

# Designing Transformation and Intervention Processes

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## 1. Introduction

Most of the problems commonly encountered in designing intervention processes centre, in principle, around one question, „Which actor can intervene with which strategies and instruments, and at what time in any particular situation of conflict?“ Scholars and practitioners have sought to answer this question by employing a single page graphic matrix depicting an intervention framework.

Reality is different. Similar to other interventions in crisis areas, peace interventions are not planned from an overall matrix by multiple actors, but usually by a single actor through intuition and rule of thumb. Possibilities of how to intervene are, therefore, directly related to the options and limits of the intervening actors in relation to a particular conflict situation.

Issues such as intervention strategies, entry points or coordination are, in reality, practised in different ways. Actors seldom even ask what are the right strategies or instruments; rather, they have developed their own ready-made intervention design. For example, scholars tend to propose instruments such as problem-solving workshops or mediation training; development agencies initiate projects to deal with the root causes of conflict; journalists support media programmes and governmental Track I actors provide good offices, facilitation or mediation. It is more accurate to talk about a market situation, with the intervening actors on the supply side, and each offering their own particular ‚product‘. This supply of instruments is sometimes so rich that it far outstrips the demand.

Entry points are, in practice, less often matters for discussion than given facts. Conflict actors come from a variety of constituencies and will naturally tend to support ‚their‘ constituency in the crisis regions: peace actors support local peace groups; church organisations assist their local churches. Entry points can also occur by chance as in the case of the Norwegian mediation in the Middle East, in which the participants of a Norwegian research project had access to the leadership level on both sides and where one of the researcher happened to be the wife of the Norwegian Foreign Minister, who then initiated negotiations on the Track I level.

Coordination tends, in general, to be a theoretical issue. Every intervening actor wants coordination but nobody wants to be coordinated! This is especially applicable to peace intervenors, who are particularly sensitive about sharing information with other actors and often have vested interests that are sometimes not even compatible with the overall objective of conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

However – scepticism aside – within the last ten years, both scholars and practitioners have learned much from many different peace interventions. In this chapter, the author focuses on a set of lessons that form conditions for intervention in the field of conflict transformation. Since intervention strategies vary between actors, it should be noted that the parameters and conditions introduced and analysed in this article are primarily addressed to non-governmental actors such as conflict resolution non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or action-oriented research institutes. Nevertheless, many of the parameters will also be of general interest to other intervening actors.

The chapter presents a variety of approaches and instruments used in the external planning of civilian peace interventions, taking into consideration that outside intervening actors‘ role is to support actors from within the conflict region. On three different levels of intervention: *macro (top-*

level), *meso* (mid-level) and *micro* (grassroots), the author discusses ten critical issues: the need for vision, goals and commitment; methods of analysing conflicts and actors; strategies and roles of intervening actors; the ongoing search for right partners and entry points; timing interventions; thinking in processes and building structures; criteria for the recruitment of field staff; coordination and cooperation; the inclusion of the goals of sustainability and building learning into the process of interventions.

The set of conditions for interventions developed in this article synthesise insights found in the literature with the author's own practical field experience, as well as lessons from the handbook *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide* (Paffenholz and Reychler 2000) and from the study on the Life and Peace Institute's (LPI) peacebuilding involvement in Somalia (Paffenholz 2001).

## 2. Conditions and Parameters for Good Intervention Design

### 2.1 Visions, goals and commitment

Before practitioners attempt to develop conflict transformation/intervention strategies, they would be well advised to take a closer look at the underlying vision supporting the stated wishes and needs to intervene. When intervening actors lack a clear vision of a peaceful outcome, they usually run the risk that their intervention will be determined by the market of suppliers, rather than by the demand side or real needs of the region in conflict. Operating from a genuine commitment for peace and conflict transformation increases the chance that the intervention will minimise harm and eventually facilitate effective processes that will lead to constructive conflict transformation.

However, vision alone is insufficient: intervening actors must also turn their visions into operational and achievable goals that can then form the basis for the development of effective intervention strategies. Goals are best clarified through analysing an intervening actor's/institution's capacities and limits, values and interests, as applied to the relevant problems and needs for conflict transformation. While goals must be clear, the strategies employed to reach these goals can vary and will most likely be adapted or modified during the process of conflict transformation.

The roles of the different actors within the Somali peace process, for example, clearly demonstrate the value of clear vision and commitment for any effort in peacebuilding and conflict transformation. While the United Nations (UN) and, later, other bilateral governmental actors (Track I) tried unsuccessfully to mediate various peace agreements among the warlords, the parallel work of the Swedish church-based NGO, LPI, had a far greater impact on peacebuilding in Somalia. During the course of the last eight years, LPI has effectively empowered many different Somali civil society groups and grassroots communities (Paffenholz 2001).

The strength of LPI's involvement in Somalia lay in the vision which was the driving force behind all strategies employed. The evident commitment of the entire LPI staff, and the strongly held belief in the bottom-up, community-based peacebuilding approach, eventually helped to overcome all the difficulties encountered in the process. For example, LPI had initially supported the establishment of District Councils, which had been quite successful in southern Somalia. These collapsed, however, as soon as the warring faction of Aideed intervened militarily in the area. While the UN withdrew from the region, LPI continued its efforts. LPI had further supported local reconciliation in the northwest of Somalia: Somaliland. Even when war broke out in 1994, LPI continued to believe in the ability of Somaliland society to achieve reconciliation and was among the first to support the peace process when it continued, while all other external actors stayed away.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/home.htm>

**Box 1: LPI's Vision**

The basic philosophy of LPI's approach to peacebuilding can be characterised as follows:

- Sustainable peacebuilding is a long-term process that can only be achieved from within the society in conflict;
- Sustainable peacebuilding is a process that involves the entire society and not only the elite;
- Sustainable peacebuilding will lead to a process of conflict transformation: the transformation of a culture of violence into a culture of peace;
- Sustainable peacebuilding must start at the local community level.

In order to make a meaningful contribution to sustainable peacebuilding, LPI has developed a two-fold approach, terming it „bottom-up peacebuilding“ or „community-based peacebuilding“. Within this approach, LPI defines its own role as that of an external facilitator with the aims to:

- strengthen the role of civil society actors during peace processes in a way that they are able to make a meaningful contribution to peacebuilding in their region;
- inculcate the philosophy of people-based sustainable peacebuilding throughout all levels of society.

**2.2 Analysing conflicts and actors**

Like all social phenomena, conflicts tend to be extremely complicated. In addition to the already complex parameters inherent in any interpersonal conflict, the many actors and issues that characterise armed conflict are even more difficult to understand (Wehr 1979). It is therefore crucial that intervening actors work to understand the particular conflict setting.

There are different approaches for analysing conflicts. These strategies and tools can be distinguished between academic and practical, quantitative and qualitative, and participatory and non-participatory methodologies, as seen at all three levels of analysis (macro, meso and micro).

**(i) Macro level:** This level is dominated by the more academic approaches to the analysis of conflicts and actors. Here, a more general approach is taken to the definition of crisis indicators that has been developed within early warning systems and was then taken up by the aid community. These crisis indicators categorise countries into „high“, „low“ and „no risk“, so that aid agencies can then better adapt their instruments and information needs to the particular conflict situation (*see Spelten 1999*).

Other general analytical approaches recently developed within the aid community have combined the established instruments of development cooperation, such as participatory rapid appraisals, with classical conflict analysis (Mehler and Ribeaux 1999). A good example of an approach that links general causes of conflict with intervening activities is the European Union (EU) Guide *Peace-Building and Conflict Prevention: A Practical Guide* (Lund and Mehler 1999).

A more academic approach to conflict analysis is the „conflict mapping“ guide originally developed by Paul Wehr (1979). This guide emphasises five aspects that should be properly considered in any effective conflict analysis: conflict history, conflict context, conflict parties, conflict issues, conflict dynamics. A shorthand version of conflict mapping produces a visualised qualitative analysis of the actors and their relationships with each other.

For such a visualised qualitative analysis, mappers gather information about the conflict context, parties and causes. Such a mapping exercise can be performed both from an academic and also a participatory perspective on all the different levels of conflict, from a general review of the

overall situation to a deeper analysis of the values, interests or needs of the conflicting parties (*see* Wehr 1978). This technique is particularly helpful as practitioners seek to simplify and understand the complex nature of group conflicts.

John Paul Lederach has developed a similar approach, more focused on understanding the actors involved in armed conflict. He provides an actor analysis that distinguishes between levels of leadership in conflict areas, differentiating top- from mid-range from grassroots leaders. He suggests analysing possible or existing peace actors within the same matrix, and then presents corresponding intervention strategies (Lederach 1997). This type of mapping is particularly useful for external intervening actors as it opens their view for internal peace actors.

The most elaborate approaches to conflict analysis are found in the field of 'early warning'. Scholars differentiate between qualitative and quantitative approaches to conflict analysis. Classically qualitative analysis looks into the root and proximate causes of a particular conflict, also analysing positive and negative intervening factors. The crucial issue for this kind of analysis concerns information gathering. Information can be obtained from international and local experts, the media and the Internet, news agencies or from scientific publications that provide the basis for qualitative analysis. Participatory analysis may also be employed: either researchers present their analysis to an audience of experts from both outside and within the conflict area or the analysis takes a joint identification of causes of conflict as a starting point. The selection of participants is crucial for participatory analysis. This methodology can be used on all levels of analysis.

Quantitative approaches to conflict analysis, such as 'event data analysis', work instead with the coding of world-wide news wire reports, employing a data lens that is sensitive to both non-violent and violent struggle, and general information that can be used for early warning. The coding is performed manually or automatically by specially developed software. This can be exemplified through the work of the American firm Virtual Research Associates (VRA) who have developed 'Automated Event Data Development Tools' that are used by different early warning mechanisms.

The *Frühanalyse von Spannungen und Tatsachenermittlung* (FAST) early warning project of the Swiss Peace Foundation, for example, combines both qualitative and quantitative as well as participatory approaches for conflict analysis (*see* Krummenacher and Schmeidl, 1999). FAST follows a traditional qualitative analysis but further monitors and analyses early action intervening factors using an analytical framework that has been specially developed for each country monitored. This entire system is then further enriched by manual and automatic coding to produce an event data analysis, as well as by the views of local and international expert networks consulted to verify the results of both the qualitative and quantitative analyses.

**(ii) Meso level:** Most of the approaches illustrated above can also be employed at the meso level. Especially qualitative and/or participatory conflict mappings and quantitative methods, such as used by VRA, are appropriate here. However, VRA techniques have, to date, not been used at the regional and local level. As a response, it is envisaged within the FAST project to use these methods at both of these levels within specific countries.

A number of specific approaches to conflict analysis have been developed at this level of intervention. Two of the most notable are the action-oriented research methodology of the War-torn Societies Project (WSP) and the community development approach expanded by the NGO *Aktion Afrika Hilfe e.V.* (AAH) (*see* Erasmus 2000). Under the WSP approach, relevant information is gathered by means of research and participatory workshops, thereby combining academic and practical methodologies. AAH represents a more practical approach and combines participatory approaches drawn from development cooperation with process-oriented methodologies developed

by social scientists in order to produce a joint (external actors together with local partners) participatory analysis of conflict.

**(iii) Micro level:** Conflict and actor mappings are also extremely useful on the local/project level of intervention, especially when implemented in a participatory manner. Many of the analytical tools developed within the AAH approach will also find effective application at this local level of project intervention. Moreover, it is of less importance to know which exact approaches and methodologies are being used, as long as they are process-oriented and participatory. Sometimes, even a combination of methodologies developed in different fields can serve as an effective tool for the analysis of conflicts and actors.

A good example of this is Project Cycle Management (PCM), which combines several different process-oriented and participatory approaches. PCM is a modified and enlarged logical framework approach based on the German *Zielgruppen-orientierte Projektplanung* (ZOPP), which was originally developed as a guide for the gathering of information for the planning of aid interventions on both the programme and project levels (*see* Information, Training and Development Ltd 1999). Both PCM and ZOPP start with a participatory problem analysis using paper cards (one for each problem), followed by a clustering of the problems. In a second step, the problems are then turned into objectives and further clustered before project intervention strategies are developed. The elaborate tools of PCM and ZOPP can be put to effective use for conflict analysis. Actor analysis is best conducted with an enlarged stakeholder analysis as part of a properly implemented PCM exercise.

The main shortcoming of integrated PCM/ZOPP conflict analysis is the lack of developed tools that can be implemented in practice. However, aid agencies are beginning a process of research to address this need.

### 2.3 Strategies and roles

By itself, vision will not guarantee success. Intervening actors must succeed in turning their visions into effective operational intervention strategies. While their goals need to remain clear, strategies developed in the pursuit of these goals can vary and be adapted or modified during the process of conflict transformation.

From the very beginning of an intervention, actors should clearly understand their role in the process. External actors must recognise that their role as outsiders is limited, and that their effectiveness will depend on the degree to which they manage to support internal actors.

Strategies to strengthen internal actors need to be developed. Experience shows the need for a combination of a set of strategies with a flexible adaptation to the situation. Practitioners must judge whether it is best to engage in facilitation or mediation, to offer training or capacity building, to organise problem-solving workshops or just to fund local peace efforts. This will depend not only on an organisation's capacity, but also on the needs of the particular peace process and which local actors are involved. While the LPI, for example, implemented a set of strategies in Somalia such as grassroots training, capacity building for local administrative structures as well as advocacy and support to local reconciliation conferences, the Italian NGO, Community San Egidio's engagement in the Mozambique peace process concentrated instead on mediation and facilitation between the main conflict parties (*see* Paffenholz 2000a).

Furthermore, it is necessary for external organisations to avoid conflicting strategies. For example, while long-term democratisation projects can often be in discord with short-term crisis prevention measures, the support of a direct peace project such as a peace radio can be well positioned along side support of a local human rights centre.

Practitioners should also clarify the limits of their organisation prior to engaging in new strategies. A critical analysis of LPI's strategies employed in Somalia show that LPI was sometimes driven too much by external developments than guided by an adequate reflection of its own capacities. At other times, LPI focused excessively on the implementation of specific strategies such as training, thus neglecting the pursuit of other important tasks. Consequently, it is crucial to always remain aware of the entire set of strategies that an organisation requires and with which it can cope in order to then implement the most appropriate approach.

There are several essential elements: clear vision; the development of appropriate strategies and the transparent and cohesive definition of an organisation's role in the process. Nevertheless, this should never compromise the concurrent need for flexibility: practitioners must constantly adapt strategies and roles to meet new developments. The challenge is to find the optimal combination of clear strategies and instruments and a flexible way to implement and adapt them to the process.

## 2.4 Finding the right partners and entry points

Finding the right partners and entry points are two issues that are closely intertwined. Often partners determine entry points and even strategies. Some partners are „natural, some are selected and some are a combination of both. Governmental Track I actors and large donors usually enjoy easier access to a wide variety of actors in the conflict arena, whereas non-governmental Track II actors often only have access to their particular constituency or to the host that invited them (Paffenholz 2000a). Obviously, third parties working on the macro level must work directly with representatives of the main parties to the conflict, while actors working on the meso level and micro level will have a much broader spectrum of partners from which to choose. The following two considerations apply mainly to this latter group of actors.

First, the strengths and weaknesses of all potential partners need to be analysed. While some partners have few resources, others may lack capacity or strategic options. Others differ in their perceived legitimacy in the eyes of the conflict parties. These assets and liabilities must be carefully considered when assessing candidates partner for partnership (CIAA 2000).

Second, a good relationship between the external and the internal partners is absolutely essential to the success of any intervention. Usually, the local partner will accept the intervention strategy of outside partners simply because they are in need of the resources. In all cases, both sides need to be clear about their respective interests and values (Mott Foundation 1999).

**(i) Donors:** Often, donors do not support local peace actors directly, but rather provide assistance through international organisations such as UN agencies, NGOs, church-based or action-oriented-research organisations. These external UN agencies or NGOs function as gatekeepers or facilitators between the external donor and the internal actors; often, the external NGO is the only party personally visible to the internal actors. External donors can, of course, also directly support internal actors; many Western embassies, for instance, directly fund smaller local project in conflict areas. The norm, however, is for larger projects to be supported through international NGOs or UN agencies.

For international NGOs, it is crucial to work with the right donor. These NGOs or research institutes usually function most efficiently when they receive basic funding for the organisation's headquarters and core operations, supplemented by unconnected flexible funding for conflict transformation and peacebuilding projects.

The EU as a donor, for example, provides funds for European NGOs working in crisis areas. The complicated funding procedures and payment delays, which are inherent in the ungainly

bureaucratic apparatus of the EU, make it extremely difficult for EU-funded peace NGOs to address the needs of local peace constituencies in a flexible and timely manner. Often, individual governmental donors are better able to adapt their funding to the needs of the situation. This is even more efficient, when there is sufficient trust between the donor and the international NGO, as well as a shared vision.

**(ii) External actors:** External Track I actors, are usually UN agencies, UN missions, and regional organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) or individual states. External Track II or III actors, are usually international peace organisations as well as development NGOs, action-oriented research institutes or church-based organisations. These actors usually work as gatekeepers, facilitating communication between external donors and local peace actors. While they are helpful in selecting and supporting local partners, they can also bar the way, effectively preventing the local partner from direct interaction with the donor. However, the facilitation role of international NGOs is often necessary, as direct communication with external donors is frequently problematic for local partners due to the complicated procedures and differing project cultures.

Moreover, external intervening actors who operate with a process-oriented conflict transformation approach can only be reliable partners for internal actors if they also practise what they preach. Thus, they must also demonstrate the philosophy of their peacebuilding approach within their own organisation. If this is not the case, civil society representatives working with them will soon realise this and cease to take them seriously.

**(iii) local partners:** The difficult question for most external intervenors seeking to support internal peace actors is whom would it be best to support. Most international NGOs or research institutes tend to link up with the people and organisations within the conflict region that belong to their own constituency. Thus, church-based organisations will support local churches while research institutes tend to work with the academic elite.

Often other criteria also play a role. Local people are chosen, for instance, simply because they can communicate in the language of the intervenor and are able to cope with a Western way of thinking. This is definitely dangerous, as it is often precisely these people who prevent intervenors from accessing many important local constituencies. The educated, smart urban elite frequently function as gatekeepers determining who will talk to whom. Special attentions should therefore be given to reducing the influence of these local gatekeepers.

How, then, should local partners be selected? Experience of the last years has shown that certain groups are particularly well suited for effectively negotiating the challenges of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. On the Track I level, one can work with actors who either maintain close links to the main conflict parties or even from within the conflict parties, engaging them in facilitation efforts, dialogue projects or conflict resolution workshops. On the Track II and III levels, the most interesting actors are local peace and human rights groups, women's peace and advocacy groups, traditional authorities, churches, the media, professional organisations and often the local business community or particularly well-known or well-connected individuals.

Different instruments can be useful in the intervenors' efforts to identify such groups. For instance, an external analysis of existing and potential groups can deliver useful information. Such a study can be then combined with a participatory peace actor inventory compiled on the ground.

Usually, the best way to select people and organisations is to leave the selection to them. One method of selection is simply to make inquiries of those involved in a particular intervention area, asking them who are the relevant actors and which would they recommend inviting for a planning exercise. This questioning is often the beginning of a process that has intrinsic value and

that maximises ownership for all involved. Ron Kraybill has suggested a useful set of questions and methodologies for such a process design on the micro level of intervention (*see* contribution of Ron Kraybill in this volume).

As soon as groups have been identified, the following selection criteria should be applied with priority given to local groups. Groups should:

- support peaceful conflict transformation;
- operate within the country;
- demonstrate self-initiative;
- express a willingness to make a substantive contribution to project work;
- represent the entire spectrum of society (multi-ethnic and gender-balanced);
- maintain independence from governments;
- adhere to fundamental democratic rules.

Criteria for the selection of local partners should also be consistent with an institution's own principles. Experience shows that working with like-minded organisations proves to be effective.

However, what can be done if there are no relevant internal actors in place who could be supported? Usually, the concept of empowering civil society assumes that it is pre-existing and partially organised. Nevertheless, the Somalia situation once again shows that support to civil society is possible even without organised groups in place.

When the LPI began its Somali engagement in 1992, there were no existing local groups that fulfilled the above criteria. As a result, LPI chose to implement its programme by training their own trainers, while at the same time supporting individual activists and larger groups, belonging to categories such as teachers or artists, although not yet well organised. This had several beneficial effects: non-clan and group based individuals could come together. The mere bringing together of all these different people proved to be a reconciliation exercise in itself. LPI further discovered that the formation of groups could sometimes be facilitated through workshops. The largest success of this approach was the effective empowerment of many of these actors as seen, for instance, in the fact that more than fifty per cent of the delegates who gathered in Djibouti and formed a Somali 'government' in 1999 were trained by LPI.

## 2.5 Timing: the need for long-term engagement and windows of opportunity

Discussions about the effective timing of interventions take up a major portion of the literature on conflict transformation and peacebuilding. For many years, individuals have debated the issue of the 'ripeness' of conflicts for resolution, and discussed the corresponding need to time peace interventions according to this ripeness. Zartman and others argued that a peace intervention could only contribute to solving a conflict, if that conflict was ripe for resolution (Zartman 1989; Stedman 1991).

This concept of ripeness, and the debate it has provoked, has led most researchers to agree that, while the idea is helpful as it makes actors more aware of this need, its practical use is limited. This is because ripeness can usually only be analysed *ex post facto*, and is empirically very difficult to distinguish from the question of the success of outcomes. In the end, it becomes a tautology: if the conflict was not ripe, there was no chance for successful peace intervention; if peace intervention succeeded, then the conflict must have been ripe! (Kleiboer 1994). Moreover, by focusing overly on this concept of ripeness, external actors further run a risk that they will always remain inactive as they continue to wait for a ripe moment (Paffenholz 1998).

With the evolution of transformation and process-oriented approaches to peacebuilding, the concept of ripeness has lost importance for most scholars and practitioners. The focus has

shifted towards long-term engagement in order to establish sustainable structures for peacebuilding and conflict transformation through the existence of many different local and international interventions. As a consequence, long-term timeframes have now come to be thought of as the sum total of many different interventions at various times within an overall process. It is only through this shift that we can approach successful conflict transformation (Fitzduff 2000).

What does this mean for the concept of ripeness? The consensus is that, while ripeness is still a valid concept, it needs to be modified and adapted to the reality of modern peace interventions. First of all, the term 'ripe moments' (Zartman 1989) should be replaced by the term 'windows of opportunity'. For while the term moment implies a very short time frame and thereby limited opportunity for intervention, windows can be opened and closed and consequently reflect the reality that the chances for intervention come and go and must be continually monitored and analysed.

Furthermore, the concept of ripeness must be further adapted to the realities of modern, transformation-oriented approaches of peacebuilding. These have illustrated that peace intervenors dare not wait until a window is fully opened, as it may well then close before the actor is ready to intervene. Actors need to combine both a long-term engagement with an ongoing analysis of potential windows of opportunity. Only long-term involvement will enable actors to properly identify these windows of opportunity, and utilise them for peace interventions in a timely manner (Paffenholz 1998).

Practitioners have also found that there is often any number of windows of opportunity which might open and close before a conflict is transformed in a peaceful manner and before an official peace agreement is signed. In the end, windows of opportunity need to be seen as bricks in the wall of the house of peace. For example, the Norwegian mediation in the Middle East, now known as the Oslo Process, made effective use of such a window of opportunity that was identified by a Norwegian NGO and then supported by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. The latest developments in the region show that the Oslo Process utilised an important window, although much more is required if there is to be successful conflict transformation in this difficult part of the world.

## 2.6 Thinking in processes and building structures

The example of the Oslo Process also demonstrates the need to think in terms of long-term processes and to build structures that will establish the dynamics necessary for peaceful conflict transformation. The contribution of the Oslo Process was not so much linked to the peace agreement itself, but rather to the structures for peacebuilding that were established when the process was initiated.

Another example of processes and structures facilitating conflict transformation is the successful mediation with a wide variety of conflict actors in the process that led to the peacebuilding effort in Mozambique. A number of different Track I and II actors working together, both from outside and inside Mozambique, managed to establish mediation structures and a peace process on different levels of intervention that proved to be invaluable, especially at stages of the process that were marked by setbacks. The Mozambique process was also notable in that these structures continued to exist even after the agreement was signed in 1992 (Paffenholz 2000a). Since 1992, although there have been numerous violent threats on the local level, the conflict transformation structure established during the mediation process continues to ensure that none of the key parties seriously consider a return to war in Mozambique (Paffenholz 2000b).

These examples illustrate that effective conflict transformation requires the building of flexible but sustainable structures. This must be done on both the level of sustaining peace processes

through the establishment of these structures, as well as the macro level. Concerning the latter, Luc Reyhler (2000, p13) has proposed a set of four peace-enhancing structures that should be built around interventions:

*The first is of a political nature: it is the establishment of a consolidated democracy. Such a democracy consists of ten building blocks and internal and external support systems. The second structure necessary for the establishment of a sustainable peace is an effective, legitimate, and restorative justice system. The creation of a restorative justice system has been strongly promoted by Howard Zehr. The third structure that needs to be built is a social, free market system. The chances of establishing a sustainable peace are greater in a social, free market system than in a centralised or pure free market economic environment. Of greater importance are the privatisation process and the creation of a vibrant economic society. The fourth structure that needs attention is the education, information, and communication system. Here we look at the degree of schooling, the level of discrimination, the relevance of the subjects and the attitudes held, the control of the media, the professional level of the journalist, the extent to which the media play a positive role in the transformation of the conflicts, and the control of destructive rumours. Finally, structures are needed to cope with refugee problems in a satisfactory way.*

## 2.7 Getting the right people: qualification versus commitment

All of the levels of intervention will require personnel who are both qualified and committed: these two qualities, above all others, are essential for building peace (Mott Foundation 1999). Qualification alone will be insufficient to effectively master the difficult personal and professional challenges endemic to crisis regions; commitment, openness, flexibility and self-confidence by themselves will not be enough for an actor to make a meaningful contribution to the peacebuilding effort. The combination of these two qualities must be sought through rigorous training.

To find such people, a good field staff recruitment process is essential. This should include the provision of a comprehensive application form on which candidates can write about themselves, their motivation, commitment, experience, education and training, skills and qualifications. It should also insist upon feedback from relevant reference persons. A proper recruitment should further include individual interviews as well as a recruitment seminar (Kruhonja 2000).

### **Box 2: OSCE Mission Members – General Minimum Requirements**

OSCE applicants are required to possess the following minimum requirements in order to qualify for any OSCE field mission:

- Ability to work in English;
- Excellent physical condition;
- Possession of a valid driving licence and ability to drive using a manual transmission;
- Ability to operate Windows applications, including word processing and email;
- Demonstrated ability and willingness to work as a member of a team, with people of different cultural and religious backgrounds, different gender, and diverse political views, while maintaining impartiality and objectivity;
- Cultural sensitivity and judgement;
- Flexibility and ability to work under pressure and with limited time frames;
- Ability to cope with physical hardship and willingness to work extra hours and in an environment with limited infrastructure.

## Desirable:

- Previous international work experience and/or experience in field missions;
- Knowledge of other languages;
- Management and supervisory experience;
- Negotiation/mediation experiences.

Source: (OSCE 2000)

Nevertheless, it seems to be extremely difficult to find candidates who fulfil all the relevant criteria. Therefore, it is all the more necessary to recruit good teams, as, within a team, individual weaknesses can be compensated. Finding the dream-team rather than looking for the superwoman or superman seems to be the right approach. Far too often, the recruitment focuses excessively on professional qualifications; the importance of motivations is underestimated in many organisations. But experience shows, at least when working in crisis areas, that personality matters as individual limitations become, in effect, the limitations of what organisations can contribute to conflict transformation (Kramer 2001).

## 2.8 Cooperation and coordination: identifying strategic alliances for peacebuilding

The literature offers many insights around the themes of cooperation and coordination. On coordination, most practitioners and actors on all levels of intervention believe in its usefulness; however, in practice, coordination hardly ever works. Everybody wants to coordinate, but nobody wants to be coordinated!

Research findings confirm that only the existence of many different and multi-focused interventions will, over time, lead to a truly sustainable conflict transformation (Fitzduff 2000; Paffenholz 2000a). Nevertheless, these findings do not mention that coordination among all these different actors will give added value to the process. Moreover, this coordination will only be effective if certain preconditions are met. Most importantly, the objective of coordination must be clear and valued by every actor involved.

In most areas of violent conflict, there is either a peacekeeping mission already in place, or at least a number of external actors working to implement peace or relief aid projects. If there is a peacekeeping mission, it has usually established a coordination office. In these cases, it is crucial for NGOs to organise themselves into some type of strategic alliance in order to develop strategies for the best way to link up with the mission.

This is often not an easy task, as NGOs tend to have cultures of rivalry rather than cooperation. Here, the commitment to support peace and stability in a war zone must become the binding force overcoming confrontational behaviour on all sides. Usually NGOs have access to more in-depth information concerning the situation on the ground in different areas of a country compared to governmental organisations. Missions will usually seek to make use of this information for their own purposes. If Track I, II and III actors are to cooperate effectively, a clear definition of appropriate roles and behaviours is an essential precondition.

Well-organised NGOs will find that they can maximise their contribution to peaceful conflict transformation by taking certain basic steps. To promote effective coordination the first step might be the nomination of a leading actor. Second, organisations must enhance their internal coordination systems prior to engaging in external coordination efforts. Finally, organisations may find that it is better not to establish formal coordination mechanisms, but rather to rely on ad hoc

task forces designed for specific purposes.

In cases where there is no international mission in place, there are two different scenarios. Either the very few NGOs on site will engage in cooperation with each other out of recognition that this is the only way to establish some sort of working structure to support their operations, or the conflict area will have become so ‚popular‘ that a continually increasing number of NGOs will have been attracted to work there. This usually hinders good cooperation. Nevertheless, actors should engage in some form of coordination, even if it is only for the purpose of sharing information and security arrangements.

The best way to coordinate is through the creation of strategic alliances involving all relevant actors on all levels in order to establish a structure for the support of peace and conflict transformation. Due to the confrontational behaviour of many NGOs, to which reference has already been made, this is not an easy endeavour. In all too many conflict regions, coordination mechanisms will concentrate excessively on the security and humanitarian aspects of the conflict, leaving the peacebuilding considerations unaddressed.

The establishment of a structure in support of the peace process is therefore a very valid instrument. Ideally within such a structure, different tasks should be performed:

- registration of all involved external actors on the ground;
- dialogue between Track I, II and III actors;
- information sharing;
- dialogue on the potential for conflict transformation;
- division of labour;
- linking up with relevant internal actors;
- sidelining ‚the wrong guys‘ (both internal and external);
- support peacebuilding structures within the conflict situation.

Once again, the experience of the LPI in Somalia demonstrates the difficulty of coordination and cooperation. In the beginning of the process, LPI and the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) were engaged in a strategic partnership that contained all the difficult challenges of partnerships on all the different levels of intervention. This strategic alliance held the advantage for LPI that it could crucially influence the decision-making of the UN in Somalia, thereby contributing significantly to the overall peacebuilding effort. Nevertheless, the effort would have been even better served had LPI also found a way to form a similar strategic alliance with a set of NGO actors on the ground.

For LPI, this experience had two consequences. On the one hand, LPI became increasingly critical of any further effort to coordinate and cooperate with the growing circle of intervening actors. On the other hand, this scepticism had the positive effect that LPI, as an agent for the civil society, never grew tired of sending out warning signals geared to sideline the wrong guys as effective partners.

## 2.9 Making the process sustainable

The goal of sustainability needs to be incorporated into intervention design from the very beginning. Different strategies are required for different levels of intervention. On the macro-level, we can distinguish between short- and long-term interventions – for example concerning funding commitments. Short-term interventions, such as good offices, facilitation and mediation efforts, should build in sustainability as a criteria to be discussed (Paffenholz 1998). Moreover, actors on the macro level of intervention should develop an exit strategy prior to their engagement (CAII 2000).

This means, for instance, that external intervening actors must be prepared to leave the continuation of the intervention to local actors or to other external actors at the appropriate time. The process and not the involvement of the external actor must be sustainable!

It is also critical for donor agencies, on all levels of intervention, to ensure that the intervention can be sustained. There are two simple mechanisms that can help them to accomplish this. First, they should develop a joint activity plan, complete with built-in follow-up mechanisms, including the assignment of specific tasks to particular individuals who have assumed responsibility for implementation. Second, they should develop a built-in monitoring system that provides continual feedback to the constituency concerned. In order for trust to develop and for relationship building to succeed, the report-back mechanism will be essential. This further ensures ongoing ownership of the process by all parties, which is the best guarantee for sustainability.

For example, training programmes to empower civil societies in conflict areas are not sufficiently focusing on sustainability. This notion of empowering people is fundamentally right and powerful, but it must also include some sort of methodology aimed specifically at achieving sustainability. It is necessary to both believe in the long-term trickle-down effects of empowerment and, at the same time, to develop effective medium-term strategies for sustainability. Empowering people is the right approach, but if these processes are to be sustained, these people will also need sustainable structures. In the short- to mid-term, training can help. This can be achieved through the building of appropriate follow-up mechanisms that will guarantee a flexible response to the needs of local groups and that will eventually lead to the establishment of sustainable local structures for peaceful conflict transformation.

Another approach to make processes more sustainable is to support them by identifying suitable networking and collaboration partners. Nevertheless, there is no utility in cooperating for the sake of cooperation. On the contrary, coordination or collaboration should only be established if there is an added value for all partners involved. However, it is always necessary to elaborate the usefulness of strategic alliances in order to sustain programmes through supportive structures.

## 2.10 Building in learning mechanisms

Work in the field of conflict transformation or peacebuilding generates a great deal of knowledge. These lessons, however, are usually learned by individuals and not by organisations and institutions. As a result, when people leave an organisation, the lessons they have learned all too often disappear with them and must then be learned afresh by their successor. Evaluation units of large organisations have also a huge accumulation of knowledge but usually only learn from the individual case that they have evaluated. To date, little emphasis has been placed on the collective learning of organisations.

The new key-phrase is knowledge management. Despite similar methodologies for both, there is a difference between the management of learning and the wider concept of the management of knowledge.

It is essential to build in a learning process on all levels of intervention. While evaluations have long been a common tool for learning within the aid community, learning on the macro level has so far not been an integral part of the process of intervention. Instead, interventions on the macro level are often studied *ex post facto* by researchers, usually without a personal connection to the process. Despite the fact that learning is often part of programmes and projects, the lessons are usually not learned because they are not integrated into the ongoing process.

It is therefore advisable on all levels to combine intervention with research and expert capacity, conducting permanent self-evaluations (*see* Smillie and Helmich 1999), or at least designing some type of built-in reflection and discussion process. Another option would be to engage in a strategic alliance with partners who could manage the documentation and learning. It is not important how learning is accomplished; what matters is for the results to be permanently updated in writing and for all involved to gain a mutual understanding that learning is not just for the archives, but rather an integrated part of the process of intervention (*see* Paffenholz 2000b).

### 3. Open Questions and Challenges Ahead

In the last ten years, both the academic and the practitioner communities within the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation have learned much about the parameters and conditions for working more effectively in their field (*see* the contribution of Kevin Clements in this volume). In my observation, there are several open issues preventing actors from making sufficient use of this knowledge in their daily work.

First, there is still a significant information gap in regard to learning from lessons in other situations. The research community has analysed many different peace processes and thereby gained tremendous experience. Indeed, there is hardly an armed conflict that has not been studied. Many books have been written, offering a variety of conceptual approaches to peacebuilding and conflict transformation. What is still lacking, however, is systematic comprehensive research to bring all this knowledge together. It is high time for donors to fund such a large, comprehensive academic exercise.

Peace researchers have often articulated the need for greater information about positive examples in peacebuilding. Indeed, when working in different crisis areas, it is astonishing how many interesting, good examples we can find among local organisations. Unfortunately, hardly any of this knowledge is documented, which in turn prevents practitioners learning from these experiences. This is not only a challenge for research but also for the international donors and agencies funding such initiatives. It is time to think about new ways to properly integrate learning into all such projects.

Another reason why so many actors fail to sufficiently implement the findings of these lessons is the high degree to which they are interest driven. Unfortunately, these interests are often not compatible with the goal of peacebuilding. For example, NGOs sometimes realise that they are the wrong actor for the particular process in which they are engaged, but nevertheless stay on because they need to spend the money that has been allocated. Similarly, Track I actors are sometimes consumed by a desire to win the Nobel Peace Prize! Such actors have usually lost track of their original goal of making a constructive contribution to peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

Even if all the above-mentioned issues could be dealt with in a constructive manner, there would still be no guarantee that violent conflicts would be transformed more successfully and rapidly into peaceful settings. We must always bear in mind not only the complexity of conflicts but also the personal limitations that we all face, especially as external actors. This does not mean that we should not work hard on improving our practice. Rather, we should never forget that the internal actors from within the conflict areas are the ones who will finally determine the effective rules of conflict transformation. They are the only actors who can build a sustainable peace.

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