before, especially in Srebrenica. Peacebuilding interventions require long and sustained work with communities, especially when having the ambition to affect not only the direct participants of project activities, but broader society as well. In case of NDC Sarajevo, it is only now possible to see the changes in the communities, thanks to the long-term commitment NDC has had to concentrate its effort on those four municipalities.

As apparent from the interviews, NDC Sarajevo succeeded in building good relationships with the local communities. Many of the interviewees said they consider people working in NDC to be their close friends. The trust the local communities have in NDC was crucial for successful implementation of the project. Yet, it takes time to build the trust and without the sustained presence in the regions and frequent visits to the local communities NDC would not achieve such a level of trust. Having the same staff working with these communities over time also helped in this process as well as their personal commitment and enthusiasm for this work.

The relationships are also being built among participants within and across municipality and entity borders. All the coordination bodies from the four regions are now cooperating on joint activities to achieve wider

impact on the society. NCBs have been holding regular joint meetings and developing regional initiatives together. NFYPs established regional school newspaper publishing stories from the four municipalities. Whole-weekend Nansen Days have been organized by NCBs in each of the four municipalities, in cooperation with other local associations, gathering students and other participants from all four target municipalities. Funding for the transportation and other logistical costs was provided by the respective municipalities and these events were often opened by local mayors. The four NCBs met in December 2014 to create strategic plans for their further involvement in improving the interethnic cooperation in BiH. Apart from developing specific plans for their communities, including areas of work, possible partner institutions and organizations and ways how to increase interaction with local authorities, each NCB expressed its interest to strengthen the regional cooperation among NCBs and to use the knowledge and experience of its members in other ethnically divided regions of BiH, e.g. in cities of Sarajevo and East Sarajevo. The conference showed the strong feeling of ownership among participants, their belief in the effectiveness of this approach and strong commitment to continue with the work not only in their own municipalities but also in other regions. This is of crucial importance for the long term sustainability and wider impact of the project.

6. Approach of the donor

The approach of the Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the main donor of NDC Sarajevo's activities, was rather unique when compared to other major donors in BiH. The approach was much more open and flexible than it is usual for other donors, not requiring the full list of activities beforehand and thus providing the space for the model NDC has been applying. With many other donors this would not be possible. The MFA sustained its support for 15 years and was showing an understanding

for the long-term nature of the work NDC Sarajevo is doing. The Ministry provided funding for 3-year projects, thus allowing a degree of financial stability. This stability made it possible for NDC to sustain its focus on the work they have been doing in the four municipalities, to develop and apply their specific approach, not changing its scope of work based on currently available funding from different donors. Their work was thus not project-driven, but based on actual analysis of most acute needs and on what local communities saw as the most beneficial for them. What NDC achieved would not be possible without such an open, understanding and committed donor.

7. Lillehammer

Lillehammer, Nansen Academy, Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue, Nansen Dialogue Network and the personality of Steinar Bryn played crucial role in the NDC Sarajevo's efforts to rebuild interethnic cooperation in BiH.

The study visits to Nansen Academy in Lillehammer have represented an important element of the model NDC Sarajevo applied. Apart from the knowledge participants gained through the advanced dialogue training, they also visited relevant institutions in Norway, such as schools and local municipalities, to see how the Norwegian educational system looks, how the local communities function and how the challenges of multi-ethnic communities are being dealt with in Norway. Additionally, participants of different ethnicities spent the time together and had the opportunity to get to know each other better, far from their home communities, in the calm and peaceful environment of Lillehammer. Many of the interviewees indicated that the experience of the study trip changed them personally and motivated them to become more engaged in improving the interethnic cooperation in their own communities. Hence, the visits to Lillehammer appeared to be an important driving force behind the mobilization of the participants.

Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue and Nansen Dialogue Network have been providing NDC Sarajevo as

well as other NDCs around the Western Balkans with assistance and training from the very beginning. Thanks to this support the centres were built into professional yet locally grounded organizations. The role of Steinar Bryn from Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue has been absolutely instrumental in spreading the dialogue work around the Western Balkans. He was one of the creators of the three-month training programme for people from ex-Yugoslavia Nansen Academy was implementing since 1995 and a driving force behind the process of establishing NDCs in the Western Balkan countries. He has been facilitating the dialogue seminars both in the Western Balkans and in Lillehammer. As mentioned before, these seminars represented the starting point for the processes that followed and a great deal of the success of the dialogue sessions can be attributed to the approach Steinar Bryn has developed. During the interviews the participants repeatedly acknowledged Steinar Bryn's personality and facilitating skills.

Conclusion

There is no prescribed solution to the challenges BiH is still facing, 20 after the war ended. No such a thing as a peacebuilding approach guaranteed to be working in every situation exists. NDC Sarajevo has developed its own approach specifically for dealing with the problems of ethnic divisions in BiH and, from my point of view; their work is bearing the first fruit. However, it takes time to change the mind sets of people and structures favouring the division of the society along the ethnic lines, especially when these structures are being reproduced and supported by political elites and by the very framework put in place by the Dayton Agreement. Yet, NDC Sarajevo has found its way to address these issues, to the extent possible under such conditions, and is contributing to positive developments due to the "factors of success" identified by the recent evaluation. To achieve the changes on political level that are so needed in BiH, NDC should continue

supporting the four Nansen Coordination Boards the local participants have established, involve more people in these boards, motivated and influential ones, keep supporting the cooperation among the four existing coordination boards to widen their impact and to apply its model in other municipalities in BiH facing similar problems of ethnic divisions, involving members of existing NCBs so they could share their own experience with others. For NDC itself it would be very beneficial to develop a model for a constant, real-time evaluation of its activities, to provide them with useful feedback and better accounts of results achieved for the donors.

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FROM OSLO TO JERUSALEM

– Sharon Ben-Arie –

The “Other Voices – On the Road Film Festival” project took place between 2005 and 2008 and was led by Other Voices, the Association for the Advancement and Empowerment of the Individual through the Media. It was conceived and formed in Oslo and Lillehammer, Norway and was implemented in Sderot, Kfar Kara, Jerusalem and Ramla.

This project was made possible due to the generous contribution of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA). A preliminary feasibility study was made under the institutional framework of the Norwegian Peace Alliance and the planning, creation, team building and implementation were made with the support and cooperation of the Nansen Dialogue Network.

It is 16 km from my neighbourhood in the centre of Jerusalem to the Deheishe refugee camp. Now there is a wall of separation, but not so long ago there were only scattered rocks, marking an arbitrary border, yet a definite and undeniable one. In my eyes it was only for the military or peace activists to cross that border, the military by force and the peace activists by some secret permission and courage.

I could always say to myself and to others that “they (the Palestinians) are human beings. Just like me and you, just like the people around me”. However, one layer below were my demons: my fears, my hostility and my disbelief.

What could ever a woman who is strongly tied to Europe and shares the deep insult by that same Europe which vomited her ancestors and doomed even the less Zionist among them to live in the Middle East, do with people full of justified hatred and evident pain? How could that woman dismantle the walls of cynicism that have

grown to compete well with the walls of enmity? How can an individual deal with collective responsibility and make any kind of change?

For me it was films that allowed me to cross the borders. Films offered me the opportunity to meet face to face with my fears and hatred, to meet face to face with the people behind the walls.

Suspension of Disbelief

Maybe it was the first lesson I had in film theory at high school in which I was introduced to the special trait of films; to create suspension of disbelief. When facing Abu Muhammad Yihya from Anabe in the dark cinema hall during the final episode of Ra'anana Alexandrowicz's "The Inner Tour" something new, naïve, overwhelming took over.

In that episode the old man is sitting next to the graves of his parents, on the lands of what once was his village Anabe, longingly telling about the grapes that were known for their exquisite quality and taste. Even now, while writing this article, tears come to my eyes. Tears for Abu Muhammad Yihya that was expelled from his village and lived as a refugee for the rest of his life, a good man in a cruel reality, a man who was longing for his home.

The lands of Anabe are easily overlooked while driving on the highway nearby. The intersection is called now Anava. Funny enough someone did maintain some reminder of Abu Muhammad Yihya's village, yet converted it into a Hebrew version. For me, as for Abu Muhammad Yihya, it will always be Anabe.

So "the Inner Tour", as well as "1948" by Mohammed Bakri, "Paradise Lost" by Ibtisam Mara'ana, "Arna's Children" by Juliano Mer-Khamis, "Chronicle of Disappearance" by Elia Suleiman and numerous other films were the crack in my wall of disbelief. And then came Oslo, wealthy yet modest Oslo, beloved and peaceful Oslo that gave me wings.

I often think about late Yitzhak Rabin - "O Captain! My captain!" - who dared to lead the battle for peace and

who created the only piece of hope in my lifetime. There must have been numerous political and practical reasons that linked the peace accords with Oslo, but something tells me it's not accidental. And I find myself wondering how Yitzhak Rabin felt when he took that long flight from Ben-Gurion Airport to Gardermoen via Vienna, Frankfurt or another connection. Or maybe prime ministers don't have connections?!

I have been trying to decipher the exact moment, the encounter or the incident that made me believe. Believe in my power to try and make a change, believe in my ability to raise my head above the water of cynicism, despair and disbelief, to believe in myself.

Was it the fact that a peaceful, just, humanistic world exists? Was it the recognition that a state and society that position welfare and civil rights at its heart exists? Was it the feeling I got, while wandering in the streets of Oslo, that for a glimpse of a moment I am entitled to take off the heavy weight of being Jewish and Israeli and become just a woman, just a human being walking in the streets of Oslo? Or maybe it was the special light or the fresh air? The serenity? The trust? The naivety that many Norwegians refer to themselves, not always with pride?

Or maybe it was the song that was sung with so much passion by Croats and Serbs from Vukovar in that beautiful hall in the Nansen Academy? They insisted that they speak different languages. Clearly they draw very different stories from the same history. Surely each and every one of them has his/her own very distinctive and private pain. And yet they sang the same song, a song full of longing and love.

And maybe it was the story about the bridge in Mostar, the bridge on which one could have been killed by the people on the other side, but also by the people on one's own side for betrayal upon return. I guess those were all parts of my journey. Fragments of reality joined arms with sequences of film and made me believe.

While crossing the border (my own Mostar Bridge one could say) I was shivering like a lonely leaf during a storm. Shivering from paralyzing fear. What am I going to see on the

other side? Will they hurt me? Will they catch me and take me hostage? Will they rape and murder me? Will I be taken by those angry warriors who have many reasons to hate me, and who will use all means in their war against occupation?

But, to be honest, while these fears are not entirely irrational, there were other fears as well. It's a bit embarrassing to acknowledge them, and even more embarrassing to confess them. My demons, I call them. My demons have neither face nor shape. They have no name or logical story. They are monstrous creatures belonging to my nightmares. The angry hateful warriors managed to keep me on my side of the border. It was my demons that made me cross it.

Whenever I recall it, I remember silence. After passing the scattered rocks and meeting my friend, putting myself in her hands. While driving through the city and the camp, when sitting on the balcony overlooking the refugee camp, I had found peace. For the first and maybe only time in my life there was no fear and my demons became friendly allies.

My journey to Deheishe was born in the magical light of Oslo and in the peaceful Nansen Academy in Lillehammer.

Other Voices

Other Voices – On the Road Film Festival was the fruit of that experience and a modest attempt to expand this personal, yet life-changing experience to the general public. So one woman who have always felt voiceless joined arms with other people in her community who felt the same, overlooked and voiceless, just like the ruins on Anabe's land. And through films a new bonding emerged, "a fraternity of the voiceless", one person in the audience in Sderot once said.

It is unforgettable, not only to me, that under the missile shelling in Sderot the Other Voices group watched "Paradise Lost" by the Palestinian Israeli filmmaker Ibtisam Mara'ana, a film about two Palestinian women trying to settle their deep painful yearning for Palestine with their identity and reality of life in present Israel. The

women from Sderot, who looked for a place with electricity in the partly darkened city, expressed empathy, care and identification with the two women despite the shelling outside, despite the fear, the anger and the hatred that flooded our streets. So what was it in Other Voices that allowed it to happen? What was it in Oslo and Lillehammer that allowed it to grow?

One can't underestimate the financial support. Without the lobbying and cooperation of the Nansen Dialogue Network, the Norwegian MFA funding wouldn't be accomplished and none of it would have happened.

Without the inviting setting, an actual dignified encounter between the rivals would not have been possible. Without the professional uncompromising standards of Haviva Bar and the team, we would have probably become another banal and superficial normative product of the "industry of peace". We felt worthy. We were seen and heard and when words and activities reached their limits, the films spoke for us. Films and images suspended our disbelief and gave us hope.

Hope

Funding has stopped and the Nansen Dialogue Network has terminated its engagement and involvement in the Middle East, after only 4 years.

I hope it is not the final end of this film. There is a lot to learn and use from the Nansen Dialogue experiences in the Balkans and there is a lot to discover, create and do in future Nansen Dialogue engagements in Israel and Palestine. We may not have many bridges right now, we may not sing the same songs, we might make any believer lose his faith these days. But if one looks and listens carefully, if one acknowledges the (bitter) fact that the battle for peace is not lighter in many ways from war, and if one accepts the necessity of the internal, distinguished and separate work each rival needs as a basis for future joint ventures, one can find glimmers of hope.

Miri Mesika is one of the most main-stream singers in

Israel. No one can deny or remain indifferent to her majestic voice. The audience who comes to her shows is heterogenic and vast. She is not identified with any political party or with any social agenda.

And yet, in almost every concert of hers, she sings a song in Arabic. “Inta Omri” – “You are my life” she sings the song of Umm Kulthum, usually with no band. No matter whom the audience is. She sings in Arabic and her voice opens the sky. She sings in Arabic and gives the feeling that a different reality must be possible.

About Other Voices and Nansen Dialogue Network

I remember someone once said: the Oslo Accords didn’t fail; they actually were never fully implemented. One can say a similar sentence about the cooperation between NDN and Other Voices. Unfortunately it has never matured and materialized to a degree that enables now a thorough evaluation of involvement and impact.

However, there always was and there still is, a potential.

NDN and more specifically, and maybe even personally, Steinar Bryn and Ingrid Vik chose to join arms with the Other Voices when it was still an idea during its preliminary study and feasibility examination, under the organizational umbrella of the Norwegian Peace Alliance. They paid a few visits to Israel and Palestine to study the context and they hosted a few seminars for Israelis and Palestinians in Lillehammer.

NDN provided a welcoming and safe refuge and space for encounter and for dialogue. It also provided openness and tolerance that allowed the parties to determine their respective boundaries, their objectives and their methods.

There is something about the (central) role of a third party in dialogue between rivals that seem to be yet undeciphered and un-developed. Since both parties brought experience and dialogue capacities and conceptions, the third party had mainly to provide the space for a dialogue and an allowing framework for it. By framework I mean facilitation together with some rules, consisting of respect,

acknowledgement, ability to listen and willingness to talk and to communicate. By rules I mean also the responsibility of the third party to maintain same and equal treatment of both parties. One of the distinguishing characteristics of members of the Other Voices was the feeling of being voiceless and of being overlooked, by the other side and by fragments of their own side (whether it is based on gender, social affiliation, status or nationality) and NDN's major role was to provide the feeling of being seen and being heard as a basis.

Another crucial dimension is sustainability. Other Voices, in its very first steps, was very much dependent on the Norwegian support, whether on the NDN lobbying and organizational support or on the NMFA when it comes to funding. On the bottom line, the Operation Cast Lead in Gaza killed Other Voices, together with hundreds of people and countless hopes, and it hasn't revived since.

Therefore, in cold terms of sustainability and impact Other Voices hasn't fulfilled its potential. It lasted only for 4 years, it occurred only once and it dissolved into the memories of its initiators, team members and participants. In addition to that, NDN didn't create long standing ties in Israel and Palestine and didn't establish a dialogue centre in Israel as it was envisaged and planned.

In the final scene of the film "Gola Sangam" a Persian poem tells about a flower growing out of a stone. Hence, one shouldn't overlook the achievements of Other Voices. It was an independent, fresh and risky project that was fully implemented according to its working plan through a structured and professional program. It succeeded in bringing the less natural and obvious crowd to dialogue: women from the generally speaking right wing periphery in Israel (bombed Sderot and the Jerusalem neighbourhood Kyriat Menachem) along with Palestinian women from Ramla and Wadi Ara. Other Voices created an overwhelming, effective process of empowerment and dialogue through films. It mobilized individuals to form groups and to lead civil actions in their community, combining raising their own voice with acknowledging the

voices and stories of their enemy.

Films allowed us not only to meet “face to face with the things we dread” as Perseus’s polished shield, through which the horror is reflected and is handled (Kracauer Siegfried: “The Establishment of physical Existence” in *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*”, Oxford University Press, 1960, p.296), but also to meet face to face with the people we overlook, with the voices we don’t hear and with the stories we deny. Films allowed us to and made us go through a powerful dialogue process with ourselves and with the Other we fear. Films allowed us also to expand our circles of influence and to share our own personal experience with our families and our communities through the dialogue sessions of the local groups and through the public On the Road Film Festival.

What in it can be directly tied with the NDN? It is hard to say with a definite, confident tone. With humility one could clearly point at the attitude of trust and belief, expressed by Steinar and Ingrid. The ability to listen to our stories, to our needs and to lobby for our cause created by itself a “suspension of disbelief” within the context of our complex relationship with the world. Feeling criticized, accused and judged by the world we, Israelis, encountered people and an institution that care, that are willing to listen to our stories and to work with them.

It is also the peaceful and welcoming setting of the Nansen Academy, where life seems so promising, certain and safe. It managed to convince, for a glimpse of a moment, even us, women terrified by the destiny of their children in the coming war or in the one after.

It was also the NDN’s experience from the Balkans that made us feel that we are not alone in living in conflict and added some humility to our self-perception.

When it comes to dialogue methods and perception, it was the distinction between dialogue and debate that provided us with a meaningful tool that was engraved in our memories.

It is also the principle of working with local leaders and with change agents in growing circles of influence, starting

from individuals and families, and expanding to the larger community. As practiced in the Nansen Dialogue Centres, Other Voices didn't impose a program on the communities, but rather developed and mobilized the program with members of the community, which took part and gradually lead the program.

I wish we had gone forward with that cooperation. My dream was to have an NDN centre in Israel, a centre that would have been brave enough not to compromise when it comes to dialogue and yet to work in collaboration with existing projects, initiatives and institutions. A centre that would not only bring the Middle East to Lillehammer, but would also bring Lillehammer to the Middle East.

About Other Voices - On the Road Film Festival

Based on the presupposition that culture and film can facilitate meaningful processes of social change, the Other Voices project aimed to empower the marginalized communities in Israel and to create ties and alliances between them. The target communities of the project were invited to take an active part in an on-going process of thinking, planning and acting in order to reach the most faithful and focused representations of their communities and in order to identify the most effective and authentic ties between the different communities.

Four dialogue groups, consisting of key members of four peripheral communities (2 Jewish communities, 2 Palestinian) took part in the Other Voices Program. The Film Program was a structured curriculum of 12 sessions consisting of film screenings and dialogue experiences. It was created by Haviva Bar, a professional consultant in the Jewish–Palestinian dialogue field and the team's facilitation supervisor, and Sharon Ben-Arie, the initiator and project leader.

The program engaged the participants in an experiential process that proceeded from the exploration of the self and one's personal voice, through the multiplicity of identities that form the individual and the national

group, to indirect contact with the 'other' voices within the national group and the national adversary. It should be noted that the groups were uni-national (Palestinian or Jewish Israeli), and that the dialogue between them took place through the films – which provided a powerful and effective, albeit indirect, encounter.

The participants experienced a demanding process of empowerment, acknowledgement and awareness, articulating their voices, encountering the other and practicing dialogue and social change. The participants were partners in the planning and production of public events, combining film screenings and discussions and of The Other Voices On the Road Film Festival, a public community event that travelled through the periphery in Israel in June 2008. This attractive, colourful and inviting public happening offered the context and the tools for representations of the weakened and silenced voices and a unique and meaningful dialogue and cultural experience.

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NDC SKOPJE – AN ESSENTIAL PARTNER FOR INTEGRATION IN MACEDONIA

– *Knut Vollebæk* –

As OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities I had the great pleasure and privilege of welcoming Sasho Stojkovski and Veton Zekoli of Nansen Dialogue Centre Skopje to The Hague in 2011 in order for them to receive the Max van der Stoel Award. The award is a prize of 50,000 Euros established by the Government of The Netherlands in memory of Max van der Stoel, a former Dutch Foreign Minister and the first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. The Prize is awarded every two years to a person or an institution that has made a significant contribution to the integration of multi-ethnic societies within the OSCE area.

The ceremony in 2011 was special since Max van der Stoel had passed away in April that year. Van der Stoel had been actively engaged in conflict prevention in Macedonia and was instrumental in hammering out the Ohrid Framework Agreement which ended the armed conflict in 2001 and improved the rights of the ethnic Albanians, thus laying the foundation for a process of integration between the country's Macedonian majority and Albanian minority.

The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities was established in 1992 on the backdrop of the Balkan wars. Inter-ethnic relations were understood to be a major cause of conflict and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) took upon itself to establish an institution that aimed to prevent inter-ethnic conflict by various means of societal integration. One of the tools that have been used over the years is education. Integration by way of including minorities and majority in the same school system, allowing the use of minority languages as means of education and at the same time making sure that the

minorities also learn to master the majority language has been seen as essential in order to include the minorities in all walks of life and giving them the respect they are entitled to as a minority.

In my activities in Macedonia I had built on the work Max van der Stoel started in the field of education by assisting the Government in Skopje in developing a policy of integrated education. My hope was that this policy would bring children of different ethnicities closer together. This should help them understand each other better, learn about each other's culture, language and traditions and facilitate interaction. Targeted training of teachers and elaboration of new textbooks should serve to weaken ethnic stereotypes and prejudices, and strengthen respect for diversity.

I believe that education remains undervalued as a tool in conflict prevention, and as a result, it is not prioritized. In working with governments on reducing the conflict potential in their countries, I learned that there can be neither economic development, nor prosperity, let alone stability, if measures to address interethnic tensions are not designed and implemented. Only a long-term investment in reconciliation, conflict prevention and peace-building can lay the foundations of stability and prosperity for future generations. In these efforts, the education system is the most readily available tool to bring up tolerant, respectful and multilingual citizens who are needed to ensure a cohesive multi-ethnic society.

In my work in Macedonia Nansen Dialogue Centre Skopje came in as an essential partner. NDC Skopje has understood the importance of developing education as a tool in order to build cohesive and sustainable multi-ethnic societies. Its integrated bilingual schools are models for promoting respect for diversity, bilingualism and harmonious relations between teachers, pupils and their parents from different ethnic backgrounds. In its reasoning, the international jury of the Award in 2011 pointed to NDC Skopje's "outstanding work to promote

integrated education and improve co-operation between different ethnic communities”.

Conflict prevention work cannot easily be quantified. It is not easy to measure the trust between communities, or the level of tolerance and understanding on the school ground, or the desire to listen to the other side and to co-operate. Still, NDC Skopje has achieved tangible results that can withstand scrutiny. A number of schools in several municipalities, governed by different political parties, now work with a model developed by NDC Skopje, whereas the tendency elsewhere in many other parts of the country, unfortunately, continues to be one towards increased ethnic division in schools.

Through patience, commitment and persistence, NDC Skopje has re-established trust between local ethnic communities separated by the violent events of 2001. NDC Skopje’s work is one of patience and confidence building. They have been faced with scepticism without losing hope. They did not despair when they have been lacking the support of local and central authorities. Nor have they given up when nationalists have blocked the road to their schools. Meeting with a great variety of obstacles have made them even more committed to move forward more resolutely than ever. As a result of its diligent work NDC Skopje now has several good examples and models that the organization may present to both central and local authorities.

Today NDC Skopje may take pride in having facilitated space where ethnic Macedonians, Albanians, Turks and Roma all study together. During my visits to Macedonia as OSCE High Commissioner I had the opportunity to visit some of the schools, to talk to teachers, students and parents, and to discuss the functioning of the schools with local authorities. I was always struck by the enthusiasm with which the students, parents and teachers described the school experience. It was moving to hear stories how students had changed from sceptics to strong supporters because they realized the advantage of being together in the

classroom across ethnic lines and how NDC Skopje had made parents their strongest supporters and to see the positive effect the schools had had on the local community. NDC Skopje succeeded in demonstrating that good education is not about ethnicity or language, but rather about quality, respect and co-operation. Teachers have been given specific training for the task of multilingual education and on how to handle multi-ethnic relations in the classroom. This has helped teachers in their approach. Local politicians across the political spectrum expressed enthusiasm because the schools showed good results. It seems that more and more people come to realize that NDC Skopje has brought forward a model that can help consolidate their country, and contribute to its stability.

The path NDC Skopje has chosen is not an easy one. Reconciliation and integration is not a process that can ever be considered accomplished. This is a road with many ups and downs, with rewarding moments, but also times full of frustration. The strength of NDC Skopje is in the staff's commitment to reconciliation, their belief in integration and in their longing for a peaceful future for the country that they love and call their home. Max van der Stoel once said: "You should not expect miracles from this sort of work. You have to arm yourself against disappointments and against what you perceive as unreasonable criticism".

What has been achieved is not a miracle; it is the result of hard work. Nothing will be achieved if we just wait for things to happen. The future is formed by our actions. In spite of the many challenges and obstacles Macedonia is faced with and in spite of the reluctance in many circles in Macedonia to accept a model of multilingual and multi-ethnic education, I believe that the contribution made by Nansen Dialogue Centre Skopje is essential for the future stability and cohesion of the country.

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He was Minister of foreign Affairs from 1997 to 2001. He has been Chairman of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities since 2007. He was head of the Norwegian Government Committee on Romani Questions and is a member of the International Commission on Missing Persons.

NANSEN MODEL FOR INTEGRATED EDUCATION - PROMOTING DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

– *Mirlinda Alemdar* –

History and background

After the end of the conflict in Macedonia and signing the Ohrid Peace Agreement in August 2001, NDC Skopje focused its activities towards promoting the Framework Peace Agreement and worked with young people from the areas mostly affected by the conflict.

In 2003 and 2004, the focus of the program activities was put on strengthening the capacities of the political parties i.e. the youth branches of the political parties through the “Schools for young politicians”.

In 2005, after adopting the Law on territorial division of the local self-governments, NDC Skopje started the implementation of the program “Dialogue and reconciliation” in Municipality of Jegunovce, which is located in the North-western part of Macedonia. NDC Skopje targeted the Municipality of Jegunovce, because it was mostly affected by the armed conflict in 2001. As a direct consequence of the conflict, in 2002, ethnically based segregation of the primary schools started within the municipality. One of the main challenges for reconciliation and re-integration was lack of sustained government commitment at the central level and absence of political will to overcome ethnically based segregation at all levels of society. While the Ohrid Framework Agreement was considered a solution to all the issues and consequences of the conflict, no real efforts were made to rebuild the bridges between communities that had been affected by the war. One of the consequences of through ethnic separation was inter-ethnic tensions which

led to segregation of schools along ethnic lines. In contrast to the political level, the local community searched for solutions at the grass-roots level, with initiatives to introduce integrated education in schools, initiative that came from the parents who sought better and safer education environment for their children in a multicultural setting.

With the goal of re-establishing the interrupted links of communication between various ethnic communities, NDC Skopje organized dialogue seminars and trainings on communication, cooperation, tolerance, team work and peaceful conflict resolution, after which, conditions were established for opening of six cabinets where students in mixed ethnic composition attended bilingual courses in IT, English, Macedonian and Albanian language. Each year, the courses were attended by approximately 200 students. The program was implemented through the year 2008 when conditions were created for opening the first integrated primary school “Fridtjof Nansen” in the village Preljubishte, Municipality of Jegunovce. Based on the positive feedback and upon the request of the local community, the first integrated secondary school “Mosha Pijade” was officially open in village Preljubishte in the year 2010. Following the firstly established integrated schools in the municipality of Jegunovce and the positive outcomes from the practical implementation of the Nansen model for integrated education, the project was expanded in additional multi-ethnic municipalities in various regions of Macedonia and has since continued to be recognized as one of the best examples for integrated education model within the country and the region.

During the earliest development phases of the Nansen model and the efforts to introduce the integrated education model in primary and secondary schools in Macedonia, the study visits to Norway had a significant impact in the exchange of experience in the field of integrated education. NDC Skopje program participants and stakeholders who attended the study tours in Norway became the biggest program supports and advocates of the idea for integrated education activities.

Politicians, mayors, teachers and students were part of the groups that had the opportunity to get closely acquainted with the education system in Norway through the organized visit and lectures in the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue, Nansen Academy, Kuben Upper School, Toyen Primary School, Sore Al Primary School and many other public institutions and NGO's.

The development process and successful implementation of the Nansen model for integrated education as well as its sustained continuity is due to the support of the main donor- the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The program support and excellent cooperation with NMFA enabled the structural development, program upgrade and continuous high- quality implementation of the Nansen model for integrated education which continues to grow and sustain the quality level.

Program philosophy

Nansen model for integrated education promotes and supports the integration processes in schools with mixed ethnic composition of students. The model has been successfully implemented in a selected number of primary and secondary schools throughout local municipalities in Macedonia and has demonstrated excellent results.

In 2011 the Nansen Dialogue Center Skopje was awarded the Max van der Stoep prize by the OSCE – HCNM for achieving outstanding results in promoting cooperation between ethnic communities. The jury noted that it had “taken up the challenging task of bringing together students, parents and teachers in an area that has been affected by the 2001 conflict and is characterized by great ethnic divisions.” The integrated bilingual schools are models for promoting respect for diversity, bilingualism and harmonious relations between teachers, pupils and their parents from different ethnic backgrounds.

Integration as a component is one of the basic characteristics of the schools that apply the Nansen

model for integrated education. The model supports the integration of students who belong to different ethnic communities, who study together (each in their native language) in the same school facility and same shift.

Besides promotion of integration for the students, as a consequence, there is also integration of the teaching staff from different ethnic backgrounds, and certainly, a very important benefit is the integration amongst the parents of the enrolled students.

NMIE offers a possibility for skilful connection and integration of the teaching content from mandatory and extracurricular character, enriching at the same time the extracurricular activities with the bilingual and game approach during its implementation.

The inventive integrated extracurricular activities through the individualized approach towards each student, the bilingual approach, as well as the continuous team and tandem method of work have an influence on the improvement of the quality of the overall educational process, and on the development of numerous competences and life skills among the students, teachers and parents necessary for a quality coexistence in communities of a multi-ethnic character.

The program activities of the Nansen model are structured to address the issues the Macedonian educational system is facing, and to offer new approaches increasing inter-ethnic integration and tolerance. The model promotes cooperation between the schools and the local community. One of the main goals of the model is to prevent segregation in schools and to encourage grass root engagement in local civil society initiatives for fostering ethnic reconciliation, tolerance and diversity.

Meaningful cooperation with parents

“The parents have been the brave ones, to try something new for their children and to stand firm when many forces

tried to stop them. For me, that is something very strong for the parents to show this resilience and strength. This would not have happened if they did not have the total trust between them and the Nansen Dialogue Centre Skopje.”

- Bente Knagenhjelm

Nansen model for integrated education has enabled successful integration and trust building between the parents from various ethnic communities. The implementation of the program for cooperation with parents is carried out through educative and creative workshops, courses and consultations.

The schools that apply the Nansen model for integrated education have benefited from developing positive partnerships with parents by involving them in all decisions affecting their child's education and learning. Engaging with parents offers the chance to understand the role that they play in all the phases of their child's learning and development process. The active involvement of parents in the Nansen model schools has promoted a learning community in which students engage positively with school staff and their peers.

Developing teachers skills and competences

Since 2008, Nansen Dialogue Centre Skopje has been organizing theoretic and practical trainings and workshops for teachers and professors from the primary and secondary schools that work as direct implementers of the annual programs for integrated extracurricular activities according to the Nansen model for integrated education.

Due to the lack of professional cadre that can work on the implementation of programs for integrated education in multi-ethnic schools, NDC Skopje in partnership with the Ministry for Education and Science of R. of Macedonia established the first Training Centre for Integrated Education in June, 2012.

“The support of the teachers included in the Nansen program to become a reflexive practitioner is an excellent strategy for encouraging personal change, because it is not only about realization of integrated extracurricular activities intended for integration of students from various cultural backgrounds, it is also about the development of new relations, behaviour towards the environment, acquisition of certain values, etc. The teachers’ experience related to the tandem cooperation is an outstanding positive practice during the training process of the new teachers and the exchange of experience among the teachers who are already included in the program.” - Prof. Florina Shehu, Ph.D - Teacher Training Faculty in Skopje

The training process for the Nansen model for integrated education enables the teachers to gain the necessary skills and competences for applying different methods and techniques, and set up school practices and policies that will give the school a positive and inclusive ethos.

Program impact

Through the Nansen model for integrated education the students are empowered to take responsibility for their own growth and achievement while teachers care for the wellbeing of all students. The education model components contribute to conflict prevention by fostering cooperative relations and by promoting inclusion and respect for diversity in the school and wider community. The teachers and the key policymakers are provided resources and best practices on how to develop local policies in order to help schools address the issues and challenges in their everyday operation which are directly linked to the establishment of multicultural values and principles, also to support activities within the school that help prevent conflicts and school segregation.

The internal and external program evaluations demonstrated improved and enriched didactic component in

all groups, upgrade of knowledge and skills for successful approach to other cultures, domination of interactive activities and group work, individualized approach towards each student and individual progress; improved and acquired techniques for active and independent studying by the students:

- Exceptionally high index of group cohesion, compactness in all groups of students, which confirms the absence of any potential risk of interethnic tensions and conflicts in the ethnically mixed groups.

- Successful promotion of the inclusive component and permanent inclusion and independence of the students with special needs for active participation in the extracurricular activities, through which they are accepted as equal members of the group. Their progression is evident on both levels – socialization and studying.

- Reduced barriers for learning of the “other” language; cultural dialogue between students from different ethnic communities is successfully achieved. In addition, the educational exclusion among the students due to language barriers is minimized.

- The multi-ethnic character of the groups is visually captured through a successful multicultural design of the school space, created by the students themselves.

- Improved results and performance in the regular teaching process, as a direct result and influence of the integrated extracurricular activities.

- Developed skills among the students for constructive conflict resolution, critical thinking, flexible approach towards the problem situations, capacity for constructive approach in the research situations, both in the extracurricular activities, but also in the regular teaching process.

- Dynamic, multidirectional communication is achieved, without language barriers, enriched with skills for nonverbal communication and understanding.

- Developed personal and social competences among the students necessary for life in a real multi-ethnic context.

“The NDC model of integrated education shows a high level of effectiveness in building and developing of the intercultural dialogue among children and youth. It strongly affects both students and teachers. The model is appropriate to the settings in which it is implemented and completely interconnects with the state priorities in the field of education. The ethos of the Program is completely accepted by all NDC teachers. They are fully equipped with competences for effective implementation of the goals of the NDC Program”. Prof. Zoran Velkovski, Ph.D. Institute for Pedagogy, Faculty of Philosophy

While the Nansen model for integrated education continues to mark success on national level, the main challenge and concern still remains the separation of society along ethnic lines which continues to widen. This is especially visible in schools where the next generations are being brought up in mono-ethnic environments where stereotypes and prejudice thrive. NDC Skopje continues with the efforts to reduce the barriers in schools by actively engaging all relevant stakeholders and promoting global educational trends which impose the need for preparing the new generations of students to live in multicultural and diverse surroundings. The implementation of integrated education programs will contribute to the development of tolerant and cosmopolitan perspectives amongst the target groups.

Mirlinda Alemdar works holds the position of Coordinator of the Department for Public Relations and International Cooperation within Nansen Dialogue Centre Skopje. She is a graduated class teaching professor from the Teacher Training Faculty “St. Kiment Ohridski” in Skopje, Macedonia. Her professional experience is linked with multiple international organizations and NGO’s focused on the development, implementation and preferment of capacity building programs for youth, managers, Government representatives and advancement of cross-border cooperation in the Balkan region. Ms. Alemdar has worked in NDC Skopje since 2011 on the promotion and reinforcement of the organization’s public relations management and the practical reinforcement of international cooperation initiatives complementary with NDC Skopje’s scope of work.

THE WORD FOR MAN IS ROMA

– Goran Lojancic –

“People are strange, when you’re a stranger”

James Douglas Morrison

About the title

In Romani language the word for man/human is actually “Roma”, so the title is accurate in its content. However, I also used the opportunity to play with paraphrasing the title of the famous Ursula LeGuin novel “The Word for the World is Forest”. In that novel Mrs. LeGuin describes the moment violence emerges from the inability of one civilization to understand, accept and appreciate the beauty of another, which was simply too different to comprehend. Not all discrimination is coming from evil and moral degradation, maybe not even most of it. In fact, it is in the formula “ignorance – discrimination – violence” most average people find their cause of discriminatory feelings and actions. Is it then fair to think that, before we label and explain other people, we should pause for a moment and ask ourselves how much we really know about the people we try to label and explain? Is the word for our world the only word worth knowing?

Prelude

If humanitarian work is your trade there are not many areas more rewarding than working with Roma. This is because of one very simple reason. Most of the countries/nations in Europe have a moment in history they are not

very proud of, would like to erase from its history books if possible - a traumatic collective experience. It seems that one more thing they have in common is a vast percentage of the population that has, to be gentle, uneasy feelings about the Roma people. It appears there are many psychological, socio-political and historical reasons for this, but the scope of this article would not allow elaborating this statement properly. Let's just say that the portfolio of discriminatory actions against Roma also involves cases from countries that have made distinctive successes in overcoming racism, sexism, chauvinism, etc.

Furthermore, social inclusion and integration of Roma people involves work in almost any aspect of human life; education, employment, housing, political participation, social and health care - you name it. Even the possession of proper documents and registration is very often a burning issue with Roma population in Europe. This community is so jeopardized that there is a wide range of "Roma decades"- ambitiously envisioned initiatives from various players - from UNDP and EU to local and regional governmental and non-governmental actors. If you want to work with Roma, the floor is yours, as long as you can get support for it. Which is, unfortunately, not very likely, despite all of these fancy decades and publicly announced determinations.

Several years ago Nansen Dialogue stepped onto that floor in city of Bujanovac, South Serbia. This article is to share what we experienced.

Bujanovac

Bujanovac is a small municipality in South Serbia, overlooking the borders with Kosovo and Macedonia. Its ethnic composition is balanced between Serbs and Albanians with a small-margin majority of the later. These two elements make this municipality a very interesting micro model of interaction and cooperation between two nations that have a long history of conflicts and political disputes, especially because it is one of the last Serbian-

Albanian areas where people are actually living together, and not side by side. One doesn't have to be a rocket scientist to understand why this municipality was interesting for an organization such as the Nansen Dialogue Network, whose intentions are basically directed towards processes of sustainable integration and substantial, continuous dialogue between ethnic groups in order to exchange perpetual conflicts with institutional stability across ethnic borders.

While we were working with the relationship between the Serbian and Albanian communities in Bujanovac, we realized that there was a significant Roma population in the municipality. Significant enough in numbers that, if they took away their votes from the Serbian and Albanian political parties, they could actually be a decisive force in forming any kind of political majority, with the exception of a possible Serbian-Albanian coalition. In the context where a tiny majority of one ethnic group creates overwhelming, almost 100%, influence in political decision making, thus generating all kinds of ethnic frustrations, this was not to be overlooked. Oh, yes - I would very much like to say that our work with Roma started with the sole intention to help them overcome their own living difficulties in Bujanovac, but articles like this have an annoying habit of asking for the truth. And the truth is that in our plans, promoting Roma interests came later during the implementation. At the very beginning we saw the Roma as the missing piece in the puzzle of reaching overall political stability for (now) all three major ethnic groups living in the region - through adequate representation at the very top of the political decision making structures.

The first movement - the task ahead and pieces of methodology

If I was too harsh on the Nansen Dialogue Network in the previous statement, the proof for that would be the logical conclusion that a community that can provide the political majority and is participating in forming the

structures of decision making can gain a lot for itself. This was the very first card we drew from the deck and that card proved to be useful during the entire program. I always believed in good intentions as a prerequisite for humanitarian work, but it is not such a bad thing to have that famous light at the end of the tunnel in form of the self-interest of the community you are trying to help. Nansen Dialogue is limited in that regard, we believe that while everybody can and should help with integration, it is the community itself that needs to have strength, ability and space to stand up for itself and participate on equal basis. And the interest of the Roma community to have a joint strategy and an institutional place to implement it was crystal clear.

However, our elementary logic got stuck at the very first step; when we realized that the Roma community in Bujanovac existed only in numbers, and that the Roma people were living their individual lives, doing their individual jobs. They certainly were not an organized political community, with an organization, a strategy, social and political aims, or even an idea that they could do something to change the course of their lives. Yes, there were a lot of small projects, Roma individuals employed in international NGOs or in municipal bodies in order to secure legal formalities, but despite the work and good will of these individuals, nothing was really changing for the better for the Roma community in general. In other words - the chance to exploit their social and political standing was there, but nobody took it.

Instead, there were individuals that were taking the benefit of representing the Roma community by invitation, not by representation. Number of positions in local self-government and state institutions were available, mainly due to the laws that cover minority rights, and the big individual hunt for those positions was very vivid. Once it was recognized, an enormous number of social clubs, NGO's, even political organizations were established by one or couple of influential Roma people with the intention to compete for those few valuable positions and gain

respective benefits. That created competition, competition created frustration, frustration created conflicts, perpetual conflicts created a community that was completely in disarray, headless, leaderless, susceptible to manipulation and completely out of any political representation in this municipality where political decisions can literally be a matter of life and death.

Obviously, both the expertise of Nansen Dialogue and the aforementioned situation in the Roma community forced us to apply a method based on the necessity to create a joint, inclusive, public and effective strategy of dealing with the most important issues for the Roma community, a strategy they could then use to approach local institutions. In order to make this possible there were two fields of engagement to cover:

1. Development of the institutional capacity and ability of the Bujanovac Roma to participate in social and political life.

2. Clear identification of the issues of importance to the Roma community and a strategy designed for their resolution.

In the first area we decided to use a soft, open-ended approach, leaving our Roma participants to decide by themselves what kind of organization they would like to have. Our first task was to open the program to all important Roma individuals and groups, by making sure they were all invited and that it was well-known that they were all invited. We were fully aware from the very beginning that Serbian and Albanian political parties were not going to be happy with the danger of losing Roma votes they could buy for sack of flour or a couple of bottles of cooking oil. It is no surprise that poor community with no secure means for living trade its votes for useable goods, as long as they don't see relevance of their political participation through voting. Bigger parties in Serbia traditionally take advantage of this situation by offering those goods in exchange for votes and that was also common practice in Bujanovac as well. Therefore, there was a danger that they would separate influential Roma individuals from their community and

undermine the project by using their influence to protect the status quo. By that time, the Nansen Dialogue Network had already developed a reputation as an organization that favoured an inclusive approach and was completely non-biased in terms of ideological, ethnic or gender basis, and whoever was invited to participate and didn't want to, or failed to contribute, needed to have at least a proper explanation to offer to his or her own community.

(Methodological note: Almost every handbook of dialogue would say that inclusivity is an important part of any dialogue initiative. There is a very good practical reason for that. It is not strange that participation in some classifications (for ex. in work of Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef) is recognized as a basic human need, people either want to participate or want to have a choice whether they want to participate or not. Not all the people are ready to participate in constructive dialogue all the time, but they want to be heard and deserve to be heard. In cases where complicated, complex, and conflicting motives are present - and they almost always are - every step away from inclusivity is increasing the size of the possible opposition. This is especially vivid in communities that have trouble with harmonizing private/individual and public interest, thus being suitable for manipulation and corruption.)

In the early stage of the project, where members from different conflicting organizations or individuals were brought together, work on conflict resolution, establishing the joint cause of action and defining the need and scope of the proper joint strategy lasted almost unexpectedly short. Interest-based conflicts are among the easiest to deconstruct as long as you have sufficient common interest to replace them. Participants quickly recognized the space for all of them in a new strategy and turned their attention to the issue of what kind of infrastructure they would like to have in order to secure and implement that strategy. The final choice was determined by the fact that the main sources of discrimination, but also the chances and opportunities to change the discriminatory pattern and do

something concrete for the Roma community, are lying in the local government. And the final choice was to create a strong, united political party for all Roma political subjects who wanted to participate and contribute.

This choice was too obvious and straightforward, and the problem was that no matter how many different organizations would participate in that new political party, old initiatives of that kind had been tried and failed. The level of previous political organizations was too low, too interest-based, too individual-based and not very informed and knowledgeable about what is needed to form and run a competitive political party. Based on the failures of previous political initiatives, the trust that the Roma community had in their political representatives was low to almost cynical proportions. To have one more political party in a long line of so-called political parties was destined to fail; it would be erased from the political market in no time.

So, there was no other road than the long one. We stuck to the idea originated by the participants, but managed to convince them that if a political party was their choice, it would have to be a proper political party and it would have to come after a long and extensive political education. The Nansen Dialogue Network summoned its own resources as well as the resources of our partners, friends and colleagues whose main area of engagement is political education, to launch the second phase of the project. This was before the party was officially organized.

The second movement - achievements

The second phase consisted of training in political organization, lobbying, political marketing, election process, political decision making, public presentation, institutional representation, community work, coalition capacity and documentation. Parallel with that, the first dialogue phase of the project was never abandoned. In fact, the political education stage was used as a never-ending source of material for dialogue, a setting that was a lot closer to real-life problems than any analogical exercise could possibly be.

The pinnacle of this phase was set to be three months before the local elections 2008, so that it could be tested and attempted in a real life situation. The success was overwhelming. Massive community work and advertising in the pre-election period lead to the final party convention, the biggest in-door political event in the recent history of Bujanovac, attended by 1200 people (total number of Roma population in Bujanovac is estimated at 3.600 people). During the election, the party won two seats in the local parliament and one seat in the municipal executive board. To our knowledge no other Roma political party in the region has ever managed to produce a result like that.

There is no clear line between the end of the process and calculation of the achievements in dialogue initiatives. In my opinion the only way to successfully end a dialogue initiative is to make dialogue endless. For a troubled community dialogue is like air for a human - when you have it you take it for granted, when you don't, you painfully understand why and how it is important. The trick is to not lose it, and to avoid doing so you have to understand exactly what you would lose if you do. Obviously, sooner or later it is the community itself that have to take care about its own dialogue, so for a dialogue practitioner to fade away from the process while the dialogue is active and secure is a proper way to finish.

Third phase - the road ahead

Therefore, the third and final phase of this project was to identify problems of the Roma community and implement proper initiatives for projects that this time would be supported by the local government. The Nansen Dialogue Network was overlooking this process, but, most importantly, the management of the new political party did most of the job by itself. That was in itself an achievement.

There were several interesting initiatives in that period, mostly related to education, infrastructural development in Roma-inhabited town areas, active participation and clear voices in all political decisions

important for all communities etc. In fact, even the almost forgotten overall goal from the beginning of the project; to push Serbian and Albanian political parties to form an interethnic coalition in Bujanovac was achieved in the next election in 2012. Of course, this project is not exclusively responsible for that, if it is responsible at all, but the Roma in Bujanovac really showed everybody how it is possible to overcome your limitations and feuds so that you can see the broader picture.

However, one initiative in my opinion deserves to be mentioned separately, because it represents how strategic thinking and a long-term platform can address the very root of the problem. Large portions of the Roma community in Serbia, those who are in the most vulnerable position, are “invisible” to the state because they are not registered at all. It is estimated that in the Serbian capital Belgrade only, more than 100.000 people live in so called “cardboard cities”, neighbourhoods made out of cardboard and tents, without any documents, without proper jobs, without kids going to school, completely and absolutely neglected by the state. That problem was very present in Bujanovac as well, of course in significantly smaller numbers.

This new Roma political party confronted the problem by:

1. Creating a strategy, an overall program and following education activities regarding rights and responsibilities of Roma citizens toward the state regulations and vice versa, based on strategic planning education they received during Nansen Dialogue involvement.

2. Advertising the problem directly to members of their own community, based on the education they got in political marketing during Nansen Dialogue education.

3. Door-to-door campaigning in Roma communities to find potential beneficiaries (people who need to be registered), collect data and investigate possible problems in the future process of registration, mainly done by party

volunteers from their youth organization.

4. Involving state institutions responsible for registration in order to cooperate on the most efficient way to register new people based on dialogue education given during Nansen Dialogue training and previously gained political influence they had established in local self-government.

As a result 873 people (out of 3.600 strong community) were registered in a process that had lasted only several months at the moment when the last evaluation was made. In fact, after the overwhelming success in Bujanovac, authors of this project were invited to present it to neighbouring municipalities and help establish a similar infrastructure there.

This example is important, in my opinion, because it shows how dialogue can be valid not only in processes of reconciliation and better understanding among humans involved, but can also enrich institutions with new strength without undermining the structure of those institutions. In light of constant arguments of “relational vs. institutional” it is important to know that it is better relationships that can provide higher efficiency and more stable environment in the existing institutions.

What did we learn?

What did we really learn? During a three-and-a-half years long project you obviously learn a lot and it is impossible in such a short article to explain all the learning processes both from the point of view of the participants and the organizers. Most of this article is just an explanation of everything we learned throughout the project and how we used it to adjust the original plan. Furthermore, the learning curve is not the same for all of the groups. It is important to know where you do start and why you do start exactly from that point, but also what kind of progress you can expect in a given period of time.

With this group we had huge controversies, not

only between different members of the group, but also individually in the minds, self-respect and developed social habits of almost all of the participants. We had at the same time, in the same group, academic citizens and functionally illiterate people, politically experienced and politically ignorant, extremely rich and unbelievably poor people, very old and very young... We also had participants highly educated and with good state jobs who were so deeply adjusted to being discriminated that they had almost no hope, not even the idea that it is possible for things to be different, doing unintentional damage to the process of empowerment with almost everything they would say at the beginning of the project.

Most of the efforts in this project found its synergy in empowerment and ownership in such a way that the formula where more empowerment meant more ownership wasn't only the goal of the project, but also a generator for its further progress. We thought at that time, and it proved to be correct, that in order to deal with discrimination pointed toward you, you have to fight in two directions: against the discrimination in general, on the social, political and institutional levels, but also against habits, the sense of depravity and submission to blind faith on a psychological level. I would like to stress one example from the second direction that, I believe, is of the utmost importance for this approach.

Something that we had to figure out from the very beginning is to what extent and in what way sympathy and compassion make an effect on the process of empowerment of discriminated people. To sympathize with your troubled participants feels natural for any decent human being and it is easy to end up in extensive discussions about different types, areas, examples and consequences of the discrimination. These discussions may strengthen emotional connection between the trainer/organizer and the group but it also strengthens the sense of being powerless under this long line of examples. The first time we ended up in this discussion we asked participants to go into groups, summarize areas where they were discriminated against

and come out with examples. A big surprise for the group was that when we gave them 1.5 hours to do so. One of the participants said that that it is waste of time because they could come out with that in five minutes. After one hour and 25 minutes, the very same participant came and asked for more time.

It appeared that this was the first time for them to discuss discrimination on their account by not taking it for granted, but thinking about it without overwhelming emotions. This was the first step in figuring out the size and content of the problem. Later, much later, this lead to deconstructing it and finding ways to deal with it. After that dialogue exercise I remember saying that there is no need for us to compete in complaints and in sharing feelings about them being discriminated, that we can take each other's words that we feel the same about it, but that we could also sit at home and have those feelings. The message was that we are done with complaining and that our focus in the future should be to do something about it.

It was risky, but very much needed policy. In one of the seminars we held in Bulgaria, participants came with the request to go to one of those big shopping malls 150 km away from the seminar venue. They wanted to buy some things and then resell it in Serbia for a higher price. It was a request easy to deny, but it was also the opportunity to test the resilience of the group, so we made an agreement that they could go, as long as we did what we were planning to do after they came back, no matter how long it would take. It was a long and painful working day. They organized the trip, got up early, travelled 300 km in both directions and then started the seminar day. In one moment they were so tired that one of the participants came to us during one of the breaks and said "we understand that you want to treat us equally and work like you work with any other group, but you don't have to, after all we are only Roma". I said that I can finish the working day any time, but it would have to be their decision, because so far they had given me no reason to believe that there was any difference between them and any other group I'd been working with before.

They did the rest of the day without any further requests.

As I said before, it is so easy to sympathize and comply with people who spent most of their lives being treated as second-rate citizens, but one has to think; how much sympathy is enough. It is important not to reinforce both the sense of being less capable, but also these small gains some people sometimes want to get with excuse of being less capable and inadequate. You can actually adjust to being discriminated so much that you will try to use it as an argument. If you meet understanding in that regard, that might completely undermine your self-respect and self-reliance. From my point of view this moment in Bulgaria was one of the key turning points in this entire program because that day they understood that it is too dangerous to use your biggest problem in life as an excuse for gaining the lesser good. They never took that road again.

Coda

I have many praises of this group I could use to finish the article. Achievements they made, personal changes they went through, abilities they showed, friendship they expressed. I think it even says enough when I say that in my experience, I could never expect to have a three-and-a-half-years long program with a group that never ever was late, not for one single second, not for any exercise or session, not after any kind of break. This is how strongly they felt about discipline, how much they wanted to succeed, how generous they were toward the program.

But I would like to finish with one of the many “small” things that were an unexpected treasure of the program.

We had a participant who spent most of his life being a lounge singer, which is one of the traditional jobs for Roma since they are in general exceptionally talented in music. The fact is that he was all about music and dance and this career was some kind of embarrassment to a group of young and ambitious participants. They wanted to break the ties with this traditional way of living, finding in it one of the major roots of them not being appreciated. But this

old man was so keen and persistent in learning new things, trying to catch up with the youngsters, contributing on each and every step of the program, that he himself stood as a living, recognized and accepted symbol of the idea that there is nothing in anybody's culture that can justify discrimination. No dialogue exercise, no lesson or anything that any trainer could say and do, no book written about it, can possibly be a supplement for this extraordinary display of something that should be so obvious, but isn't.

Goran Lojancic is a former journalist who has been facilitating dialogue within the Nansen Dialogue Network since 1999. He has been director of NDC Bujanovac, where he was responsible for the strategic development, creation and implementation of all projects, programs, reports, local and international presentation, execution of the lectures and dialogue seminars for local participants.

He has given over 80 lectures and seminars in front of various Network offices, but also for other local and international organizations: Bulgarian Regional School for Politics, International Committee for Missing Persons (ICMP), United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and many others. He is currently living in Belgrade.

LILLEHAMMER MUNICIPALITY - A SUPPORTER OF NANSEN DIALOGUE!

– *Grim Syverud, Bjørn Lie and Tord Buer Olsen* –

Would the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue have materialized without the Olympic Games in Lillehammer in 1994? Probably not! And it is quite unlikely that Lillehammer municipality would have been asked to engage in a municipal development project in Serbia without the Nansen Center.

This is the story:

Lillehammer municipality was closely involved in the Lillehammer Olympic Aid campaign from 1992 to 1994. Then Mayor, Mr. Audun Tron was one of the campaign's founders and chairman of the board, and the municipality was actively involved in practical matters throughout the campaign, especially in the final and closing stages.

This established a new and revitalized connection between the municipality and the Nansen Academy, and when the project "Democracy, Human Rights and Peaceful Conflict Resolution" started in 1995, it was directly linked to the Olympic Aid campaign. The municipality from the very beginning became an unofficial partner through several channels, as the program for the participants in the dialogue seminars included visits to different municipal services - all put together according to the composition of the groups and the interests of their participants.

And nearly all groups, through more than 20 years of dialogue-seminars, have met with Lillehammer's Mayor in the town hall, where they have been introduced to how a Norwegian municipality is organized and functions, been invited to comment and ask questions, and in that way been able to bring home with them a presumably new and interesting wall of reference for their further involvement

in the development of their own communities.

One of these groups consisted of 15 local politicians and 1 journalist from Bujanovac and Presevo in southern Serbia, attending a week-long dialogue seminar in June 2003. In Lillehammer they met with several representatives from the municipality, politicians and administrative staff, and were given a thorough introduction to local governance in Norway.

In the autumn the same year, then Mayor Mrs. Synnøve Brenden and a few employees from the municipality were invited by Nansen Dialogue to Serbia for a re-visit to the group of politicians. It was important for Nansen Dialogue that Lillehammer municipal representatives could learn about the activity of the dialogue centres. The group visited Belgrade, Vranje, Bujanovac and Presevo, was introduced to program activities and enthusiastic staff members, and also met local officials, especially in Bujanovac and Presevo. We also experienced the brutal reality of poor facilities and lack of equipment in municipal services, especially within health care. This was a further strengthening of the connection between the municipality and Nansen Dialogue.

On arrival in Bujanovac, the group was invited to visit a meeting in the municipal council. What an honour we thought! We got seated on the first row, and the Bujanovac Mayor, Mr. Nagip Arifi, gave a warm welcome speech, and invited Lillehammer to become twin town with Bujanovac. This decision had been unanimously approved by the council and Arifi presented to Mayor Brenden a "Decision on the intercommunication and co-operation of Bujanovac municipality with the Norwegian kingdom town of Lillehammer".

The Lillehammer delegation was not actually prepared for this, but our Mayor had to reply, and within a minute she was given a speech manuscript, hasty scribbled on a small piece of paper by Mr. Steinar Bryn!

We were later to learn that this meeting was the first for the council in a long time where they met in full. Previously, many representatives from the council's minority block had not bothered to attend, arguing it was no point, since the majority

block adopted all matters according to their own agenda, regardless of the minority block's view and suggestions.

This of course reflected the ethnic tensions that existed in the area, being the prime reason for Nansen Dialogue to operate there. For the Lillehammer delegation, it was an almost shocking experience, and the first of several to follow, uncovering a reality that was to influence our engagement and the outcome of it in the years to come.

In August 2004, the phone rang in Mr. Syverud's office in Lillehammer Town Hall. On the line, introducing himself was Mr. Torgeir Hanaas from International Management Group (IMG)'s Belgrade office, who straight away asked if Lillehammer municipality would be interested in taking part in a project funded by The Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (NMFA), with the aim to strengthen the overall functioning of Bujanovac and Presevo municipalities in Serbia- no less!

Mr. Hanaas described the following situation: IMG was carrying out several small-scale infrastructure projects in the two municipalities; within water supply, roads and other services. However, the lasting effects of the upgrading through the projects were poor, mainly because the municipalities failed to follow up systematic maintenance, from his point of view due to poor organizational structure, lack of competence etc. 15 years of conflict, including occasions of armed struggle together with international sanctions had of course also contributed in a negative way. Mr. Hanaas assured that the two municipalities would welcome cooperation with Lillehammer, and IMG would secure funding from NMFA. He knew that Lillehammer had visited the area, and the link to Nansen Dialogue was another positive factor.

Why not? Lillehammer's then Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Annar Skrefsrud, was positive – on one absolute condition; if we were to accept the invitation all cost must be covered by others. The municipal budget had no room for such spending. He got a go from Lillehammer's politicians, and in February 2005 an agreement on a project was signed with IMG; more on this below.

Why should Lillehammer contribute?

Lillehammer municipality is not very different from other Norwegian municipalities. However, we are known world-wide as host of the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in 1994, which has given the Lillehammer-name a special standing, also internationally. We also have the privilege to be the home-town of the Nansen Academy, and in this connection particularly the Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue. It represents a special opportunity – if not a responsibility – regarding international cooperation in general, and as a supporter of Nansen Dialogue activity in particular.

“The Nordic model” is often referred to when discussing social and economic development and the Nordic countries are often regarded as “the best-governed in the world”. Irrespective of how this is viewed, and political differences, obviously Norwegian municipalities are worth telling about.

A nation’s foreign policy is not amongst the municipal priority duties. But maybe they have a role to play in it? KS – The Association of Norwegian Municipalities is involved in project-cooperation in countries around the world, different NGOs also. The overall goal is the development and strengthening of local governance, institutions, equality-building, training of politicians etc. These projects are often partly funded by NMFA, who acknowledge the role of both KS, NGOs and direct project participation from Norwegian municipalities in the total picture of implementing Norwegian foreign policy at its full.

Therefore; Lillehammer has a role to play! However, to participate, and even more; to achieve results requires cultural understanding and respect, and an approach which emphasizes dialogue and reflection instead of “this is how to do it”-lessons.

Lillehammer municipality has tried to advocate this in its cooperation with individuals and institutions, both through the specific project engagement in Serbia, and as a partner for Nansen Dialogue in general.

Meeting Lillehammer`s Mayor

With just a very few exceptions, all dialogue groups coming to Lillehammer since 1995 have met Lillehammer`s Mayor. This is usually a one- to two-hour meeting, starting with a presentation of Lillehammer, and then more specifically on how the municipality is organized politically and administratively, service responsibilities and current topics. The participants are also given our coat-of-arms pin, and hear the story of the Birkebeiners.

It is a possibility to focus on our values, our approach to local governance, and comment on some of the differences between the Norwegian model and others; majority vs. minority in the local politics, employees policy, media versus municipal politics etc.

It has been many interesting meetings and exchanges of views through the years, and many questions. One easily remembered were expressed from a member in one of the earliest groups, a Mayor, who asked our Mayor: “How much can you influence the local Chief of Police?”

Other municipal services have also played an important role in the Nansen Dialogue – municipality meetings. Let two be mentioned here: GLØR is the inter-municipal waste-plant, one of Norway`s leading of its kind. It collects waste and gets rid of it – but it also makes use of it through a well-organized recycling system. An interesting experience if you live in a place with poor waste-handling, and important in a broader, global environmental picture.

Søre Ål primary school has also been on the visiting list for almost the whole period of dialogue seminars in Lillehammer. The school practice “open solution”, and every morning all pupils and staff gather for a plenary daily kick-off where pupils – individually or in groups – give a short presentation or perform. Is it unique? Probably not, but it is different from many other schools.

Lillehammer municipality of course runs its services according to national standards and decisions by the local politicians. It represents one way to do it – one solution – from which one can learn, be inspired – or even disagree

with, whether you live in the Balkans or in another Norwegian municipality.

The dialogue-group participants strive to strengthen their local communities and institutions in spite of ethnic tensions and other difficulties. Meeting Lillehammer municipality in one or several ways has hopefully been inspiring, and served as one of several places where they could focus on other issues than the troubles in their own community. Hopefully, it has been an area for the expression of common curiosity and a change of focus.

The cooperation project with Bujanovac.

Then back to IMG. The contract was signed, and funding secured from NMFA. In Lillehammer municipality a project group was set up, and the first priority was to get to know Bujanovac and Presevo municipalities. An ambitious “fact-finding” program was carried out. Representatives from Lillehammer interviewed politicians, administrative officials and business-owners, in total more than 30 persons, and made a report - “Consultancy Services for South Serbia Infrastructure/Municipal Development Project” (Phase I)”. The conclusions and recommendations were submitted to IMG, with copies to NMFA, and were of course presented to the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo.

In Lillehammer`s view the efforts should be put into five areas: municipal political and administrative structure, business-development, inter-municipal cooperation, infrastructure projects and improved municipal public service.

Both IMG and NMFA were satisfied so far, and Bujanovac and Presevo municipalities reviewed the recommendations contained in the report and expressed a wish that Lillehammer continue their advisory efforts. Lillehammer was then asked by NMFA to follow up their active consultancy efforts and a project description with corresponding plans and budget for the period 2006 –

2008 was worked out and approved by the Ministry. But it became clear at an early stage that we had to focus on one municipality; two would simply be too much to overcome. Bujanovac was chosen.

The overall objectives of the project were ambitious:

- Concrete projects and measures to increase the municipality's own awareness of their role in this effort and what is required in relation to their own expertise and organisation
- To increase an understanding of local democratisation processes
- To increase the municipality's network of contacts among residents
- To increase the efficiency of existing services
- To create a more dynamic and professional organisation.

Based on the above, we recommended that the project should focus on the following topics:

- Project "Democracy building".
- Hiring of "City Manager" in Bujanovac
- Manager development program
- Organisational changes
- Further develop the municipality's services to residents
- Business development

Partly parallel, a school cooperation project was initiated by NDC Serbia's staff member, Ms. Tatjana Popovic. In this book it is described in its own article.

Through the project period, an extensive program was carried out in cooperation with IMG and Nansen Dialogue office staff, and through close reporting and follow up from NMFA. The Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade was highly supportive.

The program contained numerous visits to Bujanovac from Lillehammer project group members, and also some local politicians. Seminars and meetings were held in Lillehammer and Bujanovac for politicians and administrative staff from Bujanovac, as well as business owners, teachers, journalists and other key-individuals – all a mixture of Serbian, Albanian and Roma population.

Nansen Dialogues Centre`s participation in all our projects was vital, and Lillehammer municipality owes all the staff-members at the former offices in Belgrade and Bujanovac gratitude for their enthusiastic support and contribution. The same goes for the participating staff members from IMG. Together they represented a necessary key-factor for Lillehammer to operate there; from taking care of practical matters, project management, knowledge about the political situation, and not least the fact that they enjoyed high confidence amongst most local politicians and other municipal officials and in the local community in general.

Many Lillehammer municipality employees have also contributed through the years – none mentioned – none forgotten! Thank you everyone!

Did we make a difference?

For Lillehammer municipality`s participants the ethnic tensions represented an unknown and strange reality. Why is it so important whether you are Serb, Albanian or Roma? We struggled to understand the significance of history in the Balkans - not in itself, but how it sometimes seems to be an obstacle to reasonable, political solutions. Should one not focus more on future development than historically unsettled issues?

We are not to judge the outcome of our cooperation with Bujanovac municipality in Serbia – and with Nansen Dialogue. However, our participation has created its own meeting-points between individuals and groups, where people of different ethnicity and positions have met and been able to exchange views on many topics, not at least

those important for the overall municipal development. We have contributed to target discussions, but in the end the specific and lasting outcome depends on the will and ability of those involved only!

Ethnic tensions still tamper life in Bujanovac and in the Balkans. We have seen how difficult it is, but we have met devoted individuals from Bujanovac and other places in many countries who strongly believe in their work, and are confident in their aims. That has been, and still is, inspiring!

And people`s lives is lived in local communities, together with neighbours, colleagues, family and friends. This is why understanding, respect and cooperation between individuals and groups are so vital, and a necessity for common solutions to problems anywhere – in Lillehammer as well as in Bujanovac!

Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue says:

“We use dialogue to build bridges in divided communities. We create spaces for dialogue to improve communication and cooperation in divided communities. When successful, we build bridges of trust and understanding that enable the participants to work for a more inclusive society.

To do this, we treat people as equals and with respect. That means to walk alongside them and strengthen them in their struggles.

The precondition of this work is the belief that the good in man is stronger than the destructive forces”.

We hope that Lillehammer municipality has been able to show our support for your work and we would like to continue to do so!

Grim Syverud is Advisor at the Chief Administrative Officers Office in Lillehammer municipality. He has been contact person for Nansen Dialogue in the municipality since 1995. During 2006 – 2008 he was full time project coordinator for Lillehammer municipality’s cooperation with Bujanovac municipality in Serbia.

Bjørn Lie is City Director for Health and Welfare in Lillehammer Municipality. He has worked extensively with policy and democracy. He is also a former Chairman of the Board of the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue.

Tord Buer Olsen was City Director for Education and Culture until 2006. He held the same position with responsibility for children and youth until 2012, when he became City Assistant Chief Executive until June 2015. He is now Acting City Chief Executive. He has worked extensively with policy and democracy.

DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION - TOOLS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF INTER-ETHNIC DIALOGUE

– Tatjana Popovic –

Abstract:

The article describes how the process of implementation of the project School Mediation in Schools in Bujanovac inspired, fostered and strengthened inter-ethnic cooperation between teachers, students and school management from ethnically separated schools. It gives insights into the process of rebuilding relationships between the population in the local community affected by the conflict, in post-conflict settings, supported by Norwegian partners and local coordinators. Educational and social components were inter-twined during the process. Theoretical background from the conflict transformation field used to support these efforts was combined with the practical application of tools for conflict resolution and the creation of inter-ethnic dialogue. The article also describes the development of the process through cross-sectoral cooperation of actors at different levels of society.

“Dialogue is the process of genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn. Each makes a serious effort to take others’ concerns into her or his own picture, even when disagreement persists. No participant gives up her or his identity, but each recognizes enough of the other’s valid human claims that he or she will act differently toward the other.”¹

1. (Pruitt, Bettye, Thomas, Phip, Democratic Dialogue – a handbook for practitioners, UNDP, One United Nations Plaza, NY 10017)

Over the years Nansen Dialogue Centre Serbia developed an approach of long-term presence in local communities with the aim to support local stakeholders working positive changes, leading to improved relationships and re-establishing cooperation between ethnic groups living together. Capacity building trainings for school and municipality representatives is the focus of our work. In 2006 we started with professional trainings for teachers, principals and students in Bujanovac municipality. Teachers realized that dialogue and constructive conflict resolution skills are very useful for their daily work, therefore we created programs that fit their needs and started preparing the ground for the implementation of school mediation. Inter-ethnic groups of teachers, school psychologists, principals and students from Bujanovac municipality schools were equipped with mediation skills, and then gradually mediators' clubs became operational in four primary and one secondary school in the town and in two villages.

The process and the methodology

Lillehammer and Bujanovac municipality formed a partnership in the field of institutional cooperation from which the school cooperation project grew. The school department at Lillehammer municipality and Nansen Dialogue Centre Serbia were implementing partners.

We were led by the goals of re-establishing relationships between members of all ethnic groups, renewing cooperation and preparing the strategy for inhabitants to live together, instead of continuing living next to each other in the local community. The intention was to empower local population to create its own strategy for future by facilitating dialogue events for grassroots' representatives on rebuilding trust and re-establishing cooperation at all levels, especially in relation to the local institutions building. By doing this, we were investing in the human capital in order to support locals in their efforts of creating operational, peaceful and happier society.

Along the course of our work with local communities in Serbia and in the Western Balkan region, dialogue was used as a tool and as the process. The foundation of the process was set by the series of meetings and dialogue seminars away from public eyes, without media attention in the initial phase. When trust was built and working relations established, the time was ripe for creating media strategy in order to raise awareness in public. Soon the local media became the important element adding to the quality of the dialogue process. They were regularly informing public on the inter-ethnic events and visits of partners from Norway. Public statements given by the mayor, important political figures and school principals created the opinion that the dialogue process is good for the local community, they wiped out the doubts and fears of parents whose children were being invited to participate in inter-ethnic trainings, gatherings, arts competitions and travels. While it took us a lot of efforts and time to reach this level, it was equally important to keep the gained trust and to hand over the lead of the inter-ethnic dialogue process to the locals to continue developing it for the purpose of creating peaceful society.

If we want to describe the process in the few lines it was step by step reconciliation process happening along two programmatic lines: a program for local self-government in the form of professional support from Lillehammer municipality and an educational program on school mediation for ethnically mixed groups of participants. The contents of the programs were planned carefully in advance, then tested in practice, adapted and changed in the consultations with local coordinators. Facilitators of the process had to “grow with the reality” along the way of implementation, as political circumstances were changing, affecting local population in many ways.

In the very beginning, getting the consent from the official and unofficial leaders of each community – Serbian and Albanian - was the most important prerequisite. Therefore, the preparation phase was in the form of intra-group meetings - face to face meetings with political

parties' representatives, local self-government officials and school principals. Inter-group meetings were inter-ethnic dialogue seminars away from Bujanovac, facilitated by international facilitators initially, then after some time local facilitators continued facilitating seminars in local languages, while meetings were in mixed international/local facilitation teams. On the basis of this experience, two lines of work with the local community were defined:

1) Program for local self-government: Politicians and local administration representatives: Phase 1: professional trainings (communication, dialogue, conflict analysis, negotiation skills). Phase 2: representatives of different ethnic groups jointly formed plans and strategies for future work at municipal level;

2) Educational program: Professional trainings for teachers, psychologists and students: Phase 1: Peaceful conflict resolution and school mediation. Phase 2: Implementation of school mediation and social competence skills in primary and secondary schools.

School mediation project

We will focus our attention and analysis on the educational program, with the aim to present methodology, challenges and achievements.

„Everyone in society should be a role model, not only for their own self-respect, but for respect from others.“²

What was specific for the School mediation project was the fact that the professional trainings for teachers marked the beginning of the dialogue process between schools of two ethnic groups, which were separated even physically. The basis for re-establishing relationships was the need for the professional upgrading, teachers' awareness on their own role as educators, the importance of being a role-

2 Barry Bonds, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/role_model.html

model for young generations, especially in multi-ethnic communities where guidance towards cooperation with the peers of other nationalities has got practical implications.

Along the course of School mediation project in Bujanovac schools, coordinators were faced with numerous obstacles and challenges, especially in the first phase of implementation. We could differentiate those that originated from various social actors in the wider local community and the concrete obstacles coordinators were faced with in schools. At the very beginning, as a consequence of the recent armed conflict in the community, people were completely closed up in their respective ethnic groups and the main challenge was mutual mistrust. Strong influence from traditional leaders and political parties' leaders were significantly contributing to this, as it was in their interest to keep people apart, controlling their behaviour in that way. In addition, the state institutions didn't organize neither serious processes of reconciliation nor the renewal of cooperation between ethnic groups living in the local community. The formal state body - The Coordination Body for South Serbia was established and initially served as a platform for discussion for political leaders from the area after the conflict. However, it was operational and result oriented only for a short period of time, while it was led by a strong political figure of the democratic government of the time. Soon it became just a symbol of the government care for the area, without any real influence on the population, and without the power to influence significant changes. Another important challenge was a certain number of extremely nationalistic members of both the Serbian and the Albanian community trying to influence any process of cooperation in a negative way. The armed extremist groups were still active in the surroundings of Bujanovac at the time the project started. Therefore, there was a great need for genuine interaction with the purpose of creating, first of all, a safer local community.

In schools, the most common obstacles were reluctance to the change and resistance to trying to implement the innovative approaches into the teaching process because it

required more time for preparations and a change of habits. In spite of all the mentioned obstacles, in each school there was a group of teacher change agents who realized that the changes are good and continuously worked with students transferring their knowledge about peaceful conflict resolution skills, gradually creating the mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

They were motivating students to participate in workshops in order to equip them with mediation skills, making them aware of their responsibilities and building up their self-esteem. Teachers needed some time to get consent from the school collective. The good examples of overcoming resistance in the collective come from two schools. In “Naim Frasheri” school the principal accepted school mediation as a conflict resolution mechanism and he was the one to ask for it to be used in several cases. One of them was how to celebrate the graduation day. Certain number of students suggested walking from the school to the restaurant singing, while some students and parents considered this inappropriate. Just several days prior to that, a traffic accident had happened in which some young people were seriously injured. The principal invited all students of the 8th grade, all teachers and parents to gather in the school hall where they all had several dialogue sessions facilitated by teacher mediators. Eventually, a compromise solution was found.

In “Branko Radicevic” the school principal and the deputy principal passed the school mediation training and were change agents in the school. The example that showed us that any conflict should be handled with care is the one of peer mediators who started working on a seemingly easy case of conflict only to discover a serious one - the case of students of two classes who formed gangs and were having fights after the school day was over. Teacher mediators led the mediation process for several months in secret and succeeded in finding an acceptable solution. Those experienced teacher mediators volunteered to support the colleagues from the village schools in establishing mediators clubs.

Neutral mediators and coordination with the Ministry of Education

The role of a neutral 3rd party as facilitator of the dialogue process and a special kind of mediator was very significant. The school mediation project was led by the School Group, comprised of representatives of the school department of Lillehammer municipality and local coordinators (Serbs and Albanians). Norwegians acted as catalyst, the neutral, trustful third side in the process of regaining trust in colleagues, while local coordinators were the connecting link, facilitating the dialogue process and the trainings in local languages, acting like the bridge builders between different cultures.

Since the most important aspect of the project was inter-ethnic dialogue processes, special attention was given to relationship building and sustaining good cooperation with all actors in the local community. Therefore, regular meetings with local self-government were organized and their representatives participated in the trainings and in social events. It was equally important to involve the actors from the state level; therefore the Ministry of Education³ was being informed from the very beginning. In the first phase of the project we got the official support from the minister. The counsellors from Belgrade and from Niš were actively participating in the second phase of the project by giving lectures and facilitating workshops. Prevention of violence in schools was the main topic, as there was the need to address the growing number of conflicts in schools.

Measures prescribed by the new law⁴ included protocols and formation of teams for prevention of violence in each school. At the time the law was adopted, schools in Bujanovac already had a group of teachers equipped with the tools for peaceful conflict resolution, hence it was easier

3 Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development

4 The law on fundamentals of the education system, 2009 (<http://www.mpn.gov.rs/dokumenta-i-propisi/zakoni/obrazovanje-i-vaspitanje/504-zakon-o-osnovama-sistema-obrazovanja>)

for them to understand and implement these obligations. In order to make the law articles applicable in practice, the counsellors linked the protocols with school practice in a way that builds up the knowledge and the skills teachers gained during the dialogue trainings. This process brought the officials closer to teachers, making them available for professional advices, while counsellors had the opportunity for in-depth analysis of the local situation. Unit for prevention of violence at the Ministry of Education continued to support teachers through consultancies, but also by inviting a group of students and teachers to participate in the conferences organized by the ministry and held in Belgrade. Students presented the mediation cases in an ethnically mixed group, showing the benefits their schools had since they started using mediation as a conflict resolution mechanism. More importantly, students collaborated on preparations, travelled together and became friends.

The benevolence, professional competences, concrete examples from work practice and friendly attitude of Norwegian colleagues were building blocks of the dialogue process. These were the basis for creation of programs that corresponded to the local needs. Equally important was readiness of teachers from Bujanovac to take the responsibility for contributing to the changes in the community. The learning process along with interaction with colleagues was unfolding gradually, without any pressure; facilitators provided enough time for comprehension, reflections, analytical thinking and testing out the new methodologies. The process influenced the improvement of the relationships between teachers, students and parents, as teachers were able to apply new skills in their work environment. As facilitators, colleagues from Lillehammer were transferring their experiences in the form of models adaptable to the local circumstances. The main recommendation to teachers, principals and school psychologists was that team work, continuous professional upgrading, and being sensitive to changes in the society are the most important elements for creating a good school environment.

“Empathy is essential in order to have proper understanding of what goes on in a group of people, and to get people’s confidence and trust. Self-confidence is also important when working with difficult topics, - without believing that he/she can contribute to positive change; it is difficult to gain other people’s trust. The trainer needs to have the capacity and energy to maintain focus through emotionally challenging processes. A good support network with which he can discuss challenges of the education process, is very useful in this regard. Another essential quality of a good trainer is someone who “lives like she preaches”, e.g. if dialogue is the main aim of the education, it is important that the trainer aims herself/himself to be a good listener and has good communication skills. Equally, if democracy is the topic, it is important that the trainer aims to have a democratic practice. When theory and practice correspond, it is easier to believe in what the trainer is trying to communicate to the group. The trainer will have a much stronger effect, if he/she believes in the values and principles he/she is teaching, and even more so if the trainer seems committed to fight for these values.”⁵

Methodology

Practice taught us that interactive workshops often require multiple approaches, creative methodologies and readiness to adapt the programs to the work dynamics of the group, even to make changes along the course of the training. Accordingly, our experience showed that a people-centred approach and combination of elicitive and prescriptive models worked well. By following the group dynamics we found best ways for participants to express themselves, to understand the contents and each other, to apply tools and techniques in a way they would be able to use them. Tailor-made workshops during which frontal, individual, pair and group work were used were best

5 Bryn, Steinar, Nansen Dialogue, Virtual School of “Dialogue, Democracy and Peaceful Conflict Resolution”, Nansen Dialogue Centre Montenegro, 2005.

suited for teachers' professional trainings. Groups were usually ethnically mixed in order to support spontaneous development of cooperation, still that was not a technical rule, when there was a need to mix more experienced and less experienced participants facilitators let participants form the groups; also, sometimes it was important to work in the respective schools' groups in order to define action plans for each school. Elicitive⁶ technique was useful for defining the best forms of workshops for students, and also for making teachers became more aware of how their own experience and capacities could be used during the implementation of school mediation. As a result of the trainings, the programs for students' workshop on school mediation were jointly created. Some teachers included the new methodologies in the regular teaching process as well. Facilitators had to constantly listen, observe, follow the reactions of the group in an attempt to create encouraging and simulative work atmosphere. Professional exchange between the colleagues from Norway and from Serbia contributed significantly to it. Visits in the form of on-job education in schools in Lillehammer and in Bujanovac provided the opportunity for teachers to follow the teaching process directly, to participate in students' events, to get to know educational systems and school managements in both countries and much more - to forge lasting friendships.

Transfer of knowledge was happening at several levels.

6 The *elicitive* model, on the other hand, understands training as a process that emerges from already-existing, local knowledge about managing conflict. It views training as a process aimed at discovery and creation of models that emerge from resources within that setting. Culture is regarded as the seedbed for the development of a training model that can respond to local needs In addition, the trainer sees himself/herself primarily as a catalyst and a facilitator rather than as an expert in a particular model of conflict resolution. His/her central role is to provide a highly participatory educational process in which participants gain a better understanding of conflict. Finally, the design and goals of the training process are formulated by the participants, rather than dictated beforehand by the trainer. The aim is to foster an indigenous, self-sustaining peace process. (<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/prescriptive-elicitive-training>)

The teachers from Lillehammer schools: Røyslimoen and Kringsjå were empowering colleagues during the trainings, while mutual professional exchange was happening in schools in each town during the visits. Then, teachers from Bujanovac were in position to choose methodologies useful for their own context and work environment. The next important level was direct transfer of skills from teacher mediators to peer mediators during the workshops and every-day work in schools. At the end of educational cycle, in the implementation phase, peer mediators were mediating conflict cases and transferring skills to their peers. Many peer mediators noticed that their behaviour changed in the good way, as they became more responsible in fulfilling their obligations and responsive to the needs of the others. They understood why it is important to work for the benefit of the whole community. The school group was lead by Tord Buer Olsen and coordinated by Grim Syverud.

Sustainability

Dialogue process offers the opportunity for growth and change which could be used by the local population on a long-term basis.

During the consultancy meetings with local self-government representatives and school principals, the School group members were underlining the importance of taking over the responsibility for continuous investment in inter-ethnic cooperation. In order to keep the spirit of good cooperation alive, it was suggested to use the models and mechanisms established by the school mediation project. Teachers were supportive and one of the suggestions was to celebrate the International Day of Peace, 21st September, at the community level, since the experience showed that all students enjoyed joint, multi-ethnic events organized on this occasion. As teacher Ilmi Ibrahim (Sezai Surroi School) pointed out: “We, as citizens of local community and teachers, have to take the responsibility to invest in good processes, and not to expect people who come from other countries to organize students from Serbian and Albanian

schools. We realized that it is useful for us to cooperate, for the youth to have good relationships and to be friends. We should not wait for someone else to do it instead of us; we have to continue the good work.”

Achievements

Along the course of implementation which lasted for 6 years, 6 school mediators' clubs established in 4 primary and 2 secondary schools, teacher mediators and peer mediators teams were equipped with mediation skills and school mediation became the mechanism for conflict resolution. Students and teachers from schools in which the teaching process is in Serbian and schools in which it is in Albanian language were meeting regularly to practice mediation, to celebrate the International Day of Peace and to create programs for two joint school performances. During the second performance, held in 2013, students presented the results of their work in the creative way, using role-plays and musical acts. Preparations for the performance were in the form of workshops jointly attended by Serbian and Albanian students. The process of preparation presents a value in itself, because it fostered cooperation and creativity, bringing together around twenty teachers and 130 students – these results being more important than the performance. By unanimous decision, the performance was held in the village school "Vuk Karadzic". The audience was comprised of teachers, students, parents, Bujanovac local self-government and Lillehammer school department representatives.

Inter-ethnic dialogue as the process led us to the conclusion that the focus has to be on the present and on creating a joint strategy for the future. Long-term presence in the community is essential for forming lasting relationships, as local actors from different life spheres became associates and partners.

Tatjana is a director of Nansen Dialogue Centre Serbia and an experienced trainer. She facilitated, over the last 15 years, a number of inter-ethnic dialogue seminars for teachers, ministries of education counselors and local authorities' representatives in the Western Balkans, thus contributing to cross-border cooperation and reconciliation. Focus of her facilitated trainings is on Dialogue and Communication, Conflict Analysis Tools, Negotiation and Mediation. Work with international groups in Norway and in the UK enriched her experience.

Tatjana holds MA in Peace Studies from the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND PEACEBUILDING: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT WE CELEBRATE THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE?

— *Maja Vitas Majstorovic* —

NDC Serbia & Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

Working on public relations for a peacebuilding organization, especially if one's experience originates from a commercial public relations company, one will quite quickly become frustrated with the lack of interest from the main stream media for peace as a topic and the lack of media space for publishing pieces about peacebuilding in general. One of the best things a person aware of the way media rather selects stories about violence and war than stories about dialogue and peace can do, is to create both opportunities to be covered by the news and content that can be published by the media while using social media channels to get the message out.

This article will portray two connected peace public outreach initiatives designed to raise the attention and coverage of the media for the Nansen Dialogue Network and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict on one side, and more importantly to do some actual peacebuilding in the process by educating for peace. The two initiatives are the Celebration of the International Day of Peace (September 21st) and the Regional Arts Competition on the Occasion of the International Day of Peace. In order to describe the logic behind the two initiatives it seemed useful to go a little bit into the history of how September 21st became the International Day of Peace.

Considering the long mandate of the United Nations as

the world's peacebuilding organization, the International Day of Peace was established quite late. In November 1981 UN General Assembly Resolution 36/67 established every third Tuesday in September to be the International Day of Peace by inviting: "the Member States, organs and organizations of the United Nations system, regional organizations, nongovernmental organizations, peoples and individuals to commemorate in an appropriate manner the International Day of Peace, especially through all means of education and to co-operate with the United Nations in the observance of that Day"¹. In September 2001 the UN General Assembly recognized the need for the International Day of Peace to be assigned with a fixed date and proclaimed September 21st the International Day of Peace by the UN GA Resolution 52/282. The Resolution underlined that the celebration of this Day should include activities in education and public awareness².

Nansen Dialogue Centre Serbia accepted the initiative of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) to celebrate the International Day of Peace in 2007 as the Regional secretariat of GPPAC at the time. The initiative was accepted by 15 regional GPPAC networks which covered the most of the world. In the Western Balkans we began to link our peace education activities with the celebration of the International Day of Peace and many Nansen Dialogue Centres took part by organizing specific local activities throughout the years, by organizing or co-organizing events with schools in which they have been working on dialogue, peace education, peacebuilding etc.

Over the years the schools and Nansen Dialogue Centres accepted the initiative to celebrate the International Day of Peace and have started to combine the organization of events with their needs and activities. The schools from Serbia and Montenegro that participated in

1 http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/36/67

2 http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/55/282

GPPAC regional peace education program began to include the International Day of Peace in their annual school plans since 2011 and have secured that this Day will be marked within the school as a part of a school system. Every following year the schools, teachers and students came up with new peace messages and original and creative ways to share them with their peers, teachers, parents and local communities.

One of many, however a particularly bright example, is primary school Milija Nikcevic from Niksic, Montenegro, where a team of student mediators led by their energetic teacher mediator Dragana organized workshops and performances on the school grounds and outdoor activities in the community. For a couple of years the children have been designing peace messages which they shared with the fellow citizens of Niksic on September 21st. If one would talk to Dragana about the activities where students were reaching out to their neighbours by handing them peace messages, she would explain to them the importance of preparation, from designing messages, to role plays and developing various scenarios for various reactions from people in the street. Not all would be interested to participate, however the prepared students would know how to deal with this and not get offended, indeed they became true messengers of peace.

Nansen Dialogue Center Prijedor has been organizing celebration of the International Day of Peace with schools from Prijedor and Sanski Most. In 2014 the schools and Nansen Dialogue Center hosted two big public events in Prijedor and Sanski Most on the topic Peace is my choice³. Looking at the images captured during the events one could notice happy and motivated young people handing out peace messages and painting symbols of peace while surrounded with friends, parents and teachers in the sea of colours, music and positive energy - a true way to celebrate peace. While writing this article your author reads about NDC Prijedor joint preparatory meeting for the 2015

3 The topic of the Regional Arts Competition in 2014

International Day of Peace with teachers from Prijedor, Ostra Luka and Sanski Most and looks forward to reading about the activities.

As the schools began to own the celebration of the International Day of Peace the role of the Regional secretariat of GPPAC in the celebration began to change from organizing activities in the past to coordinating and collecting information about the celebration in the present. In order to support the activities in the region new steps had to be taken. As the number of actors involved in the celebration of the International Day of Peace was rising every year it became impossible to capture all the activities in a press release. Instead it was decided to compile a GPPAC Western Balkans Annual Bulletin dedicated to the celebration of the International Day of Peace and highlighting the peacebuilding and conflict prevention work of our network. As of 2010 GPPAC Annual Bulletin is published in order to bring peacebuilding efforts of individuals, schools and organizations from the Western Balkans closer to the World.

That same year another initiative was born which, at the time, was planned to be only a one-time project. As Nansen Dialogue Centres mostly worked in ethnically mixed and conflict affected communities the idea was to include more communities and schools than it was possible to address via specifically designed peace education or school mediation programs. The regional Arts Competition on the topic *People Building Peace* was initiated to include participants from different local environments and to educate the public about the necessity of including the topic of peace in school life in the Western Balkans. Students of primary and secondary schools from the region were invited to participate in the celebration of the International Day of Peace by sending their artworks on the topic. The best artworks selected by an international jury were intended to illustrate a Peace Calendar for 2011.

The numerous entries to the competition and creativity of drawings sent encouraged the organizers to establish the International Day of Peace Arts Competition as an annual

event and a part of the wider International Day of Peace celebration. The competition was established with the objectives:

- To introduce students to the idea of the International Day of Peace.
- To encourage students to find creative ways in which they as individuals can contribute to peace.
- To encourage a discussion on the importance of each individual's contribution to non-violent conflict resolution and sustainable peace building.
- To contribute to the security of people, tolerance and reconciliation in the Western Balkans.

Each Year the competition was supported by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia and the Ministry of Education of Montenegro. Institutional support and the open call sent by the two ministries of education to schools to take part in the competition contributed to greater participation of students in the competition and involvement of a greater number of schools. The calendar launch was drawing more and more media attention each year creating opportunities for advocating for peace and institutionalization of peace education. For the past several years during the Belgrade launch of the Peace Calendar NDC Serbia peace education programs were featured on national TV stations. However, besides being a great tool for public outreach the Peace Calendar enabled every motivated student to get involved in the celebration of international peace, to learn about the diversity of peacebuilding actors and initiatives and to think about what he or she can do as an individual to contribute to the achievement of sustainable peace and security for all. The regional arts competition and the Peace Calendar directly link to the original idea behind the celebration of September 21st which is the opportunity for education and public outreach.

Maja Vitas Majstorovic is social anthropologist from Belgrade, Serbia who works as Communications and PR coordinator at Nansen Dialogue Centre (NDC) Serbia and GP-PAC Media Focal Point in the Western Balkans. She has been working in Nansen Dialogue Centre Serbia since 2002 where she acquired skills in non-violent conflict resolution and mediation; and has participated in the establishment of GPPAC network in the Western Balkans from its beginning in early 2004. She is dedicated to contributing to the promotion of peace education in Serbia and to empowerment of women as active actors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

NEW SCHOOL IN VUKOVAR AND NDC OSIJEK

– *Kim Sivertsen* –

Some cities are forever connected with acts of war. Mentioning them to anyone with even a remote interest in history will evoke images of the siege of Leningrad, the battle of Stalingrad, the bombing of Dresden and Guernica.

Vukovar in Eastern Croatia is one of these cities. Its name has become a symbol of destruction, deportations and executions. Even by the standards of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the destruction of Vukovar was exceptional. The city was literally totally ruined, the population and defending forces caught in it for three months while the Yugoslav Army (JNA) and Serb irregular forces shelled it to an extent not seen since the battle of Stalingrad. When Vukovar finally surrendered in November 1991, some 200 civilians that had sought refuge in the hospital hoping to be evacuated were eventually taken to Ovčara, a nearby farm, and executed. This is a very painful memory for the independent Croatian nation.

Vukovar was once, besides Mariburg in Slovenia, the wealthiest city in Yugoslavia. This was due to the fertile soil and the large shoe factory that supplied the Soviet Red Army with boots and shoes. No less than 23 000 people worked at the factory. These workers came from all over Yugoslavia, were of different ethnicities and lived in the Borovo neighbourhood, which in turn became a multi-cultural melting pot. Ethnical tension was not a factor to consider in everyday life. The city also had the highest percentage of intermarriage between Serbs and Croats in all of Yugoslavia, once a source of great pride in Vukovar. These married couples were also forced to choose sides as the war broke out, splitting families in the process.

The JNA and the Serb irregulars took control of Vukovar from November 18 1991. The Serbs of Croatia went on to declare a “Serbian Autonomous Area” (The Republic of Serbian Krajina, in effect a puppet state for Slobodan Milošević’s Serbian government and not internationally recognized), and the Croatian population fled Eastern Slavonia. Serbs who took part in the defence of Vukovar were treated as traitors by the occupiers. UN forces (UNPROFOR) were sent Eastern Slavonia in 1992, but the war lasted, with varying intensity, until 1995 when the Erdut Peace Agreement was signed on November 12. The Krajina was reintegrated into Croatia under UN control, a process that took until 1998 to be completed. A part of the agreement was that those who had stayed during the years of the Krajina should be allowed to stay when the area again became part of Croatia. The refugees were allowed to move back, though not everybody did. In 2014, the population of Vukovar was much less than what it was before the war. Those who returned found their houses still in ruins, while a lot of the houses belonging to those who had stayed (mainly Serbs) had been reconstructed by international charities. This has since been a matter of controversy.

To ensure the rights of the different ethnicities in Vukovar, the schools were now divided according to ethnicity and language. For the first time, Serbs and Croats went to different classes. This was also done in kindergartens in Vukovar, where Serb and Croat children still are playing in different corners of the same yard, though the wire fences separating them physically has been removed.

Cafes, bars and sports clubs now became mono-ethnic places. There was not much interacting between Serbs and Croats at all. The children grew up without getting to know anyone from the other group, and the communication between Serbs and Croats in Vukovar was close to non-existent.

Even the question of whether you actually were a Croat or a Serb had become a matter of perception. Those who stayed in the Republika Srpska Krajina when the Croat

population of Eastern Slavonija was forced to flee were labelled as Serbs when the refugees returned. It was now possible to be viewed as a Serb even if you were ethnically Croat or belonged to any of the other 24 minorities that lived in Vukovar before the war. Likewise, those that fled the Krajina and then returned now belonged to the Croat side, in public opinion. Even if you belonged to one of the numerous other minorities in the region, you would now have to choose a side.

The annual celebrations on November 18 of the fall of Vukovar by some 50 000 Croats from all over the country does not help to ease tension and put tremendous stress on the inhabitants. When official signs in both Latin and Cyrillic scripts were mounted in the city, huge demonstrations took place both there and in Zagreb. A local organization of Croat war veterans, the Headquarters for the Defence of Vukovar, has since been pulling the signs down in nightly raids. The same organization blocked the 2013 memorial march in Vukovar that was attended by the president, the prime minister, the entire Croat cabinet, 25 foreign ambassadors and, for the first time, a representative of the Serb minority in Croatia. The police did not stop the blockage, and the dignitaries and foreign guests returned to Zagreb. Recent plans to build a war memorial museum that will traffic all Croatian 14-year-olds to Vukovar to learn about the “Homeland War” is not going to contribute to easing the tensions.

Ivana Milas, director of the NDC Osijek at the time of writing, wrote in 2005:

“Fourteen years after the war and seven years after the process of Peaceful reintegration of Eastern Croatia, this area is burdened by a difficult economic situation, a slow process of return of refugees and difficult life conditions for the population. There is a climate of distrust and blame, and the process of rebuilding relationships between groups previously torn apart by war is slow. One of the consequences of the war is that these multi-ethnic communities have become ethnically segregated in most spheres of life. The ethnic gap

is further deepened by a primary school education system that divides children into Croatian and Serbian classes.

Since 2001, Nansen Dialogue Centre Osijek (NDC Osijek) has carried out a series of projects aimed at bridging the ethnic division that is a consequence of war and post-war events. It was a logical continuation of this work to address the division of schools in certain communities in Eastern Croatia.”¹

Croatian law allows national minorities the right to education in their own language. There are three models available for this ranging from Model C - additional classes in the minority language, through Model B - bilingual education (where social sciences are taught in the minority language, natural sciences in the majority language) to Model A - full minority language education of the complete curriculum. It is this last model that is used for the Serbian children in Vukovar.

This arrangement is partly to satisfy Serb and international demands on the treatment of minorities, and perceived by a lot of Croats as a just way of treating the Serbs in Croatia. Indeed, it might look like that, but there are several problems connected with this system of education, apart from the segregation issues. Having completed primary school in Serbian language and script, many young Serbs will continue their education in Serbia, where they have access to Serb universities as if they were citizens of Serbia. Many of them never return to Vukovar or even to Croatia. The Serb population is dwindling as a result. If they choose to attend Croatian schools, they are treated as foreign students in Serbia, which makes it harder to enter higher education. Many Serbs will still choose a Croatian high school, as this enables them to enrol in Croatian universities and thereby make it easier to secure employment in Croatia. Thus, the choices made on behalf of the young by their parents can have huge implications on possibilities later in life, especially since Croatia joined the EU.

Putting aside the fact that Croatian and Serbian are

1. Dialog – mer enn ord, 2005, p 89

very similar languages and that the curriculum and books are the same - only translated into Cyrillic for the Serb schools - this arrangement does nothing to bridge the gap between the ethnic groups in Vukovar. In fact, it does quite the opposite. As Milas wrote:

*“This system of primary education in Vukovar, as well as in some other multi-ethnic communities in eastern Croatia, has consequently resulted in segregation of children in Croatian and Serbian classes. In the beginning of the reintegration process, children in both Croatian and Serbian classes were attending lectures on the same shift, in the same buildings. However, they were gradually divided into separate shifts, and even in separate buildings, due to the organization of teaching (and according to parents statements: to avoid conflicts). So today, (2005, authors remarks) in three out of 7 primary schools in Vukovar, children of different nationalities attend classes in the same school buildings, but the classes in Serbian and Croatian language are on different shifts. In the remaining 4 schools, the classes are conducted exclusively either in Serbian (one school) or in Croatian language (three schools).”*²

The children of Vukovar do not meet across the ethnic divides that led to and fuelled the war. In the words of the NDC Osijek:

*“In such a system no one is satisfied because such education does not create a sane foundation for the normal development of a community, city and region. Dividedness negatively affects the children from the two largest ethnic groups (Croats and Serbs), and has a further negative effect on the children from mixed marriages, children of other nationalities, their parents and the future of the community as a whole.”*³

They grow up in separate societies, unable to connect

2. *ibid*, p 91

3. Nansen Dialogue Centre in Osijek projects 2013, Brief from NDC Osijek.

and bond with each other. This reproduces the conflict their parents and grandparents lived through and creates and nurtures ones-sided narratives. These narratives will invariably describe your own group as the victims of atrocities committed by the other group. Thus, there is no real reason to interact until the others make amends. When all sides in a conflict feel this way, there is little hope of constructive cooperation or even communication.

This can be further illustrated by the situation of a Ruthenian village outside of Vukovar. The Ruthenians, one of the many minorities of Eastern Slavonia, are Greek Catholics, subjects to the Pope in Rome. When the war forced approximately half the village to flee, they found it hard to remain Greek Catholics, as this meant among other things, celebrating Orthodox Christmas and using Cyrillic script. This would make them seem like Orthodox Christians or Serbs in their place of refuge, obviously not a good idea in the nationalistic environment of the war years. They thus became Roman Catholics, celebrating according to that calendar and exchanging the Cyrillic script for Latin, thereby melting into the Croatian population with much more ease. When they returned to their village during the reintegration, the village was divided. The village school teaches 1st to 4th grade in Ruthenian, a Slavic language closely related to Ukrainian. Then, the parents must choose which school to send their children to. If they choose the Croatian school, the children will be taught according to model C - mainly in Croatian, but with extra classes in Ruthenian. If they, however, attend the Serbian school, they will be taught according to model A - in Serbian only. The question of who have given up most of their identity in the shifting conditions of war-time and post-war Croatia is very complex indeed. Small minorities like the Ruthenians often stayed in Eastern Slavonia during the Serbian Krajina, as they did not really feel like a part of the conflict. Now they are.

NDC Osijek

In April 2001, a Nansen Dialogue Centre was opened in nearby Osijek. Their main goal was social reconstruction of post-conflict and multi-ethnic communities in Eastern Croatia. They have focused mainly on integrated and intercultural education and dealing with the past. This was a period in which the Nansen Dialogue Project sought to transfer their model of dialogue into the field. Seminars in Lillehammer were no longer considered to be enough to initiate the kind of work the NDCs have since been doing – a concrete, long term presence was needed, in Eastern Croatia and elsewhere. Centres were being opened in Belgrade and Sarajevo as well as a reopening of the Kosovan Nansen Dialogue Centre in Pristina. Eastern Croatia was another part of the former Yugoslavia where both Bryn and PRIO felt that the dialogue method should be applied.

The five initial members of staff were already experienced in a variety of fields useful to a fresh NGO that would work with dialogue, intercultural education and social reconstruction through relationship building.

Suzana Agotić had been engaged in Amnesty International in the region. Srdjan Antic had been involved in youth education, and Vuk Tesija was a journalist. Jasmina Krkic Poznic and Ivana Milas both had worked for the Centre for Peace and Reintegration from 1997. They had all been to Lillehammer for long-term dialogue seminars, Milas two years earlier and the four others in the winter of 2001. The experiences and education gained there was an important component in the initiative to establish an NDC and provided, apart from dialogue skills and knowledge, an inclusive network to draw on for experience, and a feeling of belonging among the five members of staff. Bryn's genuine engagement for dialogue work in Croatia also made a lasting impression.

Steinar Bryn and PRIO supported the idea of establishing the NDC Osijek during the stay in Lillehammer. They were certain that there was a need for a dialogue centre in Eastern Slavonia, as the situation on the ground was harder to understand when viewed from

Zagreb. This is confirmed by the surprise voiced by even high level politicians in the capital upon learning that the schools in Vukovar are indeed segregated. Not all of them knew.

NDC Osijek started by travelling Eastern Slavonia, talking to the youth. There was a general sense of apathy and a lack of cooperation among them. From the very beginning, the NDC Osijek felt the need for changes in the educational system. The first two years were dedicated to dialogue seminars among the youth of the region to get a clear view of their challenges, needs and ideas. They talked to non-formal leaders, teachers, pedagogues and young people involved in politics, though not in a direct way. Milas firmly believes that reconstruction of relationships should be done on a grassroots level, and they did not want to involve high level politicians at that time, because they would cooperate very well in the framework of meetings, but not get closer on important issues or indeed cooperate to improve the living conditions and inter-ethnic relations in the area. The politics of Eastern Slavonia would prove to be an almost impassable obstacle to the New School some years into the future.

The youth from Vukovar had bleak perceptions of this very same future. Aged between 18 and 25, those that responded to the NDC Osijek requests did not look upon the prospects of raising children in the environment surrounding them with much hope. The separated education was not good for the local community. Through organizing seminars for teachers in the surrounding area, they learned that the teachers also were dissatisfied with the situation. The teachers all had experience from before the war, and did not deem the current situation as good for the children. NDC Osijek wished to motivate the teachers, through dialogue, to initiate projects that would improve the situation, as all activities for children in Vukovar were divided between Serbs and Croats. Those initiatives did not surface. The relations between the teachers were destroyed by the war, and accusations flew among them. As often seen in the history of the Nansen Dialogue Network,

broken relations hindered cooperation on issues that almost everybody agreed on had to be handled for the greater good. Even the teacher's lounges were separated by the invisible line between Croats and Serbs. As Milas told me during the interviews for the book, even when sitting in a circle, it would be divided in a Serb and a Croat half. The teachers were of the opinion that the responsibility for initiating integrated education rested firmly on the parents.

The education in conflict resolution these teachers needed in addition to repairing the relations among them, was not available in Croatia at the time. NDC Osijek wanted to provide this training, but also to focus on concrete projects. This would ensure long term commitment from both the NDC and the youth they worked with. Initially the NDC staff hoped that training in dialogue would enable the youth to initiate their own projects, but that did not happen, Suzana Agotić told me when I visited Osijek in 2014. The societal problems surrounding them were too much to handle. Educating school and kindergarten teachers seemed like a more sustainable activity. Focusing on peace education and human rights education, they started working with primary schools and kindergartens in and around Vukovar and Osijek.

The idea to address the education situation in Vukovar surfaced in 2002/2003. Initially, the NDC wanted just to talk to the parents in Vukovar, to hear what they wished for and needed. How did they feel about the divided education their children went through?

The NDC then approached the parents in a survey in 2004, walking from door to door and interviewing 256 families that had children in the primary schools, confirming in the process that nearly 80% of the parents were unhappy with the education offered to their children, no matter what nationality they belonged to. There was a wish among them for a possibility to choose joint education. They were also unhappy about the lack of knowledge conveyed about the minorities living in the region. The remaining 20% were mainly worried about their children getting too much of a burden in school, but when it came to the content

suggested by the NDC, they agreed to it being necessary. Almost 80% also would want their children going to joint classes and grow up together.⁴ In 2005, these parents were invited to focus groups to take part of developing the New School, thereby preparing the ground for the idea.

Together with the Teachers Training Agency, the NDC developed the curriculum for the New School and, as a part of it, the Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of the Region (CSHR) program, meant to be used in any school who wanted it. Both were received with praise by the Teachers Training Agency in May 2006, with a recommendation that the Cultural and Spiritual Heritage part should be implemented in all schools in Croatia. This program seeks to remedy the lack of knowledge about the history and ethnic minorities in Croatia, the problem being that the Croat children were mainly learning about their own culture and close to nothing about the other minorities living in the region. The minorities learn about the majority, but very little about the other minorities with whom they share Croatia. There was no program to teach them the whole picture of the many nationalities living in Eastern Slavonia or Croatia for that matter. The CSHR would remedy that, and was an important part of the idea behind the New School. It was implemented in three pilot schools, reaching about 60 pupils in Eastern Croatia. The evaluation showed that the children changed their attitudes towards each other in a positive direction. 5 more schools were included in 2010 and at the time of writing 22 schools all over Croatia have implemented the CSHR, including around 350 children. From 2015, civic education will be part of the national curriculum, including intercultural education. The NDC Osijek is hoping to have the CSHR included as a part of this. The civic education part is still not clearly defined, but the NDC will try to offer their experiences on intercultural education to the designers of the national curriculum.

The development of the New School curriculum was not supported by any authorities, be it national, regional

4. NDC Osijek survey, 2004 FYLL UT

or municipal. It was developed in cooperation with parents and teachers and local experts, like pedagogues and psychologists. The NDC hoped that this could be implemented in existing schools, but the response was underwhelming. Many of the teachers in the existing schools did not want to stir the situation that was. The idea of building a new school then emerged, making it possible to provide a new environment for both teachers and children. From 2006, the Serb and Croat children would attend several of the same schools, but in different shifts. This still denied them the possibility to meet. The schedule would be planned so as to hinder interaction, and they would use different entrances.

There was not much resistance to the New School from parents and teachers, even though supporting the idea exposed them to negative reactions from their own communities. The unemployment level in Vukovar is around 45%, and those holding jobs are usually dependent on political support to keep it. This led to reluctance from some, who did not want to be exposed to these reactions. There was also disagreement on who should be included in the curriculum – the Croat – Serb rift was unavoidable, but not everyone agreed that all of the minorities needed to be represented.

The civil society organizations were not reaching through to the local government. There was, in Agotić's words, a wall between the city government and the rest of the community, not untypical in Croatia. Some of the teachers and parents did not feel it appropriate to be part of the civil society, putting pressure on their elected politicians. And some, of course, did not like the idea at all, but they never joined the focus groups.

There was also some confusion about the need for the New School. Some Croat parents were of the opinion that the ability to choose one of the three models of education available to minorities should be sufficient to ensure the rights of the Serb children, and if they did not want to go to Serb language schools, why not go to one of the Croatian schools? They saw the New School project as implying

that there was something wrong with the existing schools, which is exactly what the NDC Osijek opines. The schools are not inclusive enough and lack intercultural education. The lack of inclusiveness makes sending a Serb child to Croat school a tough choice.

Politicians were involved from the very beginning, joining the working groups from 2007. The New School project received wide media attention throughout Croatia, and promises were made by politicians on several levels of administration, but they were never fulfilled. Vukovar was and is an open wound in Croatia, and the perception was that the city was best left alone. Taking the responsibility of moving the ethnic groups towards each other is not something most Croatian politicians are ready to do.

The New School Project

In 2007 a group of people with political power was gathered and presented the feedback from the youth, parents and teachers gathered by the NDC Osijek through the previous years. They were asked for recommendations on how to implement the New School in practice. It was decided to apply to the city of Vukovar, the county and the ministry in hope of getting their support. At the time of writing, none of these offices had replied to that request.

The county of Vukovar-Syrmia recommended the CSHR-project, but not implementation of the New School. Recommendations for that came, however, from the Children Ombudsman, UNICEF, the OSCE-mission still in the country at the time, and from then Croatian president Stipe Mesić.

These recommendations were not enough to move the institutional bodies that could make the New School a reality. There was no movement at all until 2009, according to Milas. There were no signals from the city of Vukovar or the Vukovar-Syrmia County. The NDC wished to offer the curriculum to any school in Vukovar that wanted it, but the headmasters were tightly connected to the political parties, and there was no interest. The Croat-Serb HDZ/

SDSS coalition running the city thrived on keeping the conflict alive.

In 2009, things finally changed for the better, when Željko Sabo was elected mayor of Vukovar, representing the Social democratic Party (SDP). He had supported the New School project as a citizen before getting into office, and gave a formal recommendation for the project to be implemented.

Mr. Sabo's election was a very important step, though. For the first time, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) did not win this symbolic city. The election of the SDP in Vukovar was interpreted as a sign that people had had enough of that regime. One of the reasons cited by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for not furthering their support to the New School project and the NDC Osijek in 2009 was that the political situation was deadlocked in Vukovar. The NDC felt different, and was proven right when Sabo came into office.

In February 2010, the new president Ivo Josipović was inaugurated, also representing the SDP. Also on the national level, the social democrats replaced a coalition of the HDZ and SDSS. The project was presented to Josipović and he immediately supported it. With the recommendations of Sabo and Josipović, NDC Osijek went to the Ministry of Education and Sports and was politely rebuffed. With reference to the already implemented Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of the Region and the lack of political will in Vukovar, the ministry chose to abstain from implementing the New School. They promised to talk to the headmasters of some of the existing schools to see if it could be implemented there, but they never did.

President Josipović then organized meetings between the NDC and representatives of Serbian organizations, as well as the Ministry of Education. The ministry was now positive towards the implementation of the New School and promised to pay for teachers and staff once the school was built. The local government of Vukovar was supposed to be the founders of the school. But in February 2012, at a meeting in the municipality council, only Sabo's Social

Democratic Party voted in favour of the school. The proposal was turned down, making it impossible to rely on the local government as founders. Plans again had to be changed in accordance with political fluctuations.

During the next six months, NDC Osijek worked with the Ministry of Education to explore the possibility of running it as a state owned school. They also met several times with representatives from the Serbian communities in Vukovar and Croatia, and were supported by the Norwegian ambassador, Henrik Ofstad.

One of the peculiarities of Croatian politics and bureaucracy is that that neither lower level officials nor those employed by ministries will obey even direct orders from their superiors when touching upon these questions. There is widespread obstructionism, and endless opportunities for delaying a process like this. On the reasons for this, one can only speculate, but in a system in which the political parties provide people with jobs in the administration, the will to work for good governance might be less than the will to do a good job for your political party. Thus, even clear signals from the president are not enough to make the New School a reality. Even so, nothing will happen without the support from higher level politicians, and the NDC Osijek increasingly sought high level political contacts as it became clear that local politicians either wouldn't or couldn't realize the project.

At a meeting in September 2012 which saw the president, the Minister of Education and Sports, the Children's Ombudsman, Joint Council of Municipalities, representatives of Vukovar-Syrmia county, the Mayor of Vukovar, ambassador Ofstad, Steinar Bryn and the NDC Osijek, the promise was made that the New School would open in the autumn of 2013. This was not to be.

As the project had been turned down in the Municipal Council the year before, the ministry was unable to arrange a meeting with the local government of Vukovar. This once again postponed the planned opening of the school. From now on, discussions would be about the possibility of having the school founded by the ministry and run by

the state. August 2013 saw further meetings between the president, the ministry, the NDC and ambassador Ofstad. The possibilities of Norwegian funding for the school was discussed. Ofstad also helped establishing a relationship with the Serbian National Council SNV, an important and necessary partner in the project.

The funding of the New School became part of the EEA negotiations between Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Croatia, whom resulted in a signed deal offering EUR 1.3 million for the project. At that time, it had become clear to the NDC Osijek that the school could not depend on the city council for its existence - the volatile politics of Vukovar made it uncertain if the school would be allowed to exist with an eventual new local government in place. At the time, there was no one holding a majority in Vukovar. This, in effect, meant that the school would have to be state run, which has since been the goal the NDC have worked towards.

As is easily seen from this compressed chronology, the New School project has taken a lot of time. At times, the NDC has been close to giving up, trying to reconcile with the idea that this was just another project that didn't come through. Clearly, it isn't. At the time of writing, the New School project is the one project of the NDC Osijek in which all of the staff has been involved. Through years of working with a variety of local community based projects, they have always been steadily working for the New School, meeting with parents, teachers and politicians to keep the idea alive. Determined to see it become a reality, the staff has had to motivate each other at times, and deal with all the factors that make this kind of work so difficult.

Setbacks and Criticism

Naturally, the time spent also leaves room for disappointment among the parents who supported the project in its early stages. The children entering primary school in 2007 would be finished by 2014, without the New School becoming a reality. These parents had to go through

a lot of attention to, and criticism of, their personal affairs while hoping to amend the segregation in Vukovar. The disappointment can be felt among the staff of the NDC Osijek as well, but they do feel that they have done what is humanly possible.

The setbacks have been many. One of the biggest was the denial of financial support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2009. There was a widespread optimism among the staff, Steinar Bryn and the Nansen Dialogue Network, that the support would be granted, but the politics of Vukovar and Croatia seemingly got to the nerves of the NMFA, who deemed it unrealistic that the New School would ever be. At the time of writing, they are yet to proven wrong.

Stakeholders around the NDC stopped believing that the New School would ever be, though the parental support continued. NDC Osijek did not feel they could continue to recruit parents to the project, as the prospects seemed so bleak. Still, they continued to advocate the project, look for funding and mentioning the New School to politicians, institutions and donors when working on other projects, arranging discussions and roundtables as well as getting media coverage.

Paradoxically, it was not long after this “all hope is lost“- situation that the political system started to react in a positive and meaningful way to the project. Had NDC Osijek given up in the face of lack of funding and the lack of belief among their associates, the positive movement that were to come would not have happened. This ability to keep going, even when facing possible futility, is one of the great strengths of the Nansen Dialogue Network. In Suzana Agotić’s words; “It was too hard to give up!”

The contact with teachers and parents sympathetic to the project was never broken. There was also an ongoing integration project in kindergartens that made parents of would-be schoolchildren aware of the idea of the New School.

Obviously controversial, the New School project has attracted a lot of criticism. The project has repeatedly been

attacked from both Serbian and Croatian political parties, with accusations of everything from experimenting on the children of Vukovar to selling out their identities for a couple of hundred thousand euros. At least one question asked is substantial, though: Why build a new school to remedy the situation in Vukovar? Why not change the whole educational system to accommodate intercultural education?

The view that the entire school system should be changed is shared by the NDC Osijek. Indeed, the Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of the Region is meant to be implemented in all Croatian schools, and have so far had an easier birth than the New School. But, as Agotić told me, changing the national curriculum was deemed to monumental a task from the beginning. The feeling has always been that one, successful, well-run school is needed to show that integrated schools is the best way forward for Croatia's children. The symbolic value of Vukovar is not lost on the proponents of the New School either. It would be a major breakthrough to be able to point to a well-functioning, intercultural school in this symbolic city and say: "If this is possible in Vukovar, why not everywhere else?"

The downside of this is of course that Vukovar is also one of the hardest places to do this. The potential for failure is immense, and indeed, many have deemed the New School project a failure after seven years of work without the school being built. But reconciliation work must sometimes be reckoned in generations. There has been movement all along, with some period showing less than others. Still, the optimism persists. The New School in Vukovar is gaining high level support, and there is no possible way forward but the optimistic route.

The personal costs of working with this very long term project are mainly due to the political resistance. It is tiring and emotional to have your motives questioned and being subjected to the kind of attrition tactics used by politicians and bureaucracy in Croatia and Vukovar. Watching closely a representative democracy not representing its own people in a meaningful way also takes its toll.

The easiest way to realize the New School would have been to make it a private school. But the idea of the New School is not compatible with making it in any way exclusive, which it would be of the funding of it were to be depending on the parents. Neither would the school be secure if depending on annual or bi-annual funding from outside donors. It would also make the school more exclusive, the exact opposite of what the NDC Osijek wants to achieve. More importantly, one level of Croatian government has to take responsibility for the school. With state backing, a strong signal is sent to the community, and, one can imagine, to politicians all over Croatia.

It is also important for the NDC to provide a solid basis for the school. At one point in the future, it will have to be run by either state or municipality, and the foundations of its pedagogics and social environment must be firmly laid on the values of the Nansen Dialogue. Most important of all is finding teachers and staff who share these values of integration and diversity. All children and all parents should feel that they are welcome to the school. The greatest fear of the NDC Osijek is that the school, once opened, becomes another pawn in the political game drawing on ethnic divides for its subsistence. As Suzana Agotić says; “You can’t teach children in schools about integration if you are not showing them by your example that it is possible. “

The New School project shows the failures of the Croatian political system in all its glory. The community wishes for this alternative to exist for their children, but the local politicians do not listen. In five days in 2008 the NDC Osijek collected almost a thousand signatures from people in Vukovar supporting the New School initiative. It was handed over to the municipality politicians, who reacted literally with a shrug of the shoulders. One can only imagine how many sound initiatives from citizens or NGOs that have been laid to rest by this combination of indifference and obstructionism from authorities through the years, but giving up gains nothing.

Education is a crucial part of reproducing the ethnic divides in Croatia. If it is not changed, the different projects

bringing Serb and Croat children together in their spare time, while valuable in their own right, will not have the chance to change the situation in a meaningful way.

The project has been kept alive by money collected in Søre Ål School and the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer, when the financial support dried up. It has also been supported by the George Soros foundation. Given the financial situation of the NDC Osijek, this has proven to be crucial to the survival of the New School Project.

Milas is certain that the NDC did everything they could, approaching the project from different perspectives and trying every angle possible to reach through those in power. The High Commissioner of National Minorities supported it, writing a recommendation. The Ministry of Education and Sports have stated that it is the right way to go forward.

The dialogue component has been important. From the very beginning, NDC Osijek has brought together parents and teachers that did not cooperate or communicate very well, providing space for them to tell their stories and listen to the others. Invariably, this process would start with them exchanging views on the current situation, and then slowly move towards the events of 1991 and what they went through at that time. These are subjects that are not part of everyday conversation. Handling them is a precondition for being able to move on and work together for the common good. In forming the working groups, NDC Osijek approached local politicians with an open mind, even if they knew that they did not support the cause. At the very least, they should hear the thoughts of the parents and teachers who saw the effect of segregated education every day.

One of the central ideas of the Nansen Dialogue work is that conflicts are, in essence, a breakdown in communication. The divisions seen in Vukovar and countless other cities and villages all over the Western Balkans effectively hinders cooperation of the kind that could contribute to actively develop these communities. To re-establish communication between the groups in

conflict is to enable them to cooperate. By developing their community in cooperation, they further strengthen the communication between them. A downward spiral is turned into an upward one.

The structural, political and social problems of a city like Vukovar, does not go away because dialogue is introduced to the community. What dialogue can do is to build bridges of communication that makes cooperation possible, even across seemingly unbridgeable divides, even after atrocities like those seen in the Balkan wars of the 1990s. On the level of personal relations between teachers, parents and youth in Vukovar and Eastern Slavonia, dialogue has succeeded in doing this. Hopefully, this will eventually seep into the political domain and result in the New School being opened.

LESSONS LEARNT

– *Steinar Bryn* –

Since 1995 I have been facilitating dialogue seminars on a regular basis. My experience is primarily from inter-ethnic groups from the Western Balkans. The seminars have lasted from a weekend up to three months. About half of them were done in the Western Balkans and half of them in Lillehammer, Norway, probably close to 300 altogether. These are 12 lessons learnt that I want to share with everybody interested in or motivated for dialogue work.

- Dialogue is no magic fix
- Impartiality is a prerequisite to be a good dialogue facilitator
- A good dialogue requires a neutral place and balance in the room
- The devil is in the details
- Dialogue can create movement, when conflicts are frozen
- Dialogue often modifies strong victim/aggressor perceptions
- Dialogue opens for multiple identities
- Dialogue discovers there are competing truths
- Dialogue is more than words
- Dialogue is a prerequisite for a functional democracy
- Dialogue challenges the dominant instrumental paradigm
- If not dialogue – what is the alternative?

Lesson 1: Dialogue is no magic fix

I often hear the word dialogue being used; “Let us use dialogue. Let us solve it with dialogue.” And sometimes I hear complaints when a dialogue seminar stalled or did not get anywhere, as if something went wrong. Dialogue is a way of communicating that focus on understanding the other side. A dialogue person would be equally curious about why we have reached so different conclusions about the same issues, as about convincing others he was right. A successful dialogue will increase the understanding of the disagreement, but other tools are needed to solve problems or find solutions. Dialogue can heal wounds, but not necessarily; it can also open them.

When people understand each other better they realize how prejudices and stereotypes got in the way, how misunderstandings have divided them and how the more or less official propaganda about the other side have produced enemy images that do not correspond with reality. But when we understand each other better we might also discover how different we are. We might discover that evil abuse was done on purpose. We might discover that reconciliation is not possible because there is no willingness on the other side to reach out. Reconciliation then becomes to accept that what happened, happened. Reconciliation means to reconcile with one’s own past.

There is a second interpretation of this lesson. There is no magic in dialogue. I often call our method the “MacGyver-method”, after the well-known television star that always looked for solutions in his close surroundings. He was a true bricoleur, a man who uses the tools available.

His opposite is James Bond who possesses some magic tools he has received from Mr. Q, tools unavailable to ordinary people. I am often questioned about whether I have some magic tricks, as if what goes on inside the Blue Room, our working space at the Nansen Academy, must have some secrets. I say there are none. People talk to each other and over time they learn to listen to each other.

When they listen to each other they start to understand each other better. They simply become more visible to each other. When you see and listen to another person over time you often start to understand his or her thinking better and you start to act in a more constructive way toward that person.

I use Lillehammer in the same “MacGyver” way. I look and see what we have that can work. The Olympic Park offers the opportunity to walk down the 1000 steps of the ski jump while ski jumpers are practising close by. Maihaugen offers the opportunity for studying Norwegian building techniques from the 12th century to today. Storgata is a very cosy walking street in the middle of the small town with an almost fairy tale-like atmosphere. GLØR is a recycling compound with a recycling activity most politicians concerned about the garbage problem are fascinated by. The municipality itself receive visiting groups to hear about how the municipality works and schools open their doors. These visits in and around Lillehammer are both a break from conversations and inspiration for new talks. So when I say no magic, I mean that we use what is in the room among the participants and we use what we find in the town. Talking, listening, eating, walking, skiing, swimming, dancing, dreaming and reflecting are activities most people can master without any magic

Lesson 2: Impartiality is a prerequisite to be a good dialogue facilitator

When I facilitate a dialogue seminar I hear many stories and arguments. Participants are very curious about my positions. They confront me. “You have heard all these stories - you must of course have made up your mind about who were the most guilty”. They approach me during the breaks with arguments and facts they want to present. I am surprised by how strongly they trust their own sources of information, while the others are victims of propaganda. I do form my personal opinions, of course I do. But these participants are invited to a dialogue meeting. My job is

to create the necessary safety inside the room that foster honest conversation. If I behave like a judge in a courtroom, I would quickly alienate half of the people in the room. I have developed a guideline: "It is not enough to be right". Participants are convinced they are right, and after having listened to many stories I have to admit that many are more right than I thought. There is more right out there than I was aware of. What does this mean? It only means that conflicts are less black and white than I once thought.

The division between angels and devils are not between ethnic groups. One can find angels and devils on both sides, and sometimes even in the same person. It was not "bad" Germans that attacked "good Norwegians" during World War 2. We have learnt that some Germans came with good motives and intentions, and that some Norwegians cooperated with the "bad" Germans. We have also learn that the "good" Norwegians did questionable things and that some of our actions toward the end of the war had elements of revenge and cannot be justified as necessary to win the war. Traitors were treated badly. The process of reconciliation must take all of this into consideration.

I have, a few times, been provoked to go into arguments with participants. I cannot recall one single time something good came out of it. When I have done so, I have tried to avoid taking sides in the conflicts, and instead argued from principles of democracy, human rights or dialogue.

In one seminar one side started by stating they would not participate in the dialogue unless one of the participants from the other side was excluded. He belonged to a parallel structure and they were under strict orders not to communicate with those in the parallel structure (shadow government). From my belief in dialogue it should be an inclusive process, we should not exclude, so I started to argue; "It is a big mistake when the U.S. does not want to talk with Taliban or Hamas; it is a big mistake when we do not want to talk with those we name as terrorists. How can we confront their perception of truth and reality if they are not included?" I was sure I was right and that I was arguing a point that at least I had found to be experientially true.

The end of the argument was that the first side decided to get up and leave the table only one hour into the weekend seminar. I made numerous unsuccessful attempts to bring them back.

My first mistake was that I started to argue against a decision made by people outside the room. If I wanted to argue I should have argued with those making that decision. My second mistake was that I so clearly behaved as if I knew what was right and they were wrong - a humiliating starting point for a seminar. The third mistake was that my arguments clearly favoured one participant from the other side, which led to the conclusion that I supported that side more. Arguments also open up for misinterpretations. They felt compared to Taliban and Hamas. It did not help that I said I tried to do the opposite; compare them with Obama. Obviously it is not enough to be right.

Lesson 3: A good dialogue requires a neutral place and balance in the room

I am often asked about the importance of a neutral place. My experience is unquestionable. When the parties are in a serious conflict everything that can be interpreted as negative must be excluded. If the hotel once was owned by a supporter of the enemy, the vibes are still in the walls. Conflicts are often accompanied by territorial claims. To move outside the contested areas is very useful. I have found Norway and Lillehammer to be an excellent place. In addition to feeling the neutrality, they also discover their commonality as very different from Norwegians regarding food and drinks, music and even noise. Lillehammer is so quiet. Another advantage of Norway is that they cannot just return home in anger. There is a logistic apparatus needed that gives some time to convince people to return to the table.

The recruitment process is one of the harder challenges in this work. People do not want to participate, they have to be convinced. "Why should I spend a week together with them after what they did to us?" When people finally arrive

into the dialogue room half the job is done. There is an inherent need to talk, to confront, to discuss, to quarrel, but ultimately also to dialogue. When we started we received quite some help from international organizations like the Helsinki Committee, International Red Cross and Norwegian Church Aid. We spent quite some time interviewing potential participants and the final selection focused on balance in the room - ethnic, verbal, gender and other skills. I was sometimes accused of keeping alive the very discrimination I tried to overcome when I signaled that I needed a “real” Croat to balance the group.

When we had short term seminars in the field it became very important to call participants almost every night the last week. Too many old aunts had a tendency to die just before a seminar. In one case we recruited 10 - 10, but the night before 6 on the one side cancelled and the dialogue was carried through with a 10 - 4 misbalance. I must admit that if I do notice lack of balance in a room and although I stress impartiality I do lean over toward the side I consider weaker and try to support their involvement in the dialogue process.

Lesson 4: The devil is in the details

When we plan the dialogue seminars we often focus on the program, less on the process and we focus on the “big” issues, less on the small details. Donors need a program to support financially, participants need a program to get time off from work, and the host facility needs to know time for arrival and departure and meals.

Once a group was very interested in visiting a farm, they were actually wondering about the possibilities for future season employment. I contacted a famous sheep farmer in the Gudbrandsdalen valley who gladly accepted us. We all looked forward to it, but to my big surprise he didn't have sheep anymore. He had started pig farming. The Moslem half of the group felt very uncomfortable and I had to spend months rebuilding their confidence. I had just assumed he still was a sheep farmer.

I have had very constructive working days ruined by the wrong choice of restaurant in the evening. It once turned out that the live band for the evening obviously mastered the music of the dominant culture better than the music of the minority culture. Those 2-3 songs from the minority they knew were just not good enough. We checked the menu, but not the music and as a result half the group walked out.

I have made plenty of other mistakes. But moods and atmosphere can also turn out positive by giving attention to the “small” things, like greeting people when the bus arrives instead of showing up half an hour later, or shaking hands and say good bye even if the bus leaves 03.30 in the morning to catch an early flight from Gardermoen. They remember that, more than the good lectures I gave

Lesson 5: Dialogue can create movement when a conflict is frozen

I once invited five Palestinian filmmakers to come together with five Israeli filmmakers, all of them women. The aim of the meeting was to show each other the films they had made and to discuss if a joint film project could stimulate the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. The Palestinian women refused. To engage in dialogue would be a sign of honouring or respecting women they did not honour or respect. I travelled to Bethlehem and spent a day with them. I asked if they thought the Israelis knew the true story about how they lived. No - that was part of the problem. I challenged them whether they thought teachers, politicians and journalists gave an honest portrayal of their situation. They answered “no.” When asked whether it is important to tell their story, they answered; “of course it is!” Then I said that is what I am asking you to do. I am inviting you to show your documentary films about the Palestinian experience. They commented; “is that dialogue? We thought dialogue was what was going on at Camp David”. I replied; “that is in the other end of the communication spectrum. The conversations going on at

Camp David are political talks exploring solutions, and the participants defend their positions and are afraid of going back home with a compromise they can't defend in front of their own people." In a dialogue on the other hand, you do not need to give up anything - the goal is to make yourself understood and to understand. They agreed to participate on the condition I would not call it dialogue.

They showed each other the films and one Palestinian admitted "I am ashamed to say I had to become 44 years old before I saw my first Israeli movie". The film was about a group of Palestinians travelling around Israel and how the tour guides told the history of the Holy Land.

To engage in dialogue does not imply a commitment to compromise or any form of agreement, the dialogue can be more useful when a conflict is frozen. Through improving the understanding of each other's situations we can create movement in the positions. Dialogue can never replace negotiations, but sometimes a stronger dialogue component before the negotiations start could secure a more sustainable outcome.

Lesson 6: Dialogue can modify strong victim/ aggressor perceptions

Laura Silber and Allan Little describe the victim mythology as follows: "To work in former Yugoslavia is to enter a world of parallel truths. Wherever you go, you encounter the same resolute conviction that everything that had befallen the region is always someone else's fault, except one's own side... Each nation has embraced a separate orthodoxy in which it is uniquely the victim and never the perpetrator."

At the University of Oslo the exam text was once: "Describe the victim mythology in at least three ethnic groups in the Western Balkans," indicating we can find it in more than three.

The Albanians were always the underdog in ex-Yugoslavia; the Bosniaks carried the largest loss of people killed and the largest number of people becoming refugees

during the war in Bosnia Herzegovina. The Croats feel they lost the war in Bosnia Herzegovina, since the Serbs and the Bosniaks ended up with a better final deal. The Serbs feel they were the great loser in the break-up of Yugoslavia, losing their positions in all republics including the loss of Kosovo.

When you enter the dialogue process and discover that people are much more than representatives of their ethnic group, you discover that individuals have their own stories. Many Serb soldiers and civilians were also killed in Bosnia Herzegovina. Their families suffered the loss of loved ones. When young Serbs and Albanians from Kosovo meet and talk, they might discover that they still have a common dream of leaving the country. But most importantly; nationalistic media does not report the acts of aggression of its own people in the full scale. Over and over again I hear people in dialogue express surprise: "I did not know that." I believe them. The assumption that everybody know, is in my experience wrong. People need to be told about many things.

It is often argued that reconciliation requires punishment of war criminals. I agree. But it also requires that all sides take an honest look in the mirror and realize the impossibility of punishing all war criminals. This does not mean that all are equally guilty; it means that individuals and families are wounded by the war in very different ways. Through listening to each other's stories we realize this. When there is a clear perception of oneself as a victim and the other as aggressor there is no wish for win-win-solutions. The others do not deserve to win; they should be punished for what they did. I will rather sacrifice my well-being to secure their punishment. Loose-loose is preferable to win-win. But when you hear their stories of suffering, you realize that the other side maybe has tasted their own medicine. Both sides are victims of the war and through improving our cooperation and communication we can give our children a better future.

Lesson 7: Dialogue can open up for perceiving each other's multiple identities

Participants arrive with a strong perception of each other as representatives for ethnic groups or countries. People are Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. These perceptions are full of prejudices. One worker at the Nansen Center in Sarajevo says: "When people ask me which ethnic group I belong to, I refuse to answer. They want me to identify with an ethnic group. If I answer they put me in that box where their stereotypes about that group are activated. In that case they probably know less about me than if I refuse to answer."

Through living together they slowly discover that other people are much more than representatives of their nation. People are mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, they are teachers and students, they are music lovers and table tennis players, they are hikers and they are soccer players, they are lovers and they are dancers. Maybe people cannot connect as representatives of their ethnic groups, but they can connect as Mozart lovers or chess players. Maybe they cannot connect as Serbs and Croats, but they can connect as students and truth searchers.

I do not think that the participants in dialogue seminars change their political base or future goals, but they definitely change their perception of each other. The so-called enemy develops a more human face, they discover similarities in their stories, and they become more visible to each other and develop stronger relationships.

This might be one of the more underestimated effects of dialogue work. The contact hypothesis suggests that when people come in contact, they develop better contact. The system of segregation is not a historical coincidence; it creates structures that keep the conflict alive. The mantra in the peacebuilding community is "build strong institutions", but sustainable peacebuilding must include de-segregation and reconciliation among the people to enlist a common loyalty to the same institutions.

Lesson 8: Through dialogue we discover there are competing truths

When people arrive, they are often convinced that there is one truth and we both know it, but the other side deny it. One example from Kosovo; On March 20 1990 the alleged poisoning of school children started. Thousands of Albanian school children experienced symptoms of poisoning. Even today, 25 years later, Serbs and Albanians have almost collectively identical, but opposite answers to the question of what happened. A Serb would say it did not happen; it was a performance to obtain sympathy from the world. Albanians would say; "Certainly, I know somebody that was there." Logically it follows that the Serbs assume that the Albanians knew they were performing since they did the performance, while the Albanians assume the Serbs were informed about the poisoning since their children managed to avoid it. There is one truth and we both know it, but the other side deny it.

When people develop respect and confidence, it becomes possible to explore these competing truths. Because surely they are not equally true. My experience is that people seem to have an equally strong belief in their own truth. In the early stage of the dialogue there is no point to talk about finding the real truth, because the real truth is my truth. When respect and trust start to build, and a certain openness develops - that maybe my family, my teachers, my journalists and my politicians did not tell me the whole story - then the willingness to pursue the missing pieces in the whole picture increases and the time might be ready to open these more controversial issues. We did this many times. Under a discussion about the poisoning a Serb suddenly expressed "you really believe we poisoned you - now I understand why you hate us". As long as he assumed they just performed he only lost respect. When he understood that it was not one truth, but two competing truths, everything made more sense to him.

To misinterpret this as meaning there is no real truth ignores the fact that it takes some talk to start talking.

Dialogue is about minds opening up. It takes time for the minds to warm up, to become receptive towards other explanations. To invite enemies into a dialogue room is almost the opposite of inviting them to a negotiation table. The goal of a negotiation is to reach an agreement. A dialogue meeting is successful if the parties understand better why they disagree. But when they understand that they disagree because they have relied on very different sources of information, they get curious about examining those sources.

I have experienced that such a process can lead to a direct interest in finding the “real” truth, and the joint, committed search for the real truth can often be revealing for one or both of the sides; like the Serb and Albanian who wanted to find out what had really happened in Raçak. The challenge for a dialogue facilitator is to create a space where minds start to unfold, that means they start to open up – and some listen for the first time to alternative explanations to those communicated to them by their own families, teachers, journalists and politicians.

An illustrative example that not even “forensic” truth (i.e., the number of dead) is easily given is the research done by Mirsad Tokaca in Bosnia Herzegovina. It was for a long time assumed that 200,000 people were killed during the war between 1992 and 1995. It was repeated so often that it became a factoid, but nobody really knew who had figured this out – it was just assumed. The research done, it culminated in a report reducing the number to around 100,000.

Lesson 9: Dialogue is more than words

This is maybe the most crucial lesson. Is there something in the dialogue process itself that leads to action? I have seen this over and over again; when people start to share their stories, become more visible to each other, build relationships, realize they are both victims of strong propaganda, understand the operation of parallel truths, discover that they are much more than representatives of

ethnic groups - they realize they are all accepting social and political structures that do not provide equal distribution of resources or equal access to opportunities. To understand the other can be a revolutionary act.

Imagine for a second multiple moral universes with relatively equal ability to motivate and enlist followers. I am not saying that these moral universes are of equal value, only that they seem to have equal ability to enlist true believers. So the true believers of the West believe that the liberal democracies of the West founded on the individual and the protection of human rights, for liberty and against oppression, are a stronger moral universe than a moral universe founded on the collective group (of a people or an imaginary nation) and values like authority, loyalty and sacredness. We both go to war for what we believe in, while the war itself often destroys the very values we wanted to protect in the first place.

The important questions are: what happens when people build relations and start to understand each other better? What happens when people start to realize that the others have suffered more than they thought? What happens when they start to realize the abuses their own people was responsible for? You start to look at your own surroundings with new eyes. The enemy that should be punished becomes a potential partner in finding a way out of the misery. Win-win solutions become more attractive.

The Nansen Coordination Boards are examples of this. They exist in many of the communities where we are active. In Prijedor, Sanski Most, Jajce, Zvornik, Bratunac and Srebrenica, where we are deeply involved in municipality politics, these boards consist of people with strong political disagreements, but what binds them together is the respect for dialogue. And they engage in activities that are initiated to break down the division between people. The core of these coordination boards were built during seminars at the Nansen Academy.

Lesson 10: Dialogue is a prerequisite for a functional democracy

When I grew up I was taught that the big differences between people were on the outside, but that on the inside we were more similar. I was taught that democracy was based on our rational ability to recognize the better argument. If we created safe public spaces where the different arguments were allowed to be presented, the stronger and better arguments would slowly start to dominate. Today I think this is based on the assumption that we are more similar than what we really are. If we recognize each other's differences we start to realize that what is the better argument for me might not be the better argument for you. I used to think that the more I knew myself, the more I would know other people. Today the catch phrase is "on thyself you know nobody else". In other words we cannot assume that other people are like us, and "do unto others what you want others to do unto you" is changed to "do unto others what others need to be done for them".

Dialogue is a representative system. In multi-ethnic societies it becomes very important to get to know the others. We can't assume we know how they think or feel. This is the main argument against the system of segregation, particularly in schools. The purpose of education is to learn to know the world in which we grow up, and if other groups of people are not visible in our surroundings our knowledge of and experiences with them are limited. I would argue that dialogue is not only a way of communicating and an attitude toward life. It has certain implicit values that would lead to a struggle against segregation and in favour of open societies where dialogue is a prerequisite for a functional democracy. As Julian Bond expressed it 50 years after Martin Luther King gave his "I have a Dream"-speech on the Washington Mall: "White people tend to live over here; black people over there. And as long as you live in separate places, you don't know each other."

Lesson 11: Dialogue challenges the instrumental paradigm

Our societies have become very functional. The instrumental running of airports, hospitals, municipalities, and even schools is impressive. There are accidents, there are delays, but basically the system works. A crucial component is the rotating system. It shouldn't matter who the pilot is, as long as he is licensed to fly an airplane and follows the instructions. We do not question the next shift in the hospital. We trust they can do the job.

The rotating principle is very visible in international peacebuilding. Embassies have it as their basic principle, the Red Cross do the same. In military operations the rotation is even faster. But a fundamental problem in post-conflict areas is the breakdown of trust in human relations and the breakdown of trust in authorities. In dialog work relationship building is central. This of course becomes more difficult when people rotate too fast. When I discuss this with internationals they respond with all the good reasons they have for rotating. Those reasons might be good, but the consequence is that the relationships between representatives of the international community and the local population become weak.

One aspect of instrumentalism is the beginning and the end. A good project is a sunset project with a clear exit strategy. One forgets that the demand for an exit strategy came from development cooperation, when internationals withdrew too fast before they had transferred all knowledge to the locals so that the locals could run the operations themselves. This has now been twisted to a demand that everybody should have an exit strategy. Reconciliation is long term work, generational work, even. It is not a project. Within international peacebuilding there is a willingness to support projects that have a high chance of success, but the projects really needed are probably those who have a great chance of failing.

I will strengthen this lesson with a last paragraph; my point is that the instrumental dominance in peacebuilding might help explain why our efforts produce relatively little peace.

Lesson 12: If not dialogue - what is the alternative?

The world is becoming more polarized. We fear radicalization and extremism. New waves of refugees are entering Europe. The lessons learned from dialogue work in the Western Balkans seem less Balkan-specific today than 20 years ago. The historical process of nation-state building seems to have come to an end in 2015. Almost in the same way as the Europeans fled in millions from the multiple wars in Europe, we see how people today are coming to Europe for the same reasons.

We have started to talk about Oslo as a divided city. We expect immigrants and refugees to integrate. But how can they integrate if the others are not there? We recently finished another election campaign revealing that it is debate and not dialogue which directs the political communication. I have personally been invited to different institutions, organizations and workplaces in Norway simply because they feel a strong need to strengthen their dialogue skills. The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue has experienced great interest in its dialogue expertise from different municipalities, simply to strengthen their ability to deal with the new multi-ethnic reality.

The political challenge of integration will become the most pressing issue in Europe in the years to come. It gives me a certain feeling of mutual benefit to see that the knowledge and experience we have gathered in the Western Balkans over the last 20 years are becoming so relevant for Europe at large. How do we plan to meet this challenge of integration without dialogue? The alternative is to build fences.

