

Closing the Books or Keeping them Open?

Contributions to the Bonn Conference on Adult Education and Development (BoCAED) “Remember for the Future”

Vanya Ivanova/Matthias Klingenberg (eds.)



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Introduction

“Don’t struggle with people, with men.

Struggle with the goals and conditions that make men fight each other.”

Maha Ghosananda

This compendium of articles is meant to complement the discussion during the Bonn Conference on Adult Education and Development (BoCAED) on 12th and 13th of December 2011. The call for articles was spread with the support of all the partners of the conference – Academy for Conflict Transformation (Bonn, Germany), the Alliance of Historical Dialogue and Accountability (AHDA), Columbia University (New York, USA), and the European Adult Education Association (EAEA). Scholars, educators and practitioners working in the fields of memory studies, peace and conflict studies, and Youth and Adult Education were invited to contribute for the discussion on issues concerning recent violent past and its implications in the present.

More and more Youth and Adult Education providers are involved in reconciliation and dealing with past activities, the role of non-formal education in this field has increased in recent years. Actors are involved in broad variety of approaches and contexts, such as nation and identity building, democratization processes, processing memories, biographical work, eye-witnesses work, getting into terms with the past, how to handle blame and/or denial, etc. This demands a high professional capacity and responsibility from these organizations and the experts working in the field, both on the theoretical and practical level. The compendium and the conference itself would like to systematize the experiences made and lessons learned, bridge the existing gap between theory and practice and offer tools on how to deal successfully with these issues.

In the volume you will find thirteen articles coming from different parts of the world and covering various topics: Youth and Adult Education methods in dealing with the past, teaching shared memory and violent past, oral history, museums and memorials as educational sites and providers of public education, dealing with the past as a method for peace-building and reconstruction of civil society after violent conflicts and war, achieving reconciliation through dialogue, collaboration and exchange.

This compendium wants to stimulate an open discourse about the relation of Youth and Adult Education, processing the past and development work. All the articles contained here reflect the options of the authors. Our wish was to bring as many as possible multiperspective approaches for both the publication and conference, aiming at a synergy effect and richer exchange. Nevertheless we are aware that this attempt is a small step toward systematising the experiences gathered and lessons learned, bridging the existing gap between theory and practice and offer tools how to deal with these issues. The editors sincerely hope that the compendium and the related conference will be of interest to professionals, academics, educators, policy makers and the general public alike.

Vanya Ivanova and Matthias Klingenberg

dvv international

| Remembering or Forgetting? |

Closing the Books or Keeping them Open

“Closing the books or keeping them open”. It is a dilemma typically found in post-conflict situations in which heinous crimes have been perpetrated. The worst of crimes: those that denigrate the very meaning of what it is to be human and which have been designated *“serious”* violations and abuses of human rights. And as the brutal chatter of the Kalashnikovs goes quiet, the walls cease their shuddering, and peace descends, it may seem preferable, in the words of the Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen, *“to dig a hole and bury the past.”*¹ The general mood may be one of wanting to forget and of focusing on the urgent need to rebuild schools, bridges, streets, hospitals – the list of needs is usually overwhelming – and put aside memories of the worst of times and the worst of crimes committed in them.

Yet for many of those who have suffered gross violation, the war still rages on inside of them – vivid in its detail, brutal in its continuing impact, undeniable in its demand for some sort of recognition, or reckoning, and heartrending in its questions. Who, precisely, is responsible for the atrocious act that tore through my life? How did my loved one die? Where are their remains? How can I let the past now rest? Do I even want to? Societies that neglect or refuse to acknowledge this struggle, to listen to survivors’ questions, their stories, and to respond sympathetically, do so at their peril. One commentator on the 1994 genocide in Rwanda talks of how easily victims become killers.² And poet Maya Angelou writes, *“History despite its wrenching pain cannot be un-lived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again”*.³ To attempt to close the books on an episode of systemic violence without having tackled the violations committed is to leave trauma unaddressed, grievance unresolved, animosities intact and highly charged, volatile patterns of conflict unaltered – and the likelihood of a resurgence of conflict, in some form or other, extremely high.

1 Quoted in Youk Chhang, *The thief of history* in *International Journal of Transitional Justice*. Vol.1, 2007, p.163.

2 Mamdani, M. (2001) *When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism, and genocide in Rwanda*. London: James Currey.

3 From the poem by Maya Angelou, delivered January 19, 1993, at the inauguration of President Clinton.

www.poetseers.org/contemporary_poets/maya_angelou_poems/on_the_pulse_of_morning/

The need to account for violations and abuses perpetrated in violent conflict has become widely acknowledged in many quarters, leading to the growth of an international consensus that serious human rights violations should not be subject to amnesty. Allow me to digress for a moment to unpack this term, “*amnesty*”. Essentially, it comprises legal measures that have the following effect:

- a. *“Prospectively barring criminal prosecution and, in some cases, civil actions against certain individuals or categories of individuals in respect of specified criminal conduct committed before the amnesty’s adoption; or*
- b. *Retroactively nullifying legal liability previously established.”*⁴

Historically, amnesty has been an essential item in the peacemaking toolbox – a legal means of putting aside grievance for the sake of peace. The trend in recent decades, however, has been to establish exemptions and exclusions to the general practice of amnesty. In part this has to do with a growing understanding that certain types of crimes degrade the very meaning of what it is to be human: crimes such as enforced disappearance, which in addition to robbing the disappeared person’s loved ones of their presence, leaves them in a sort of twilight zone, needing to know what has happened but hoping that the truth is not that the loved one is dead, or was humiliated in their dying hour; crimes such as the use of rape to render a community, or people of a certain ethnicity or religion, submissive; torture; and taking a human life. Crimes of this kind, and magnitude, we can call these crimes “*serious*” violations and abuses of human rights.⁵ And in this, we may hear the words of Justice Robert Jackson at Nuremberg echoing: “*The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it cannot survive their being repeated.*”⁶ Sadly, such wrongs have been repeated – and are being repeated even now as we speak. And confronting them represents one of the great challenges of our age.

How then might we confront these wrongs? This is a question that continues to draw much debate, much of which, mixed into a history of unprecedented growth of international humanitarian law and its application, are usefully described in Geoffrey Robertson’s book (2006), *Crimes Against Humanity: The*

4 OHCHR Rule of Law Series, *Amnesty*. Accessible through www.ohchr.org

5 The term “*non-lethal*” is also sometimes used; I prefer not to use as it does not cover at least two “*serious*” crimes, namely rape and torture.

6 Jackson, R. “*Opening Address for the United States*”, Nuremberg Trials. Available at <http://fcit.usf.edu/Holocaust/resource/document/DocJac11.htm>

*Struggle for Global Justice.*⁷ It is a fertile, sometimes vociferous discussion, given impetus by, to cite a few out of many monumental works, Diane Orentlicher’s (1991) article, “Settling Accounts: The Duty to Prosecute Human Rights Violations of a Prior Regime,”⁸ and to UN reports, Louis Joinet’s (1997) “Question of the impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations ...”⁹ and Orentlicher’s later “Independent study on best practices, including recommendations, to assist states in strengthening their domestic capacity to combat all aspects of impunity”.¹⁰

I will approach the debate, perhaps somewhat provocatively, through the lens of a single value: truth. I do this for several reasons. For one, to quote from a celebrated movie from the 1970s, “If you ain’t got the truth, you got nothing”: nothing real to work with, or resolve, or heal; nothing. This may seem obvious. Yet it is a fact one gets reminded of, over and over, working in the field with victims of serious human rights violations: what to do with perpetrators may be open to discussion, likewise the type and amount of material support from the government that failed to prevent the violation, or whose agents were the violators. But clarifying what happened, establishing who was responsible – and having that acknowledged, publicly – is generally, among victims, simply non-negotiable. I recall hearing, during an OHCHR workshop in Kavre District, Nepal, the words of Purnimaya Lama,



Killing tree from the Choeung Ek Memorial in the killing fields of Cambodia Source: Tyrone Savage

7 Robertson, G. (2006) “Crimes against humanity: The struggle for global justice.” Penguin.
 8 Orentlicher D. (1991) “Settling accounts: The duty to prosecute human rights violations of a prior regime”. *The Yale Law Journal* 100, 8: 2537-2615.
 9 Joinet L. (1997) *Final report on ‘Question of the impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations (civil and political)’*, prepared by Louis Joinet for the Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/20, accessible at <http://derechos.org/nizkor/impu/joinet2.html>; accessed 20 September 2008.
 10 Orentlicher, D. “Independent study on best practices, including recommendations, to assist states in strengthening their domestic capacity to combat all aspects of impunity.” (Report submitted pursuant to resolution 2003/72).

wife of Arjun Lama, taken in April 2005 by Maoist forces: “*Discussion about justice can come later. First, tell us where our loved ones are buried.*” Purnimaya Lama is a woman of extraordinary courage, who has consistently and very publicly challenged the Maoist leader, now in Government, she alleges gave the order for Arjun to be taken away and killed. When we talk about how remembering can help transform our future, assuring the truthfulness of the stories contained in those books, is the *sine qua non* – the essential precondition – for deciding whether to close or keep holding open our books about the past. Perhaps it is the prerogative of victims to make the decision and do the eventual closing.

In any post-conflict situation, establishing an accurate, honest record of crimes committed during the fighting is likely to be a frustrating process. The institution usually responsible for ensuring accountability, the judiciary, may have been damaged, corrupted, destroyed or simply left to decay amid the seemingly more urgent priorities of the fighting. In Zaire, for example, the judiciary under Mobutu Sese Seko was corrupted by heavy executive interference and its infrastructure – the actual buildings, the personnel, even copies of legal codes – destroyed in fighting. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge had attempted to purge society of legal professionals, among others, as well as of codes and institutions, and to replace legal proceedings with centralized party discipline. Even legal infrastructure remains, the outgoing regime may have used it erect legal obstacles. Amnesty provisions, for example, may block, or at least complicate, legal accountability. Chile offers a vivid example: it took fully a decade for a Chilean court to rule that General Augusto Pinochet should stand trial.

Yet even where the criminal justice system is functional and legal obstacles to accountability have not been constructed, the type of truth pursued in the courtroom is likely to be frustrating for victims. For one, the proceedings are deliberately, strictly, centred on someone else: the alleged perpetrator – and not on those who have taken the brunt of the wrong done. Because criminal justice proceedings are based on “*documents of proven authenticity and testimony which has been vigorously cross-examined and then judicially analyzed*”,¹¹ they do doubtless provide a significant countermeasure to denial and thus may provide victims with some “*satisfaction*” (Bassiouni).¹² But criminal justice is simply not there to engage with questions and needs victims struggle with, daily, after violation. Primo Levi describes the impact of violation thus:

11 Robertson, G. (2006) “*Crimes against humanity: The struggle for global justice.*” Penguin. p.621.

12 Bassiouni, C. “*The right to restitution, compensation and rehabilitation for victims of gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms*” (Final report of the Special Rapporteur, Mr. M. Cherif Bassiouni, submitted in accordance with Commission resolution 1999/33). E/CN.4/2000/62, paras 21 & 25.

*"[It] spreads like a contagion. It is foolish to think that human justice can eradicate it. It is an inexhaustible fount of evil; it breaks the body and the spirit of the submerged, it perpetuates itself as hatred among survivors, and swarms around in a thousand ways, against the very will of all, as thirst for revenge, as a moral capitulation, as denial, as weariness, as renunciation."*¹³

For victims, closing a case is generally not the end of the story.

The distance between criminal justice proceedings and victims' needs has become vividly evident amid the development of international judicial mechanisms – the international tribunals established for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, the hybrid tribunals, composed of international and national judges, such as the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the International Criminal Court, to name the most salient initiatives. Though these courts obviously hold massive historical significance and promise – a fertile topic, outside the bounds of our present discussion – these courts necessarily limit their efforts to a few cases involving notorious perpetrators considered "*most responsible for the worst offenses*".¹⁴ International judicial mechanisms simply have not been created to provide answers to multitudes of individual victims asking detailed questions about specific incidents of intimate loss.¹⁵ Victimologist Ivo Aertsen describes the problem thus:

*"International courts operate in a highly formalised way. This, together with practical and financial restrictions, would not allow for much personal participation from the side of the victims or their families, unless in a status of witness. Nor would this setting give room to forms of interaction with the perpetrator. This type of international procedure is mostly – psychologically and socially – very distant from those directly affected."*¹⁶

Debate about how victims of serious human rights violations experience criminal justice systems, be they domestic or supranational, is more complex than I am acknowledging here. Victims, along with society in general, obviously benefit from

13 Levi, P. (1976) *"The Truce"*, in: Friedlander, Albert A. (ed). *Out of the whirlwind: A reader of holocaust literature*. New York: Schocken, p. 426.

14 To date, the work of the ICC has resulted in only a handful of arrests. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has convicted a few dozen people for a genocide that took almost a million lives.

15 See from a growing volume of critical works, Zacklin, R. (2004) 'The failings of ad hoc international tribunals', *Journal of international criminal justice*, 2:2, pp. 541-545; Findlay, M., and, Henham, R.J., (2005) *Transforming international criminal justice: Retributive and restorative justice in the trial process* Cullompton, Devon: Willan, and Drumbl; M.A. (2007) *"Atrocity, Punishment, and International Law."* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

16 Aertsen in Ivo Aertsen, Jana Arsovska, C.H Rohne, Marta Valiñas, Kris Vanspauwen (eds.) (2008) *Restoring justice after large-scale violent conflicts: Kosovo, Israel-Palestine and Congo* (Cullompton, Devon: Willan, page 417.

the deterrent that trials provide against further abuses, as well as the ways in which trials militate against a generalized non-respect for the rule of law, and help uphold moral norms and standards. Criminal justice procedures can also offer survivors an alternative to personal confrontation, such as vendettas and other forms of private justice, by providing a process that accords with society's larger goals – an option, to use Martha Minow's phrase, somewhere *"between vengeance and forgiveness"*.¹⁷ It may, or may not, be the best a society can offer victims. But does it connect with the needs that result for one who has survived the worst of acts? And unless we take on that challenge, how can we say we have confronted the past sufficiently to now be able to close the book?

Allow me to illustrate those needs through a reflection I penned during a visit to the Kurdish *"northern autonomous region"* of Iraq a few days after the execution of Saddam Hussein.

"The execution offered a measure of justice – [Saddam] was convicted in a court of law, condemned and punished – but my lingering impression is one of repugnance."

The Kurdish elder seemed spellbound by the memory as he spoke.

"It was a macabre spectacle. Above all, though, I feel uneasy, strangely empty, robbed and lost in my memories. By holding the trial for the Dujail massacre first, the authorities have effectively blocked the trial for heinous crimes committed on a vast scale in the Anfal campaign. They have taken away the possibility of acknowledging, in detail, what happened to the Kurdish people. Justice for Anfal was impossible, but still we had looked to the trial for truth. It would have given surviving victims the opportunity to confront Saddam with their stories of loss, contradict his lies and insist on truthful answers, it would have given us all a chance to get the historical facts in order and to begin to rebuild from there."

The elder seemed to grow in stature as he wrestled for words to explain his ambivalence at the execution of Saddam, words to make his continuing demand for truth understandable to others, and perhaps above all to himself. His struggle seemed to imbue his sorrow with a certain dignity, a humanness.

My thoughts were interrupted by the hopeless outrage of the Kurdish elder: *"A distorted, maladministered form of justice for Dujail,"* he was saying, *"has robbed us of our right to confront Saddam with Anfal – justice has robbed us of truth!"*

17 Minow, M. (1998) *Between vengeance and forgiveness: Facing history after genocide and mass violence* Boston: Beacon Press.

Justice, robbing victims of truth... Perhaps the survivors of Anfal had long ago given up on getting justice for the sorts of heinous crimes they had endured. Now they were facing the possibility of having to give up the truth. I was struck by the painful emptiness of his outstretched hands. I looked away, staring into the late afternoon mists blowing in off the nearby mountains. I wondered which was worse.¹⁸

The tension between justice initiatives (if the Iraqi High Tribunal can be called that)¹⁹ and victims' need for truth have been the subject of much debate spanning the past two decades.

Among the first to articulate a need for innovative compromise was Chilean truth commissioner, José Zalaquett, who finds a creative balance between “*ethical imperatives and political constraints*”²⁰ in the position: “*the whole truth and as much justice as possible*”.²¹ Priscilla Hayner asked, “*Truth versus Justice: Is it a Trade-Off?*” in her groundbreaking comparative work, *Unspeakable Truths*.²² A key figure in the South African process, Charles Villa-Vicencio, affirms a need for “*neither too little justice – nor too much*”, suggesting that in post-conflict situations justice may be most productively pursued when linked to broader reconciliation imperatives.²³ Argentinean human rights lawyer, Juan Méndez, presented a vision of account-



Magic tree from the Choeung Ek Memorial in the killing fields of Cambodia Source: Tyrone Savage

18 First published in *Human Security Journal* vol. 4, Summer 2007 (See http://www.peacecenter.sciences-po.fr/journal/issue4pdf/issue4_full_version.pdf).

19 Stover, E., Megally, H., Mufti, H. (2005) “*Bremer’s ‘Gordian Knot’: Transitional justice and the US occupation of Iraq*” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 27 pp. 830-857. Johns Hopkins University Press.

20 Zalaquett, J. (1991 – 1992) “*Balancing ethical imperatives and political constraints: The dilemma of new democracies confronting past human rights violations*” *Hastings Law Journal* 43, 6: 1425-1438.

21 Zalaquett, J. “*Report of the Chilean National Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Introduction to the English Edition*”. Available at http://www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/chile/chile_1993_introeng.html.

22 Hayner, P. (2001). *Unspeakable truths*. New York & London: Routledge, ch. 7.

23 Interview with Charles Villa-Vicencio, 07 September 2007.

ability that goes beyond mere “*insistence on moral principles.*”²⁴ Out of these early debates in the field, now loosely describable as “*transitional justice*”, a nuanced appreciation of the utility of extra-judicial truthseeking – to victims as well as society more broadly – has emerged.

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was the first to explicitly expand the concept of truth it was using, to include four types of truth:

- ▶ **factual truth** (including findings of forensic investigations);
- ▶ **narrative truth** (the stories people tell about past abuses);
- ▶ **dialogical truth** (encounters between victim and offender);
- ▶ **restorative truth** (exchanges that produce a measure of healing and re-establish non-destructive relationships).

The list is obviously not exhaustive. “*Coerced truth*” could be added, to reflect measures taken to induce perpetrators to provide information, such as in plea bargain arrangements.²⁵ Restorative justice scholars have also used the term “*integrative truth*” to describe the understanding that results from “*active participation by all stakeholders.*”²⁶

Amid this expanding appreciation for extra-judicial forms of truthseeking, discussion has grown about a legal “*right*” to truth. The notion first emerged in Latin America as families of the Disappeared sought information about their loved ones, and their claims were viewed as creating an “*obligation [on the state] to disclose to the victims and to society all that can reliably be known about the circumstances of the crime, including the identity of the perpetrators and instigators.*”²⁷ The concept has since been more fully articulated in the United Nations’ Human Rights Council. Among the various documents to emerge, one of the council’s resolutions is particularly useful for our purposes: Resolution A/HRC/RES/12/12, agreed to on 12 October 2009, provides an overview of the growth of the right, tracing its roots to Articles 32 and 33 of Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which assert the right of families to know the fate of their relatives and the obligation of parties to armed conflict to search for persons reported missing. The resolution notes a variety of crucial elements in the right to truth, including archiving,

24 Méndez, J. (1997) “*Accountability for Past Abuses*”, *Human Rights Quarterly* 19: 255-282.

25 Aertsen in Aertsen, I., Arsovska, J. Rohne, C.H, Valiñas M., Vanspauwen, K. (eds.), (2008) “*Restoring justice after large-scale violent conflicts: Kosovo, Israel-Palestine and Congo* (Cullompton, Devon: Willan).

26 Vanspauwen, in Aertsen, I., Arsovska, J. Rohne, C.H, Valiñas M., Vanspauwen, K. (eds.), (2008).

27 Méndez, J. (1997) “*Accountability for Past Abuses*”, *Human Rights Quarterly* 19: 255-282.

witness protection, forensic genetics, and the right of victims to know the identity of the perpetrator of the violation to which they were subjected.

Having emerged as a compromise measure – imperfect and incomplete yet nonetheless innovative and productive – extra-judicial truth recovery initiatives are now shaping and giving impetus to groundbreaking developments in international human rights jurisprudence. Yet working with the truth about violations and abuses perpetrated during an episode of violent conflict remains somewhat like looking through a kaleidoscopic lens: hidden elements emerge, some facet or other is illuminated, structures become evident and then disassemble, images are produced and then alter as the lens is turned this way or that. Nonetheless, the fact remains that acts that erode the very meaning of what it is to be human actually occurred. Though the truth established about these events may not be exhaustive, it may nonetheless be enough to provide victims with some satisfaction, or to draw on Chérif Bassiouni’s words, “*to mitigate the simmering effects of the hardships and hardened feelings resulting from violent conflicts that produce victimization, to dampen the spirits of revenge and renewed conflict, to educate people, and ultimately to prevent future victimization.*”²⁸ Truth is also the basis for virtually any other measure of reparation: compensation for those damages that can be economically assessed; exhuming the remains of the Disappeared for loved ones to hold a decent burial; public apology by the State and other political authorities; administrative steps to restore the public reputation of the victim; judicial action against offenders and measures such as vetting (screening of public officials’ human rights records); monuments; and a variety of other measures indicated in the UN’s *Basic Principles and Guidelines* on reparations.²⁹

How then might civil society and humanitarian workers support efforts at truth recovery after a conflict glutted with serious violations and abuses of human rights? The obvious mechanism to aim for is a national truth commission that is compliant with international principles, informed by best – and worst – practices elsewhere, and, crucially, feasible in the local context. This is no easy task, however: a high level of resistance should be expected, particularly when political leaders who now hold public office risk being named in victims’ testimonies as being among the alleged offenders. Purnimaya Lama’s struggle in contemporary Nepal is not untypical.

28 Bassiouni, C. (1996) “*Searching for Peace and Achieving Justice: the Need for Accountability*” 59 *Law and Contemporary Problems* 9, 24.

29 “*UN’s Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law*”, adopted and proclaimed in 2005 by General Assembly Resolution 60/147. Accessible at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/remedy.htm>

While advocating at the level of high politics for a commission, it may be strategic to establish smaller projects that would contribute directly to the work that an eventual commission would be mandated to undertake. Drawing on the example Cambodia NGO, DC-Cam,³⁰ these projects could include:

- establishing a documentation centre holding both secondary and primary documents about gross violations and abuses perpetrated during Nepal's conflict;
- conducting a detailed preliminary mapping of mass graves and memorials in Nepal with a view to identifying sites for a full-scale forensic exhumation;
- tracing, to the fullest extent possible, cases of disappearance upon the request of remaining loved ones;
- creating a database of victims of alleged torture and provide counselling that, among other things, assesses their mental health status, levels of functioning, and distress levels using standardized questionnaires, such as the Assessment Schedules developed by the World Health Organization;
- creating the option of mediated victim-offender encounter;
- supporting the prosecution of high profile, "emblematic" cases involving those responsible for the worst offences.

In effect, such projects would get some of the commission's work done. They may also contribute to the growth of public demand for the commission as well as to discussion about the mandate of the commission. Crucially too, projects such as these have immense stand-alone value, especially to victims. They represent examples of "*remembering for the future*", of recovering the truth about the past in order to say, as a collective, "*never again*".

A Zimbabwean proverb holds that, "*when a tree is felled, the axe forgets; the tree cannot*". The task of all is to re-grow that tree, protect it, nurture it, cherish it. For it is a permanent reminder, a symbol, that speaks to the future we wish to create

³⁰ See www.dccam.org

Salispils Monument
Source: Tyrone Savage



Jan Robert Schulz

Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week

Remembering and Forgetting the Easter Rising in Northern Irish History Textbooks

From the analysis of history textbooks used in Northern Irish secondary schools in the last four decades, this research project deals with the memory of the 1916 Easter Rising. The study shows that the representation of the Easter Rising is balanced, though the textbooks do not perform well with handling controversial issues. A general pattern is to avoid challenging questions and complex issues, such as the concept of “*sacrifice*” or contemporary interpretations of Easter 1916.

Not using enquiry-based approaches, avoiding drawing links to the present and not mentioning sectarian interpretations of history are shortcomings revealed by this study. Furthermore, the textbooks reviewed have the tendency to not critically engage the Easter Rising, the ideologies surrounding the event and the people involved. This all merges into a picture of a society that is afraid to say too much. Within the theoretical framework of collective memory, the argument developed is that critically dealing with a violent and divided past is important in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Moreover, theories of collective memory contribute to a further analysis of Easter 1916 and the textbooks.

Remembering in Northern Ireland

Education – and school education in particular – plays a key role in teaching the next generation about the past. What the next generation recalls and how it remembers the past is partly shaped by history lessons in school. Therefore, what and how the subject matter is taught in schools are both powerful tools in shaping social memory.¹ A shared narrative is a necessary prerequisite for mutual understanding among the people of a country. The coherence of a community or a nation depends

¹ This is shown by research conducted in Northern Ireland: Barton, McCully and Conway (2003); Bell, Hansson and McCaffery (2010).

on collective memory. Renan (2011), whose work will be discussed later, argues that a common glory in the past and a common determination in the present are vital for every nation. Collective identity depends on a collective past (Halbwachs 1992; Assmann 1988).

The Easter Rising is a highly salient event in Irish collective memory. The rebellion has been referred to as the “*birth of the Irish nation*”, as it was one of the key events that led to Irish independence (and partition) in 1922. It has been idealised and glorified by the nationalist community and the southern Irish government, turning the insurgents into heroes. The Easter Rising, although a military failure, was the starting point for the first successful rebellion against British rule on the island of Ireland for many hundred years. The *heroism* and *selfless sacrifice* of the revolutionaries is openly celebrated by members of the nationalist community.²

When discussing the Easter Rising, one must also address the Battle of the Somme, which occurred shortly thereafter in July 1916.³ Just as the Easter Rising is seen as the “*birth*” of the Irish Republic, the Battle of the Somme is viewed as one of the founding cornerstones of the unionist tradition in Northern Ireland. The Battle of the Somme and the Easter Rising are arguably the most important historic events for the Unionists and the Nationalists respectively.⁴ For both communities, the events of 1916 added another chapter to their respective group narratives. The Unionists have linked 1916 to the 1690 Battle of the Boyne which can be observed at the Orange Order parades where Somme and Williamite banners are displayed together. Similarly, Nationalists connect the Easter Rising with the rebellions of Wolfe Tone (1798) and the Fenians (1867). Furthermore, the sacrifice of the hunger strikes in 1981 is often linked to the sacrifice of 1916 (Jarman 1999, 176; 185).

How the Easter Rising is viewed by the nationalist and unionist communities affects and reflects Northern Irish politics and makes an attempt towards reconciliation. Thus, evaluating the representation of the event in Northern Irish school textbooks is a vital contribution to the debate on how to recall Ireland’s violent history. This research project demonstrates that memory studies are pivotal to

2 The main political divide in Northern Ireland is between the unionist (mainly Protestant) and nationalist (mainly Catholic) communities.

3 The Battle of the Somme is an important element in the justification of the Britishness of Ulster Protestants. This proof of loyalty during the Great War legitimised their affiliation with the crown. The way this event has been commemorated plays an outstanding role in the construction of Unionist identity. The Easter Rising and Battle of the Somme oppose each other in their interpretation, but the context of both events (First World War 1914–18) relates them to each other (Graham and Shirlow 2002; Simpson 2009).

4 Jarman (1999, 174) argues that the Battle of the Somme is more important to unionist identity than the Battle of the Boyne.

understanding why a divided past hampers post-conflict reconciliation. Above all, engaging with social memory enables communities to broaden their views about the past. The Northern Irish conflict is usually either lived out or avoided, but rarely is it “*worked through*”. Northern Ireland, although its peace process has been one of the most successful in the world, has not yet overcome its conflict. The term “*post-conflict*” means “*post-mass violence*” in Northern Ireland. A power-sharing government, where Unionists and Nationalists collaborate, has been in place continuously since 2007. The political structures set up can ensure a democratic future. Reconciling the relationships between the two communities will be the most important task over the next few decades. Unfortunately, indicators of division, such as segregated housing and schooling, are at an all-time low. The education system is divided into maintained Catholic and controlled Protestant schools. However, both types of schools choose their resources used out of the same pool of textbooks.

This paper argues that the textbooks used could be improved in three ways. First, the textbooks should use more enquiry-based learning.⁵ Second, the books should engage with current interpretations of the Easter Rising. Moreover, they should make stronger links to the present. Finally, the books could critically analyse concepts, such as sacrifice and heroism, and in general, take a more critical approach in their retelling of the Easter Rising (instead of implicitly supporting what happened). All three of these suggestions are intertwined. A good way to critically question the violent past and draw links with the present is through enquiry-based learning. Furthermore, drawing links with the present makes critically engaging with the past relevant. Textbooks seem to shy away from these three ways to critically remember the past. As the title of this article suggests, the authors of the textbooks “*fear to speak of Easter week*”. The authors tend to avoid controversial issues and try to deal with the Easter

5 The students are not asked very often to explain, speculate, evaluate or empathise (higher order tasks). The category of higher order tasks includes enquiry-based and problem-solving questions.

National mural of the 1916 Easter Rising
Source: Emily Bereskin



Rising as something detached from contemporary society. As this study shows, history in post-violence Northern Ireland is certainly not detached. The past is not dead, it has not even passed yet (cf. Wolf 2007, 9).

Memory plays a key role in the construction of both individual and group identities. It is a crucial subject for peace and conflict studies. Theoretical frameworks of memory and identity can be used to illuminate various issues within the field of conflict studies. An oft-heard phrase in Northern Ireland is that the communities are “*stuck*” or “*trapped in the past*”. Using the work of Paul Ricoeur, Ernest Renan and other academics working on this issue, I evaluate what it means to be “*trapped*” (Ricoeur 2011, 477). Many politicians and commentators often say how important a shared history is. The aim of this article is to give a substantiated explanation as to why creating a shared history is so vital. A divided memory can create a huge gulf between communities that, without engaging with the past, is irreconcilable.

We rely on memory in our search for a “*meaningful order*”, a greater understanding of the society around us and how it functions. Symbolic representation and frames help us to determine and organise our self-conception and our actions. Consequently, memory shapes the present (Schwartz 2000, 18). This shaping is particularly significant in the creation of identity. Individual, as well as collective identity, presupposes memory. Memory is very important as a carrier of identity. For some authors, it is indeed the most important source of identity (i.a. Assmann 1988) or the only source of identity (i.a. Connerton 1989). A reservoir of unifying beliefs and values as well as heroes and myths is stored in the archive of collective memory.

In this article, reconciliation is defined as a “*process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future*” (Bloomfield 2003, 12). A society cannot complete this move as long as the division is recalled and “*repeated*” (cf. Ricoeur 2011). Thus, dealing with memory is essential in post-violence reconciliation. According to John Paul Lederach (quoted in Batchelor 2007), “*all conflicts are identity conflicts*”. Since conflict is connected to identity and identity to memory, all three elements are related to each other. Thus, if transforming conflict is the aim, transforming memory might be a tool for doing this.

Working Through a violent past

Paul Ricoeur uses Sigmund Freud’s idea of a distinction between a repetition-memory and a recollection-memory. Repetition prevents the past from “*breaking off from the present*” (Ricoeur 2004, 337; also Duffy 2009, 58). Repeating common behaviour creates continuity between the past and the present. Ricoeur calls repetition-mem-

ory escapist or passive forgetting. Repetition-memory is the avoidance of actively engaging with the past and questioning the past (Ricoeur 2011, 479). Repetition lies on one end of a continuum with recollection on the other end. Recollection is actively and critically engaging with the past. Recollection involves viewing the past with a multi-faceted lens, e.g. seeing the past with the eyes of others. This kind of memory facilitates reconciliation with the past; it is a way of cancelling the debt of the past. This is what is meant by “critical memory” in this article. However, critical remembering does not eradicate the memory itself. Rather, it heals the memory and encourages the process of moving on (Ricoeur 2004, 79; Ricoeur 2011, 478–480). To achieve the state of recollection, one has to be “working through”.⁶

Analysing history textbooks

Studies from other conflict regions, such as Cyprus, Palestine/Israel and the Balkans, report a huge political influence on textbook writing. Textbooks are often used to justify the group’s position in the conflict. Textbooks are used for indoctrination and to create partisan interpretations of the conflict (Höpken 2001; Demetriou 2005). For example, some Palestinian textbooks show biases and inaccuracies, e.g. maps in the books depict the Middle East without showing Israel (Firer and Adwan 2004).

Likewise, Israel used to have very nationalist and imbalanced textbooks; however, in recent decades, Israeli textbooks have become pluralistic, showing more multi-perspectivity and more empathy towards the Palestinian people (Höpken 2001, 7; 9). Höpken argues that these changes are partly caused by a more “pluralistic academic discourse” (ibid., 12) which he compares to the emergence of the “revisionists” in Ireland. The “revision” of Irish history in late 1960s and 1970s led to a more balanced and less nationalist view of Irish history.⁷

“The revision of history textbook content is inextricably linked to larger political debates about which narratives of history are true. Secondary-school history textbooks rarely, if ever, play a pioneering role in tackling highly sensitive issues or changing historical narratives that are not widely accepted in society. A key

6 Ricoeur uses *working through* as his translation of the German term *durcharbeiten* (Duffy 2009, 59) which is similar to *aufarbeiten*, a phrase coined by Adorno (1997).

7 A more critical generation of historians emerged in the Republic of Ireland, and became influential within the academic debate on Irish history. These “revisionists” contributed to a more sceptic attitude towards Irish republicanism and the Easter Rising. All textbooks since the late 1960s that were published in the Republic are influenced by this more balanced and critical view (Höpken 2001, 12).

problem for educators is achieving agreement on historical narratives.”

(Cole and Barsalou 2006, 9)

Northern Ireland does not have a shared historical narrative. The lowest common denominator of agreement between the two communities about the past is found in history textbooks. An analysis of textbooks reveals that they are balanced and do not display any partisan or sectarian interpretations or obvious inaccuracies. This finding is not congruous with other conflict societies in which the glorification of one's own group and the demonisation of the other is the common pattern. Therefore, in comparison to the aforementioned conflict societies, Northern Irish textbooks perform very well. One could argue that Northern Irish textbooks are the one-eyed among the blind because they are not the spearhead of reconciliation either. It seems as if history education actively avoids dealing with sensitive issues. Surprisingly, textbooks from the 1970s and 1980s, the height of the Troubles, are almost as balanced as they are today. Höpken states that the Northern Irish case is exceptional because steps were taken towards a more peace-oriented education system under the constraint of ongoing violence (Höpken 2001, 7). Being balanced and not giving a voice to sectarianism is a positive achievement. However, more needs to be done if history education is to be a tool for promoting reconciliation. Contemporary textbooks exhibit some positive developments, as the following section will show.

Good practice, bad practice

The place of publication does not appear to influence the content of the textbooks. Books published in Britain, as well as books published in the Republic or Northern Ireland perform in a similar way. However, the historical scope (e.g. Irish or British history) of textbooks does greatly impact the content: Irish history textbooks are the only sort that deal extensively and in-depth with the Easter Rising. The eighteen Irish history books analysed allocate an average of six pages to the Easter Rising. British, First World War and World history textbooks (16 books analysed) devote, on average, only one page to Easter 1916. That in itself is not surprising. However, the amnesia of Irish history, as well as the ignorant treatment of Irish affairs in a few of the books was significant. None of the British, World War I and World history textbooks can be seen as good practice. Some of them, however, are outstanding negative examples.

The good practice examples from the Irish history section have typically been written in recent years. Four of the five textbooks were named in at least one of the

three different areas – enquiry-based learning, links with the present and dealing with controversial issues – analysed are from the 1990s and 2000s. With the textbook of Macdonald (1985), only one book from the 1960s to 1980s made it into the good practice list. However, no book was named as a good practice example in all three areas. Dean, Kelly and Taggart (2009) and Macdonald (1985), being mentioned in two areas as good practice, show a good overall performance. Another three textbooks are named in one of the areas as a positive example. One can thus conclude that all of the books could improve in how they deal critically with the past.

The results of this study support the arguments of the few previous studies on this topic. The textbooks are balanced, but they often have difficulties when engaging with more complex topics. The books rarely make explicit connections between 1916 and the present, although wall murals, commemoration sites and parades would give the authors an accessible and visual way to engage with the present-day. Only three authors make links with the present. By refusing to engage with the present, the textbooks avoid any controversial or difficult topics, such as challenging the sectarian conceptions of the past, which the pupils are exposed to outside of the classroom (cf. Kitson 2007).

Textbooks could do more to help with societal reconciliation; they are in a unique position to tackle social division, critically engage with the past and promote reconciliation. History education is *the* subject in which students learn about the origins of the Northern Irish conflict and therefore, it is through history that students can explore their own role and political identity in a secure classroom setting. The new history education curriculum of 2007 can be interpreted as the curriculum aiming to tackle social divisions and promote reconciliation. The challenge mentioned in the curriculum to learn how the period of the Irish Partition (1912–22) has influenced Northern Ireland today (CCEA 2007) is only well supported by a few of the textbooks. Further steps could be taken, including reprioritising history education to deal with the conflict and its legacy. As long as there is no shared past, there cannot be mutual consent and reconciliation. As long as past events that reinforce division are remembered, Northern Ireland will remain far from being able to create a more inclusive society. Adorno's "*the past is processed when the causes of the past are disposed*" (1997, 572) seems to be valid in the Northern Irish context. As long as the causes for the division in the past prevail, the memory of these divisions will prevail. However, this argumentation should not be interpreted to mean that the Irish conflict is primarily about the past. But the past plays an essential role. Otherwise, people would not talk about the two *traditions* on this island, when referring to the unionist and nationalist community.

Analysing textbooks and the current political situation in light of theories of collective memory reveals that history is lived out every day in Northern Ireland. History is nothing removed, nothing past. It is part of the present and determines the social action of the people. Events such as the North Strand riots in East Belfast in June 2011 or the Ardoyne riots in North Belfast in July 2011 could be interpreted through the lens of Ricoeur who discussed “*acting out*” instead of (critical) remembering (Ricoeur 2004, 79). If we consider Northern Ireland to be a society that is *trapped in the past*, then the findings of the textbook analysis are not abnormal. It is difficult for the textbook authors, as well as for the rest of the society, to question the common perceptions of the past as long as the *past* is not yet *passed*. History is not in the rear-view mirror; rather, it is in the windscreen.

The authors cited here, such as Adorno and Ricoeur, talk about critical remembering but they do not provide a cookbook recipe for societies to get there. This recipe has not been written and will also not emerge in the future. Each society has to find its own way of dealing with its history.⁸

Conclusion

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”⁹

The words quoted above of George Santayana only make sense if Santayana’s remembering is critical remembering. Instead of being captured in our own narrative, we have to teach ourselves to critically question our own past behaviour and attitudes. That is how we learn and evolve. Theories of collective memory help challenge our self-perception and our perception of our environment. Moreover, these theories enable critical thinking. When evaluating history education in Northern Ireland, one has to keep in mind that the peace treaty of 1998 was signed only thirteen years ago. Enormous progress has been made since then in various areas, but thirteen years are not enough to make the violence of the Troubles a historic event. Furthermore, the “*historic wounds*” of the Partition of Ireland (1912–22) and other past events are still visible and have not yet been forgotten. In fact, they are not historic but lived out every day. The wounds of the conflict, although addressed in many ways, have not healed yet. Some of the wounds will probably never heal or they will, at least, leave very visible scars in the narrative of Northern Ireland.

8 In his essays on fascism, Adorno assigned a major role to education in preventing future violence (i.a. Adorno 1966).

9 George Santayana in his book “*The Life of Reason*” (1905, 82).

Kitson notes that the history curriculum of 1991 should be seen as good practice for a (post) conflict society. Other countries affected by violent conflict would be glad to have such a progressive way of dealing with the violent past (2007, 123). The same can be said about the 2007 curriculum. However, the implementation, as well as the resources available do not seem to achieve the high standards of the curriculum.

One of the findings of this study is that history textbooks do not link the mentioned historical incidents to the present. Although the Easter Rising has played an important role in nationalist and unionist politics and identity in recent decades, this link is not made in textbooks. However, linking the present with the past is very common in politics on the island of Ireland. *“In Ireland, there is no future, only the past happening over and over”* (Uris 1976, 751 cited in Walker 1996, 58). The people on this island are aware of the fact that they often refer to the past. The people are known *“[t]o be so bizarrely entangled with history that we must go back three centuries to explain any fight outside a chip shop”* (Bolger 1992). However, figures for the Republic of Ireland show that the interest in studying history as a subject in the second or third level of the education system is comparatively low (Walker 1996, 59). Further, Irish history is not the most studied field among the academics in Irish and Northern Irish history departments (ibid.). Walker draws

Easter Commemoration Parade 2011 on Falls Road (West Belfast)

Source: Jenny Williams



the conclusion that the often diagnosed *obsession* with history does not exist. Instead, he calls it an obsession with sectarian myths.

Following Walker's analysis, one can argue that there is a huge discrepancy between the reliable, verifiable and well-established scientific interpretation of the past and the interpretation of the past by the public, i.e. the collective memory. This gap exists in every society. Collective memory and historiography are never identical. However, the gulf between the two seems to be broader in conflict-torn societies.

The framework of collective memory added another lens to this study. Without referring to memory studies, we cannot understand why Northern Irish textbooks shy away from enquiry-based approaches and drawing links between the violent past and the present. Framing the results in the light of collective memory assists us to see the wider picture of the traumatic legacy in a post-conflict environment. The Northern Irish society might have to critically deal with some essential parts of their past before more textbooks and history teachers feel comfortable addressing these issues.

A better understanding of how remembering and commemorating is structured and how it influences society can be an essential contribution to this process. In the long run, this can help to develop a more peaceful and reconciliatory way of communal remembering. The upcoming centenaries (2012–22) seem to be a good opportunity to try new ways of commemoration. SDLP leader Margaret Ritchie (quoted in Henry 2011) said that “[t]here is a great opportunity to develop the shared narratives and unite the people of this island instead of focusing on division”. The question is if Ms Ritchie is right with her statement.

There are some arguments in favour of focusing on the divisions. Only if the people on the Irish island and elsewhere are ready to look at what divided them in the past, will they be able to come together to create a new, shared narrative. “[T]he past is processed when the causes of the past are disposed” (Adorno 1997, 572). This means that as long as the causes for the division in the past are still relevant to the people, they cannot start writing the mutual narrative which Ritchie says they should write. If the past has not been forgotten or forgiven, there is no space in the memory to start writing a new story.

Forgetting is not an option in Northern Ireland. Violence leaves scars that cannot be forgotten, although they can be forgiven. Critical memory, as described in this study, is a promising way to work towards forgiving the debts of the past. The more people do not “*fear to speak of Easter week*”, the better it is for post-conflict Northern Ireland.

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Mike Abrams

When the Past Stands in Front of the Present so We Can't See the Future¹

*"Circumstances...circumstances...circumstances, I can't get around them!
These obstacles are always in the way, that's how it is... you are stuck here man!"*

DK. Participant project Hope. Overberg, South Africa 2009²

Working class youth in South Africa today are ensnared by vicious, self-perpetuating and self-defeating cycles of hopelessness and anti-social behaviour. Legacies of the past and the poor policy decisions of successive democratic governments have created a lethal set of systemic factors which, when combined with family and class circumstances, act as huge obstacles to personal and social development. It is our belief that these cycles are caused by the failure of our nation to engage in a sustained process of deep-seated reconciliation. This failure has led to the injustices of the past becoming intergenerational and acting as a brake on reconstruction and development. The transition from a society fractured by three hundred and fifty years of conflict to democracy requires the fundamental reconciliation of people, families and communities. The social fabric has to be rewoven thread by thread over long periods of time and include:

- ▶ Acknowledgement of what happened
- ▶ Grieving for what was lost
- ▶ Forgiveness for acts of brutality by perpetrators and victims
- ▶ Restitution of what existed before
- ▶ Equality and social justice in the present

As a nation we have turned away from the past to gaze firmly into the future, ignoring the need for a fundamental process of cleaning up the mess left behind by oppression. At the start of our transition to democracy we were a nation of

¹ The article reflects the understandings of *"Hands On Collective"*.

² *"Hands On"* has an agreement with participants in our workshops that they are only referred to by their initials. The quote has been translated from Afrikaans.

deeply wounded people who were undereducated and experienced high levels of unemployment and poverty. Attempts have been made to address these legacies but they have been superficial and short term, and have focused more on symbolism, policies and procedures, rather than on people and the social infrastructure which holds a society together (families, communities, culture). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) allowed for a brief period in which we could acknowledge what had happened and forgive acts of brutality but this was limited in time and scope. Little was done to surface the impact of colonialism and apartheid on social infrastructure, education and the economy. This meant that as a nation we did not really understand the full impact of colonialism and apartheid. As a result, policy and programmatic responses to our past deal with symptoms and outcomes not systemic causes. In our understanding, there are three specific legacies which are driving the vicious cycles of circumstance for youths:

- ▶ Psychological, cultural and historical wounding of individuals, families and communities from years of invasion, civil war, land theft and migrant labour
- ▶ Impact of colonial and apartheid education on human abilities and the development of individual and social meaning and purpose
- ▶ Racial form of capitalist economic development which created structural and intergenerational unemployment and poverty among black and brown working class South Africans

We are a Multiply Wounded Nation³

Three hundred and fifty years of conflict over resources, power and control have scarred the nature of our society. Brutality and violence, revenge and shame, loss and dispossession, repeated over and over again across generations have scarred the sense of self and ripped apart the psychological skin of communities, leaving human bonds fragile and dislocated.⁴

As psychologist Martha Cabrera noted in the case of Nicaragua:

“When a person does not or cannot work through a trauma right away, its social consequences, the most frequent of which are apathy, isolation and aggressiveness, are only revealed over time. ... The ability to communicate, to be flexible and tolerant is enormously reduced among people who have a number of unresolved personal traumas. The characteristics vital to a person’s ability to function ad-

³ The idea of a multiply wounded nation is adopted from the work of Dr Martha Cabrera and her team in Nicaragua. We are grateful for their support as it has helped us clarify and analyse our own context.

⁴ See for example, Jensen, S. *“Gangs, Politics and Dignity in Cape Town”*. Wits University Press 2008.

equately become affected... Trauma and pain afflict not only individuals. When they become widespread and ongoing, they affect entire communities and even the country as a whole."

Cabrera, undated: 3

But what happens when this unprocessed trauma becomes intergenerational in the families and cultures of the oppressor and the oppressed, and when the next generation is born into a completely changed context but still carries the psychological burden of the past? Few studies have been undertaken to help us understand how the wounding and unprocessed trauma of the past is impacting on the first generation born free in South Africa.⁵ In one of the few studies undertaken, Naidu and Adonis note

"...the longevity of intractable conflict allows for the accrual of prejudice, mistrust, hatred and animosity, which further play an important part in the selective evolution of the group's collective memory (Bar-Tal, 2000). On the one hand, emphasis is placed on the other's responsibility for the conflict's outbreak and continuation, its misdeeds, violence and atrocities. While on the other hand, there is a preoccupation with self-justification, self-righteousness, glorification, and victimization. This collective memory is institutionalized and maintained by the groups in conflict, and then transmitted onto new generations..."

2007: 5

Our collective experience suggests that these unprocessed past traumas continue to affect individuals, families and communities by their shaping of identities and perceptions of "the other". We have noted in our work with men that fundamental changes in the identity and purpose of "fatherhood" clearly highlights how legacies of wounding determine the circumstances of many of our youths.

As we have listened to this recounting of history from three, sometimes four generations of men, it has become clear how the masculine identity is disfigured by consistent brutality and violence and the collapse of mans' ability to provide for his family. What has emerged from these stories is that the intent and role for men was to be the external link between family and community, the hunter, protector and provider. The material basis for this was a nomadic and / or pastoralist existence in which land was communally owned and thus access to land and therefore wealth, open to all men. This conferred ranking and status, meaning and purpose which were the foundation blocks of indigenous male identity. Colonial land theft, forced and migrant labour and influx control systems destroyed these social and

⁵ See Naidu, E. and C. Adonis, "History on their own terms". Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, February 2007.

economic relations separating men from their families and their land. This process created a deep psychological wounding and disfigured the identity of “*the father*”, creating the phenomena of the “*absent father*”. The new democratic government did little to address war-torn forms of masculine identity. There were no campaigns to help men scarred by generations of war to rediscover new identities based on peace and democracy and find an equal place in their families.⁶ The lack of a national understanding of the impact of war on masculinity allowed for these skewed identities to become normalised, legitimised and transferred intergenerationally in the new South Africa.⁷

We have noticed that for the first generation born free there is a very close link between the behaviour of a father or a father figure and the behaviour of the male child. Absent fathers seem to result in an “*emotional trauma or emptiness*”, “*a father hunger*”, which is a determinant of the how the male child behaves in his relationships. A “*father hunger*” becomes the means for the transference of unprocessed trauma and a determinant in anti-social or violent conduct. We have also noticed that fathers and sons self-administer alcohol and drugs to try and calm and control the pain of this loss and hunger for fathers. This use of substances becomes normalised as a way of coping with life.

Research undertaken by the South African Institute of Race Relations into the status of families in South Africa indicates that what we have experienced in our workshops is part of a much wider national problem. This report notes:

“Only 35% of children were living with both their biological parents in 2008. Some 40% were living with their mother only and 2.8% with their father only, which leaves 22.6% of children who were living with neither of their biological parents... International research echoed by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on the effect fathers have on their children’s development suggests that the presence of a father can contribute to cognitive development, intellectual functioning, and school achievement. Children growing up without fathers are more likely to experience emotional disturbances and depression. Girls who grow up with their fathers are more likely to have higher self-esteem, lower levels of risky sexual behaviour, and fewer difficulties in forming and maintaining romantic relation-

6 For the last 10 years, Hands On has been involved in psycho-social programmes for ex-combatants from the civil war in South Africa. These types of programmes are few and far between and do not meet the need. Again, this is despite government rhetoric and plans to provide these services. Our experience is many ex-combatants suffer from rage, anger and other PTSD symptoms.

7 This can be seen in the actions of the then President Mandela, as the national father figure, which created a tacit legitimacy for the multi-family father when he divorced his second wife and married a younger woman.

ships later in life. They have less likelihood of having an early pregnancy, bearing children outside marriage, marrying early, or getting divorced. Boys growing up in absent father households are more likely to display 'hyper masculine' behaviour, including aggression." SAIRR 2011: 4

The failure of our leaders to ensure fundamental reconciliation between people has meant that *"our multiple woundedness"* has been carried over into the new *"democratic"* civil society. Wherever South Africans gather in churches, sports activities, the economy, in everyday life, we are experiencing the lingering effects of this wounding through a lack of tolerance, poor communication and the inability to unite. Slowly, but with an ever-increasing speed, our social infrastructure is collapsing, thus fuelling high rates of male violence, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse, which in turn create vicious and self-perpetuating cycles of violence and social fragility for our youths. In addition, the HIV epidemic has struck down thousands of parents, creating a large number of orphans and child-headed households.⁸

Overtraumatised, uneducated, undereducated and miseducated

The legacy of one hundred years of racialised, dehumanised and brutal education systems has made a huge impact on our society. The personal and social impact of robbing people of their right to self-respect, knowledge and critical thinking has yet to be calculated. We need to understand the impact of oppressive education aimed at servitude and compliance on the nation today as our society is being led by people who were educated under this system. While the government has noted the legacy of undereducation in terms of skills, it has done little to understand the psychological impact of apartheid education on the inner meaning and purpose of individuals, families and cultures. Nor have they analysed the impact that this has had on the culture of schools, education officials, government departments and the managers of our economy. There have been no coordinated and sustained interventions to reverse this legacy. This has been left largely up to non-governmental organisations and individual school managers. Yet the signs of this can be seen in the lethargy, poor management, corruption and impunity of many of our civil servants who are unable to implement policies of reconstruction and development. In addition, we suffer from low productivity in the economy and a society which has not yet moved beyond the racial and ethnic divisions of the past.

8 See *"First steps to Healing the South African Family"*. South African Institute of Race Relations 2011.

The legacy of poor infrastructure and quality of instruction in black schools has been perpetuated under a democratic government. While in the years since 1994 significant gains have been made in terms of enrolment of learners, which now stands at 92 %, and de-racialising education spending,⁹ South African schools are in a crisis:

“Efforts to raise the quality of education for poor children have largely failed. Apart from a small minority of black children who attend former white schools and a small minority of schools performing well in largely black areas, the quality of public education remains poor. Literacy and numeracy test scores are low by African and global standards, despite the fact that government spends about 6 percent of GDP on education and South Africa’s teachers are among the highest paid in the world (in purchasing power parity terms).”

National Planning Commission 2011: 14

Equal Education has estimated that only 5 % of schools have stocked science laboratories and only 7 % have stocked libraries.¹⁰ In a global world where access to information and technology is critical, the lack of libraries and laboratories severely hampers the chances of working class youth breaking through the cycle of undereducation left by apartheid.

“For every age cohort of 1.5 million starting school each year, just over 500,000 end up sitting for final year examinations. Less than 70 % of these candidates get a high school diploma – of which only 20 % are good enough to give the pupil access to higher education... We have created a culture of low effort and low standards of performance among young people. Could you ever have imagined that we would set 30 % in three subjects and 40 % in another three as enough for a high school diploma?”

Ramphela, Sunday Times 2011: 5

The failure to attend to the legacy of apartheid education on people and their abilities has been short sighted and self-defeating. Transforming education systems from a colonial and oppressive model to a global democratic one must include fundamental transformation of existing knowledge as well as the culture of learning and teaching. What has been lost needs to be returned before starting with the new. Transformation is about people, not systems and structures and our failure to understand this is most clearly seen in the history of educational change

9 National Planning Commission Diagnostic report 2011: 13.

10 Equal Education is an NGO mobilising learners and society at large to improve the quality of education. The figures quoted are from an article in The Cape Times 15th July 2011, page 9.

since 1994.¹¹ Add this to the legacy of multiple woundedness, and the cycle of circumstance begins to destroy any hope and vision for the future. In our youth programmes, we have noted that the impact of the 67% drop out rate is a long term devaluing of education. The idea that school “*is not worth it*” has crept into the consciousness of many youths, creating a myth of the “*goodness of failure*”. Many youths in our programmes, who are at risk of leaving school or who have already left school, argue that there is no point in going to school because their chances of completion are only 1 in 3 and even if you get a school leaving certificate you will not get a job. From their point of view, it would be better to go into crime.

Overtraumatised, undereducated and unemployed

Colonialism and apartheid skewed access to and control over the economy, resulting in ownership being linked to class and colour. The lighter your skin, the more chance you had for ‘en-skilling’ and access to the fruits of the economy. This skewed system has developed and refined itself over the last 300 years.

“The roots of South Africa’s high rates of unemployment, poverty and inequality can be traced to more than a century of colonial exploitation and apartheid – denying African people access to land, and the right to run businesses, to own certain assets, to quality education and to live in well-located areas.”

National Planning Commission 2011: 9

The reintegration of South Africa into a world economy dominated by forces of a free trade form of globalisation has reinforced the existing inequalities. Government interventions to open access through broad based Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) have had little impact on the ownership and racial distribution of opportunities in the economy.

“The poorest 20 percent of the population earns about 2.3 percent of national income, while the richest 20 percent earns about 70 percent of the income... A large proportion of out-of-school youths and adults are not working. This is a central contributor to widespread poverty. Inactivity of broad sections of society reduces our potential for economic expansion.”

National Planning Commission 2011: 9

11 See for example, the work of Extra Mural Education Project [www.emep.org] as well as Bloch, G. “*The Toxic Mix: What’s wrong with South African schools and how to fix it.*” Taffelberg, Cape Town, 2009.

This skewed and racialised form of economic development has had a dramatic impact on South African youths and their ability to be part of change and development. Unemployment is a continental high of 51%.¹² If we break down this figure, we see that racial and gender oppressions of the past are still being reproduced, with 63% of African women between 15 and 24 years of age being unemployed.¹³ The psychological impact of intergenerational unemployment needs to be analysed and better understood, for example, if you are unable to get a job, how does this impact on your self esteem or on your identity as a young man and provider for your family? What is the link between this form of structural unemployment and the involvement in gangs or in substance abuse?

For many of the youths we work with, a gun is the poor young black man's credit card. It is his way to get access to the consumer society and a brand driven Western lifestyle. Often the only way to express their spirit and generate income is to become involved in criminal activity, reinforcing the cycle of dislocation. Crime, the sex industry, drugs and gangs offer a real-life opportunity for many youths. Relations of production trap many youths in this way and create the belief that bad is good. The less our leaders are able to break structural unemployment and ownership of the means of production, the more we condemn our youths to increasing economic marginalisation and to developing the grey economy as a legitimate option for income generation.

So what is to be done if we are to find ways of breaking these cycles of self-defeat and entrapment? How can we empower a traumatised youth? How can we break through this cycle of legacy issues and reconstruction challenges? Can we find answers to these questions before the number of youths trapped in this way reach a tipping point in which social chaos and economic marginalisation become the norm? We would argue that this is the critical challenge we are facing – finding a way for increasing numbers of traumatised, unemployed and unskilled youths to be part of building a peaceful country with an active civil society.

Breaking the cycle

Over the last 10 years, Hands On has developed an approach to fundamental reconciliation which we call Cooking up Community.¹⁴ It seeks to mobilise all ages and

12 "First steps to Healing the South African Family." South African Institute of Race Relations 2011: 8. This figure refers to 15 to 24-year-old youths only. In sub-Saharan Africa, the figure is 12%.

13 "First steps to Healing the South African Family." South African Institute of Race Relations 2011: 8.

14 "Cooking up Community. Change Moves Publications", Cape Town, 2003.

sectors of the community simultaneously to generate new relationships and ways of being and doing. Our approach has been influenced by the work of Cabrera in Nicaragua who argues:

“There can be no social change without personal change, because one is forced to fight every day to achieve that change. Our proposal for accompanying organizations currently has four major areas. The first module focuses on the personal sphere, which is where crises, wounds, health, the conception of healing, life style and holistic health habits come in. A second module is historical-cultural, in which we try to understand how our personal life is marked by the country’s history and the national culture and we explain how many dysfunctional strategies our culture has and how they are expressed. The third module is the organizational one and the fourth is dedicated to development. Practice has helped us avoid seeing these four modules as separate and we constantly try to make connections among them.”

undated: 6

In each community we work in, we undertake a separate analysis of what the legacy issues are and how they are presently affecting citizens. This leads us to develop strategies of personal and community psycho-social healing that attempt to deal directly with legacy issues. Working with Cabrera’s concept of multiply wounded societies, we have utilised storytelling, learning through play and wilderness camps to provide members of the affected communities with an opportunity for their stories to be heard, witnessed and acknowledged. This creates spaces of inspiration and hope that support participants to develop strategies for discovering and creating new forms of the self and community. However, these strategies need to be linked to sustainable livelihoods as this provides the energy and hope necessary for healing and the possibility of material improvement in peoples’ lives. History and memory projects are important as a tool, a means for putting the past into perspective, but they are still about the past and not the present and future. To empower a brutalised and traumatised nation, we need to *“deal with the past”* in a way which changes the circumstances of the present to ensure a future better than the past.

An example of this is provided by our work in the Cape Agulhas Municipality over the last four years. The municipality is situated on the southern tip of Africa with a population of 27,000. We were initially invited into the area as part of a government intervention aimed at preventing school drop outs.¹⁵ In the initial baseline

¹⁵ An initial study of school dropouts in the area in 2008 put the figure at 62%. EMEP Feasibility Study. Cape Town, 2008.

study, it became clear that high school drop out rates were due to legacy issues of structural poverty, social dislocation and trauma as described above.¹⁶ The intervention aimed at tackling the problem from a number of points simultaneously:

- ▶ Support for families who experience abuse (substance and domestic violence) through home visits, parent workshops and dialogues, and men's groups focused on returning the father to the family, building resilience and mental health of families
- ▶ Multi-agency and intergovernmental partnerships between organisations to provide rationalised and coherent support for youths and families including training and employment
- ▶ Whole school development and support for the affected high schools and primary feeder schools aimed at altering the meaning and purpose of schools by making them into fun places for learning to occur (including academic and psycho-social support for learners at risk of dropping out of school)
- ▶ Psycho-social leadership programmes for youths who had left school for more than one year.
- ▶ This first phase of the project was poorly managed by the provincial government resulting in consistent financing problems and the eventual closing of the project in 2010. However, the local authority became involved in the project through its Human Development Unit. A number of new initiatives were also launched to consolidate some of the gains of the original intervention. A public participation process was initiated to draft a youth development policy for the local authority. This process drew together 75 youth leaders from representative councils of learners, sports, culture and faith-based organisations. This was the first time that youth leadership was brought together in this way, thus laying the foundation for ongoing mobilisation and the growth of a dynamic and vibrant youth leadership. The new youth policy¹⁷ identifies the intersection between legacy issues of family dislocation, unemployment and poor education, and seeks to address this through programmes aimed at strengthening families and overcoming social fragmentation. In addition to the youth council, the local authority is building a stakeholder forum of government agencies and civil society to ensure coherence of and focus on all interventions. This helps with the clustering and efficient use of resources while allowing for a slower and more fundamental systemic change to occur. The partnerships which are at the foundation of this initiative represent

¹⁶ As high as 72 % in one of the neighbourhoods. EMEP Feasibility Study. Cape Town, 2008.

¹⁷ See Cape Agulhas Municipality youth policy 2011.

a significant step forward for the local community in creating sustainable relationships with the government. In addition, these partnerships create a “*development space*” which is not driven by political competition, but allows civil society organisations to come together and begin a process of building social cohesion and a new way of “*being*” and “*doing*” as communities. The vehicles which will drive the consolidation of this “*development space*” are a youth council, a youth centre and a human development forum.

A similar approach has been adopted by the Community Healing Network (CHN) in the community of Vrygrond¹⁸ in Cape Town. The network’s activities are based on the belief that the legacy of apartheid cannot only be addressed through socio-economic projects or electoral processes. In this analysis, South Africa is a multi-wounded country, as manifested by the multiple divisions and conflicts across groups (be they racial, ethnic, gender, generational or class), as well as poverty and violence. The CHN sees drug abuse, crime and violence as indicators of the wounds that need healing. Through programmes that build informal social networks between women, youths and families, a development space has been created which is healing in that it allows for a practice of grassroots democracy based on tolerance and diversity. This has led to the development of new partnerships between residents, with NGOs and with organs of the state. This has significantly reduced violence in the community, especially during periods of intense social and economic stress.

The work of the CHN and Hands On are two examples of a trend in the local development sector of a growing focus on the woundedness of the nation and the need to deal with legacies of the past as an integral part of reconstruction of our society. The growth in the last 5 years of community healing as a practice and the number of organisations¹⁹ working with men are a cause for optimism. Similarly, the intense national debate over the education system and how to deal with structural legacies of the past has resulted in policy changes which may create new opportunities in the future.

18 See Jensen, Steffen and Peter Polatin “*Violence and Community activism in Vrygrond, South Africa.*” Rehabilitation and Research Centre, Copenhagen, and Naidoo, Derrick Community Healing Network, Vrygrond, Cape Town 2010.

19 In our main cities and in surrounding areas the work with men is growing quickly; see for example, Hearts of Men in the Western Cape and Sonke Gender Justice more nationally.

Conclusion

After two decades of transformation, South African society is teetering on the edge of an abyss. The inequalities, moral corruption and violence²⁰ of apartheid have become structural and systemic in the new South Africa, due to the failure to ensure fundamental reconciliation, the impact of integration into the globalised world of rapacious capitalism and the HIV epidemic. This “*toxic mixture*” is trapping ever-increasing numbers of our youths in circumstances of class and identity that cannot be overcome and, in fact, have become self-generating vicious cycles of hopelessness, anger and violence. This threatens the gains made in the struggle for democracy.

South Africa is but one society in this situation. Transformation from conflict to peace is seen as a set of steps, a road map from negotiations to a ceasefire to an election and then onto economic regeneration. Sometimes this is accompanied by some form of truth and reconciliation or court cases at the International Criminal Court (ICC), but most often the country is encouraged to “*move on*” and rebuild the economy, as foreign capital is just waiting to invest. This is a quick fix option. But what of the shattered lives and destroyed social infrastructure? When is this repaired? How? How do we begin to overcome the multiple wounds of post-conflict societies? How do we rediscover and reconstruct masculine identities disfigured by violence? Failure to adequately deal with reconstituting the fabric of society strand by strand only ensures that conflict becomes intergenerational and systemic and will reoccur again in the future. We need to analyse to what extent the violence of the present youth rebellions across the world is due to a failure to ensure fundamental reconciliation in post-colonial societies or, in the case of Europe, post World War II. Given the level of conflict we are facing on a global scale, the time has come for a fundamental rethink about how societies transform from conflict to peace.

²⁰ Physical and psychological forms of violence.

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**| Youth and Adult Education
Practices in Processing History |**

“What’s that Got to Do with me?” – Political and Historical Youth Education on 20 Years of Peaceful Revolution in Germany¹

In November 1989, the wall dividing the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic came down after a series of peaceful protests. German reunification was officially declared the following year. The German Democratic Republic (GDR), “*East Germany*”, had been founded in 1949 in the Soviet zone of occupied Germany and in the eastern part of Berlin. The state became a one-party dictatorship ruled by the Socialist Unity Party (SED), with the Berlin Wall, erected in 1961, providing a visual symbol for the citizens’ lack of freedom. Our understanding of the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 as a great historic achievement, memories of the injustice it ended and the way life changed for so many people seem to be fading. Today’s children and young adults are the first generation without any personal memories of divided Germany or the Peaceful Revolution. “*Private remembering*” within the confines of the family as well as the *Ostalgie*² phenomenon in popular culture often promote a romanticised picture of life in the GDR which is in stark contrast to the political discourse or the work of government-funded institutions for the reappraisal of the past.³ These contradictions between regional memory cultures and official narratives illustrate the challenge that the complexity of GDR history represents, but they can also provide important stimuli for the re-negotiation of the past that each generation has to tackle anew. Historical consciousness is crucial to the construction of identity – and thus the negotiation and debate of the recent German-German history continues to be essential, particularly for the growing together of Germany.

1 This article is based on the following publication from the German Adult Education Association: Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, ed. (2010) “*Was hat das mit mir zu tun? – Politisch-historische Jugendbildung in Volkshochschulen zum Thema 20 Jahre Friedliche Revolution 1989.*” This publication can be ordered free of charge (in German) at kulka@dvv-vhs.de .

2 *Ostalgie* is a German term referring to nostalgia for aspects of life in East Germany. It is a pun on the German words for east and nostalgia.

3 Cf. Großbölting 2010.

Multiple studies have revealed alarming gaps in knowledge about the former GDR among teenagers.⁴ A study in 2008 among 16 to 17-year-olds conducted in eastern as well as western German federal states exposed how a disturbing number of the surveyed pupils were not capable of recognising the dividing line between democracy and dictatorship: 62 percent of the eastern students were not aware that the GDR did not hold any democratic elections and more than half in the East (and slightly less than half in the West) thought the *Stasi*, the GDR's highly repressive Ministry for State Security, to be a "normal secret service".⁵ On the other hand, the more the pupils knew about the SED state, the more critically they viewed it.

To put into perspective the conceptions of history that teenagers gather from films and their grandparents' and parents' accounts, school education and extra-curricular education play an important role. However, already in 2004, a study of German school curricula found that "[t]he understanding of the GDR is doubtlessly difficult for the pupils. It demands a view of different aspects of society [...]. This complex task [...] is accomplished only to some extent in German school curricula".⁶ Especially the social history of the GDR, including the history of everyday life and youth movements – aspects that are particularly appealing to younger history students – is often underrepresented at school in favour of encyclopaedic knowledge.⁷

While the number of GDR-related educational seminars in Adult Education centres had been decreasing continuously since 2000, the anniversary year of 2009 provided an occasion to reverse this trend⁸. Taking advantage of the media interest that the 20-year anniversary of the Fall of the Wall entailed, a large number of schools and institutions of extra-curricular education offered educational events focusing on the former GDR and the Peaceful Revolution. Many of the concepts turned out to be so successful that they have been held repeatedly since.

The German Adult Education Association (DVV), as the umbrella association for the 16 regional associations for almost 1000 local Adult Education Centres (*Volks-hochschulen*), seized the chance to encourage political and historical youth education on the subject of life in the former German Democratic Republic. Already in 2008, DVV held a central workshop for multipliers where seminars, cooperations and high-publicity events were organised and prepared for the following year. Financed partly by the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictator-

4 Cf. Arnswald 2006 and Deutz-Schroeder 2008.

5 Deutz-Schroeder and Schroeder 2009: 52-55.

6 Arnswald 2004: 29.

7 Cf. Arnswald 2004: 31.

8 Behrens, Ciupke and Reichling 2006: 141.



Border fence at the border memorial Gompertshausen, Thuringia

Source: DVV

ship (*Stiftung Aufarbeitung*) and partly by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), around 50 educational programmes for children and young adults were held at *Volkshochschulen* (VHS) all over Germany in the anniversary year of 2009 alone. Around 500 *Volkshochschulen* offered seminars for adults on subjects related to the Peaceful Revolution.

The programmes for children and young adults evidently made use of their advantages over school lessons: smaller thematic restrictions, more flexible and longer time slots, allowing the use of effective and innovative methods and approaches, as well as the possibility to address specific target groups.

*“When everyday history is factored out, it becomes more complicated for subsequent generations to understand those who have lived in the GDR”*⁹ – it is therefore no coincidence that most VHS projects focused on everyday life in the GDR, often with a direct reference to youth. A focus on the political system or on single “GDR highlights” was therefore rare; instead, wider approaches were chosen and didactical concepts were designed to correspond to the adolescents’ living circumstances and everyday issues. Often, programme organisers used local or regional history to lower the threshold to access national issues. Classic methods such as oral his-

9 Pfüller 2009: 151.

tory and excursions to historical sites or museums were complemented by new approaches: a mixed group of teenagers from eastern and western Germany, for example, explored part of the former border via Geocaching. Using a GPS device, the group tracked down different stations along the former inner-German border, each of which provided them with information on everyday life and history of the GDR. A different group used recordings of interviews with contemporary witnesses to design an e-course that was published on an online learning platform.

In the following, two practical examples will give an insight into the practice of political and historical youth education at German Adult Education Centres. The examples are only a fraction of the work done in political youth education at *Volkshochschulen*, but are nevertheless exemplary as they did not only familiarise the participants with a specific part of German history but strengthened their democratic competence in general.

Practical example: “*Stories of passage*”¹⁰

The Hamburg Adult Education Centre (VHS Hamburg)¹¹ decided not to hold an educational seminar in the classical sense but to design their contribution to focusing on the Peaceful Revolution around a competition.

The project combined oral history with intercultural learning while encouraging creative engagement with the topic at schools in Hamburg. Three different groups of people were involved in the project: a group of older contemporary witnesses who had experienced life in the GDR but had left or escaped to live in Hamburg; a group of younger migrants from Hamburg who compared their experiences of flight and departure with those of the former group; and finally several groups of pupils from different schools, who engaged in the experiences of the two former groups by means of translating these into visual or textual representations of the different perspectives. These then entered the competition.

During the first phase of the project, VHS staff recruited contemporary witnesses who had left the GDR for Hamburg between 1960 and 1989. Twelve witnesses were interviewed about their memories of the Fall of the Wall, their personal experiences of departure or flight and their subjective view on the Peaceful Revolution in general. The interviews were recorded on video and the material was edited and

¹⁰ The project was organised by Claudia Schneider, VHS Hamburg, c.schneider@vhs-hamburg.de

¹¹ The VHS Hamburg, as well as many other *Volkshochschulen*, has a branch that offers educational programmes designed especially for children and young adults (*Junge VHS*).



Visit in den "Museum for Border Crossers" at the Thuringian-Bavarian border

Young adults retrace the former division at a border fence

Source: DVV



cut into short clips. Subsequently, the group was invited to participate in a writing workshop where they put down in writing their personal "*stories of passage*" which they presented to and discussed with the rest of the group.

At the same time, the project coordinators recruited young adults from Hamburg with an immigration background willing to talk about their experience of emigration or flight. They were interviewed with the same focal points as the former GDR citizens and the material was added to the other existing video and text material. All material was didactically edited for use in subjects such as history, philosophy or art at school or at workshops in extra-curricular initiatives. In August 2009, the competition was announced to all schools in Hamburg as well as cooperation partners of the VHS Hamburg. Teachers were given access to the material collected in the first phase of the project and were invited to participate with a whole course, a smaller group of pupils or independent work groups.¹²

By November, 17 groups with more than 100 children and young adults had entered the competition and had handed in texts (ranging from fictional diary entries to poems), short films and photo reports. At the awards ceremony, all groups had the chance to present their work publicly. Thanks to the funding of the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship, all participants were able

12 The video interviews were made publicly accessible on www.deinegeschichte.de.

to be invited to take part in an excursion to Berlin where they had the chance to see some of the historic sites they had learnt about.

The focus on flight and departure proved a low-threshold offer, as it was connected to the participants' everyday reality. The idea to include young migrants' experiences turned out to be particularly rewarding. Many pupils with a migration background found it easier to comprehend the texts written by the young immigrants. After having gained access to the immigrants' "*stories of passage*", they found it easier to relate to the texts written by the contemporary witnesses from the GDR. On the other hand, a comparison with experiences of immigration similar to their own or their family's enabled the participants with a migration background to find common ground with the former GDR citizens and thus gain access to parts of German history that had not been disclosed to them before.

Juxtaposing the two groups' experiences not only helped lower the threshold but also illustrated that, while being "*historical*", the flight stories of former GDR citizens are nevertheless politically and socially relevant and topical today.

In a city like Hamburg where the percentage of inhabitants with a migration background is as high as 50 % in some neighbourhoods, this approach presented an effort of integration which, besides enhancing social and political integration of immigrants, also focused on raising awareness among German participants for the migration experience and the ensuing problems immigrants face in their new home. The recorded and written material allowed a lively approach to the subject. The participants did not only accumulate knowledge but learnt to understand different points of view. The videos and texts illustrated the limits of the sober, factual understanding of history on the one hand, while revealing historiographical problems of subjectivity on the other.

***"Border interests"* – Experiencing the inner-German border**

In the anniversary year of 2009, the *Volkshochschule* of the Ludwigslust region, situated in the eastern part of Germany near the former inner-German border, organised the project "*Border interests*", which put a thematic focus on the repression that took place in the former GDR.¹³

Both the region around Ludwigslust and its inhabitants were shaped enormously by their proximity to the border, its death strip and the prohibited zone. ID checks, regular surveillance and the constant presence of armed border patrols were part of

13 The project was organised by Wolfgang Kniep, KVHS Ludwigslust, w.kniep@ludwigslust.de.

everyday life for most people in the area. The isolated life of people in the shadow of the Iron Curtain was not only subject to daily restrictions; many even lost their homes due to dispossession and relocation, and hundreds were killed or injured trying to cross the border.

20 years later, there is little to remind us of the dramatic social and geographical consequences of the border. Structural relics can be viewed only at selected places and memories of the border regime are fading from collective consciousness; young people in particular seem to find it hard to identify with that part of their region's past. The objective of the project was to offer a future-oriented and very practical approach to the local GDR history which could, at the same time, yield sustainable results for the whole region.

The background of the project was the decision of local authorities to reallocate the land on which preserved border facilities were located and to relocate the relics to an open air museum. The children participating in this were given the task of planning the reconstruction of the relics on the new site and integrating them in the existing open air museum. They had to develop a concept for the political and historical valorisation of the relics and the border region as well as to stage the exhibits in a way that allowed them to be used for historical learning in the future.

The personal experience of the past by means of encountering historical sites and contemporary witnesses was a focus during preparation for the work on the memorial. The participants visited sites at the former border and spoke with contemporary witnesses who made the now almost absent border visible to them once again. The interviews, films and group discussions helped the participants put what they learnt into wider contexts.

After having gathered information on the significance of each of the relics, the children organised a walking tour through the border museum and started writing texts for the museum's display cases. By researching the intentions and functions of the displayed objects, knowledge of global historical and political issues was transferred inductively. The example of warning signs found on both sides of the border illustrates the inductive approach: a former sign is on display that was used by the German border police to warn people on the western German side against approaching the border. This was to protect people from committing border violations which were severely punished by the GDR border guards. The reverse function was fulfilled by the signs found on the other side of the border, which together with spring guns and mines, were to prevent people from the East

escaping the GDR. The two different contexts show the antithetic meaning of the exhibits, which refers to the asymmetric history of post-war Germany.

Gradually, the participants became experts in the history of the border region. The project was brought to a close when participants gave a group of teachers a guided tour through the museum and got the chance to prove their newly acquired skills. They managed to explain the political, economic and ecological dimensions connected to the exhibits and became, in turn, multipliers of political and historical content and ideas. In the course of the project, they had the chance to be certified as tourist guides for the region.

The project's objective to enrich the participants' point of view was therefore doubly fulfilled: on the one hand, they designed a piece of memory culture, on the other they completed a training course to be tourist guides and were encouraged to do voluntary work in the future. *"Border interests"* is an example of a sustainable project of political education, in which addressees of education became multipliers of political and historical content. The participants did not only acquire knowledge about the border region, they also developed their social skills, enabling them to make the history of the region tangible to other young people.

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Collecting Oral Evidence and Creating Active Citizens

Adult Education in the Context of the European Memories Project

The article will explore how biographical storytelling can be used to develop social and civic competences. The text analyses the experience gained through our participation in the Grundtvig multilateral project “*European Memories. A European Archive of Memories for the development of social and civic competences of European citizens*” (2008-2010). During the project, elderly people were encouraged to share their personal experiences in order to raise the awareness of the younger generations about the recent past. They were involved in the process of sharing personal stories through a European competition “*Telling Europe!*”, thus contributing to the creation of a culture of remembrance and to how the grand historical narratives are experienced by the person.

In today’s dynamically developing world, when interpersonal communication is more often replaced by communication between people and the media, almost without recognising it, we are becoming influenced by the modern mental and technological models that are constructed in the world’s information ocean. These “*externally*” devised models remake our own structures of memory and make them subordinate to insert “*rightness*” of the interpretation of the memory or suppress them in the periphery as no longer necessary and valued today.¹ One of the consequences of this process is the increasing automation of society and the break-up of social ties between citizens. The speed of such processes is very keenly recognised in countries like Bulgaria, where after 1989, the world of the Communist past fell

1 Zhivkova, V. “*Invisible treasures.*” Library OMDA Ltd. – http://www.omda.bg/institut/veska_kojuharova/sakrovishtata.htm#_ftn1. (In Bulgarian). Last checked on 25.08.2011; See also: Prodanov, V. “*From modern to post-modern moral socialization of children and youth.*” – In: Collection of articles, Moral socialization of children and youth in Bulgaria. Faber: Veliko Tarnovo, 20 (in Bulgarian); Hymowitz, Kay. “*Liberation’s Children: Parents and Kids in a Postmodern Age*”, N.Y.: Ivan R. Dee, 2003.

apart into “many worlds disparate among themselves”.² The destruction of collective memories was also reflected in value dissonance and an ideological gap between the generations, thus destroying the existing “bridges” between the past and the present. The uncertainty of the future that, before 2007, was symbolically referring to two letters “EU” (European Union) became part of a regime which had no place after 2007 – a “regime of normalisation”. The conventionality of the present, coded in the ironic metaphor “Europeans we are, but still not so far”,³ continues to multiply the challenges, connected with the long transition of our country towards democracy and an active civil society.⁴ In such a context, active democratic citizenship still continues to be relevant,⁵ both in formal education and in the sphere of non-formal Adult Education in its various formats and settings.

The following article will try to answer two main questions: Can we encourage active citizenship through biographical storytelling? And: How can we develop social and civic competences by bringing our memories about the past to life in the present through the process of narrating? Our experience evolved during our participation in the European Memories project through several main activities.⁶

Box 1: European Memories project

The aim is to foster the development of social and civic competences of European citizens by means of autobiographical and historical methodologies, tools and activities and the use of web technologies.

1. The Creation of the European Memories Portal (www.europeanmemories.eu), a digital archive of stories by European citizens, in different digital languages (text, photo, audio and video format) and in nine European languages (English, German, French, Italian, Danish, Spanish, Catalan, Bulgarian, Portuguese).
2. Desk research on the organisation working in the field of memory in the countries involved.

2 Rewriting the New Bulgarian history in the textbooks for secondary education. Institute for social criticism. Sofia, 1995, 18 (in Bulgarian).

3 Broadly spread phrase in Bulgaria of the author Aleko Konstantinov in the introduction of his book “Bay Ganjo” from 17 March 1895. It is used as an idea for students essays, it is also the title of the book of the anthropologist Michail Minkov “Europeans we are, but...”. Publisher: “Klasika and stil”, Sofia, 2007 (in Bulgarian).

4 See Mitev, P.-E. “Socialization crossroad.” In: Collection of articles Moral socialization of children and youth in Bulgaria. Faber: Veliko Tarnovo, 230-231 (in Bulgarian).

5 See: Birzea, C. “Education for Democratic Citizenship: A Lifelong Learning Perspective.” CDCC, Strasbourg, 2000. In this sphere, the European Information Center of Veliko Tarnovo has had various adult education activities (mainly with teachers) since 1998.

6 The aims and activities of the project are given in Box 1.

3. Adult Education activities in writing autobiographies or collecting life stories, using different forms of expression (written text, videos, audios, photos) as in the Digital Story Telling approach, for the promotion of social and civic competences; the project has also created – in some of the participating countries – groups of volunteers in the field of autobiography and memory, whose work is aimed at producing and valorising autobiographies and life stories.
4. Creation of products and activities of diffusion for the stories of European citizens, and in particular:
 - ▶ The second edition of the European competition “*Narrating Europe!*”
 - ▶ A European Autobiography Festival, held in Pieve Santo Stefano, Tuscany, in September 2010.
 - ▶ A final publication of the project in eight languages, with a CD-ROM.
 - ▶ Training activities in using autobiographical and historical methods and the use of web technologies as a means of developing social and civic competences.

This article will elaborate three activities which belong to Adult Education practice – Storytelling groups, the European competition “*Narrating Europe!*” and the European Memories digital archive – giving examples and making analyses of Bulgarian participation in this Grundtvig project.⁷

Storytelling groups

In the project, “*Storytelling group*” was defined as an Adult Education practice like all the meetings, workshops and events realised using the oral history methodology with various groups of people which were formed spontaneously on a voluntary basis with the main aim of telling their biographies. In some cases the activities also involved young people in formal educational settings, thus creating another form of permanent groups of volunteers. The fact that most participants in Bulgaria were teachers or adults working in the sphere of education made it possible to multiply the project activities through other non-formal education practices and to involve a group of young people – predominantly pupils and students. Thus, an emotional, dynamic and efficient dialogue between generations was initiated as well, based on autobiographies, memories and family history.

⁷ More information about the project can be found on the project website and portal: <http://www.europeanmemories.eu>

The creation of the Storytelling groups in Bulgaria started right after the first international meeting of the project in Rome, Italy, during the autumn of 2008. Between October 2008 and April 2009, our team conducted five training sessions with the trainers (in Vratsa, Kostinbrod, Dobrich, Veliko Tarnovo and Gorna Orjahovitsa) and five training seminars (in Veliko Tarnovo (two), Gorna Oryahovitsa, Zlataritsa and Chelopech). The training session for the trainers and the training seminars sought to introduce the oral history methodology and biographical methods to members of the core team and the volunteers. As a result, eight storytelling groups were formed in different parts of the country – three storytelling groups in Veliko Tarnovo, one group in Gorna Oryahovitsa, one in Zlataritsa, Vratsa, the village of Skravena and the village of Chelopech (Sofia district). In other cities and towns, individual participants took part in the project. A network of Storytelling groups was established, which shared and collected biographical narratives and involved young people and adults from different ages, backgrounds and professions, who were motivated to share their memories of the past. Thus, these non-formal communities “opened” spaces for dialogue – the dialogue of the storyteller with his/her personal experience from the past, the “interiorised” dialogue of the memory told and the common memories “awakened” in those listening, as well as the dialogue between the storyteller and the other participants on “re-experiencing” the experienced event again. Thus, using different methodological tools, we have managed to conceptualise the personal biographical experience through its “mirroring in” and “mirroring through” the experience of “the others”. The significance of this kind of non-formal training for developing social and civil competences is more clearly revealed when we become aware that the process itself, of public storytelling of life stories, transforms the past into “shared” experience and at the same time makes the past a former present. In making the past a former present, the present starts playing the role of a crossroads where the historical past meets the historical future. Thus, in the historical present, a contextual dialogue develops about the historical times.⁸ As one of the characters of Chyngyzyt Aitmatov says in his novel “Golgotha” (Avdii Kalistratov):

“Thus it is said: the ones from yesterday can’t know what happens today, but the ones of today know what happened yesterday, and tomorrow the ones of today will become the ones of yesterday... And furthermore it is said that the ones of today live in the yesterday, but if the ones of tomorrow forget what happens today – this will be a misfortune for everybody.”⁹

8 Kalchev, K. “Introduction in historical knowledge.” University Publisher “St. Cyril and St. Methodius”, Veliko Tarnovo, 2007, 12-13 (in Bulgarian).

9 Ibidem, 15.



Part of the project team and some winners of the “Telling Europe” competition Source: Vanya Ivanova

The participation of many young people in the project’s activities gives us the merits to claim that oral history could be used as a resource for intergenerational dialogue and as a tool for civic education in the contemporary school.¹⁰

The distribution of the participants into main categories in the Storytelling groups is as follows:

Storytelling groups – participant categories	Number
Teachers	104
Pupils	105
Students	20
Pensioners	11
Others	10
Total	250

Storytelling groups – participant categories

¹⁰ In this regard, our team used the experience, gained while participating in the History project of *dvv international* at DVV International. For more information: <http://www.historyproject.dvv-international.org/>. Last checked on: 25.08.2011.



Storytelling group in Veliko Tamoro
Source: Violeta Stoycheva

Educational tools within the Storytelling groups

In the framework of the Storytelling groups, a variety of techniques were

used for the means of autobiographical learning:

- ▶ *Individual interviews* (village of Skravena, Razgrad, village of Pobit Kamak, Plovdiv, Dobrich, Zlatitsa, High school “Emilian Stanev” in Veliko Tarnovo, University of Veliko Tarnovo “St. Cyril and St. Methodius”);
- ▶ *Microprojects* (“Memories of our Youth” in Gorna Oriahovitsa, “Living tradition” in Vratsa, “Our Living Memories” in United Nations Club-Veliko Tarnovo);
- ▶ *Theatre of living* (a joint initiative of the Historians’ Club in Veliko Tarnovo and their colleagues – history teachers from Plovdiv);
- ▶ *Festivals of memories* (Veliko Tarnovo and Gorna Oriahovitsa);
- ▶ *Thematic events* (in Veliko Tarnovo, Sofia, village of Skravena);
- ▶ *Discussions on biographical narrations* in many cities, towns and villages in Bulgaria.

European competition “Narrating Europe!”

The application of all the tools mentioned above was best illustrated in the European competition “Narrating Europe!”.¹¹ Between April 2009 and December 2010, we held a total of twenty meetings with the Storytelling groups. Each of these meetings discussed a certain specific topic within the framework of the three main themes of the competition: “Narrating Bulgaria”, “Travels in Europe”, “Easter – traditions and holidays”, “Living traditions” and “Women and social struggle” etc. The joint initiative between the groups from Veliko Tarnovo and Plovdiv under the slogan “We, the pioneers of Dimitrov” was very passionate and interesting. It was devoted to the European day for intergenerational solidarity and the biographies were narrated through the method “Theatre of living”.¹²

11 The three thematic areas of the competition can be read in Box 2.

12 More about the Theatre of living methodology can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXFtV7WLeE>

Box 2: European competition “Narrating Europe!” (Topics)

Pathways through Europe (through its diversities):

- ▶ History, culture and traditions of Europe seen through the lens of personal experiences.
- ▶ Recount briefly one or more memories of your life: memories of childhood or adult life, memories of work, family, love, friendship and the important people in your life ... Memories of something you learnt; anything that is part of human life ...
- ▶ Are there traditions or customs – past or present – which have been important in your life? Do these traditions contain teachings which may be valid today as well?
- ▶ Try to recount the experience of travelling in or through Europe and what the journey has brought into your life...
- ▶ My story within the history of Europe. Try to recall your personal experience of historical events, representing moments of upheaval or change....

Experiences of feeling part of Europe:

- ▶ Life experiences which have contributed to creating in us a sense of belonging to Europe...
- ▶ Have there been particular moments and experiences which have created in you a sense of belonging to Europe?
- ▶ Identify a photograph in your life which seems in some way to represent your experience of Europe...
- ▶ Identify an object which can represent something of your experience of being part of Europe...

Another Europe is possible: stories of social commitment and change in Europe...

- ▶ Recount your experiences towards another possible Europe, within the different spheres in which social commitment for human rights and democracy is manifested: solidarity and communitarian economy, intercultural dialogue, labour, minorities, housing, health, public assets, fight against poverty, education and training for all, participation, etc. These can be personal or collective experiences, already completed or still ongoing, experiences which have been successful or which have not achieved the expected results...
- ▶ Experiences of intercultural dialogue. Personal experiences of intercultural dialogue (meeting the “*other*”, in everyday life, in the different contexts and situations where intercultural conflict arises and the need to overcome it is manifested...); experiences of projects and collective social action in the promotion of intercultural dialogue in Europe...

Participant categories	Numbers
Teachers	25
Pupils	105
Students	6
Pensioners	6
Others	24
Total	166

Participant categories

166 people took part in the Bulgarian competition. The distribution of all of them into categories is given in the above figure. 250 submissions of material were collected – autobiographical and biographical texts, photo narrations, video narrations, audio narrations, stories in pictures, essays, poetry and one script for a play. The distribution of all the material gathered by those who reached the phase of evaluation by the national jury is shown as follows.

Stories	Numbers
Auto/biographical narrations	60
Photo narrations	21
Video narrations	7
Audio narrations	46
Other texts	9
Studies and research	7
Total	150

Stories

The first selection within the storytelling groups themselves allowed 150 entries to be gathered, and after one internal selection by the core team of the project, 50 stories were introduced to the Bulgarian jury who had to evaluate them and select the winners in the different categories. Bearing in mind that each of the competitors had the chance to participate in more than one story, it is obvious that the number of stories in the final data collection is not equal to the number of participants.

The Digital archive – virtual space for collecting the auto/biographical narrations

The creation of the Digital archive as an instrument for collecting, sharing, preserving and formatting life stories, thus creating active citizens, will be narrated by exploring (both quantitative and content-wise) the stories submitted by the Bulgarian participants of the competitions and, more precisely, the ten winners. The Archive¹³ itself is meant to encourage all the citizens of Europe to share their stories and thus enable shared knowledge to be collected about the history and cultures as well as the social and political transformations that have occurred in Europe's recent past. Thus, both the competition "*Narrating Europe!*" and the archive served to unite the various people living in Europe and to create a "*culture of remembering*". The material was submitted in the following formats: **as text** (autobiographies, diaries, letters and stories), **photo narrations, video and audio recording** (oral recording, traditional songs and music, poetry) or a combination of any of them.

Thus, the Digital archive became a special space – from the *people* who want to share to the **formats** of sharing and the **place** of collecting the living memory. A space that could be used in education in several directions: for personal encounters with the history and cultures of other people in Europe; as a tool for self-education and training; as a social network that allows the creation of education beyond the national borders and for the non-formal community of citizens in Europe. Hence, the actors in this community became actors of citizenship. The process of **learning about** the history of "*the others*" and understanding their life stories, the process of *learning from "the others"* who have shared stories about themselves, the process of *sharing our* stories; in all these processes *we learn about ourselves* and thus we form a social competence that contributes to active citizenship in Europe. Thus, we create a **common culture of memory** which is very important for the future of Europe.

What have we learnt?

Collecting the stories of people from all over Europe provides the possibility of exploring the relevant social images in Europe today concerning the main national, ethnic and religious groups, and hence we could see memory as a projection of the present rather than the past. The analysis of the collected stories in the framework of the national stage of the competition "*Narrating Europe!*" brings the possibility

¹³ Most of the stories from the competition can be found at: <http://www.europeanmemories.eu/eng/Stories>. Last checked on: 25.08.2011.

of identifying the main markers of the individual stories (main themes and how they are revealed in the narration). We have chosen to do an analysis of the ten Bulgarian stories that were nominated by the national jury.

How are Bulgarians narrating Europe?

The topics that appear in the stories of the people follow the three thematic areas of the competition *“Narrating Europe!”* Still, they reveal a variety of recalled memories and periods from the recent Bulgarian, Balkan and European history. The geographical regions that the stories cover go beyond the borders of the European Union. The most frequently mentioned countries besides Bulgaria are Germany in first place (5 out of 10 winners), Romania, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and others.

▶ *“Dad not only told me what he saw in Germany, he also suggested ideas and messages that were both very emotional and rational – that Germany is a very well developed industrial country, that has beautiful architecture, towns set in order, museums, castles, disciplined people, set human experiences through the philosophy of Kant, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Goethe, Schiller.”*

(Anelia G. Kocheva, European geography – beautiful Germany)

Thematically, several important areas of narration could be tracked:

- ▶ *Experiencing “otherness” – “we/they”, “here/there”*
- *“We Bulgarians are very different from the Germans in our way of thinking. For example, we’re a bit nationalist, we spit on other countries and peoples like Romanians and Turks but we don’t intercede for each other whenever there are problems. Everyone takes care only of their own good. The Germans have a very strongly developed social thinking. If a German hears that there is a fight at his neighbour’s home, he immediately either calls the police or interferes. While if the situation were in Bulgaria, people would just say: ‘Let them fight as long as it’s not in my house’.”* (Sofia D. Yankulova, Money, money, money)
 - *“In Germany no one ever insulted me but I often cried from insults, especially when I got my salary at the end of the month. I got a pretty high salary but it didn’t make me happy. My family was far away from me, my children were growing up without a mother and I was making money. Bulgaria never helped me give birth to 3 children, Germany did. To be a mother is considered in Germany the greatest achievement a woman can have and people have a great respect towards mothers.”* (Sofia D. Yankulova, Money, money, money)



Presenting the results

Source: Vanya Ivanova

– “The owner – a woman in her fifties – lives alone. This fact impresses me because at home, at the moment, it’s impossible for a woman to have a hotel and to live alone because she would be blackmailed for money.”

(Antoaneta Pechovska, My trip to Holland)

– “We were very impressed by these people – fitters like us. They were working neatly and precisely, and in their hands the valve pistons, the segments and the valve bolts looked like souvenirs. They weren’t smoking and there were not fag-ends, dirty rags and spare parts all around. In a visible place, there was an alarm clock with a vague purpose. Later we understood, that the alarm clock was set to ring every hour, for they had a fifteen minute break every other hour. During the break, they washed their hands and went inside to smoke or have a cup of coffee. Sometimes, they invited us, as well.”

(Vasil Uzunov, The German experts in Bulgaria)

► Experiencing borders

– “I remember my first travels. In fact, I doubt whether a westerner would understand the story of my first trip abroad. They have been used to mobility since

their childhood. They travel easily, organised with an adequate sum of money in their pockets. They would never understand what it is like to start a journey all alone with only money, scarcely put aside from the family budget. It is all right if so. My child, our children wouldn't understand this story, either. In fact, this is the best thing about this story!" (Radostina Angelova, Blue Sky to Fly)

–“My grandfather was a rich man. He was a member of the Dobrudzha revolutionary organisation. That was after the First World War, about 1922. He was pursued by the Romanian police and he fled to Varna (which was in Bulgaria then) to avoid prison. He had two sisters and a brother, all of them married in Dobrich (which was in Romania then).”

(Galina Naumova, A Life in a World of Change and a Swirl of Ideas)

► **Atrocities of different regimes**

–“My father's destiny is tragic. It begins with the escape of his own father to Chile in 1948. On 5th April 1951 due to political reasons, my father and my grandmother were interned in the Belene district through an order by Valko Chervenkov – the prime minister at that time. My grandmother was interned in the Kara Varbovka village but I still don't know why my father wasn't sent with her. He was interned in Pleven. He was born in the capital and he had graduated with excellent grades... But after his marriage to my mother, a militia man 'was taking a walk' in front of their front door every night from 1950 until 1952. All packages and letters from my grandfather sent from Chile were opened and examined strictly. Despite everything that happened, my father lived proudly and for many years I had no idea that my whole family had been repressed.”

(Anelia G. Kocheva, Dad, I will always love you)

► **Family values**

–“Never in his life did my father say a bitter or a poisonous word. He never complained. He never hated. In his whole martyred life full of pain, suffering, repression, he stood sensitive and mature to his duties as a person, as a citizen.”

(Anelia G. Kocheva, Dad, I will always love you)

► **Youth during Socialism**

–“First-grade students became members of an organisation called Chavdarche. A blue tie and fur cap in memory of the insurgents from the April uprising in 1876 were given to each child. For our children it was a great moment to be accepted in the organisation.” (Radostina Petrova, Biography that our photos narrate)

► *Silenced/untold stories*

–“With these words my grandmother ended the story and closed the album. All huddled and stared at the beautiful night sky and at the same moon that I had contemplated a bit earlier that night. It was also a witness of grandmother’s story. So dreaming we found ourselves lost in our thoughts. We looked at grandma secretly, it appeared as if she was not in the room, her thoughts were far away. Maybe she was still sunk in the world of memories which the photos from the album revealed.”
(Ina Miteva, Journey into the memories)

If we accept that “*biography is a story about our experience of society, contextualised in history*”,¹⁴ we could claim that the collection of *life stories* gathered during the competition “*Narrating Europe!*” reflects some of the narrative lines of the grand historical narrative for the socio-political transformation in Bulgaria through one long period of time. Chronologically, its borders are marked by important events in national history – from the imposing of the totalitarian regime by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BKP) to the acceptance of Bulgaria in the European Union. In this “*timeline cut*” of social space, the extracts presented above from the ten narratives nominated by the national jury confirm the theory of Alfred Schutz that the schemes

14 Berger, P., B. Berger, “*Sociology: A Biographical Approach.*” Penguin Books. New York, 1976, 11.

Storytelling group

Source: Violeta Stoycheva





Remembering the youth during Socialist time Source: Violeta Stoycheva

of individual biographies do not have a “*monologue*” character, but are interactive because they give the possibility of reconstructing the relations of the individual with his/her “*significant others*”.¹⁵ In this case, the question is to reconstruct “*Europe*”

as a symbolic space through the configurations of meanings generated by “*experiencing somebody’s own biography*” from the perspective of the Bulgarians as participants in the international competition. Regardless of the format and the way each one of them articulated his/her life story, the auto/biographical method was used as a “*social technique of everyday living*”.¹⁶ This gives us the basis for exploring the process of telling/sharing/collecting stories in the space of the created Digital archive of memories as a source of information for *culturally established “frameworks”*¹⁷ of interpretation of the actions in contemporary culture. Such conceptualisation of the biographical experience confirms the applicability of the Storytelling groups as a matrix for searching and provoking our memory and as good practice for youth and Adult Education which can develop social competences and active citizenship as a key competence within the European framework for Lifelong Learning.

15 Quoted by Ivkov, B. Biography and interpretational sociology. In: “*Social context of the Visible Disability*”, Publisher: OMDA, <http://www.omda.bg/biblioteka/bojidar-ivkov/ivkov-interpretivna.htm>. Last checked on 28.08.2011.

16 *Ibidem*. We also refer to Luleva, A. “*Memory about the Socialism and auto/biographical narration*.” In: *Everyday culture of Bulgarians and Serbs in the post-socialist period*. Belgrade, 2006. Main aspects of this research was presented by Ana Luleva at a training session with participants within the European Memories project, 17-18.01.2009 in Veliko Tarnovo.

17 By analogy with the terminology of Erving Goffman, used to construct social interaction – see: Goffman, Erving. “*Presenting the I in everyday practice*.” Publisher: Petar Beron, Sofia, 2000 (in Bulgarian). See also the collection of articles “*Qualitative methods in social sciences*”. Editors: V. Naidenova, M. Dzhamdzhieva, V. Staleva. University Publisher “*St Kliment Ohridski*”, Sofia, 2008 (in Bulgarian).

Achieving Reconciliation through Dialogue, Collaboration and Exchange

Modern society tends to demand that educational institutions produce mobile and polycultural people. To realise oneself in our informative, changeable world a person has to adjust to different life conditions, to find the right solution to certain problems, to communicate with people of different cultural environments with different views on life. International projects affect the interests of all participants and promote the development of these qualities among pupils and adults.

Each person plans his or her life and future on the basis of their ancestors' experience and knowledge. The knowledge of the history of the native country, town and village is inalienable for an educated person. That is why historical projects, based on the common past, are a great source for different research and effective for the development of pupils' personalities. As there is always something common, not only in the historical process of a certain locality or town, but also in the history of certain countries as well, such international projects motivate people to communicate with one another and promote reunions and the reconciliation of persons.

Organising such a project, choosing the right methods, suitable activities etc., cannot be done in a day. Besides, there is no methodical base that will help in the realisation of an international project.

Nowadays lots of international projects are held in different spheres. Many of them publish the results and findings of their projects, which is valuable for people aiming to realise a certain project.

Every project starts from one's idea or a certain theme. The idea for the project "*Belarusian school in Cham: the history of the Belarusian emigration*" came to one of the organisers who read a book by Y. Zaprudnik, "*The Twelve*". The biographical story is about a group of people from Belarus, specifically Novogrudok – one of the oldest Belarusian towns.

The author is an immediate member of the group of twelve people. The plot of the novel touches upon the times after the Second World War (1945-1952), when lots of emigrants left Belarus for Germany due to different political reasons. Political persecution causes the main characters of "*The Twelve*" to emigrate.

After those young people went away from Belarus they settled in Bavarian Cham, where a DP detention camp¹ had been organised for the emigrants from Belarus and other Slavic countries.

The Belarusians who lived in that DP camp controlled the conditions for their pupils' education. In 1945, the first Belarusian school, the Y. Kupala Gymnasium, was opened in the village 5 km away from Cham, where some teachers from Novogradok continued their pedagogical work.

This very school became a subject for project research under consideration and connected two foreign towns and schools: Cham/R. Shuman Gymnasium (grammar school) and Novogradok/comprehensive school.

After the project topic and subjects have been chosen, the aims of the collective work need to be defined. Considering the requirement of the project *“Belarusian school in Cham: the history of the Belarusian emigration”*, the following goals have been set to achieve the most from the international collaboration:

- to study the activity of the Belarusian emigrants within the framework of the German-Belarusian project;
- to study the history of the Belarusian emigration to Germany;
- to develop the communicative competence of pupils during the communication process with foreign informants.

Every project includes certain phases, one of which is its preparation. After the aims of the project *“Belarusian school in Cham: the history of the Belarusian emigration”* had been defined, the working group of pupils and teachers was chosen and the plan of necessary arrangements for project realisation was drawn up.

On that level the working group started research on the project topic. Pupils were divided into several subgroups: the task of the first groups was to study Internet resources, the second to search archival documents, and the other groups found witnesses and interviewed them. The Belarusian group carried out data capture about the emigrants' activity in Novogradok.

The German side tried to obtain some information about the Y. Kupala Gymnasium and look for witnesses who may know Belarusians from the DP camp or remember something about the Belarusian school in Cham.

Although the research took a great deal of time and intellectual effort, the pupils carried out great work and unveiled lots of interesting material about their native town. Many unknown biographic facts about such famous people in Novogradok

¹ Camp for displaced persons.



Project team

Town rally in Cham

Source: Tatyana Spogar



and its suburbs as Alexander Orso,² Inna Ritor,³ Nicolay Rowenskij⁴ and Stanislaw Stankewich⁵ were found by learners using the method of “oral history”.

Studying literature, Internet resources and archive documents gave us only general data about those people (lifetime, activity and so on). But the interviews with the witnesses Lopuh Lyudmila and Novik Helen helped understand the situations in the educational establishments at the beginning of the war. Thanks to such meetings, pupils got a taste of the atmosphere of A. Orso’s and I. Ritor’s lessons and got closer acquainted with those people.

2 A. Orso was born in 1896 in the Novogrudok region. From 1929 to 1939 he taught natural history in some schools of Novogrudok. In 1941-1944 he was a supervisor. In 1945 A. Orso emigrated to Germany. In 1945 he became a director of the first Belarusian grammar school, the Y. Kupala Gymnasium in Cham.

3 I. Ritor was born in 1906 in Odessa. In 1921 she came to Belarus and studied the Belarusian language. From 1942 to 1944 she taught German at the scholastic seminary in Novogrudok. In 1944 she left for Germany, from 1945 she taught German at the first Belarusian grammar school, the Y. Kupala Gymnasium in Cham.

4 N. Rowenskij was born in 1886 in Belarus. From 1895-1903 he studied religion in Minsk. In 1905 he came to Novogrudok to work as a conductor of the church choir and teach music in the schools. In 1944 he left for Germany and taught music at the Belarusian grammar school in Cham.

5 S. Stankewich was born in 1907 in Belarus. He studied the Belarusian language and literature in Vilnius. From 1939 to 1944 he worked at the scholastic seminary in Novogrudok. In 1944 he went to Germany.



Visit in Berlin

Source: Tatyana Spogar

When all the received material was completed, the working group prepared presentations for the start of the project realisation. Two meetings of the German and Belarusian sides were planned within the framework of the project.

The first phase of the project started on 15 October 2010: a visit from Germany (13 pupils and 3 adults). During a week, people of different cultures worked alongside each other on the project material. They also took part in different activities that promoted reunion and reconciliation of the Belarusian and German pupils.

During the intellectual game *“Town rally”* the German learners got acquainted with all the sights of Novogrudok and with architectural monuments. That activity promoted eliminating psychological difficulties through communication between pupils, brought children together and motivated them to communicate with one another.

During the *“Evening of national cultures”* children got to know cultural traditions of the two countries and could put into practice their knowledge of the foreign lan-

guage in unknown situations, which, without question, enabled the development of regional geographic competence among the Belarusian pupils. Besides, that evening gave the German pupils a great opportunity to communicate with all the learners and teachers of our school, to discuss some questions with them and express their opinion on Novogrudok and the school.

It must be pointed out that the *“Evening of national cultures”* had a cheerful and friendly atmosphere that prevented some disagreements among children and also brought them together.

The method of collaboration and exchange became the main method of collective work during those arrangements. Firstly the German and Belarusian pupils worked together in small groups: they ran, round Novogrudok looking for answers to the questions about the places of interests in the town. The children were required to communicate with one another using the foreign language, to respect each other’s opinions and make a joint decision. Secondly, all the project partners cooked lots of national Belarusian and German dishes together and presented them. Pupils had a chance to cooperate to learn the interests and customs of each other.

In according with the project aim, the German and Belarusian pupils attended the talk *“The History of the Belarusian Emigration”* by the historian Natalie Gordienko.

All the learners took an active part in the discussion of that material and asked additional questions on the project theme. The meeting with the historian was really valuable and informative for children – but not only for the accumulation of the research material within the framework of the project. Natalie Gordienko evoked deep feelings of unity and reconciliation among pupils, because these



German young adults give information about their photo exhibition

Source: Tatyana Spogar

two groups have a common past, thanks to people who have reunited not only two foreign towns but two nations as well.

The pupils paid special attention to comparing the German educational system with the Belarusian one. That activity was valuable not only in the educational aspect. The children had the opportunity to discuss their weekdays at school, to compare lessons and teachers and share their plans for the future. Undoubtedly that exchange of experience played a considerable role in creating friendly and close relationships between the pupils.

The excursion round Minsk (the capital of Belarus) "*History of the Second World War: memorable places in Minsk*" evoked strong emotion in the children's hearts. The story about thousands of children tortured to death in ghettos evoked tears from pupils and touched everyone. The project participants came to the conclusion that xenophobia does not justify wars, bloodshed, hunger and tears of children.

Of course, such activities as the presentation of the research results and an interview with the witness Novik Helen were crucial during the work. The Belarusian group presented the received material about the emigrants, archive documents and photos. Then the pupils discussed the activity of the Belarusian school in Cham.

The meeting with Helen Novik left lots of positive impressions on the children. She recalled her teachers A. Orso and I. Ritor, told about their lessons, sang the Belarusian songs and recited national poetry. The learners listened to this wise woman, who encouraged them to be friends, to communicate and to help each another.

The first phase of the project realisation turned up trumps. This was confirmed by the departure at the airport, when all the project participants didn't look like two scattered groups but true friends, a unified collective. Pupils said goodbye to each other in tears, because they had become so close.

But on 18 March 2011 the second meeting of the German and Belarusian groups took place in the Bavarian town of Cham. All the pupils exulted at the long-awaited meeting – the second phase of the project.

With the purpose of studying German cultural heritage, local traditions and customs, to organise the collective entertainment of children and promote collaboration and communication among the learners, the project included excursions round Berlin, Cham, Regensburg and Munich. All the tours had been planned in consideration of the overall aim of the project, which was to reconcile two groups of different cultures and with different views on life and to prevent xenophobia among them. The German pupils spoke with great pleasure about their native town, showed the Belarusian children around different historical places, architectural monuments and picturesque landscapes in the suburbs of Cham. And in the



Get together in the gymnasium of Cham

Source: Tatyana Spogar

course of the other tours the German pupils tried to complete the guide's stories and display their knowledge about the history and culture of their native land.

Visiting the Bavarian parliament became the most significant moment for the pupils during the guided tour in Munich. The children had an opportunity to discuss the system of federal governance in Bavaria with a deputy of the parliament, which encouraged the pupils to play an active role in everyday life and developed their cognitive interests.

Another important trip was a visit to the village near Cham where the DP-camp for the Belarusians had been founded after the Second World War. Unfortunately the building of the Y. Kupala Gymnasium had been knocked down, but the Belarusian pupils could see the old barracks where their ancestors had lived and worked. The visit to that place had a great impact on the children, who could experience a small speck of their homeland in a foreign land.

Within the framework of the project, a ticker-tape reception was organised at the R. Schuman Gymnasium to celebrate the visit of the guests from Belarus. The German pupils represented their school superbly, danced national Bavarian dances and demonstrated excellent dramatic skills acquired at the school pantomime theatre. Naturally, the cordial atmosphere of that evening was the next step consolidating the friendly relationship between the two schools.

Joint entertainment, walking a round town and conversations on a range of topics didn't prevent the two working groups from making diligent preparations for the home straight of the given project – the photo exhibition.

The research material was completed for the presentation at the photo exhibition. The children expressed their opinions on the project in short essays that were placed at the stand for a general review. Pupils' views on their collective work contained positive views of mutual collaboration, different activities and the new knowledge and friends that were acquired.

The exhibition gathered many people, which confirmed that the project "*Belarusian school in Cham: the history of the Belarusian emigration*" united lots of people of different ages, education and cultures and everyone of them was glad to share their impressions and opinions of the international project.

The mayor of Cham and organisers on both sides commented on the project results and hoped that the relations between the two foreign schools would continue and the pupils would be involved in new projects. The Belarusian and German learners had an opportunity to give voice to the project theme, what had become a connecting link between the two towns, and thanked each other for the hospitality, patience and mutual help. The children said thanks to the project organisers, who had given them an opportunity to learn about the other country, to make new friends and test their language knowledge.

It seemed that the project started a short time ago. But it has already come to its logical end – the photo exhibition, the release of a film about the project, an exchange of opinions and a discussion of future plans.

The analysis of results allows us to say that all the aims of the project were achieved: the children have done all the necessary research work according to the chalked-out plan. In accordance with the requirements of the project, pupils had to communicate constantly with one another and have dialogues on equality with their foreign partners. Of course, an insufficient level of language knowledge often impeded the process of communication among pupils. But the help of teachers, dictionaries, phrasebooks, computer translations and the determination of the children helped to achieve excellent results during the project.

The effectiveness and merit of the project quickly created a friendship between the two schools, which resulted from the collaboration, cultural exchange and mutual help.

The project "*Belarusian school in Cham: the history of the Belarusian emigration*" was an invaluable experience of collaboration for all the teachers and pupils of our school, which is always open for new ideas.

Oral History and How Youth and Adults Learn from the Past

Experiences from Uzbekistan

The development of historical science in the 20th century led to the appearance of new directions, one of which was “oral history”. Often, history “written” by scientists based on written sources is only able to reflect general tendencies and patterns. Studying history on a micro level – through a prism of the conscience of lay people – provides the development of new views concerning the conformity of historical processes to natural laws. P. Thompson, the author of “*The Voice of the Past: Oral History*”, wrote

*“in some spheres oral history can change not only the angle of view, but discover new important research destinations”.*¹

Oral history is a new direction in historical research which appeared as a result of understanding that there are deficiencies in written sources that do not cover a lot of historical facts of daily life as well as society and individual attitudes to certain events in the past.

Oral history as a modern method of collecting historical sources and an autonomous scientific direction was formed after the Second World War. In 1938, Allan Nevins, a professor at the University of Columbia and specialist in the history of the American Civil War, called on his colleagues to create an organisation that would systematically collect and write down oral histories as well as memories of famous Americans about their participation in the public, political, economical and cultural life of the state over the past sixty years.²

In spring 1948, he initiated the creation of “*The Oral History Research Office*” for recording memories of people who had played a significant role in the life of America. However, Allan Nevins, who was the first to introduce the term “oral

1 Thompson P. “Oral history. The voice of the past.” M., 2003.

2 Macklin P. Berg “Oral history in the USA // *New and newest history.*” 1976. No. 6. p. 213.

history” to science, understood it as collecting and using people’s memories of historical events.

Over time, the term was interpreted more widely, and incorporates different kinds of past oral witnesses, as demonstrated by written research.

Modern oral history has been formed as an autonomous direction in historical science, with the implementation of technical means of recording for interviewing witnesses about problems of modern history.

European historical science initially viewed oral tradition critically, but in the last quarter of the 20th century it also began to use oral history. Here, in Europe, subjects related to social cataclysms and disasters – wars, revolutions, dominated. Having started with meetings in Bologna (1976) and Colchester (1979) once every two years, the international conferences on oral history was conducted and later on the International Oral-History Association³ was established.

Today, research incorporating oral history is conducted all over the world. In Mexico and Brazil national oral history associations were established in 1990. In Australia an oral history association has been operating since the end of the 1970s, supported by specialists of local, social history and the anthropology of Indigenous Australians. In the 1980s, William Hinton created a masterpiece of oral history *“Shenfan: The Continuing Revolution in a Chinese Village”* (1983). For Israel research activity gained international character, acting as a catalyst for numerous research projects throughout the world, as well as independent measures like the creation of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, or Spielberg’s large-scale programme for making video recordings of memories. In South Africa, oral history as a scientific discipline has been actively developed since the 1980s, when it was recognised as an important method of collecting sources about life under apartheid and repressions. In Russia an important contribution to the development of oral history was made by the *“Memorial”* society, with archives of personal documents related to Stalinism and repressions, and by the Centre of Oral History at the European University at Saint Petersburg.⁴

In the former USSR, scientists also used methods of oral history. In 1970s and 1980s oral questioning was conducted with the *“best workers of industry”*, best kholhozniks (collective farmers), drivers of combine harvesters and veterans of war. These sources maintained a positive image, were optimistic, and were therefore convenient as an official picture of Soviet daily routine and it was used as an

3 Nikitin D. *“Problems of oral history at the VII international conference”* // History of USSR. 1990. No. 6 p. 212.

4 *“Readings on the oral history / Translation, elaboration”*, Ed. Loskutovski M.V. St. Petersburg, 2003 p. 396.



Elderly tells his story
Source: *dvv international*

illustration of the general scheme of an official historiography. According to Russian historian S.O. Schmidt, “we were losing the main value of information as oral history, which is more open

compared to other (written) sources”.⁵ Thompson called this research “a parody of oral history” to create a “propaganda genre” of optimistic Soviet research.⁶

As results of talks with different oral history specialists, the author came to the conclusion that Western historiography is a rather clearly defined contribution of oral history to historical science in general. These are:

- ▶ new data for history;
- ▶ asking the question “why” in relation of historical experience;
- ▶ an emphasis on subjectivity, intersubjectivity and strengthening the potential of the respondent;
- ▶ an interdisciplinary approach;
- ▶ providing contacts between academic circles and responsible scientific opinions;
- ▶ the understanding and altering of society.⁷

It would be wrong to say that Uzbek historians do not know the methods of memory collection.⁸ While Western specialists understand oral history as a history of mentalities, Uzbek historians view it as a valuable factual source that compensates for a lack of documented facts.⁹

5 Schmidt S. O. “Oral history” in the system of historical knowledge sources // Schmidt S. O. The path of the historian. Selected papers on sources and historiography M., 1997. p. 106.

6 Thompson P. “Oral history. The voice of the past.” M., 2003 p.74.

7 From the materials of the Fourth Adult Education Academy “Oral History as a source for identity and nation development” // July 23th 2009 Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan.

8 See, for example, Video and audio materials Fund of Museum “Remembrance of victims of repressions” at Academy of Sciences, Republic of Uzbekistan; “Oral history in Uzbekistan: theory and practice”. Ed. I. Tashkent, 2011; Ziyayev H. The history of the struggle for the independence of Uzbekistan. Tashkent 2001; Ismailova J. The national liberation movement in the Fergana Valley. Tashkent 2003.

9 Sabirov A. “Oral history as a source and method of historical research” / “Oral history in Uzbekistan: theory and practice”. Ed. I. Tashkent, 2011 p.16.

However, in local history, the collection of memories was conducted in a very fragmented way, while interesting historical periods were not available to Uzbek researchers. For instance, there are only a few studied reflections of key events in our history on people's lives, perception of these events by ordinary people, how their culture was transformed, routine life in periods of social disasters, of which there were enough in 20th century Uzbek history.

There are few people who experienced that time and if we do not collect their memories now, a significant layer of people's memories will be lost.

A starting point of implementing scientific oral history approaches was research into the Turkestan insurrection (also called the "*Central Asian revolt*") in 1916.¹⁰ In the late 1950s and early 1960s, numerous memories were collected from contemporary witnesses of the major national liberating uprising of 1916 in the Fergana Valley. The research was continued in Siberian regions of Russia for studying Uzbek diasporas.¹¹

The practice of collecting oral witnesses has been actively used since the Republic of Uzbekistan gained independence.

Experts from the history institute at the Uzbek Academy of Sciences conducted narrative interviewing of children and other family members of participants in anti-Soviet rebellions, repressed members of Uzbek dehkans (farmers) and businessmen who, as "*socially dangerous elements*", were deported to Ukraine.¹²

These materials have been systematised and used in exhibitions of the "*Memorial to the victims of repressions*" museum at the Academy of Sciences, Republic of Uzbekistan.¹³ Experts of the museum interviewed representatives of culture, science and clergy in Uzbekistan, who experienced different significant events in the history of their country; in addition, they conducted interviews with national diaspora people deported to Uzbekistan.

Using in-depth interviewing, research was conducted with members of diaspora people in Turkey and Germany who fled from repressions in Uzbekistan in the

10 The biggest uprising of Central Asian peoples against Russian imperial colonial administration, Russian lately moved farmers and Semirechinsk Cossacks during First World War. The uprising was cruelly suppressed. Cause of the rebellion was official decree regarding forced rear labour for men from Central Asia aged from 19 till 43 at front areas – author note.

11 See, Ziyaev H. "*Remembrances – important source of historical research (from the experiences made by interviewing uprising participants from 1916)*". And Siberian Uzbeks / "*Oral history in Uzbekistan: theory and practice*". Ed. I. Tashkent, 2011 p.140-150; Ismailova J. The national liberation movement in the Fergana Valley. Tashkent 2003.

12 See, Ziyaeva D. Basmatch: "*The truth and myths.*" Tashkent, 2002.

13 See, Video and audio materials Fund of Museum "*Remembrance of victims of repressions*" at Academy of Sciences, Republic of Uzbekistan.

1920s and 1930s, as well as interviews with relatives and apprentices of repressed scientists living in Uzbekistan.

Interviews naturally were combined with research of questionnaire data and other written evidence. These documents were obtained with the assistance of German academic Professor Ingeborg Baldauf.¹⁴

Every interview encompassed not only concrete periods, but the whole life of the interviewee, to follow tragic traces of repression in the history of entire families.

Nevertheless, the research situation and use of oral history materials is characterised by definite problems. Such as:

- a lack of interaction between different groups of researchers
- a weak methodological base for conducting oral history research (lack of literature, methodological instructions, questionnaires, etc.)
- a lack of experience, knowledge, and technical means
- experience gained was especially kept within specialised scientific schools

The best way to overcome these problems was to institutionalise the process of collecting memories.

The existing problem of organising the implementation of oral history methods into the activities of scientific, governmental and public institutions in Uzbekistan is well known to the Tashkent representative office of “*The Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association*” (*dvv international*) in Central Asia.

The office has been operating for a long time in Uzbekistan and realised more than 20 projects aimed at improving the overall social situation in the region. Its coordinators and employees are well informed about the local context, and, together with other German organisations, initiated an interesting project, “*History and Identity*”.

Specialists of *dvv international* consider Uzbekistan as a polyethnic state with a great historical heritage. The modern tasks of forming national identity has to be solved in the context of searching historical roots and drawing attention to historical identity.

Historical consciousness is an evaluation of the past with all its variations which are usual and characteristic for society as a whole, as well as for different social and ethno-social groups and individuals. So human communities are able to recreate

14 See, Turdiev Sh. “*They studied in Germany (in Uzbek).*” Tashkent, 2006.

their past in space and time by rethinking it; moreover they can recreate in the past, present, and future, promoting the connection of time and generations.

One of the less studied aspects of historical self consciousness is historical memory, which provides people's historical view and attitudes to history. If the nation is aiming at the future it has to remember its past. Every person learns a lesson from the past, harsh and glorious days, historical tests and achievements. As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, said, "*there is no future without historical memory*".

According to that *dvv international* clearly indicated its principal position in the project – realising history through its personal perception by witnesses and, finally, wide implementation of the oral history results in definite model proposals in Adult Education, especially for vulnerable social groups (micro level).

From the very beginning, employees of *dvv international* formed the project strategy competently and adequate to local context with the assistance of local experts.

At the beginning *dvv international* initiated joint activities with history witnesses at mahallas¹⁵ in Tashkent ("*Talking chayhana*" project).¹⁶

Work with history witnesses was conducted using biographical methods. These methods enable the study of history and live picture of past events are imagined through the memories of a certain person as well as from examples of biographies of elderly people (aksakals).

As a result of these activities a dialogue has been started between old and young members of the community, which effectively helped to reach the main goal – development through collaboration in the sphere of adult and youth education.¹⁷

The logical continuation, as part of the oral history development strategy, was seminars, which appeared necessary for writing down witnesses' stories for future generations. Masterclasses were held for those who decided to write down their memories. Participants of seminars were representatives of Tashkent mahallas and specialists in Adult Education. As a result, a book about memories of the Tashkent earthquake in 1966 was published, with the aim of transferring that information to young generations in Uzbekistan and other countries.¹⁸

The initial stage of oral history work in Uzbekistan was very useful and valuable for gaining experience for future work with history witnesses, as well as meth-

15 Mahalla – a traditional communal social institute, which inhabitants use as a local authority – author's note.

16 Chayhana is made of two words – "*house*" and "*tea*". Chayhana is usually calls teahouses in Iran and Central Asia. Here it is cultural and public centre in Uzbekistan – author's note.

17 See, Information bulletin of IIZ/DVV representation office // №11 2007 г. – <http://dvv-international.blogspot.com/>

18 Earthquake in Tashkent 1966, Remembrances of eyewitnesses, 2006.

ods of conducting seminars and discussions promoting work with memories and their recreation.

As a result, Uzbek experience of oral history research has increased qualitatively and in its complexity with the creation and institutional development of the Centre of Oral History in Tashkent, which provides a theoretical and methodological base for the training

of motivated individuals in new oral history methods. The goal is to take oral history beyond the limits of academic science and into the public sphere (students, journalists, sociologists and other interested individuals).

The joint Uzbek-German project “*Challenges of Time and Oral History*” (The Development of New Research Practices for Oral History in Uzbekistan)¹⁹ was aimed at achieving high level tasks and clearly defined functions of the research centre:

- ▶ coordination work for collecting memories
- ▶ providing technical assistance
- ▶ providing methodological assistance
- ▶ creation of and archiving of respondents’ databank
- ▶ creation of and archiving of audio bank of memories

A peculiarity of this stage of the project is that the theoretical course of studying oral history is accompanied with field and research practice. Much attention is paid to principles of source study interview analysis as well as demonstrating modern recording technology of recording, editing and the archiving of audio and video information.

In summer 2010, training was conducted in Tashkent for interdisciplinary teams consisting of specialists in different science spheres (historians, sociologists, ethnologists, linguists, architects, producers, journalists).



International Symposium

Source: dmv international

¹⁹ See, Agreement for cooperation and joint activity between representation office of *dmv international* and the Institute of History Academy of Sciences, Republic of Uzbekistan for 2010 and 2011 / current archive of the Centre of Oral History at the Institute of History Academy of Sciences, Republic of Uzbekistan.

Training was divided into three stages. The first and second stages were dedicated to general topics like *“How to use methods of oral history”*. More in-depth training was given in *“Interview situation (scheme, questions, topics)”*, *“Method of observing”*, *“Social networks: history, theory, practice”*, *“Oral history: family as social memory (methodology)”*, *Methods of verifying the authenticity of information sources*, *“Equipment usage in field research”*, *“Creation of guides”*.

Particular attention was paid to the topic *“Psychological aspects of work with respondents”* by the experienced psychologist who participated.

After gaining theoretical skills, practical training was conducted in the form of pilot research on the topic *“Small towns of Uzbekistan: socio-cultural aspects (second half of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century)”*. Pilot research took place at the region which has ancient agricultural and handcraft traditions: in three provinces of Fergana Valley – Namangan (the towns of Chust and Turakurgan), Andijan (the towns of Shahrihan and Asaka) and Fergana (the towns of Oltiariq and Kuvasay). The theme of the pilot as well as the chosen towns were selected by the participants themselves with social, economical, demographic and ethnicity criteria. Criteria of developed guides were divided into three levels:

- ▶ micro level (individual biography, family biography)
- ▶ meso level (biography of a mahalla, a local community)
- ▶ macro level (biography of a town)

Defined questions revealed information on traditions, the way of life, habitudes, type of work, architecture. The result was that participants of the project obtained more than 30 audio interviews, which were also recorded on video and photographed for an archive centre.

In autumn 2010, the last and final stage of training was organised towards the transcription of information and further archiving of data under the guidance of a foreign expert. Participants of the training worked out procedures of information triangulation on the basis of interview analysis, including deciphered interviews obtained in the process of pilot research.

Additionally, the oral history team organized a master class with the assistance of students from several Tashkent universities on *“Traditional and modern architecture of Uzbek mahalla through oral history”* as part of the international symposium *“Architecture between tradition and modernism”*, supported by several representative offices of German organisations. The section on studying and testing the oral history method was organised by *dvv international*.

The objective of the master class participants was reflected in the slogan: *“The transformation of the appearance of Uzbek mahallas (architecture, traditions, mentality)”*. In preselected mahallas in Tashkent, oral stories were collected from inhabitants by using audio, video and photo devices. This supported the students in learning one of newest method of oral history practically and using it appropriately. The obtained material was discussed, analysed in groups and presented during the final plenum meeting.

By conducting several seminars and trainings where teachers, university employees, students, pensioners, scientists – in total 28 individuals – participated, the focus was on the problematic and thematic study of the method itself and skills development for working with oral information. As a result a team of researchers and volunteers was formed who worked exclusively with the oral history method. The team set up the Centre of Oral History at the Institute of History Academy of Sciences, Republic of Uzbekistan.

The scientific and practical result of the teamwork was the publication of the *“Oral History in Uzbekistan – Issue 1”* book in 2011, which consists of articles on theoretical matters and results of practical oral history research in Uzbekistan as well as foreign oral history experience.

In 2011, the next stage of the project aims to connect the public in Uzbekistan regions with the study of history at a micro level – through the prism of real people’s consciousness; to distribute oral history methods through training and practical work among scientists, teachers, lecturers, students of different institutions and communal organisations; to assist the setting up of the oral history centres network; to extend the oral history archive of the Centre of Oral History at the Institute of History Academy of Sciences.

Rural regions of ancient historical value, the cultural centres of Uzbekistan – Bukhara, Samarkand and one region with a problematic ecology – Karakalpakstan – were chosen for pilot research.

50 motivated individuals were involved in the process of learning oral history, including scientists, teachers, lecturers, students, museum staff and mahalla activists. The training consisted of discussions of foreign articles in oral history, analysis of local oral history experience, discussion, and lectures, giving training in methods of interview and guide creation and practice seminars.

According to the above-mentioned method, the participants of the training chose 6 small towns for pilot research. Research work was conducted with respondents aged between 23 and 65. The social status of respondents was widely represented:

workers, farmers, state officials, intellectuals. Discussions in small groups followed key questions included in a guide:

- ▶ how long they had lived in the town
- ▶ what they know about the town's history
- ▶ childhood in the town
- ▶ significant events during respondents' lives involving the town
- ▶ the way of life in the town today (traditions, social sphere, economy, pedagogy, culture, education)
- ▶ the future of the town from the citizens' point of view

As the result of the Centre activity local groups of motivated specialists, scientists, teachers, museum employees and students were established to conduct oral history research in Uzbekistan regions. The oral history archive (72 interviews) was widened and enriched and a process of implementation of oral history methods in Uzbekistan became in some way a master class for those who decided to recount their memories.

That method

*“motivates simple people to tell their past and forms understanding that history is made by them; such understanding and realisation that they themselves are creators of history influences their self identification”.*²⁰

Uzbek experience in oral history does not have a long tradition, but interest leads to an understanding of the necessity of viewing oral history as a special sphere of scientific research and the totality of various ways and methods of analysis and interpretations obtained with the help of text interviewing.

In other words, it is currently important to pay attention to stages of oral history research that started after field work, namely archiving interviews, strategic approaches, and methods of analysis applied by researchers. These tools primarily make oral history critical, self-reflected (i.e. attracted to the researcher's own conclusions) and open to public discussion, which gives the community access to oral history information. In future, project activity components of the oral history method can play an important role in the professional, cultural and scientific education of youth and adults, as well as in the process of life-long education.

20 Romy Lehns: *“Wie es eigentlich gewesen ist...”* in: *“Oral history in Uzbekistan: Theory and Practice.”* Volume 1, Tashkent, 2011. p.8

| **Insights for Sustainable Peace** |

Helen Rottmann

Coming to Terms with the Armed Conflict in Colombia at a Local Level

In a letter to my friends, I wrote on 8 March 2008: in Medellín, EXITO – success – is a department store chain. Today, the store in my residential area is offering everything at reduced prices for International Women’s Day. This is “my” shopping centre, less than a five-minute walk from my flat. This is where I do my shopping on Saturdays. The people who go shopping there, mainly women of all age groups, the younger ones with children, look neat and are dressed in a European style, and I think to myself, like so many times before, that Medellín could also be in Europe. Judging by what they consume, by their laden trolleys, they are hardly troubled by financial constraints. These people buy, buy and buy, and I ask myself if they haven’t heard the news that occupies my mind. I heard on the radio that the military forces, together with the intelligence service, had tracked down a guerrilla camp on the Ecuadorian border and bombed it, killing one of its political leaders. According to the report, it had been a great cooperation and the most significant piece of news so far this year. The attack took place two days after the release of four persons who had been kidnapped. The release was made possible due to cooperation between the Colombian Senator Piedad Cordoba, acting as mediator, the Venezuelan President and the International Red Cross. The four former government representatives who had been released were interviewed on the radio and they all appealed to the president to opt for the humanitarian rather than the military approach, i.e. to negotiate. In their view a military strike would put the lives of those still in captivity at serious risk.

When I wrote this letter I had been living in Colombia for one year. Why had I come and what was I doing there?

The German Church Development Service (*Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst – EED*) had deployed me as an integrated specialist with *Conciudadania*, which can be translated as “*fellow citizenship*”. In the period between 2007 and 2010, I worked for this non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the field of conflict transformation.

Conciudadania, based in Medellín, capital of the federal state of Antioquia, works in small, rural areas where it advises the local residents and the municipal government representatives and provides them with training in the area of strengthening local democracy. The year I arrived in Colombia, *Conciudadania* was supporting, among other things, the development of local agendas aimed at providing advice on voting by analysing the municipal development programmes of candidates for the office of mayor.

Further activities of *Conciudadania* in the field of empowerment include educational courses through which the organisation has supported the efforts of certain sections of the population towards increasing their involvement in the political process for more than two decades.

The project

Context and processes

Before going into details about the project “*Coming to terms with the armed conflict in Colombia at a local level*”, I would like to provide some information on the context, conditions and processes that made this project possible in the first place.

- a. It was only possible to launch this project because three factors and/or circumstances came together: the continued work of *Conciudadania* in the municipality of Betania, the founding of the Committee for Reconciliation and my own assignment.
- b. Reconstructing the experiences of the armed conflict with the local residents was possible only because they had previously dealt with issues such as compensation for injustices, conflicts and reconciliation in parallel programmes that provided counselling and training.

In the following I will provide more information on the issues addressed in paragraphs a. and b. and afterwards present the steps, content and results of the reconstruction of the past. But first I would like to tell you more about the municipality¹ of Betania.

Betania is a rural community; growing and selling coffee form the economic basis for its approx. 10,000 inhabitants. Most of them live in so-called *veredas*: settlements that are spread all over the territory covering 168 km² that became the

¹ A municipality is established by an administrative act.

municipality of Betania in 1921. All the key facilities of municipal administration, commercial exploitation, healthcare and education as well as other services are located at the *cabecera municipal*, the urban centre of the municipality, which lies at an altitude of 1,550 m above sea level. Approximately 3,700 people live here.

Regarding a.

First factor

Conciudadania has worked continuously in the municipality since 2002: under the motto “*de la casa a la plaza*” which means something like “*from the home to the public arena*”, it encouraged local women to become politically active. And it was successful, since a number of women have joined the *Asamblea Constituyente*, a citizen’s action group dedicated to implementing the constitution. *Conciudadania* also supported this initiative, which campaigns for the participation of everyone in public life. Its goal is to encourage people to take part in the decisions made on public issues, including the drawing up of municipal development plans as well as controlling public expenditure.

Conciudadania furthermore supported the formation of self-help groups for people who have suffered traumatic experiences in the armed conflict.

In addition, it must be mentioned that *Conciudadania* helped the victims of violence to organise themselves into groups; this was prompted by Act 975 of 2005, which regulates reparation payments to the victims of the AUC’s paramilitary blocks (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*). During local meetings, victims of violence were informed about their rights.

Second factor

With its process-oriented commitment, *Conciudadania* succeeded in encouraging active residents to join forces and take part in shaping their social environment. It also contributed to the formation of a group in 2007, consisting mainly of women that worked on the subject of reconciliation and under the name “*Committee for Reconciliation*” assumed responsibility for organising events and activities.

Third factor

The third factor – my assignment – consisted of the following elements: I contributed knowledge and experience from systemic consulting, empirical social research,

my work with heterogeneous groups and methodical diversity to the cooperation, as well as financial resources. The latter enabled us to finance the project.

Regarding b.

Impact of counselling and training

As explained above, with the support of *Conciudadania* local action groups aimed at improving the living conditions had been developing since 2002: the citizen's action group dedicated to implementing the constitution, the self-help groups and the Committee for Reconciliation.

With these groups we ran parallel programmes providing counselling and training, which at a later point in time enabled the reconstruction of the armed conflict together with the local residents.

We met the Committee at regular intervals every third week. During these meetings we discussed different issues, exchanged information and coordinated our duties. As the driving force behind the reconciliation process, the Committee was the subject of scrutiny at all times. We addressed the relationship between persons with leading functions and team work, discussed the development of the organisation and the allocation of duties.

Together with the Committee, we organised two events for the family members and friends of the victims of the violent conflict, one taking place in November 2007 and another in May 2009. At both events the provision of information regarding their legal situation was combined with an exchange of their experiences.

At the first meeting in November 2007 we invited the local residents affected by the violent conflict to talk about their memories of their lost ones through art (by painting and writing) and to exhibit the results. This procedure made it possible for them to express their pain in public and share it with others. In this way, a gallery was created that gave testimony to their immense losses.

At the event in May 2009, the participants discussed their experiences within groups formed according to the residential area in which they lived. To aid their memories they were provided with a sheet of paper showing symbols representing possible events (see figure 1) and a sketch of their residential area. The results, drawn onto the sketch, were presented at the plenary meeting, commented on and also added to. The room was filled with a sense of astonishment and dismay, for up to that point the events had never been publicly discussed in such a way.

At this meeting it also became clear that a more detailed examination of the past was needed in order to achieve peaceful coexistence.










Legend		
Clashes specify	between guerrillas and AUC between guerrillas and army between AUC and army army ...	
Murders differentiate by actors	selective	
Disappearance		?
Displacement		
Mines		
Mass graves		
Sexual abuse		
Massacre		
Distinguished by colors according to confrontation		
Forced recruitment	=	FR
Kidnappings	=	K
Threats	=	T
Vaccine	=	

Figure 1

With one group consisting of people from the initiative dedicated to implementing the constitution, the Committee for Reconciliation, and a few women from the self-help groups, we carried out a training course on conflict management combining basic knowledge with the teaching of methods. The methods, including re-enactment of events, were tested on the basis of concrete cases of conflict.

To explain the whole purpose of the different methods for conflict management would go beyond the scope of this article. I will therefore confine myself to describing some scenes from two situations which were re-enacted.

One group re-enacted the negotiations for the return of a kidnapped person. In doing so, the group referred to cases that had become generally known within its municipality; some owners of coffee plantations had been kidnapped by the guerrilla forces and released after a ransom was paid. Another group re-enacted the search for a missing daughter. We learned that the daughter had been in a relationship with someone from a paramilitary group and the mother suspected that her daughter had fallen victim to an act of revenge.

Reconstruction of the past

Focus groups

The event, which took place in May 2009 with the groups based on residential areas, demonstrated that the population living at the urban centre was affected in a different way to the inhabitants of rural areas, and that even among these, differences were discernible. In order to gain a better insight into these distinctions, we divided the local residents into focus groups according to their specific place of residence. This resulted in two focus groups for the urban centre and four for the rural areas. We met the participants from the urban centre at the local parish's community centre and the participants from the rural areas on their terrain, either at the meeting places of the social action organisation *Junta de Acción Comunal* (JAC), or in classrooms.

Multidimensional knots and historical events

Theoretical approach

At the first meeting with the focus groups we talked about the ideas of two authors, Paul Ricœur and Steve Stern, that are significant for reconstructing the local past:

Ricœur's thoughts regarding the relationship between history and memory and Stern's statements on collective memory.

Paul Ricœur² explains the relationship between history and memory as follows: Memories are fed by the events of the past while history looks backwards, assigning events to a certain time and space.

We explained this definition and supplemented it as follows: Memories are something personal; what is stored of the historical events in the individual memory is a selective, unconscious process. To remember means to try and retrace the past. History is the result of many different people looking back in time and space.

The differentiation between memory and history gains significance when for some the past consists of painful experiences which, however, are not reflected in written history. This is why there must be an exchange of memories, and these reviews of the past must be sorted and assigned to a certain time and space.

For this process of exchange, i.e. this reconstruction of the events in time and space, we used the structure provided by Steve Stern³. His structure is a framework, and within this framework individual memories are connected by means of "*multidimensional knots*". Among these knots are:

- ▶ events that disrupt daily life;
- ▶ collective agents, such as government representatives, members of the military, parties;
- ▶ physical places, such as buildings, streets and rivers.

Steve Stern's term for this framework is "*emblematic memory*" (*memoria emblemática*).

Time and space – multidimensional knots – reconstruction

On the basis of this framework we invited the participants to recount what they had experienced in the period between 1985 and 2001. To stimulate their memories and encourage them to talk about them we visualised certain historical events at four different territorial levels: Colombia, Antioquia, south-west Antioquia and Betania (see Figure 2).

2 Ricœur, Paul: "*La marca del pasado*" (1999). In: Historia y Grafía. [web] Hemeroteca Virtual ANUIES. <http://www.hemerodigital.unam.mx/ANUIES>. Retrieved on 15 August 2009.

3 Steve Stern: "*De la memoria suelta a la memoria emblemática*." In: Jelin, Elisabeth (comp.) (2002). "*Las conmemoraciones: Las disputas en las fechas 'in-felices'*". Siglo XXI. Madrid, Spain.

We named events with agents such as the guerrilla troops, paramilitary groups and the drug mafia and the impact of these events at the four different levels. We reminded the participants of the founding of the Patriotic Union party (*Unión Patriótica*) and the assassination of the presidential candidate Galán, as well as the well-known journalist and political satirist/comedian Garzón, since these events had disrupted daily life.



Figure 2

And ... we listened to shattering accounts – the fates of individuals – in which the following multidimensional knots came up again and again: threats, intimidation, payments to armed groups, kidnappings, bomb attacks, expulsions, assassinations, people disappearing.

Providing space for people to tell their stories and be listened to was one intention of our meetings; another was aimed at helping them come to terms with the

past. By assigning their stories to a certain time and space and by connecting their personal experiences with the multidimensional knots, things became clearer and it also emerged that more than one truth exists.

Parallel to meeting the focus groups, we conducted interviews with prominent politicians and employees from the administrative and health sectors. We transcribed the recordings, inspected the material, made a first attempt at situating the events in the municipality in time and space and charted them on a time line. The result was presented to the focus groups at the next meeting (cf. Figure 3).

The depiction of the multidimensional knots on the time line revealed that the guerrilla forces first made their presence felt in 1986 through two actions carried out at the urban centre of the municipality, the raid of the Agrarian Bank and an attack on the police station. The participants established that the year the kidnappings took place was 1993, that the skirmishes between the army and guerrilla forces also started in this year and that the assassination of the mayor was in 1994. The paramilitary groups called attention to themselves with flyers and assassinations from 1995 onwards.

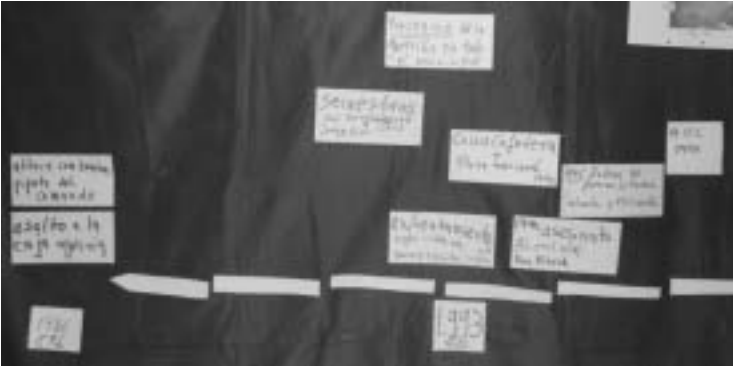


Figure 3

This graphic representation motivated the participants of the focus groups to provide further details, some of which contributed to correcting the facts while others helped to give a more complete picture of the local history.

Interrelation between history and memory

During a group discussion it emerged that the coffee crisis had severely aggravated the situation of the smaller producers. There had been an uprising, the army had intervened, and afterwards many of those involved were forced to leave the area.

We carried out some research and found out that an association of coffee producers, *Unidad Cafetera*, had demanded better conditions for production and commercial exploitation during negotiations with government representatives. The government had resisted these demands. In July 1995 the *Unidad Cafetera* called for a strike and demonstrations at a regional level. Approximately 5,000 people showed up at the two main towns, Bolomboló and La Pintada, located in southwest Antioquia. According to the organisers, governor Uribe had tried to prevent the mobilisation and the official press labelled the participants as *narcoguerrilleros* – drug traffic guerrilla.⁴

During further group discussions we brought up this historic event and read the press release and this triggered the memories of some participants who told us what they had experienced. The army had sought out women who had partici-

4 Tribuna Roja. (1995) Bolomboló: "Paro exitoso contra viento y marea. No. 61." [web] <http://tribunaroja.moir.org.co/BOLOMBOLO-PARO-EXITOSO-CONTRA.html>. Retrieved on 18 August 2009.

pated in the Bolomboló demonstrations at their homes and ordered them to leave, threatening them with the use of poisonous gas.

The fact that those who participated in the uprising were from then on associated in people's minds with the guerrilla and therefore stigmatised caused many residents to banish the mobilisation from their memory. Confronting them with the press release encouraged some of the participants to talk about their experiences.

Emblematic memory

By reconstructing the events and assigning them to a certain time and space, connections between individual and collective memories became clear. Some examples will be given in the following section.

For the residents of Betania, the start of the armed conflict is linked to two occurrences, i.e. two multidimensional knots: the direct or indirect impact (victims) and the activities of the guerrilla and paramilitary groups within the municipality that took place at the same time.

From this perspective, the conflict peaked between May and August 1996. This was the point in time when the events cumulated in a series of attacks and assaults that left deep scars. In the local residents' memories these were associated with the "*assassination of the mayor*", the massacre in La Mercedes, the burial of the victims, the dropping of a grenade, the bomb attack, the black list, the roadblocks.⁵

The paramilitary groups pretended they wanted to "*exterminate*" the guerrilla forces, but assassinated employees of the local administration who engaged in trade union activities, as well as representatives of social organisations, such as the *Junta de Acción Comunal*. Under the pretence of fighting against the guerrilla groups they hunted down anyone who was allegedly connected to the guerrillas and managed to massively intimidate the population.

In the period between 1997 and 2001 the municipality was under the control of the paramilitary groups. The guerrilla forces withdrew, but not all at once. Some of them changed sides, becoming feared members of the paramilitary. Their knowledge aided the drawing up of "*black lists*" containing the names of persons who allegedly sympathised and collaborated with the guerrilla groups. Those on the list were as good as dead.⁶

5 In more detail on page 60 *et seq.* In: Gloria Amparo Alzate Castaño and Helen Rottmann: "*Contando historias que nadie debe vivir.*" June 2010.

6 Page 75 *et seq. loc. cit.*

In 1998, the hospital registered 37 victims of assassinations. The local residents estimated this figure to be higher since many cases were not reported to the police out of fear. It was furthermore common practice to throw the bodies into the Cauca River or to dispose of them in anonymous mass graves.

The following event, too, has imprinted itself on the collective memory. The paramilitary forces demanded that the people show up regularly at a local farm to hand over a monetary contribution. They would queue up to pay their contributions. No-one was able to evade this procedure. The paramilitary groups were well-informed and had ownership status registers at their disposal.

This “*offertory procession*” was carried out in secret; when asked, people made up excuses. But rumours circulated, since it was hardly possible for such a procession to go unnoticed. The many humiliations caused by this blackmail isolated people from one another, each paid on his own. No-one approached the local authorities since it was common knowledge that they would take no action.

Coming to terms with the past – a contribution to reconciliation

At the meetings, the participants listened to the experiences of others during the stated period. This encouraged participants to remember and to talk. They compared their experiences, drew conclusions. Although at the beginning of the meetings the participants only addressed the two external moderators, their eyes began to turn towards the other participants as time went on. The participants made comments, added pieces of information, contradicted each other and sympathised with each other.

During a plenary meeting with the participants of all the focus groups we presented the draft publication. The reading of this draft, their stories now situated in time and space and supplemented by public sources, provided a coherent insight into the local history.

With this publication of the reconstruction of the armed conflict in a municipality, the local residents have a document at hand that combines personal, collective and historical perspectives.

It is a publication for the residents of this territory, Betania, about their local history; a document comprising accounts that send a warning: Never again. What they had to experience must never happen again, anywhere.

It is a document that compels the representatives of governmental institutions to fulfil their duties. The residents expect them to see that human rights are respected

and to create conditions where they are compensated for the cruelties they were made to suffer in the past.

The process of looking back made it possible to identify alternatives for the present and the future, for the situation of the individual and the family and the local community. Mothers who had their sons taken from them were able to draw strength from their faith and forgive.

The citizen's action group dedicated to implementing the constitution, *Asamblea Constituyente*, and the Committee for Reconciliation, held negotiations with the local authorities and agreed to jointly work towards developing the municipality. Ideas for "*sustainable development*" will be integrated into the design of this plan entitled "*Plan de Vida Local para la Reconciliación*" – local development plan for reconciliation.⁷

Literature

Alzate Castaño, Gloria Amparo and Rottmann, Helen. (2010) "*Contando historias que nadie debe vivir. Relatos del conflicto armado en el municipio de Betania*", Antioquia.

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Tribuna Roja. (1995) Bolombolo: "*Paro exitoso contra viento y marea*." No. 61. [web] <http://tribunaroja.moir.org.co/BOLOMBOLO-PARO-EXITOSO-CONTRA>

7 I would like to express my gratitude to Sandra Ambrecht who contributed most of the translation.

Education and Armed Conflict – Never Again!

Context of the reflection

This year, under the title “*A Hidden Crisis: Education and Armed Conflict*”, UNESCO produced the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report. It is important to discuss the issue since armed conflicts affect people’s right to education: uneducated persons are much more inclined to participate in armed conflicts, as was the case in Peru during the time of political violence.

Armed conflicts inflict deep damage on people and in the whole social tissue; they generate poverty, inequalities and reduce populations to anonymous masses. According to Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO,

“armed conflicts still represent an important obstacle for human development in many parts of the world. This revealing report presents the magnitude of this hidden crisis and its underlying cause, while introducing documented proposals to implement the necessary changes”.¹

However, it is a matter of particular concern that this same report shows that governments are noncompliant with the commitments for the achievement of the EPT goals for 2015, and, although some advances have been made, there is a significant deficit with respect to those commitments. The combination of noncompliance with EPT goals, the reductionist approach to their implementation, and the armed conflicts is generating an explosive context because, even if we do not see education as all-powerful, we do believe that a good, all-inclusive education, focused on a Lifelong Learning process, is the antidote against war or, at least, the instrument for better personal and social resources to deal with it. Indeed, the core of the EFA is to create an education which, along with the development of identity and self-esteem, promotes the communication skills needed for inner communication and communication with peers, as a great community; a tool to know the world and oneself, to understand and to act from a positive perspective. An education beyond “*ba, be, bi, bo, bu*”, and as conceived by educator Paulo Freire.² An education that

1 2011 “*EFA Global Monitoring Report. A Hidden Crisis.*” UNESCO.

2 Freire P. (1992) “*Pedagogia da Esperanza: un reencontro con la pedagogia do oprimido.*” Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

implies a critical comprehension of the social, political, and economical realities surrounding people immersed in the literacy process. This principle sees education as a process, advancing hand in hand with public education for the promotion of human rights, peace, from an intercultural critical perspective, rejecting all forms of discrimination and injustice. Increasingly, this education contributes to lay the foundations for all people, regardless of age, to reject war, defend peace and face those who create war in an organised manner.

The Network for Quality Education in Ayacucho sees the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report and its reflection on education and armed conflict as an opportunity and a commitment to conduct an initial review of the recommendations of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) on education, a route that has to be intensified in the light of the comprehensive reforms advocated by the CVR. We may have advanced a little, and we actually have, but the advance should take place within the frame of all fundamental rights and the construction of a democratic nation for all.

The situation in Ayacucho

For 20 years, Peru – particularly the Departamento de Ayacucho – was the scene of political violence, with a high level of human losses (the CVR received reports of the death or disappearance of 23,969 Peruvians),³ which was accompanied by a huge economic crisis with estimated losses of more than 18 billion dollars, and the displacement of more than 600,000 families. It was a real human tragedy affecting people from the Andes, Quechan and Ashaninka-speaking populations, peasants, the poorest and the poorly educated, not to mention the rest of the country feeling and assuming that the tragedy was its own. Displaced people, mainly of native origin, were forced to leave their original locations, without the security conditions to live and work. This population migrated compulsively in a regressive process driven by fear, terror and insecurity, looking for refuge mainly to defend their lives.

In an effort to explain and understand this reality, we present here the voice of Mama Angélica⁴ who says,

³ “Informe Final de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación.” Primer Capítulo. <http://www.cverdad.org.pe>

⁴ Mendoza Angélica (2011) “Entrevista en Educación y conflicto armado.” *¡Nunca más!* (2011) *Una reflexión desde Ayacucho. A propósito del informe de seguimiento a EPT 2011*. Red por la Calidad Educativa de Ayacucho. “Mamá Angélica” Mendoza, es Historical leader, President of the Asociación Nacional de Familiares, Secuestrados, Detenidos y Desaparecidos del Perú – ANFASEP, who fought relentlessly to protect human rights; her dedication is recognised by Peruvian institutions and international organs alike.

“In those days teachers were not coming to teach. When terrorism became apparent, boys and girls were very afraid. When they were reunited in some little town or in a more populated centre, they were not taught well either, because they were too afraid. Over the time, young people joined the terrorists, without telling their families. Later, and out of fear, they went to the big cities, but there they were not taught well”.



Regional Education Project

Source: Nélica Céspedes Rossel

This situation aggravated in Ayacucho, a region historically abandoned by governments and still showing remnants of political

violence. Social exclusion has affected mainly the Quechua-speaking population; it is a racist society and, with respect to education, still will not enter the dialogue concerning the real cultural, economic and political needs of our people.

By the 2000s, with the establishment of democracy, a complex ongoing decentralisation process had been launched, allowing the implementation of a Regional Education Project, presented as a Government policy for the region. The project was prepared with participation from all stakeholders and aimed to strengthen the gratuity of public schooling in accordance with regional realities, possibilities and resources in order to overcome inequalities and promote inclusion, critical reflection, and dialogue, as well as intercultural and bilingual relationships.

The process goals include six essential transformations: intercultural, bilingual dialogue; rural development; ethical, autonomous, participatory, efficient and efficacious management; democratic, quality education; training and revalorisation of teaching personnel, and regional development. These transformations, however, should be deepened and articulated within the framework of the CVR recommendations to achieve an education capable of closing the gaps and healing the wounds left by the armed conflict.

Testimonials on the era of political violence

Herein we present a testimonial on Adult Education.⁵

In the 90s, in Ayacucho, each night was a historical event for us teachers and students. Years of pain and terror and, notwithstanding, we continued working in night schools.

A professor, torn between doubt and distrust, told me the following:

"... our school was a barracks; we were ordered to leave and told that there will be no more classes because the General of the Military Command of the Ayacucho Region has decided to install a military base there. Classes were therefore held in the house of the head teacher. I remember that one night we all stayed there for the night and were forced to whisper: first, there was a power outage, then a shooting, and afterwards it was deadly silent. Echoed screams and whistling bullets were heard, the night was long, we were dying more out of fear than of cold or sleep, we wanted to see the dawn break rapidly".

That was how it was in the 90s – each night brought a new event. At times, we had to step out in groups after the sound of dynamite and bullets; we walked in the darkness, carrying something white. I remember one day when there were no handkerchiefs, only white paper, we held the paper aloft to indicate that we were neither military nor subversive elements. We went down by the Jiron Callao and then, in small groups and according to the zone we lived in, we moved forward.

There was a lot of fear; we had an inner panic and students only spoke about issues of violence in a very low voice. During the blackout, all of us, professors and students, were confronted by the dilemma of whether to go out or not. At times we just stayed (in the classroom) until eleven or midnight and if there were no shooting sounds – there was both solidarity and distrust among us, ultimately nobody knew where the allegiances of the others lay – and what a happiness when one finally reached home, safe and sound! There were no mobile phones at that time to communicate with the family; at each house people prayed for their loved ones to be... I do not know if this is silly or what, but I worked as a professor at nights, what was I supposed to do? It was my only job and livelihood; now I sometimes wonder how I was able to work in such conditions.

Under those circumstances it was not possible to expect much from students: one was worried, under pressure, sometimes it was perceived that some students felt

5 Félix Valer Torres. Since 2004 he has worked as an Adult Education specialist and with the Centro de Educación Técnico Productiva (CETPRO) of the "Dirección Regional de Educación de Ayacucho".

respect for subversives invoking, at the beginning, the Popular War. They agreed with some of their initial activities, which is why they talked in a low voice, half crouching.

Notwithstanding, most of the night students were present most of the time; in those days students were older than they are now. Once we conducted a fund raising activity and bought an energy plant. Professors and the majority of students did not speak in favour of or against the forces in conflict. Students only wanted to learn as much and as rapidly as possible, before the blackout.

After one day of outage and dynamite in the zone of the Colegio Bolognesi we could not get out. Due to the continuing shooting, we slept in a neighbour's house; they received us and distributed mattresses and some blankets. We slept in groups, trying to keep silent because we could hear people running in the streets, but neighbours helped us; the students were more scared and we tried to calm them down but, deep inside, we too were scared and worried about our families waiting for us at home.

Once, the curfew, and then the blackout, caught us at the school. Little research has been done on the effects of violence on students of Youth and Adult Education (EPJA). Progress has been made since then, but this is a modality still dedicated to people excluded from society.

Our conclusion is that the EPJA is seen as a solution to everything: poverty, crime, hate and prejudice, drug addiction, teen pregnancy, maternal mortality, suicides, everything...wars... And even though education is not all-powerful, it is very important and all the more important in the case of night youth and Adult Education, because these students are excluded from the regular education system.

Proposal: an education to rid schools of violence

As it has been stated, during the 90s, Ayacucho experienced one of the most painful periods in history; TAREA, as an organisation working for justice and democracy, was questioned with respect to the intolerable situation of children as a result of the political violence, displacement and almost no response from authorities in general or from the educational establishments in particular. That is why, in 1992, in coordination with Canada's Save the Children, we decided to help change this situation and to accompany teachers from Ayacucho schools in their journey to process the issues of violence and the ways it affects the lives of children, as well as their own lives.

I remember the fully justified ambiance of fear and mistrust at the time: the Plaza de Armas in Huamanga was surrounded by armoured cars; for security reasons, authorities were living at a tourist hotel, and at 6 pm the city was empty and the fear was palpable.

The Ayacucho's Working Coordination for the Rights of Children, within the framework of the implementation of the Children's Rights Convention, played a crucial role in the protection of infants, and of the House of the Children in Ayacucho, caring for boys and girls displaced by the political violence; rootless children, isolated from their families, their familiar settings and their culture.

In 1994 UNICEF implemented the summer schools, promoting respectful and trusting relationships between teachers and students, with participation of parents as well as community leaders looking forward for the recuperation of communication spaces and adequate socialisation that had been interrupted by violence. From this conjunction of experiences the project *"Rebuilding Lives with Education"* was born.

The main objectives of this project were a) the implementation of the generalisation mechanisms for the education proposal of self-esteem and identity within the region as part of the formal system, contributing to the design of specific policies for infants in violence contexts; b) the development of a strategy for the training of trainers; c) the designing of a plan for the monitoring of the project; d) the preparation of educational modules and materials; e) the coordination and incorporation of local and community institutions as part of the sustainability of the proposal.

This intervention was conducted in coordination with the Regional Board of Education, UNICEF and Tarea. Those were the years of the last wave of political violence.

Effects of displacement on children

Children are the most affected because support for a holistic development is weakened when the families are overloaded with problems. Their environment becomes unstable, all the activities – agricultural/farming, pasturage, socialisation with other children – are abruptly interrupted.

On the other hand, once their families are installed in reception shelters, marginality and hostility are the main components of the social relationship, leading to insecurity, fear and loneliness.

Concerning school, even the children that achieved integration suffered the effects of a school where the learning and teaching process is in Spanish and does not include their mother tongue, which does not account for the psychosocial



Learning to read and to write

Source: Nélica Céspedes Rossel

problems or the culture of the children and therefore deepens the marginalisation: it is a school that turns its back on reality.

Violence seriously affected the education system, an establishment already in the middle of a crisis. In Peru, the economical, social and political crisis did not spare the education system. As stated by Juan Ansión⁶, an extreme material and pedagogic deterioration and the political violence were two essential conditions that have put the very survival of the theory of education as a mobilising force in doubt.

The violence and the education debacle were also the result – due to the serious irresponsibility of governments – of the neglect of public education in the middle of a conflict that targeted the education system as an important field of ideological and symbolic confrontation, as a result of the intimidation and stigmatisation of entire communities of students and professors of public universities, especially in the provinces, and serious violations of the human rights of students and professors for the sole reason of being students and professors.

6 Ansión, Juan (1993) *“La Escuela en Tiempos de Guerra.”* Tarea 1993.

The report of the *Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* (CVR) made evident the systematic abandoning by different governments of education, infants, teachers, education approaches... all these factors acted as catalysts for the unjust situation of education that was the breeding ground for violent political factions.

Let's remember

Within this context we take the best lessons from people, groups and teachers who, far from yielding to despair, accepted the challenge of self-reconstruction, many of which were indeed resilient. It is important to remember that hope is a powerful healing emotion, as is the long struggle of our peoples to respond to situations of crisis, but we are not naïve: without comprehensive policies, the right to education will always be infringed.

In Ayacucho, initiatives were issued by the Dirección Regional de Educación to empower directors and to comprehend the seriousness of the political and social problems in order to produce responses from the education establishment. A reflection on the neglect of education and the weaknesses that prevented said situations from being faced was conducted. This reflection leads to the promotion of relations with the community, as well as listening units along with proposals for education policies. The project "*Educate for Life*" was a contribution to this momentum. Professor Mario Huayhua Yupanqui, member of the regional board of education, indicated in an interview that "by implementing the project *Educar para la Vida*, schools on the Ayacucho's Regional Board of Education created favourable environments for the holistic development of children, particularly the displaced children. Schools have become spaces where children learn to accept, value and love themselves and others, and to appreciate their culture and technology.⁷

Yesterday and today

A great number of Peruvians assumed the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a milestone in their national history. It has been pointed out, however, that the big task remains to read the report to know the truth, a still open and never completed task. Without doubt, this implied, and will continue to require, a great debate within each and every sphere of national life.

7 "*Educación y conflicto armado. ¡Nunca más!*" (2011) Una reflexión desde Ayacucho. A propósito del informe de seguimiento a EPT 2011. Red por la calidad Educativa de Ayacucho.



Basic education

Source: Nélica Céspedes Rossel

Some advances have been achieved, but the truth is that our progress is inconsistent. For example, with the CVR an agreement was executed with the Ministry of Education to include the subjects of peace and reconciliation in the syllabus; education materials based on the CVR findings were also promoted but, at the same time, an unconceivable debate was raised, led by the former minister Mercedes Cabanillas, who accused the Year 6 textbook to be an apology for terrorism. Meanwhile, the National

Education Counsel and several historians and even the Attorney General's Office indicated that the textbook only reproduced the CVR conclusions.

Another fundamental issue has to do with the preferred attention to rural sectors, particularly Quechua-speaking populations, where it all started. However, the balance indicates that there are factors that prevent the materialisation of policies such as the lack of political will, the limited budgets, as well as the agreements which were more worthy of photographs for the press than putting the alleged commitments into effect.

To this day, the way that policies for intercultural bilingual education (EIB) have been debilitated is pitiful, leaving the pedagogic institutes and EIB with specialisations but no students. This demonstrates the discrimination against the rural sector and the autochthonous languages of our people groups.

But there is a flip side to the coin. It is none other than the role of human rights organisations, education forums or networks, as well as some public and private institutions, which are developing several initiatives in response to the CVR recommendations in Ayacucho. For example, the ordinance making the use of Quechua and Ashaninka official in the region. This is important but not enough. We must highlight the effort made for the implementation of policies in EIB and a syllabus of cultural relevance.

Other voices

In this section I list the main recommendations gathered by prominent professionals especially convoked to participate in this reflection and to set forth in writing their contributions regarding the current status of the CVR recommendations on education, contributions contained in the paper *Education and Armed Conflict. Never again! A Reflection from Ayacucho*, following the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report, and supported by *dvv international*.

Mental health⁸

Community mental health shall be implemented within the framework of an articulated comprehensive healthcare model that is multidisciplinary and inter-institutional and involves the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in the recovery of community mental health; a process not limited to the health establishment for, although it is a regional priority, this is a strategy without budgetary allocations and political will does not translate into material actions because of the poor empowerment of regional and local authorities. Promotion of research and implementation of sustainable projects addressing community mental health demands reinforcement of the mental health information system in order to make documented decisions on intervention programming.

Therefore, the proposal on the table is the creation of a mental health network system covering the whole region, reinforcing competences, improving infrastructures, providing equipments to healthcare units, and recruiting specialised personnel for each health network. Resulting decentralisation will improve the access of the Ayacucho population to mental health care which, even if it proves impossible, is at least a great dream. Management of the implementation of mental health modules shall be prioritised, starting with the regional hospital and the comprehensive mental health care facility of Carmen Alto, a measure beneficial for the vulnerable population affected by the political violence. At the same time, it is imperative to guarantee the financial resources allowing continuity of interventions and, indeed, to guarantee the promotion of self-care among healthcare providers, who may be affected by any of these conditions, knowing that if we do not protect our human capital, little or nothing will be achieved.

8 Manuel Giancarlo Palacios Aybar. Surgeon MD, currently Regional Coordinator of the National Strategy for Mental Health and a Culture of Peace, Ayacucho Regional Board of Health, since February.

Intercultural bilingual education⁹

Some of the challenges to be addressed for the continued development of the EIB include:

1. Reaching a consensus definition of an EIB education institution and organising a strategic plan for each region, allowing the assessment of the current status of these institutions and to design proposals for their reinforcement.
2. Starting to working with figures, allowing ascertainment of:
 - ▶ the number of students entitled to enter an EIB, initial primary and secondary levels. It must be remembered that according to the 169 ILO Convention, the bearers of this right are the indigenous students, with or without the autochthonous language as his/her first language
 - ▶ the number of teachers in each region, according to group, language, level and specialisation
 - ▶ the number of papers published in each indigenous language and/or with the contents referred to knowledge and values of indigenous groups, with accurate data on areas, levels and degrees
3. A nationwide policy of a decentralised and continuous teacher training, including the intercultural approach for all and from EIB where applicable. This entails:
 - ▶ knowing how many centres of initial education and EIB service are in each region and how many are required to cover the demand of teachers proficient in different languages and levels
 - ▶ assessing the IESP offering EIB specialty to certify their quality and reinforce their functioning
 - ▶ assessing the impact of the Programa Nacional de Capacitación-PRONAFCAP and of the specialisation of teacher training in the EIB service
 - ▶ having regional study plans for the initial and servicing teacher training processes, with intercultural and language treatment approaches
4. Having editorial regional plans considering proposals of education materials and textbooks for different grade areas and levels in all languages, according to the identification of the demands.

9 Lucy Ann Trapnell. Anthropologist and educator. Master in Education from Bath University. Cofounder of the Programme for the Training of Bilingual Teachers of the Peruvian Amazon / “Programa de Formación de Maestros Bilingües de la Amazonia Peruana” (FORMABIAP), jointly implemented by the indigenous confederation AIDSESP and the Instituto Superior Pedagógico Público Loreto. Advisor of the education at the Asociación Regional de Pueblos Indígenas de la Selva Central (ARPI-SC) and invited professor of the Programa de Formación Docente Descentralizado developed by ARPI-SC with the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. Has written articles on subjects related to the development of intercultural bilingual education.

5. Having a Program for the Evaluation of Learning Achievements / *Evaluación de Logros de Aprendizaje* and a census evaluation system, both sensitive to the sociocultural and linguistic diversity of the country, increasingly including the different indigenous languages.
6. Guaranteeing that bilingual specialists of education management units have the budgetary and academic conditions required to conduct actions of continuous and systematic accompaniment of EIB educational institutions.

Finally, we must point out that these challenges have been identified and analysed on the occasion of a number of events on EIB during the last decade. The lack of political will is the reason why the adequate strategies to systematically face these challenges are not implemented. A different way to perceive the country is needed in order to question the paradigm of homogeneity prevalent in our society, and acknowledge its ethnic, linguistic and cultural plurality, as well as the contribution of this plurality to the construction of a more democratic society.

Participation and democratisation of education in Ayacucho¹⁰

One of the most important recommendations of the CVR report corresponds to the reinforcement of the participation instances in the education establishment. As it has been indicated here, the process of participation and democratisation of education management have to be conducted within the ongoing decentralisation process across the country.

According to the CVR report and the recommendations for the institutional reforms in education, the participation of the protagonists is a priority, given the fact that authoritarian pedagogies and vertical relations among actors favoured the introduction of totalitarian ideologies.

The country has achieved important advances towards participative democracy in educational management and, currently, educational management regional (COPARE), local (COPALE), and institutional (CONEI) instances have become formal institutions. However, as in Ayacucho, other forms of participation have developed and made an impact on public policies, the decision making process, and, in some cases, with more efficacy and legitimacy. This has been possible due to the structural voids in formal instances that hampered their functioning.

¹⁰ Hugo Reynaga Muñoz. Educator from Tarea.



Young people in traditional clothes

Source: Nélica Céspedes Rossel

When analysing the participative experience of Ayacucho, given the formal instances, it may be concluded that participation has been poor. However, if we extend the focus and recognise other participative forms, we will see that the recent years have seen an important movement of social participation in the educational management at different levels. The dynamic behind this mobilisation has been the formulation and implementation of consensus policies as the Regional Education Project and Local Education Projects.

This rich process supposes the re-composition of the regional social tissue, which is a challenge resulting from the years of internal war. The vitality of the organisation, of the participation spaces at Ayacucho, is a clear signal of the improved conditions. Worth highlighting is the incorporation of citizen participation in the agendas of organisations such as the Federation of Mother Clubs, Human Rights Movement, Network for Education Quality, Platform for Consensus Against Poverty (*Clubes de Madres, Movimiento de Derechos Humanos, Red por la Calidad Educativa, Mesa de Concertación de Lucha contra la Pobreza*), and the student organisation.

This re-composition of the social tissue is a signal of a reform of the decentralised government, with more participation of the stakeholders now involved in political life. Even if there is a pending agenda for the democratisation of the educational management, the overall balance is positive. Considering that educational management tools such as the *Ayacucho's Proyecto Educativo Regional* have been in the regional agenda since 2007, we are talking about a participation that makes sense, and about a conception for the improvement of the quality of education. This is an intercultural, civic and ethical education, with a peace culture.

To continue on the right path

This is the right moment to re-read the CVR report; concerning education, this report tells us to

“promote a syllabus reform that emphasises general knowledge and humanistic fields, as well as areas like human rights and humanitarian law, sports, the arts and scientific education – both in social and natural sciences. This will result in a holistic education, leading to the creativity and progress that will remove any proclivity to destructive and violent behaviour”.

Besides these recommendations, there is a need to promote citizenship and intercultural bilingual education in urban and rural areas. To contribute to the constitution of an intercultural citizenship, the continued training of teachers is a key element, as well as the contact with the families, the community, and with different social institutions and groups.

We deserve a fair, peaceful, democratic and intercultural society, where bread and beauty, solidarity and love, and truth and transparency, all in interaction and complemented with a constructive critical practice, could defeat poverty. A society with responsible members lead by responsible authorities, dedicated to the construction of the society we deserve as Peruvians, working together to prevent the return of the terrible experience: Education and Armed Conflict. Never Again!

Community Publishing for Conflict Transformation and Peace-building – a Zimbabwean Experience

The community publishing concept and methodology was initiated in 1986, in a process providing training and training materials to 7000 village community workers. Over the last 25 years, the approach has been further developed, and since 2009 community publishing has been effectively used for conflict transformation in 100 wards of 3 rural districts with a history of intense violence. Through the publications, and training of inter-agency facilitators, the community publishing approach is being gradually spread to other volatile districts.

The concept of community publishing

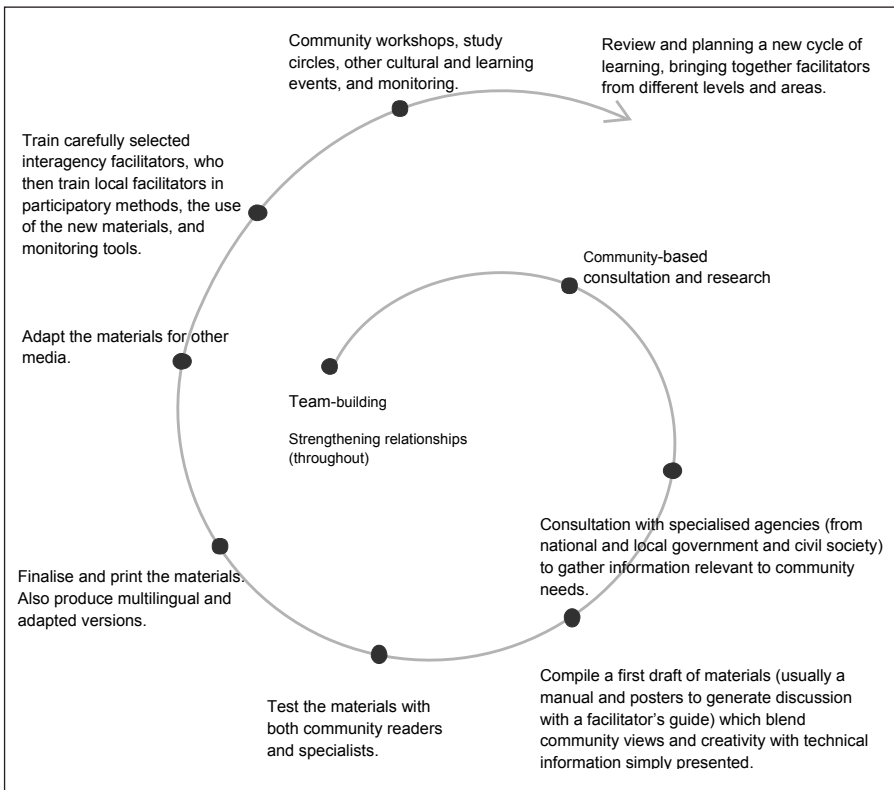
Community publishing is an internally driven process of change, rooted in community wisdom, creativity and solidarity. It combines community-based research, publishing, education and organising. In community publishing, the process is as important as the products, the books, and both are used for capacity enhancement and advocacy. Community publishing enables impoverished and traumatised people to develop confidence, articulate their experiences, concerns and aspirations, communicate and use the constructive power of persuasion and organisation to participate effectively in public affairs, resolve conflicts and engage in local development initiatives. Community publishing has been described by participants as *“the voice of the previously marginalised commanding attention”*.

Community publishing as an innovative approach to conflict transformation and peace-building

Conflict transformation is an integrated approach which tries to transform the negative energy of violence into the positive energy of building a democratic society.

Peace-building is the process of dealing with the causes of conflict and promoting justice. It is a process of breaking down the barriers that block our way to a good society, as well as building bridges of trust between people.

Community publishing materials are used to provide communities with information, guidelines and motivation to begin to tackle the conflict within the communities, address human rights abuses, build constructive relationships and move the communities towards peace and development again. The community publishing approach has a transformative effect at an individual and community level and drives change. It is an inclusive process involving women and men, children and adults, citizens and leaders from across the political divides. The process begins and ends with communities, as shown in the diagram which follows.





Peace building workshop

Source: Kathy Bond-Stewart

Community Publishing is a people-centred approach, and two of its principles include: *“build on what is there, promote local creativity and wisdom and work with whole communities in an integrated way.”* Two distinguishing features of community publishing are the community-based production and distribution of books; and the priority given, since 2008, to constructive communication, and restoring all forms of broken relationships, between people in different political parties and roles, leaders and communities, women and men, children, young people and adults. ACPD has used radical diplomacy to win over provincial and district leaders to support a peace-building programme. Each of the groups identified in ACPD’s conflict analysis is given a role, and an opportunity to communicate in a non-threatening environment with those who previously caused them problems. Gender equity is mainstreamed in all the publications and all key issues, including violence, are examined both in family and public life. Participation at workshops is balanced in terms of age and gender, and at times marginalized sectors such as women, young people and children have specific workshops to enhance their role in peace-building.

The books

The books produced through community publishing combine community wisdom and creativity with specialised information. They all contain Facilitator’s Guides. The books expand freedom of expression and access to information, provide read-

ers with guidance, encouragement and hope; connect previously marginalized communities across the country; and influence the national agenda. For example, **A People's Guide to the Agreement** and **A People's Guide to Constitutional Debate** became national reference books, and the constitutional book in different formats and languages had a print run of 200,000, with an average readership of 5 per book, reaching an estimated one million readers. The books are very popular and there is an insatiable demand for them, so they are constantly reprinted.

The main books ACPD is currently using are:

- ▶ **Sowing our seeds:** Strengthening citizen participation in local decision making.
- ▶ **Lighting up our unfolding way:** Constructive relationships, conflict transformation and peace-building.
- ▶ **Facilitating Civic Education for Transformation:** A Community Publishing Practical Guide.
- ▶ **Let the smallest speak from the tallest peak** – A people's guide to children's rights
- ▶ **Soft Strength:** Peace building for development; a discussion guide (with 11 posters)

ACPD has also produced **A People's Guide to Transitional Justice**.

The books are distributed free of charge through a network of about 70 organisations, including civil society organizations, the Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe (ARDCZ) the Ministry of Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs, and most recently, the Zimbabwe Youth Council and Ministry of Youth. In ACPD's three pilot districts, the books are used intensively, as a basis for programmes.

ACPD's peace-building programme

This long-term programme began in 2009, in selected rural districts in North East Zimbabwe which had experienced the most intense violence in 2008, and which had a history of violence. It began by bringing ten of the most powerful leaders together from each of the three selected districts. These leaders included the chairpersons of the two main political parties, district administrators and chief executive officers, district council chairpersons, chiefs, war veteran leaders, church leaders, police and central intelligence officers. Participatory methods and centring based on symbols (for example a clay water pot representing the life-giving culture of democracy and peace compared to a spear representing the life-taking culture of autocracy and violence) motivated district leaders to begin to communicate

constructively with those they had previously opposed, and to support the peace-building programme in their districts. The core of the programme is enhancing constructive communication and relationships across all the institutions and social groups through which rural life is organised, using participatory learning events and books. The interdistrict workshop was followed by 3 district workshops with a wider group of 40 different leaders per district. From these workshops, a district training team of 10 facilitators was chosen, and orientated, guided by ACPD's provincial pilot districts, and the whole process was monitored and reviewed. After the workshops, participants share the publications with others in their villages, sometimes forming study circles. The process is cost-effective with an average book costing one dollar, and a ward workshop US\$220. In the first two years, when resources were very limited, one round of workshops was held annually; but as resources have improved in 2011, five rounds of workshops are being carried out. Each round focuses on an important aspect of peace-building; and in 2011 ACPD has worked with four specialists to add components on conflict transformation; healing, the integration of peace-building in local government structures; the role of traditional leaders in peace-building; and special workshops are being held to

Peace building workshop

Source: Kathy Bond-Stewart



promote the role of women, young people, and children in peace-building. Integrated ward-level teams of facilitators are being formed.

The soft strength process in a pre-electoral environment

Elections in Zimbabwe have always been associated with increased violence and restrictions. To prepare for this, ACPD specially designed eleven problem-raising posting posters without words rooted in Zimbabwean culture and experience, and a book **Soft Strength: Peace-building for development**. The concise book (available in different languages) provides discussion guides to each poster/picture, as well as defining basic concepts and outlining basic skills (self-awareness, constructive communication and relationships, dealing with conflict positively, and soft strength (active non-violence). It also provides a **Facilitators' Guide**. The book has been used so far in 91 ward workshops, and it has been distributed through local structures, and so far the **Soft Strength** materials and workshops have proved the most popular of all ACPD initiatives. The pictures generate intense discussion, and people apply them to resolving problems and conflicts in all aspects of their lives. The books, especially in Shona (the most widely spoken language in Zimbabwe) are used every day in many contexts (homes, schools, fields, markets, mines etc.) Headmen, traditional leaders at village level who are usually conservative, have requested a book for every home. We thought that the first 40,000 copies in English and Shona would be enough for national distribution; however, the books hardly suffice for four rural districts. Leaders from both political parties and diverse roles are highly motivated to distribute the books and expand the **Soft Strength** process into other districts.

On the following page is a selection of some of the most popular pictures (also available as A3 posters, with a proverb written on the back, although participants also come up with their own proverbs and phrases.)

Results

Results are collected through monitoring forms and visits, interviews, testimonies, and review workshops.

The community publishing peace-building process, making use of the books in workshops and study circles, has the following effects:

- Reduces violence.
- Restores relationships across political, gender, role and age divides; in a highly polarized society.



Kindness can pluck the hairs of a lion's moustache. **African proverb**



Nothing in the world is as soft as water, yet for dissolving the hard nothing can surpass it. **Chinese proverb**
The power of the fish is in the water. **Zimbabwean proverb**



The heart is like a tree, it can grow where it wants. **Zimbabwean proverb**



Build bridges, not walls. **African proverb**



Harvest all pumpkins as all have seeds. **Zimbabwean proverb**



No-one can ride your back unless it is bent. **Martin Luther King**

- ▶ Increases the participation of women, young people and children in public affairs.
- ▶ Increases freedom of expression and access to information.
- ▶ Changes negative attitudes and behaviour.
- ▶ Transforms some potential opponents into supporters of peace-building.

We will provide some examples of these.

Reduction of violence

A District Police Officer in one of the districts stated that ACPD's peace-building process had reduced violence and crime by 70%. Somebody in another district commented: *There will be a total reduction of violence in the communities due to Restoring relationships across the divides.*

People from different political parties now attend development meetings, funerals and social gatherings together. Leaders are learning to respect the people they lead:

- ▶ "I have learnt about my position as a leader and how to deal with the community and unite not divide them."
- ▶ "As a leader I have learnt how to achieve a community without violence."

- ▶ *“Community members are learning to be tolerant and co-operate with those who have different views or backgrounds.”*
- ▶ *“Soft Strength teaches us to live peacefully, loving one another. It also teaches us to accept everyone despite his or her political party or religious beliefs.”*
- ▶ *“As a father, I should love and respect my wife and children and be an example to others.”*

Resolutions of conflicts

Many conflicts have been resolved; from conflicts between political parties, and conflicts over roles, to conflicts over resources, and family conflicts. Here are some examples:

- ▶ *“Livestock taken during electoral violence was returned, and those who had lost their animals forgave those who had stolen the animals, and cancelled the pending court cases.”*
- ▶ *“A councillor of a certain party who had lost in the 2008 elections had vowed not to contribute to development programmes organised by the winning councillor. But after discussing the picture of Zimbabwe being torn apart he stood up, appealed for forgiveness from the reigning councillor and promised to work together with him in the future.”*
- ▶ *“People from the two main parties acted in a play. One party clearly spelt out the wrongs they had done to the other party, who accepted the apology, but asked them not to repeat what they had done wrong. After the drama people commented ‘The past is past, let us concentrate on the future. Our relationship is more important than these political parties, which come and go, but we remain as one family.’”*
- ▶ *“A once deserted piece of land due to a boundary dispute has been put into production after conflicting parties came to terms and resolved their dispute through the correct channels.”*
- ▶ *“A dip tank was lying idle for years because it was located in someone’s land, so cattle were dying of disease. After the workshop, the owner of the land stood up and invited the community to visit the dip tank and repair it for the use of everyone’s animals.”*
- ▶ *“A husband who had ill-treated his family, after attending a workshop, openly shared his new experience of love in the family. ‘Two days ago I had a conflict with my wife and the teaching I got today came at the right time and I hope I am born again. I have always been very harsh with others in discussions and meetings and I hope to change from this day. It’s good to receive advice as I have done today.’”*

Increased participation of women, young people and children in public affairs

Women, young people and children are developing leadership and facilitation skills. They are now able to express their own opinion and make their own decisions, and refuse to be used by selfish politicians to carry out violence. In one district, after reading *Soft Strength*, some children gained courage to report cases of child abuse to local leaders and perpetrators were arrested. (In a related process, using community publishing methods, with 4 other agencies, 4000 children participated in constitutional debate.)

- ▶ *“Why didn’t you bring these pictures in 2009 so that we could have been free to talk about issues as they are? The pictures are so good and healing that everyone will be laughing and talking without fear of anyone.”*
- ▶ *“Most people enjoyed the use of picture codes. They said the pictures give them the means to discuss freely and do not result in enmity since all discussions come from the given code. They say even issues that people fear to discuss can be talked about without future retribution or witch hunting.”*
- ▶ *“This exercise has endowed the community at large. The people are now pregnant with ideas to equip themselves fully in life.”*
- ▶ *“It empowers minds that nothing is impossible, it brushes away fear, it outlines that in a community there should be no looking down on others, and everyone should be treated with respect.”*

Change of negative behaviour, opponents transformed into supporters.

ACPD has a number of testimonies of previously violent people who confessed what they had done wrong, made up to those they had abused, and redeemed themselves by becoming active supporters of ACPD’s peace-building process. Here is a recent example.

At a workshop in a new district, ACPD met a war veteran who expressed his enjoyment of violence. Less than a year later, he has changed beyond recognition. He is making amends for the past, and has become an exceptionally dedicated distributor of peace publications. Here is an interview with him (held on 20 July 2011)

ACPD: How do you come to know ACPD?

M: *At first I had a negative attitude towards NGOs, but when I first had a workshop with ACPD at Coach House Inn, I felt relieved and changed my attitude. ACPD has*

made my community a better place to live. I have managed to unite all the youths who used not to see eye to eye.

ACPD: What can you say about the book **Soft Strength?**

M: I don't know how to describe how helpful the book has been to me as an individual and my community as well as the whole district. Remember, I was the person who used to terrorise the area, but now I have learnt to live in peace with people.

ACPD: What do people see in you now?

M: Everyone is surprised why I am a changed man. It is because of ACPD. Right now the two booklets are my bibles.

ACPD: What would you say is the future of you and ACPD?

M: Mine is like a marriage in which the two will be separated by death. I wish I would spread the gospel of peace using to my colleagues, the war veterans who are hard hearted.

ACPD: What is your hope?

M: A transformed Zimbabwe where fighting is a thing of the past.

The significance of community publishing

Community publishing can add value to the work of many agencies involved in building peace and democracy because of the following:

- ▶ The production and distribution of books and posters rooted in community wisdom enables participants to develop confidence, critical consciousness and organising skills, influence public life positively and explore practical, democratic alternatives.
- ▶ Community publishing is people-centred and internally driven, self-managed by local teams with some support from a small national team.
- ▶ The books are a cost-effective way of communicating important messages and transferring effective development methods across rural and urban Zimbabwe, linking the local, district, national and international spheres.
- ▶ Positive relationships, peace-building, use of constructive forms of communication and creativity enables ACPD to work even within difficult situations.
- ▶ The community publishing process is integrated and inclusive.

- ▶ Community priorities such as economic survival, local control over local resources, gender equity, HIV/AIDS and the rights and well-being of children can be mainstreamed in local governance and other institutions.
- ▶ Community publishing is accessible both in terms of language, the user-friendly nature of the books, and in having books and services available in remote rural wards. It is reaching communities who have very little access to conventional media.

Conclusion

So community publishing can bring hope and life to even desperate situations. The main challenge is to upscale the use of Community Publishing for conflict transformation and peace building, without weakening the quality of the process. As the poet Lloyd Machacha wrote of Community Publishing :

Civic participation grants the silenced a loud voice and affords the marginalised a personal choice. Community publishing enables the impoverished and traumatised to be confident, articulate and for development energised...Towards peace and democracy, the journey of a thousand miles, begins with a single step. Civic education is one of the peaceful ways to cover the miles. Just keep on increasing the pace of your step.

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Presenting the results
Source: Kathy Bond-Stewart

How to Transform the Post-war Society through Reconciliation: Yugoslavia and Serbo-Croat Relations

Hopes for social and cultural transformation, as for liberal economic reforms, were highest for Yugoslavia in 1989 with the waning of Soviet power and the end of the Cold War. Yugoslavia, after all, was the success story of communism with open borders and its escape from the Stalinist grasp in 1948. Many Europeans believed it was moving towards a market economy in Yugoslavia with its liberal economic policies and trade agreements, but they were wrong. Following the decline of the Soviet bloc, communist parties lost legitimacy everywhere except in Asia, creating a power vacuum into which nationalist parties were sucked as a viable alternative. Most of the communists became nationalists. According to this, while we are focusing on nationalism, when trying to examine the dissolution of Yugoslavia, we are ignoring communism, as if Yugoslav history began in 1989. But if “*incumbents*” were as important to the onset of these wars as “*insurgents*”, then the actions and inactions of the communist elites were as critical to the onset of war as that of the nationalists. Indeed, we can view the mentality of those who waged the wars as essentially communist, because most actors were trained by the Party and most nationalists came from the ranks of the SKJ (League of Communists), whose ineffective repression and belated liberalisation provoked the “*dogs of war*”.¹

Also, it is important to mention the influence of the economic and social crises in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia’s economic crises led the CIA to predict the country’s collapse if it did not resolve its economic problems.² Its unresolved national question also played a role. But the question remains as to why the conflict became acute. Yugoslavia was a divided society which had been in crises for most

1 Eckstein Harry, “*On the Etiology of Internal Wars, History and Theory*”, 1965, p.141-2, 145-7, 153-5.

2 CIA, National Intelligence Estimate, “*Yugoslavia Transformed*”, 1 October, 1990.

of its history, but only in 1941 and 1991 did it experience bloody internal wars.³ Within that question, we can observe cultural differences which also played a role. Adherents of the Catholic, Orthodox and Islamic faiths, who were closely identified with national groups, held different ideas about concrete realities, not just about rituals and the afterlife. Different regions had also developed their own distinct customs and cultures, including attitudes toward the organisation of society and the economy. Efforts by the SKJ to suppress, neutralise, balance and even out these differences after 1945 were no more successful than those by King Alexander after 1929, and they all did it by covering up the documents of the past. It is not necessary to agree completely with Samuel Huntington to recognise that human populations are not uniform, and that culture is bound up with individual identity, marking and reinforcing national divisions. Even if the communists tried to create Yugoslavia as a multi-cultural paradise, they failed.⁴

Yugoslavia still might have survived had only the “*insurgents*” acted to destroy it. However, in reality, the country’s “*incumbents*” had either lost interest in maintaining the system or had joined the insurgents by 1991. The events of the 1980s, including the transformation of the USSR prior to 1989, and the events in Eastern Europe after the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet bloc disintegrated, were critical to changes in Yugoslavia because they offered a new psychological orientation which allowed all Yugoslavs to envisage a future radically different from the past, and encouraged some to seize control of the system and shape it to their own ends.

In addition to that, nationalism and national tension in ex-Yugoslavia played the key role in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. In fact, nationalism was not only the fruit of an émigré conspiracy nor simply the creation of a few ideologists, it was also the offspring of a regime which controlled its nationalities by favouring some and suppressing others. The collapse of the SKJ set the stage for conflict and war because it left Yugoslavia with no legitimate authority after the death of Josip Broz Tito. However, the subsequent wars were not merely epiphenomena occasioned by a search for legitimacy; they were also the result of conflicting assertions of legitimacy by the warring sides who set the concept of “*self-determination*”, broadly interpreted, against the legal status quo.⁵ In the following years, some communist

3 Bilandžić Dušan, “*Propast Jugoslavije i stvaranje moderne Hrvatske. Eseji, članci, intervjui, analize, izjave*”, Zagreb 2001, p.307.

4 Botev Nikolai, “*Where East Meets West: Ethnic Inter-marriage in the Former Yugoslavia, 1962-1989*”, *American Sociological Review* 59, 1994, pp.461-80, and Randy Hodson, Duško Sekulić, and Garth Massey, “*National Tolerance in the Former Yugoslavia*”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 99, May 1994, 6: 1534-58.

5 *Ibid.*, pp.150.

leaders disappeared from the political arena, some joined the nationalists and some established or entered the parties of social-democratic orientation. However, none of them learnt the basic lessons of democracy. Full control of state media, recruitment of party members in public service and abuse of ideology (hatred and fear) in order to cover the inability to overcome the economic problems are just some examples that show they continue to live in a society of the “*communist eighties*”. At the beginning of the nineties, some of Croatia’s Serbs rejected both Tuđman’s nationalistic party and the Croatian state, just as some Serbs and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina rejected the SDA and the Bosnian state, and all non-Serbs rejected Milošević’s vision of a Yugoslavia dominated by Belgrade. Unfortunately, democratisation and pluralism in Yugoslavia have not led to the easing of political tensions. Instead, they have given rise to ethnic-based political parties that are helping tear the federation apart and give voice to virulent nationalist hatreds. Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Muslims, Albanians, Macedonians and a host of other peoples are fixated on the past, with its mass killings, betrayals, forced migrations and “*lost*” territories.⁶

Yet within two years from the climax of the national tensions, the country had ceased to exist, and by 1992, war tore apart the former Yugoslavia. The most enduring and bloody of the ethnic crises came in Yugoslavia where, in 1991, festering differences erupted in civil war between Serbs and Croats in Croatia. One year later, the war began in Bosnia between Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats. In the course of the war, with more than a quarter of a million lives lost and two million people displaced, the Yugoslav conflict was recognised as the bloodiest ground war in Europe in 50 years. After the collapse of Yugoslavia, ethno-nationalists were the first to take over the new public arena, and they succeeded with democratic means – without, however, creating a real democracy but an exclusive ethnocracy.

It is also important to mention that identification of territory with ethnic belonging was and is one of the most problematic legacies in the tradition of the former Yugoslav nations and, in fact, it is the legacy of the classic Central European ideology of the nation state.⁷ This kind of identification prevents the application of the citizenship concept to create ethnically neutral territories with multiple identities. The tendency is sometimes reinforced by the international community when it caves in to threats of territorial separation by ethno-national leaders, thereby rewarding

6 Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, 14 March 1991, “*Yugoslavia’s Ethnic Conflict and Its Regional Fallout*”, Summary, p135.

7 See Michael Mann, “*The Dark Side of Democracy. Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*”, Cambridge, 2005.

them by permitting consolidation of their grip on ethnically conceived constituencies. Contrary to their efforts, the situation in the field is usually devastating.

For example, the Dayton Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina set the pace for conflict settlement in the Balkan wars. A closer look into the institutional arrangements foreseen in the Annexes reveals that the drafters of the Dayton constitution followed the model of consociational democracy for post-conflict reconstruction. Dayton was therefore based, firstly, on territorial separation into entities and cantons mostly following ethnic lines, thereby also cementing the ethnic separation of the population. Secondly, on the state level, all institutions were formed on the basis of the rules of proportional ethnic representation and mutual veto power in order to create the necessary trust for elite consensus through power sharing. The situation allowed the ethno-nationalist parties such as SDA, HDZ and SDS to convince their electorates that they were the only reliable defenders of their respective “*national interests*” and to reinforce their grip on power and prevent any inter-ethnic cooperation on both mass and elite levels. A similar conclusion results from an analysis of the reconstruction efforts of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) following Security Council Resolution 1244.⁸ Based on the ambiguous political compromise of “*territorial integrity for the Former Republic of Yugoslavia and substantial autonomy for Kosovo*”, the UNMIK administration created a de-facto independent state under international protection with serious deficiencies as far as security, political stability, effective state administration and democratic governance are concerned. The March 2004 riots, including killing, looting, and ethnic cleansing of the Serbs and other minorities, revealed that not even basic physical security could effectively be secured by KFOR and UNMIK. The economy is constantly on the brink of collapse, with a theoretical need to employ 30,000 newcomers on the formal labour market each year just to preserve a 70 percent unemployment rate.

So, the challenges of state reconstruction in the Western Balkan countries make it clear that there has not been too much “*state*” as such, but rather an absence of effective exercising of state power where it is absolutely required. The problem, therefore, is not deregulation and liberalisation, but how to “*bring back the state*” in order to provide good governance as a prerequisite for the reconstruction and reconciliation of weak peace in weak states and divided societies. If the long-term goal is in fact economic growth and EU integration, development requires an effective state for rule-making as well as rule implementation and rule-adjudication.

8 See Helmut Kramer, Vedran Dzihic, “*Die Kosovo Bilanz. Scheitert die internationale Gemeinschaft*”, Wien, 2005.

These are vital functions that cannot be left exclusively to private agents or international agencies.

How to transform the post-war society through reconciliation

After the end of the Cold War, and especially during the last fifteen years, the human need to amend immoral wrongs has been expressed in political discourse as a propensity to apologise for acts of past injustice. A wave of apology continues to work its way through global politics. In September 2003, the presidents of Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro unexpectedly exchanged apologies for “*all of the evils*” perpetrated by their countries. Nicholas Tavuchis was among the first scholars to take up the subject of these political apologies and his text, “*Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation*”, still serves as a historical starting point for the field. Tavuchis regarded apology as one of the “*deep truths*” of social life and as a “*moral expedition*” which could repair damaged social relations and allow the parties of past injustices to go on with their lives.⁹ From Argentina to South Africa, from ex-Yugoslav countries to the United States – societies and international institutions are deciding how they should reckon with the past and its atrocities (including genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, rape and torture) that may have been committed by a government against its own citizens, by its opponents or by combatants in an international armed conflict.

One of the possible ways to deal with the past injustices and to prevent genocide is to research the past, which is shrouded in political myths, without bias and prejudices. This is impossible, even as an initial step, if, at the first level, we are faced with an ideologically controlled society and closed archives with valuable documents that can shed light into our past. This applies on the second level, too, if we are faced with myths that are building blocks of nations (as no national history is myth-free). Due to all this, both the intentional and non-intentional cover-ups of the historic truth about the causes of conflicts among South Slavs only prolong the existing conflicts and bring about new conflicts with even more perilous consequences. According to this, on the other hand, if we are faced with these cover-ups and a new myth-making that ruined our lives in the last two decades and if we still want to take steps forward towards doing away with nationalism and try to create civil society, facing the past through documents as historians are doing,

9 Barkan, E, Karn, A, “*Group Apology as an Ethnical Imperative, Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*”, Stanford – California, Stanford University Press 2006, p.5.

it is imperative for all of us from ex-Yugoslav territories to work on apologies and reconciliation as the important step towards preventing genocide. This process takes place in four phases.

Group apology is the first step, and it represents a new and compelling iteration of our commitment to moral practice. Despite new tensions and escalating hostilities associated with what some view as the new world disorder, apology remains a powerful trend in global politics. Even as cycles of violence emerge in some spots, in others, we see rival groups (like in ex-Yugoslav countries) willing to put their troubled histories in the service of justice and peace.

In the best cases, the negotiation of apology works to promote dialogue, tolerance and cooperation between groups knitted together uncomfortably (or ripped asunder) by some past injustice. A sincere expression of remorse, offered at the right pitch and tenor, can pave the way for atonement and reconciliation by promoting mutual understanding and by highlighting the possibilities for peaceful coexistence. Practised within its limits, apology can create a new framework in which groups may rehearse their past(s) and reconsider the present. By approaching their grievances through a discourse of repentance and forgiveness, rivals can explore the roots and legacies of historical conflict as a first step towards dampening the discord and frictions that they produced. It is possible, of course, to overstate the effectiveness of apology, but the psychological attraction it has for perpetrators, victims and those who live in the shadow of historical injustice seems empirically undeniable. Especially at the group level, apology has emerged as a powerful negotiating tool for nations and states eager to defuse tensions stemming from past injustices.¹⁰ It is important to mention that apology and dialogue, in general, are only the first step in the longer process of post-conflict reconciliation. Reconciliation requires the sides of the conflict to accept their own past first and, only then, to reach an understanding of the shared past.

If apology is the first way to resolve the clashes and national tensions, the second consists of **trials and truth commissions** that can work cooperatively, each responsible for emphasising one of the two ideals – punishment and reconciliation – while not completely ignoring the other. It is better if neither tool is overloaded with functions that the other can perform better. For example, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has indicted, has put on trial and is punishing some middle-level implementers, some high military commanders, former presidents and other alleged planners of atrocities in Bosnia. In contrast,

¹⁰ Ibidem, p.7.

a proposed truth and reconciliation commission, comprised of representatives of the Serb, Croat and Muslim communities, could investigate and deliberate together concerning the truth about the past. This kind of investigation and a resultant authorised report would partially settle accounts with the great number of rank-and-file rights violators. Such a report would also go beyond the scope of judicial processes, by recognising and applauding those from all sides who found ways to aid their ethnically diverse and endangered neighbours.

The relations of trials and truth commissions can be complementary in a stronger sense, because each body may enhance as well as supplement the other. Fair trials and punishment may contribute to the reconciliation and truth sought by truth commissions. On the one hand, if victims believe that their testimony might be used by national or international tribunals to bring perpetrators to justice, this knowledge can also satisfy the thirst for justice and lead to healing. On the other hand, the evidence that truth commissions unearth may have a positive role to play in judicial proceedings. Moreover, truth commissions, after evaluating the fairness and independence of a country's judicial system, might recommend judicial reform or argue that an international tribunal should have jurisdiction.¹¹

The third step towards reconciliation is supporting the **scholar projects and meetings** that seek to promote a dynamic, multi-national, multi-ethnic and non-partisan history (among students, teachers and pupils through journals, textbooks and seminars, the same as in society, especially through documentaries). Its aim is to foster understanding and acceptance of ethnic and national differences, highlight similarities in cultural, religious, social and political life and harmonise the various histories that exist in the region. These projects have to engage scholars, educators, media representatives and civil society organisations in the process to transform "*the image of the enemy*" and examine the historical myths that have been used as propaganda from different ethnic perspectives. This process includes working with teams built from the different regions with the goals of researching, writing and disseminating shared historical narratives in an effort to build a greater understanding of "*the other*" and thereby contributing towards the dispelling of public myths often used to conflagrate tensions.

Alongside this, it is necessary to incorporate in such projects and meetings the political elite (creating in the region the groups of friendship among those political groups of different nations who want to promote peaceful relations and reconcili-

11 Crocker, D., Punishment, "*Reconciliation, and Democratic Deliberation*", u Barkan E., Karn A. (ur.) "*Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*", Stanford – California, Stanford University Press, 2006, pp.73,74.

ation as a possible way for preventing genocide) who want reconciliation in the region. Politicians should be invited to discuss future cooperations with scholars on reconciliation processes and regional stability. These meetings should generally raise public awareness through online and print media. Thus, that can be the third step towards preventing genocide, post-conflict reconciliation, the fostering of democratic values and peacebuilding in regions afflicted by the legacies of ethnic and religious conflict.

For example, in the ex-Yugoslav region, this kind of project seeks to identify the following relevant political and national myths, looking at their mutual “*dynamic interaction*” during the period of the old regime, antebellum crisis, wartime and post-war transition: firstly, official myths of “*titoism*” as well as alternative myths emerging during the socialist era; secondly, Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin and Albanian old and new ethnic myths; thirdly, the religious myths incorporated into the new national ideologies; fourthly, myths about the wars of the 1990s, and at the end to work with groups of friendship among Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian parliaments attempting to find a way to prevent genocide. A further wish of the group of scholars who are working on this project is to emphasise the *process* and its *dynamics* because the nations under consideration are incomplete. In other words, no nation that came out of ex-Yugoslavia (not even Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, not to mention Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo or Macedonia) is a finished product. All of them are in a rather raw shape, left alone with the feared possibility of further bifurcation and emergence of new nation-statelets.

Borders are the “*scars of history*”. The wide range of problems and opportunities on both sides of the borders in a wider Europe makes cross-border cooperation indispensable. The border areas of the countries of Western Europe already took the first steps towards organised cooperation back in the 1950s, where the state borders did not correspond to natural linguistic, ethnic, cultural or economic communities. At first, it was done spontaneously, with a bottom-up cooperation system evolving that lacked any formality. Later, principles and legal regulations influenced the already functioning practice, mainly supported by the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Association of European Border Regions. It then slowly evolved into appropriate institutional structures. This tendency was enhanced by regional policies in the Union and the beginning of the INTER-REG programme via which cooperation along the internal and external borders of the European Union was aided. At the third level came **cross-border cooperation (CBC)** between the states in the divided region. It is the perspective of reinforcing cooperation with

countries bordering the European Union that the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) includes a component specifically targeted on that point. The CBC strategy has four key objectives:

- ▶ Promote economic and social development in border areas
- ▶ Address common challenges
- ▶ Ensure efficient and secure borders
- ▶ Promote people-to-people cooperation

Two types of programmes have been established:

- ▶ Land border programme between two or more countries sharing a common border (or short sea crossing).
- ▶ Multilateral programme covering a sea basin.

It is the task of the regional and local partners on both sides of the border to analyse their common needs and to identify priorities and actions that are most relevant to their local situation. CBC uses an approach largely modelled on 'Structural Funds' principles, such as multi-annual programming, partnership and co-financing, adapted to take into account the specificities of the EC's external relations rules and regulations. However, CBC is also a way to heal the trauma from the certain past. At the end comes **forgiveness**. It is a Christian morality, or rather its secular embodiment, which has raised forgiveness to the status of supreme, even constitutive value. Not only has Christianity emphasised internal transformative capacities, it has also put suffering and its redemption at the core. The best that can be done in these circumstances is to implement legal justice, even though both are very much aware that justice cannot be done anymore. Jankelevitch wrote his essay in the midst of the French debate regarding the imprescriptibility of Nazi Crimes. For him, pardon is equal to forgetting Crimes against Jews and true Crimes against Humanity, against the human essence. They cannot be pardoned. He also does not believe in German repentance: "*German Repentance, its name is Stalingrad ... its name is defeat.*" (Jankelevitch, 1996: 552-572).¹² For all these reasons, it may have nothing to do with the term reconciliation as we use it today, which is understood entirely in a social and political perspective that is completely independent of personal feelings. No-one expects the victims to forgive anyone, but the social process of receiving restitution and processes of political forgiveness can still legitimately be considered part of a reconciliation process. At the end, it is important to conclude

12 Jankelevitch Vladimir, "*Should We Pardon Them?*", *Critical Inquiry* 22, 1996., 3: p. 552-572.

that, despite its Christian origins and western dominance, it would be erroneous to conceive these developments as a new form of “*moral imperialism*”.

An example of how to build peace in local community

The healing process of post-war society involves the education of adults. This does not mean that adults should go to school again. This means that adults, in their schooling until then, were manipulated primarily by the interests of political elites, which were supported by the media. If we want that group of society to be able to view the world without prejudice, we have to perform several important steps. Each of these includes the initial lustration of those politicians and the media who supported war in ex-Yugoslavia and who are still working on it. Also, it is very important to have the support of the politicians and media who want to rebuild peace and reconciliation. Politicians and media should help by supporting projects that help strengthen the stability and reconciliation. These projects should involve the acquisition of historical knowledge but without bias and prejudices. In contrast to frequent efforts to deny or repress the past as a form of conflict resolution, the aim is to use the past as a means of coexistence as well as of conflict, and seek to legitimate and acknowledge the various constituencies of the region. By building reconciliation into the core fabric of society and enhancing the economics of reconciliation, each project should provide a linchpin for transforming society from dependency to an economically viable community that fosters ethnic heterogeneity. That knowledge should come from seminars, training and meetings as well as from media (documentary movies, feuilleton, interviews that will be seen or published in the regional media). Except for the projects which will provide a new image of the past, it is important to have projects which will assist adults in everyday life. For example, in areas that were affected by the war, the formerly opposing parties should be included in joint projects related to the economic revitalisation of the area where they live as well as in programmes of legal and medical protection and assistance. All this has to be done because individuals should have an understanding of the advances, limitations and risks of economic revitalisation in their region, but also of the damage and hatred that can be produced by political myths that already destroyed our lives in the region during the wars. Furthermore, these kinds of projects should create a big picture in relation to values, moral questions and culture when we are speaking about women’s rights, especially because of those who were refugees and have now returned and are unemployed.

This idea has shown initial success in Croatia in the village of Golubić.

There, we saw how Adult Education carried out through seminars, training and meetings with politicians (minority and majority representatives and documentarists) aims to enhance local post-conflict reconciliation efforts and trust-building among ethnic groups. Using Croatia, a Yugoslav successor state, as a lens through which this can be studied, our work on reconciliation and education of adults focuses primarily on Serbo-Croat relations and opportunities for sustainable development of those communities where the refugees are coming back.

Our project aimed at establishing peace and reconciliation involves NGOs (Centre for History, Democracy and Reconciliation, Novi Sad – CHDR, Dijalog, Zagreb, Association for History, Cooperation and Reconciliation, Obrovac), scholars, political leaders of the Croatian minority party in Serbia as well as the Serbian minority party in Croatia, the leaders of the group of Friendship between Croatian and Serbian Assemblies, human rights advocates, primarily those who work on behalf of refugees, local politicians and local people. Although most similar activities worldwide (and in the former Yugoslav region) have been carried out at the state, national, multi-national and macro-regional levels, we believe that post-conflict recovery, reconstruction and prevention of future conflicts will be most successful if achieved on the local level among civil society. Thus far, our model has proved successful and is now in its fourth year.

This also took place in the one-time predominantly Serb-populated parts of Croatia, near the town of Obrovac in the hinterland of the ancient coastal city and tourist landmark of Zadar. Heavy fighting took place there during the war and the local Serbs also joined the exodus of the summer of 1995, leaving homes and farms to be looted and burnt to the ground. But ten years later, many returned to stay. This was achieved not by the government of any country, but mostly by the CHDR's activists and people themselves, the villagers and their friends and relatives with the aid of non-governmental groups and human rights advocates from Croatia and Serbia. As the result of cooperation between CHDR's activists, local politicians and villagers, those who returned to Golubić (meaning "*Little Dove*") started by revitalising the area and restoring normal life. This is a story about how things can be changed for the better by citizens' activism "*from below*". Although it was only carried out by one fifth of the pre-war population, those who did it were glad to have done so. Some farmers turned to ecological tourism, hosting annual scholarly conferences started by the Centre for History, Democracy and Reconciliation in 2008. The nearby historic Orthodox monastery "*Krupa*" revived

annual pilgrimages. In 2010, during the scholarly conference and dialogue of ethnic minority parties taking place there, this obscure village appeared on prime-time programmes of several national TV stations in the region.

The process of rebuilding peace and reconciliation through Adult Education came from a small village school building in 2008 when scholars from Serbia and Croatia, together with leaders of minority parties and local politicians, brought the refugee repatriation issue to the public's attention and discussed controversies over the war and problems of transition. As landmines were cleared from the village, roads and farmland, and burnt homes still stood amidst the new ones, television cameras that arrived to cover the meeting captured a reborn community. The administration of the nearby town of Obrovac (once a Serb town but now with a Croat majority) led by moderate Croat politicians, took care of cultivation of inter-ethnic relations. Thus, a town that had been "*de-Serbianised*" and "*Croatised*" by war, and a nearby village repopulated by returning Serb refugees, not only live in peaceful coexistence, but cooperate and work together.

Therefore, the Golubić case can serve as both a role model for the whole region and a centre from which "*missionaries of peace*" will be dispatched to similar areas to bring similar events to other rural communities. However, in the meantime, assaults on returnees persist in other areas.

Potočari Memorial Site – a Place of Reconciliation?

Introduction

Srebrenica is a small town in the east of Bosnia and Herzegovina first mentioned in 1376 under the name Srebrenik. No-one could have anticipated back then that almost 620 years later, the town would face a devastating fate during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995). This small peaceful town in East Bosnia, which lies in a narrow basin between the densely wooded mountains rising to around 1000 metres high, created horrifying headlines all over the world in the summer of 1995. Since 1995, July 11 has been the anniversary of a sad and humiliating day. At the command of Serbian leader Radovan Karadžić and his General Ratko Mladić, Serbian soldiers murdered around 8,000 Bosniak (Muslim) boys and men between the ages of 14 and 77. Although the whole world knew about these atrocities, and although the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 819 on April 16, 1993, nobody intervened. The Resolution was a demand for all parties to regard Srebrenica and the surrounding region as a “Safe Area”. Unfortunately, the designation of “safe area” barely corresponded to what actually happened (Holbrooke 1998: 118). *“The horror of Srebrenica was a stain on our collective conscience. People were killed, who had relied on the promise of protection from the international community,”* said US President Barack Obama in a personal statement on the 15th anniversary of Srebrenica.¹ Radovan Karadžić – wherever the former Serbian leader’s name is heard, the name of the small town also echoes with it: **Srebrenica**. Just as Adolf Eichmann automatically triggers thoughts of Auschwitz, Karadžić’s name will always be connected to the most atrocious war crimes committed in Europe since 1945. The trials that have already been completed so far before international courts have shown that the crimes did not happen spontaneously, but were systematically planned and carried out. The UN War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague (the

1 <http://derstandard.at/1277337845199/Gedenken-weltweit-Obama-Srebrenica-ist-dunkler-Fleck-auf-unserem-Gewissen> as on 18 August 2011.

Netherlands) described the massacre as genocide in the sentences against Radislav Krstić, Vidoje Blagojević, Dragan Jokić, Ljubiša Bera and Vujadin Popović. At the end of February 2007, the International Court of Justice also judged these crimes as **genocide**.² After many years on the run, on July 18, 2008, more than 13 years after the genocide, Karadžić was caught and subsequently transferred to The Hague. The person allegedly bearing the main responsibility for the massacre, Ratko Mladić, was also arrested on May 26, 2011, almost 16 years later, and is currently in custody at The Hague awaiting trial. Both were arrested in Serbia and transferred to The Hague by the Serbian government under Boris Tadić.

Every year on July 11, the whole world commemorates this genocide. Several thousand people and leading politicians from the region and from Europe pay their last respects to those victims newly identified that year from the mass graves, who are then laid to rest in the memorial cemetery in Potočari. Each of these anniversaries has seen the burial of several hundred victims, and television images of the bereaved next to the graves have become a symbol of the enduring trauma of thousands of Bosnian families. Potočari, the little village 6 kilometres away from Srebrenica, is the location of the memorial site and cemetery for the genocide of Srebrenica. On September 20, 2003, the memorial site was inaugurated by former US President Bill Clinton. In his speech in front of 30,000 people gathered in Potočari, Clinton addressed the Bosnian and Herzegovinian population, expressing his hope that this memorial centre will contribute to future peace. He highlighted that Srebrenica will always be a memorial for the past war madness, a permanent reminder to warn the world that something like this should never happen anywhere in the world again.³

What does this memorial site mean today for the ever-divided Bosnian and Herzegovinian population, for the region and for the world? Will it lead to reconciliation or to further division? Can reconciliation be achieved through learning, and is acknowledgement of an atrocity a prerequisite for this necessary and hoped-for reconciliation? These are the issues this text is going to discuss in order to convey to the reader the peaceful message behind the memorial site in Potočari.

Controversial memorial site

The Potočari memorial site is visited every year by several thousand people from all over the world. One of the most important groups of visitors are the students and

2 <http://www.zeit.de/online/2007/09/IGH-Srebrenica/komplettansicht> as on 18 August 2011.

3 <http://www.sarajevo-x.com/bih/clanak/030920003> as on 18 August 2011.



Potočari Memorial Site

Source: *dvv international*

youths who come from all over the world and stay in Srebrenica and Potočari for a while. Even in summer, almost every Monday, groups of 50 students arrive on the memorial site to pay their last respects to the victims. Many place hope on the young generation, as can be seen in the statement the German minister Dirk Niebel made, when he set down a wreath at the memorial of Srebrenica on August 7, 2011. He said:

*“The memorial and cemetery convey a clear message: a massacre like the one in Srebrenica must never recur. Bosnia needs to overcome its ethnic problems. Thus I ask the Bosnian government not to exploit the ethnic problems anymore for its own ends. I have great hopes in the young generation. The Srebrenica youth centre is a sign of hope that in the future it will not matter as much whether someone is Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian. Hopefully in the future, the name Srebrenica will not just be associated with the word ‘massacre’, but also with the notion of ‘reconciliation’”.*⁴

To achieve this goal, in the summer of 2010, the **Summer University** was established in Srebrenica. The idea arose because the memorial site of Potočari-Srebrenica is an ideal place for researching recent history and it is inevitably one of the first contact points for research carried out by postgraduates, doctoral students and academic researchers on the topics of genocide, human rights, justice and jurisdiction. In the summer university’s first year, 12 students from 3 continents took part.

⁴ http://www.bmz.de/mobil/aktuelles/meldungen/20110807_pm_132_bosnien.html as on 18 August 2011.

Alejandro Weles came from Mexico. He studies in Barcelona. As well as participating in the first summer university in Srebrenica, he also took part in the “marching column” from Nežak to Potočari. Weles describes his experience:

“I have some horrible images that I will take home with me. I found out the truth about the genocide and this will be the focus of my future thesis. The ‘marching column’ made a particularly strong impression on me. I walked on the route where many of the people who were trying to escape from Srebrenica were killed, and I can imagine how tough it must have been here in July 1995.”

Sarah Celinien came from Melbourne. She told us of her immense wish to come over here. She wanted to meet people who had survived the genocide, but also pay her respect to the innocent victims.⁵ By now, we have encountered two generations of students at the Summer University. The interviews with them show that these young people are not only very interested to research the genocide but also to find out the truth about Srebrenica and spread it back to the part of the world where they live. Most of them deal with human rights, something which those murdered in July 1995 were totally and utterly robbed of.

Every single visit to Srebrenica helps the survivors and keeps the memory alive. The visitors contribute to the understanding and sympathise with the victims. Such an understanding, the students and pupils from Srebrenica and generally from the Republika Srpska (RS) unfortunately do not have, as they neither learn about the genocide at school, nor do they visit the location of the atrocities. “School groups do come for example from France and Germany to visit the cemetery. It is only our own pupils who have never even been there,” criticises the vice-mayor of Srebrenica, Ćamil Duraković.⁶ The school curriculum and leading politicians in the RS deny the genocide in Srebrenica. “Does this also have something to do with the Balkan mentality?” This mentality sees apologising to other people as humiliation rather than a moral and civilised act.

One of the reasons why the denial of the genocide is daily fare in the Bosnian-Herzegovian entity of the RS is that it is not punishable, while in other European countries, such as Switzerland, the denial of genocides and more specifically that of the Srebrenica genocide can be prosecuted: Two authors of the Swiss journal “La Nation” have described the genocide in Srebrenica as a “pseudo-massacre”. The society for threatened peoples (GfbV) and TRIAL (Swiss association against im-

5 <http://www.studentskioglas.ba/studentski-info/4434-ljetni-univerzitet-u-srebrenici> as on 18 August 2011.

6 <http://derstandard.at/1304553097368/Reportage-aus-Srebrenica-Eine-Botschaft-dass-dies-nicht-ungestraft-bleibt> as on 18 August 2011.



Potočari Memorial Site
Source: *dvv international*

punity) have filed charges against them with the Vaud bureau of investigation due to the denial of a genocide and crimes against humanity. *“Following the terror experienced by the victims, the very denial of this crime is intolerable and prevents real reconciliation for all those concerned, thus hindering peaceful co-existence in the future,”* explains Fadila Memišević, president of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian section of the GfbV. TRIAL president Philip Grant states that *“the arguments used by the authors are identical to those currently used by Radovan Karadžić at The Hague. They deny the suffering of victims and exonerate the perpetrators of these crimes”*.⁷

The Serbian “national writer” Dobrica Ćosić goes one step further: *“We do not accept the Bosnian Islamic fundamentalist propaganda lies of a Serbian genocide in Srebrenica,”* he said, insultingly. *“We are turning our descendants into members of a genocide people like Nazi Germany.”* Three years ago, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) declared a “genocide” in Srebrenica. The term has now become a touchy subject in the Serbian Parliament. Virtually the whole opposition and parts of the government deny the facts. *“We will not condemn the genocide because it never happened,”* said the former franc-tireur Dragan Marković (aka “Palma”), whose party is currently part of the government. Even the socialists of Serbian autocrat Slobodan Milošević (who died of a heart attack in the UN War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague) do not want to back a parliamentary statement containing the term genocide. At present, they have key positions in the government as junior partners of the “democrats” (DS) of President Boris Tadić. Infrastructure Minister Milutin Mrkonjić still has a picture of Milosević hanging on the wall *“in worship of him”*.⁸

Milorad Dodik, current President and former Prime Minister of the RS until 2010, is a further denier of the Srebrenica genocide. In an interview carried out in 2010 for the Austrian newspaper “Standard”, he said that the Bosniaks had stylised

7 http://www.trial-ch.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Evenements_et_manifestations/Pressedossier_D.pdf (page 2) as on 18 August 2011.

8 <http://www.n-tv.de/politik/dossier/Voelkermord-spaltet-Serbien-article735661.html> as on 18 August 2011

themselves as victims of the war and now wanted to take revenge by depicting the Serbs throughout history as a kind of “*genocidal people*”. He further emphasised in this interview that by now, a sort of “*Srebenisation*” of the war reigns in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁹ He has even financed a symposium denying the genocide in Srebrenica. The Society for Threatened Peoples (Bosnia and Herzegovina) condemned the organisation of the symposium, held in Banja Luka on October 4, 2008 with the financial support of the Republika Srpska government of Milorad Dodik, and considers it disgraceful. The organiser of this symposium was the NGO “*Srebrenica Historical Project*”, founded in Holland with the aim of relativising, tabooing and denying the genocide of over 8,000 murdered Srebrenica men.¹⁰

In contrast to Milorad Dodik, who has never been to Potočari, the Serbian President Boris Tadić, who also had Karadžić and Mladić arrested and sent to The Hague, took part in the Srebrenica commemorations in 2005 and 2010. On the last anniversary of the massacre of thousands of Muslims by Bosnian-Serbian troops (July 11, 2011), Tadić said to the Serbian news agency Beta, that “*the dignity and respect applied to the innocent victims*” as well as to “*all other victims*” of the Bosnian war (1992–1995).¹¹

The examples show how differently the events of the 1990s are looked upon in this country. This also applies to the memorial site in Potočari. The Bosniaks consider it to be something almost holy, while many Serbs see it as a threat. The memorial centre’s efforts to spread the truth about the war crimes of the military and former Interior Ministry of the RS are difficult for some to accept. There are not many Serbs who speak openly and condemn the crimes in Srebrenica. One of the few who do is Sonja Biserko, who in her book on Srebrenica says that Srebrenica is a special case and far more than a tragedy. Organised and systematic extermination of so many people in just four days was not an extreme but a blatant evil. The methods used surpassed everything that had ever happened before in the region of former Yugoslavia. Such acts cannot and must not be forgotten. For the Serbian population and its future generations it is a huge load to bear. (Sonja Biserko 2005). Her opinion is shared by Richard Holbrooke, US special envoy to the Balkans in the 1990s. He is considered the “*architect*” of the Dayton Agreement, which ended the Bosnian war, and he said in his book “*To End a War*” that “*due to the figures alone, no act of war is on a par with Srebrenica or should ever be compared with it*” (Holbrooke 1998: 118).

9 <http://derstandard.at/1282979509446/STANDARD-Interview-Dodik-Geben-uns-fuer-die-EU-nicht-her> as on 18 August 2011.

10 <http://gfbv.ba/index.php/Archiv/articles/archiv-2008.html> as on 18 August 2011.

11 <http://www.suedostschweiz.ch/politik/serben-prasident-tadic-gedenkt-der-massaker-opfer-von-srebrenica?version=1%2007%201%3D%40%40version> as on 18 August 2011.

Worldwide resolutions on genocide

A resolution of the European Parliament at the start of 2009 declared July 11 the European day of remembrance for the victims of the Srebrenica genocide. Many followed this example. As a sign of condolence and condemnation of the genocide of Bosniaks in Srebrenica, resolutions have been issued all over the world except in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the victims are only remembered in the Federation on this sad day and not in the RS, as the latter's government refuses to acknowledge this day and its sad justification. A few years before, the former High Representative of the International Community for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr Christian Schwarz-Schilling, put a new bill through for the Potočari memorial site, transferring the administration of the memorial site (that only acted as a foundation until then) to the responsibility of Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus territorially excluding the centre from the RS. This was the only way to safeguard the centres further existence. The Serbian members of parliament described the draft bill as unconstitutional and boycotted the legislative parliamentary proceedings by leaving the session. The president of the MP fraction of Bosnian Croats, Tomislav Tomljanović, showed more understanding when he said that he viewed the decision of Schwarz-Schilling as justified, because *"it is not illegal and moreover it is our moral responsibility to the victims to protect them from a republic which almost led to their complete eradication"*.¹²

The European Parliament's resolution officially terms the events of July 1995 as *"genocide and the greatest war crime in Europe since the Second World War"*. *"This document should act as a stimulus and do more for justice, the victims and their families,"* said the Slovenian MEP Mr Jelko Kacin, who was one of the initiators passing the resolution.¹³

In Serbia, where the term *genocide* is generally dismissed and does not appear in the resolution, there are also people to be found who search for the truth and investigate the background of the events. Goran Lazin, an activist of the organisation *"Women in black"* from Belgrade explains:

"In Serbia, there still is a fairly dominant power, a nationalist matrix of young people born in the early 1990s. When the war was causing havoc in Bosnia, they heard of the 'heroic action' at the front. These generations admire the known war criminals, some of whom have been sentenced. Politics in Serbia has not experienced the desired transformation. What we are doing here should be done by our

¹² http://www.ngo.ba/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2403&pop=1&page=0 as on 18 August 2011.

¹³ <http://haler.blogger.ba/arhiva/2011/07/11/2809124> as on 18 August 2011.

government. However, they only act under pressure from Europe, such as in the example of Ratko Mladić's arrest. There still is no real compassion or culture of remembrance and thus it is not possible to build legitimate and lasting peace".¹⁴

The Bosniak representative in the three-man Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bakir Izetbegović, comes to a similar assessment of the situation and thinks that Serbia still has a long way to go to openly confront the issue of the genocide. "The Serbian population is still not ready to face the truth because so far no attempt at catharsis has been made." As proof of this Izetbegović cites Serbian "provocations" following the arrest of ex-army chief Ratko Mladić at the end of May 2011. Mladić still has a lot of supporters in Serbia and in the RS who admire him as a war hero.¹⁵ A couple of Serbian youths born at the end of the war, who were interviewed by a journalist at their school in Srebrenica on the day of Mladić's arrest may serve as an example. The reporter from the Austrian newspaper *Standard* asked them what Mladić's arrest meant for them. "Boris Tadić has betrayed the entire Serbian population. Mladić is a hero and liberator, also for the Muslims," said one girl. There was no evidence of crimes and they had never learnt of the events in Srebrenica at school. "When we heard of Mladić's arrest, we burst into tears," continued her friend. Evidently, the political propaganda in the RS works.¹⁶

One of the factors that aid and abet such perceptions is the claim which is continually made that the western world is conspiring against all Serbs. According to those promoting this dangerous idea, this can be seen in the western media's one-sided portrayal of the events in Srebrenica.

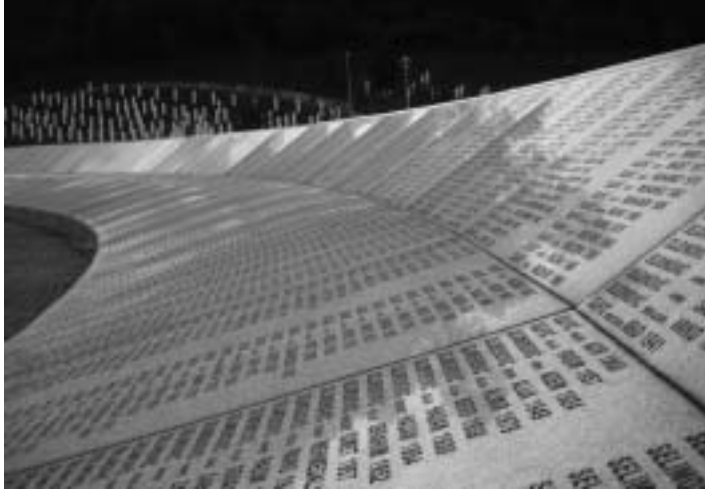
There are certainly media reports to be found that convey a biased picture to the disadvantage of the Serbs, but there are numerous other examples. The American journalist David Rohde, who was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of Bosnia, describes the events in and around Srebrenica from 6 – 16 July in many facets. He clearly states that genocide had been committed and names those responsible, but he also shows the role and shared responsibility of the UN, the tensions that existed between the Dutch "blue helmets" and the Bosniak Muslim refugees in the enclave, the ever-controversial part of Bosnian commander Naser Orić, the issue of a share in the responsibility of Sarajevo and many other aspects of the complex

14 Radio Slobodna Evropa/KIP.ba.

15 <http://www.sarganserlaender.ch/de/news/ausland/serben-praesident-tadic-gedenkt-der-massaker-opfer-von-srebrenica.aspx> as on 18 August 2011.

16 <http://derstandard.at/1304553097368/Reportage-aus-Srebrenica-Eine-Botschaft-dass-dies-nicht-ungestraft-bleibt> as on 18 August 2011.

Potočari Memorial Site
Source: dvv international



turn of events. In other words, there is no sign whatsoever of manipulating the readers into putting the blame on just one party.

Another example is the media analysis of Mirela Memić. She systematically collected and analysed the reports from the three weeklies, *Dani* (Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Time* (USA) and *Profil* (Austria) published between 1992 and 2000. She came to the conclusion that, for example, *Profil* reported in a very critical way towards the Bosniaks: *“The scepticism towards the reports from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosniaks was more than evident from the tone of these reports: ‘The horror stories told by the refugees are probably just as unverifiable as such information’”* (Memić 2009: 44). Her analysis of *Dani* and *Time* in 1995, reads as follows:

“A major topic in Dani and Time was the influence and the role or complicity of the international community in the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina. ... In the case of Srebrenica, the United Nations are specifically accused of not having (sufficiently) protected the safe area. ... Dani asks the question of who would hold the United Nations responsible ...” (Memić 2009: 47)

Anyone who still keeps suggesting that the whole world has conspired against the Serbs, is primarily damaging just them by blocking a clear view and path towards reconciliation with their recent past.

Two years ago in neighbouring Croatia, the Parliament also declared July 11 as a day of remembrance for Srebrenica. Šemso Tanković, representative of the national minorities in parliament, said that this was a political decision which included the official and permanent condemnation of this crime, regardless of who caused it, in whose name, for whom and for what purposes.¹⁷ As far as the region of south-east Europe is concerned, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia also passed

17 www.trend.com.hr

resolutions on the Srebrenica genocide. America, Canada, Australia and other parts of the world have an hour of remembrance on July 11. Thus, there are many places where condolence is offered more than in Srebrenica itself and Banja Luka, the administrative centre of the entity of RS.

Reconciliation needs truth

At present, Srebrenica is going through a difficult time. There are still traces of the war to be seen everywhere and many families still have not found the remains of their loved ones. Destroyed villages still stand deserted. Mistrust continues to reign among the people in Srebrenica and mistrust counteracts the act of reconciliation that is supposed to lead to a common rebuilding of the town and relationships. In society and politics, reconciliation is regarded as a possible component in the process of coming to terms with the past or conflict management. Determining the truth, what really happened, is necessary both in the process of grasping and coming to terms with the past and for conflict resolution. In some cases, monuments are built for purposes of reconciliation, e.g. memorial centres, memorial sites, etc. Yet how does the society relate to the symbols and monuments that remind us of these dreadful acts and how does it cope with the past tainted by war?

Even for the Serbian population in Potočari, Srebrenica, Bratunac and the neighbouring communities, all these places in East Bosnia are connected with much suffering. This is what makes the work of the memorial sites in direct interpersonal contact with the neighbours so difficult. There is a tendency to weigh one suffering against the other. Genocides, however, constitute a unique form of violence and destruction. They leave behind collective traces and fears among the survivors and provoke denial, rage and often even deep fears in those who think they are identified with the perpetrators. Against this background, the Potočari memorial site faces an enormous challenge: to give the genocide in its uniqueness a place for remembrance and at the same time to respect the pain of the Serbian neighbours who may no longer live next door but rather in the next village, as a human experience; without any tactics in mind. For this to happen, all parties of the past conflict have to confront their own past. This assessment is shared by Todor Kuljić, sociologist and professor of philosophy in Belgrade:

“I see an urgent necessity to set up a ‘museum for the disgrace of former Yugoslavia’. The semantics of grief in the new post-Yugoslavian nation states must bring people’s own crimes to the fore. Only then is it possible for emotional participation



Potočari Memorial Site
Source: *dvw international*

to substitute collective affect and the denial of guilt.” (Kuljić 2010: blurb)

As a first step, reconciliation needs the admission and acknowledgement of the crime by its perpetrators and by the community in whose name this crime has been committed. Only then can forgiveness be granted by the victims or their surviving dependants. This is the least that can be done for the families. They are not asking for much, but a denial of the atrocities, no matter on what side they were committed, means fresh pain for the survivors. What they need is an honest confession, not some half-hearted lip-service just to get rid of the matter. We do not like to speak of individual guilt because a single individual cannot commit genocide. Genocide is committed by a system – as was proved at The Hague. But genocide is never committed by an entire population. Anyone who arrives at such a conclusion is making the same fundamental mistake that people in the Balkans made during the 1990s by attributing the characteristics of their worst members to an entire ethnic group. What happened in Srebrenica clearly is an instance of all individuals of one ethnic group being classified as belonging to a wrong context without ever being asked. When Ratko Mladić entered Srebrenica on July 11 1995, he announced on television that he was *“presenting this town to the Serbian people as a gift.”* He added: *“Finally, after the rebellion of the Dahijas, the time has come to inflict vengeance on the Turks of this region.”* The very fact that Mladić saw today’s Bosniaks as equal to the Turks of almost two hundred years ago revealed his dangerous and absurd ideology (cf. Holbrooke 1998: 119). Had the Serbs ever asked or wished for this *“gift”* and are there any Turks living in Bosnia and Herzegovina? The answer to both questions is a clear **NO**.

For more than half a century, people have been disputing to what extent the entire German population was complicit in the Holocaust and a similar question has now arisen: is the whole Serbian population responsible for the barbaric acts that its leaders and their murderous accomplices have committed? The former Czech President Vaclav Havel, one of the greatest visionaries of modern Europe, wrote an excellent essay on this topic:

"I consider it an offence against the Serbian people and a betrayal of the civic notion of society to identify the evil with Serbian nationality. But I find it equally misguided not to call the evil by its name, for fear of hurting Serbian feelings. All peoples have their Karadžićs and Mladićs, either in real or potentially. If such men due to a mix of historical, social and cultural circumstances win greater influence than they have in other parts of the world, this does not mean that the people they come from is a criminal people. ... It is a conflict of principles, not of nationalities. ... In other words: let us beware of attempts at holding entire peoples responsible for evil. That would be adopting the ideology of the ethnic fanatics."

(Holbrooke 1998: 564)

The place where 5,137 of the identified victims have been laid to rest and a further 3,000 are waiting has been made publicly accessible to all those who wish to speak about it and fight for reconciliation. This memorial centre, just like other monuments all over the world are meant to evoke specific responses: confession, anger, sorrow or a wish to learn something about the past (cf. Brett, Bickford, Sevchenko, Rios 2008: 1). These reactions help to take the next step, in particular, in a collective grieving process so as to deal with the collective loss. The psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, whose work significantly influenced the debate on Germany's past, said in their joint publication *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior* in 1967:

"According to psychoanalytic understanding, the collective grieving process just like individual grief means going through a long and painful process of remembering in order to slowly work through and endure a difficult loss. Collective mourning would be connected with the memory of the victims' suffering in order to become aware of one's own prejudices and projections attributed to these victims. Only sorrow that has been worked through and experienced enables us to feel sympathy for the victims."

(Fischer et al, 2007: 183)

The memorial site offers a place for coming to terms with one's sorrow, for communication and thus for catharsis. These are the important steps towards reconciliation.

Architecturally, the sacred part of the Potočari memorial site is built as a flower with seven petals and symbolises the birth of a new life following the almost complete extermination here in July 1995. The centre of the cemetery houses the musalla (outdoor place of prayer/mosque) where everyone can go to pray. Last year, a Catholic victim of was also buried here, and the grave is marked accordingly. The

memorial site was built as a place of remembrance as well as a place of education for future generations because people of different religions have always lived here together, built the town and a common life, and people will also have to live here together in the future.

The memorial site thus creates a place for reconciliation. Support for this comes, for example, from the Serbian organisation “*Women in black*”, which is there every year for the burial in Srebrenica. On the occasion of the 16th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, this organisation arranged the memorial ceremony “*We will never forget!*” in Belgrade, during which the names of all the victims who were buried in Potočari in July 2011 were read out. Activists of the “*Roma Women’s Network*” from the Serbian part of the Banat were also in Srebrenica to pay their last respects to the victims. “*It is important to support the remaining relatives of the victims and to create a continuous awareness for the tragedy that was enacted here back then,*” said Ms Danica Jovanović, member of the network.¹⁸

This was the aim for founding the memorial centre. The ability to raise awareness and learn from compassion for the victims and their families, from research, truthful information and published facts as well as from the necessary questions on preventing war crimes.

Potočari memorial site – a place with many facets

The public memorial site in Potočari has many roles. It is a place of mourning and remembrance for the families, and thus a calm, non-political place, for some a religious place and always a personal place that allows the feeling of pain and the tears to flow.

It is a place of collective memory as witnessed every year on July 11, for example. On these occasions it is often also a place charged with political ideas and ideologies. Collective remembrance is vital for the grieving process. At the same time it creates publicity, sometimes even commotion. It triggers opposition, is the focus of new conflicts and it is constantly exploited for political debates that lack respect. This is the most difficult facet of the memorial site that needs to be endured.

It is a place of truth and learning that encourages documentation of the genocide, initiates research and publications on the topic, and thereby makes an essential contribution that has to precede reconciliation and will go far beyond it.

¹⁸ <http://www.sutra.ba/novost/36623/Zene-u-crnom-obiljezile-16-godina-od-genocida-u-Srebrenici> as on 18 August 2011.

Potočari has already become a place of reconciliation on a small scale, in everyday life and with each visit that leads to talks with visitors from Serbia or the Republika Srpska that are not steeped in denial and accusations, but in a joint remembrance of this awful shared past. What is crucial is the self-conception of the memorial site that aims to contribute not just towards finding out the truth, dealing with grief and coming to terms with the events, but also towards creating a multi-ethnic peaceful life in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Educating Croatian Youths on Dealing with the Past: The Method of Experiential Learning in Building Sustainable Peace

In addition to the importance of education enriched with quality textbooks, participatory and engaging educational methods and safe environments for learning ways and facts to deal with the past, a method of experiential learning creates an enormous personal and collective space for the process of recovery, reflection and “*remembrance for the future*” that gives us deep insights. So far, experiential learning has shown its extensive educational, learning and empowering role and, contrary to its advantages, has been highly neglected within Croatian educational practice. On the other hand, non-formal educational programmes in Croatia often use this method, giving added value to the processes of learning. The examples the author refers to are consultations with youths on dealing with the past¹ and the Human Rights School project organised in several post-Yugoslav countries².

This article reflects on the importance of learning history and historical facts together with the understanding of war narratives. It reflects the need for in-depth dealing with the past on a personal and social level, the importance of dealing with the past for new generations and the method of experiential learning by reflecting on past experiences through the introduction of different perspectives of personal and collective actions of responsibility, such as preventing new conflicts and mak-

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- 1 Regional (Western Balkans), national and local (Croatia) consultations on dealing with the past with youths are processes which have been run for 4 years by Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past (www.documenta.hr), Croatian Youth Network (www.mmh.hr), Centre for Peace Studies (www.cms.hr), Youth Initiative for Human Rights (www.yihr.org) and the Association Legalis (www.legalis.hr). Consultations were undertaken to support ideas of the Coalition for RECOM which advocated establishing a Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia in the period from 1991 to 2011 (www.zarekom.org).
 - 2 Human Rights Schools is part of the regional (*Western Balkans*) project Education for Human Rights and Active Citizenship taking place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. In Croatia, the project has so far been run by the Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Association Legalis and recently by the Centre for Peace Studies (www.cms.hr). Human Rights Schools have been implemented together with Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past (www.documenta.hr).

ing further steps towards healing the society. The article is based on the author's experience in the area of peacebuilding, youth development and dealing with the past in Croatia.

Two main questions that the article poses are:

1. Why is dealing with the past relevant for new generations?
2. What is the role of experiential learning in dealing with the past?

Dealing with the past for a different future

Dealing with the past refers to a process of going through a violent history and reaching the potential of social healing. Dealing with the past requires a certain time and place on different levels: individuals going through memories and questioning personal responsibility, dealing with the past in local communities, at an institutional level and for the entire society (Kardov, Lalić and Teršelič, 2010:14). Approaches to dealing with the past focus on all social groups, but one of the most repeated ratios for complex multi-layered and multi-level dealing with the past processes is the birth of a new generation. The lives of youths who will understand history, change the present and better influence the future.

“When they turn 15 or 16, they have a perfectly designed ideology based on little information, based on what a member of the family said and what they saw in the street. This is how they form attitudes.”

Ivan Kešić, Civitas, Bosnia and Herzegovina;
National consultations with youths on dealing with the past;
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2007³

The perspective of dealing with the past for young generations often means a building of the future by young generations. The focus of our attention is the responsibility of young generations to do so. Responsibility for understanding, changing and influencing. Responsibility for a better future built on historical experiences. On reading the experiences of different social actors in dealing with the past processes, there are at least 3 levels of responsibility that young persons have.

The first level of responsibility is the way new generations will lead their lives, communities and states. In short, new generations are responsible for politics that will be created today and in the future, as a preventive mechanism against potential armed conflicts and a constructive mechanism for citizens' participation, the

3 Quotations of participants in the consultations were taken from the booklet *“Mladi i prošlost – zašto bi me to zanimalo?”* (reference in Bibliography).

protection of human rights and freedom as well as quality education for younger generations.

The second level of responsibility reflects the relation to historical facts and narratives. Young generations are expected to understand historical facts and historical narratives. They are expected to retell and transpose stories and experiences of their grandparents in a proper way.

The third type of responsibility that new generations need to create is their attitudes towards war crimes and the major consequences of armed conflicts, which is an attitude of non-repetition. Those attitudes need to be created towards war crimes that were often committed on their behalf.

“Young generations are not responsible for war damages hundreds of thousands of people have survived in current post-Yugoslav countries. We need some kind of an open discussion on this issue, on what would be sincere motives for taking the responsibility for dealing with a past they did not live through.”

Marina Škrabalo, Centre for Peace Studies, Croatia;
National consultations with youths on dealing with the past;
Zagreb, Croatia, 2007

Young generations are perceived as generators of change, especially with regards to the meaning of the truth/facts and creating a just environment. Society has placed great expectations on youths for future development. In fact, the real process of dealing with the past starts with grandchildren questioning their heritage and the structures around them.

A quality educational process can stimulate the comprehensive and empowering process of dealing with the past, whereby young generations can produce certain steps towards a more just and safer society. Formal, non-formal and informal education play an important role in every person's life and give an added value to the facts, situations and processes that surround us. Education of any kind provides a public place for developing a culture of memory, for retelling and deconstructing historical narratives as well as for learning facts. It enriches the perception of history from below. (Schimpf-Herken, 2004). The school as a public place has to ensure that remembering and a critical approach towards history can take place. The teachers as representatives of different sectors of society can foster an open exchange of different points of view. Dialogical pedagogy and participatory methods of exchanging experiences and project-oriented learning can help the students to express their fears and traumas (Schimpf-Herken, 2004).

“Education is enormously important and topics, such as dealing with the past and human rights, need to find their place in schools and mass media due to their effect on socialisation.”

Mario Mažić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Croatia;
Regional consultations with youths on dealing with the past;
Belgrade, Serbia, 2007

In addition to historical education that covers historical facts and narratives through engaging educational methods and preserving a culture of memory, it is highly relevant to develop civic or political education into all kinds of education at all levels in different forms. Civic education deals with attitudes, critical thinking, reflection, experiences, skills and competencies often lacking in traditional educational approaches and learning methods. Civic education includes an approach to human rights protection by introducing principles *for human rights*, living in diversity and developing multiculturalism and interculturalism, developing political literacy and political participation, and empowerment for peace and non-violence.⁴ By horizontally permeating through all the components of civic education, we recognise that learning on how to deal with the past is a necessary category and process.

Educating on how to deal with the past is a very sensitive issue. However, dealing with the past supported by the educational process creates different and new perspectives for younger generations. It recognises the importance of questioning personal feelings and attitudes as well as the memories and experiences of others, understanding different expectations and perspectives of future justice, safety and peace.

Croatian youths facing the past through experience sharing

Questioning personal feelings and sharing experiences has been one of the most important ways of facing historical heritage for Croatian youths. Many of the social issues that youths face today in Croatia are direct consequences of war activities within Croatia and the broader region. The beginning of the 1990s has led to radical changes among the Croatian youths and those living in the regions of the Western Balkans with the disintegration of Yugoslavia followed by violent armed conflicts all around the region, specifically across and within the borders of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo. More than a decade of

⁴ The Council of Europe recognises education for democratic citizenship and human rights composed of four mentioned components.

violence in the region of ex-Yugoslav countries left many atrocities: more than 130,000 were killed,⁵ more than 18,000 persons went missing,⁶ more than a million refugees fled their homes. Many young lives were lost, many young lives have significantly changed. Croatia's development of the democratic society and state is burdened with the history of one of the most ruinous wars of our current time.

Croatian society and young generations still strongly feel war narratives and their heritage. The burden to be carried by youths and coming generations has been rather heavy and overwhelmed with war history, war crimes, atrocities and material losses, etc. Croatian society wants long for needs social recovery and a huge democratisation process. The same necessity is strongly present among the young who wish to overcome traditional patterns and to create a new, safer and inclusive environment.

Going through burdens of historical heritage requires systematic approaches through educational processes on formal, non-formal and informal levels. Educational approaches using experiential learning focus on experience as the source of learning and development. The experiential learning theory combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour through a holistic integrative approach. Our knowledge is actually continuously derived from our experiences (Kolb, 1984: 10, 20, 21).

Experience has a much bigger role in our lives and in our education than we usually think. Formally, experiential learning as a pedagogical method has not been widely used within the traditional Croatian educational system. The structure of education still relies on a non-participatory method based on cognitive and behavioural aspects. Experience as a way of learning has not been used extensively in non-formal educational programmes in general, except in those dealing with the past, peace and non-violence mostly run by activists, trainers, educators and youth workers. Some programmes are also run by civil society and community groups.

Croatian non-formal educational programmes dealing with the history/past, peace and development and non-violent action pay much more attention to value-based education and take it to the personal level of understanding one's ability and responsibility in dealing with serious issues and finding ways of solving them. Many of those programmes are tailored for youths, starting from pupils and students through to young citizens via Lifelong Learning programmes.

5 Figures were estimated by Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past from Croatia, Bosnian Research and Documentation Centre and Serbian Humanitarian Law Centre.

6 Estimation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Experience from working with youths by using methods of experiential learning in dealing with the past has been an enriching experience and it enables perspectives to be developed at many levels such as:

- ▶ personal questioning and reflection
- ▶ sharing experiences
- ▶ group benefits from connecting different experiences
- ▶ exploring and discovering
- ▶ taking responsibility and feeling empowerment.

Kolb's cycle of experiential learning consists of sharing the concrete experience, meaning practical experiences (as opposed to a theoretical structure and knowledge), reflective observation i.e. giving real meaning to the one who experienced something, abstract conceptualisation referring to developing general principles and applying theory to the experience, and active experimentation through testing principles in practice. Within this cycle, new concepts are being tested and modified as a result of reflection, abstract conceptualisation and further examination (Kolb, 1984).



Image by Karin Kirk

The Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) is a pedagogical tool to engage learners and is based on David Kolb's (1984) classic model.*

Through educational programmes, such as the Human Rights School, and consultations with youths on dealing with the past (as previously mentioned), the starting point is understanding and realising why youths need to care about past events and their causes, challenged with personal and group views and experiences. In this stage, many people feel they are knowledgeable enough to understand the process of dealing with the past, although many of them deny the importance of knowing

historical facts, past events and experiences. Some of them, however, believe in their present and future role and feel ready to share their concrete experiences and feelings (often followed by pain and shame).

Young person 1: *“My father was a soldier. I have never asked him what his role was and he never spoke about it. But I want to know. I feel glad I can share my personal story. I feel people need it.”*

The second step includes introducing terms, facts, and concepts by presenting different personal, social and political experiences. In this phase, the majority of young persons realise their lack of knowledge of facts, narratives, perceptions and interpretations of war experience. This is where they find out about manipulation and distortion of the “truth”. Furthermore, they hear living persons’ experiences of violence, displacement or fleeing as well as personal and material losses. Here starts the process of questioning and reflecting on what was presented and heard.

Young person 2: *“I am most affected by personal stories I heard and memories that have been shared. This gave wars and conflict completely another dimension.”*

Young person 3: *“When you know more, you are more aware of certain things. You feel more hurt by some of the things you hear. Today, I realise how people were manipulated. The war did not start on a specific date; rather it was a process. Every conflict starts with minor human rights violations such as prohibiting using Cyrillic script. War memories are tough, but I feel appreciative for hearing them. I want to do something now, I want to participate in some actions, I want to make a change.”*

Through the final phase, participants think about some general principles they would like to apply in their surroundings. They claim that the process of determining facts and seeking the truth on war conflicts is of high importance to young generations (living in ex-Yugoslav countries) because youths have the right to know the truth and learn objective, unbiased perceptions. Young persons deserve to have quality knowledge of their own past and history to prevent new war crimes, discrimination and prejudice. The truth related to fact finding and experience sharing is of utmost importance for the entire population. It gives them the opportunity of living together, acceptance and reconciliation.

Young person 4: *“The truth is so relevant to the present in order to have a future. We can influence our present and our future. We do not deserve a distorted picture of history. It does not enable us to develop. We need to stop supporting war criminals like they are national heroes. We need to combat nationalism and*

building borders. We do not want new political manipulations. I want to live in a society without prejudice, discrimination, hate and violence.”

The final step of an individual and group active experiment in a community/society usually happens immediately after the aforementioned process due to fresh knowledge, sensitivity and motivation, through civic initiatives, school projects, student research, youth groups as well as local, national and international exchanges and projects. At the end of the 1990s, a respectable number of local youth groups emerged dealing with socio-political issues that were direct war consequences. Some of them still work today and new initiatives have been emerging. Participants in the educational projects and consultations mentioned earlier have been largely included in local projects and campaigns dealing with the past and its heritage.

Instead of a conclusion

The method of experiential learning used for education in dealing with the past questions develops peoples' attitudes, stimulates a more complex understanding of certain situations and encourages a concrete ability of applying insights to new situations.

One of the participants would say:

“I feel things are so clear sometimes, yet other times I am full of contrary feelings. I have had feelings of respect and gratitude in a silence towards those who lost their lives. I felt proud and furious at the same time because people do not respect their own past and human losses. People were manipulated and it feels scary. I have a feeling that the only way of fighting this kind of violence is through education, even though I do not know if it is realistic. It is terribly hard to hear of war crimes and war criminals with medals of national heroes. It is hard to step in the shoes of victims, even for a short while. I felt vulnerable and insecure. What if it happens tomorrow? We need more education and more chances to talk about our experiences.”

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