"If we can train people for war, we can train them for peace."

The Peace Zone movement as an alternative form to pacify ethnopolitical war and conflict.

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Abstract: The question of how long-lasting protracted armed conflict can be put to an end is of particular importance (not only) for the world's conflict regions. Yet recent research has shown that civil society movements like the Peace Zone movement can ensure a territorial and temporary peace. On this foundation Peacebuilding measures can be established, addressing issues and relationship problems fuelling the conflict. Doing that, Peace Zones create a shared identity uniting the conflicting parties and thereby lay the foundation for a mutual and peaceful future. The questions about the *preconditions* for the foundation of Peace Zones, the *methods* to establish, extend and empower them, their *effects* on the overall Peace process, and the role, motivation, methods and visions of *key persons* in this process have been thoroughly analyzed in a case study including regional and international literature as well as interviews with founders, members and operators of a prototype Peace Zone in Pikit, Philippines. The insights gained have been evaluated along a set of theories adapted to the special needs of ethnopolitical conflicts. They include Senghaas' Civilizatory Hexagon in order to identify whether key elements of Civilization are being addressed and Lederach's Framework for Peacebuilding to gain insights from a rather hands-on perspective. The additional use of Habermas' theory of Communicative Action to explain the success of these Peace Zones has proven to be very clarifying and opened new approaches for the scientific field of Peacebuilding.

Outline

Abbreviations

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DED	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (German Development Service)
f.	Following
ff.	Forth-following
GO	Governmental Organisation
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
MILF	Moro-Islamic-Liberation-Front (Muslim Rebel Group)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PO	People's Organisation

1 Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, conflicts and wars described as ethnopolitical have gained importance and are now, more than ever, dominating the landscape of international politics. Although they have decreased in number, their implications on the population are increasing, resulting in steadily growing numbers of civilian casualties and displacement (Marshall/Gurr 2005). Conflicting parties who describe themselves or are defined as motivated by ethnicity have a persistence and cost-tolerance that seems irrational to outsiders and make such conflicts hard to understand for those involved and those standing aside. But seldom the concept of ethnicity is questioned and its interactions with personal and social identity, history, politics and religion challenged. Seen in this context, ethnicity does no longer seem to be only a tool for political instrumentalisation, but a decisive part of the individual and social identity of millions of people worldwide. Such deeply rooted concepts can only be challenged by alternative ideas of identity that have the potential to develop comparatively strong bonds. Such options have to provide alternative or integrative forms of self-definition, holistic concepts of society and history and strong visions. Therefore they can not be imposed by Third Parties or some national Elites, but have to result from the needs and wishes of the very people they want to represent. If such alternative identities are deeply rooted in society, accepted by the population and influencing Elites, they can lay the foundation for the development of a society no longer ruled by ethnic tensions but by cooperation among multiple groups, sectors and co-operations organised along political perspectives, economical interests and social projects.

Such an alternative identity, and this forms the core argument of the following paper, can best be provided through social movements as grassroots initiatives, rooted in the population, providing the necessary motivation to transform identities and attract growing numbers of supporters. Therefore this paper starts by giving first insights into the special dynamics of ethnopolitical conflict. Further it moves on to present a social movement, which reached locally limited, but stable peace in some regions of protracted conflict: the Peace Zones in Mindanao, Southern Philippines. One of them will be evaluated, trying to show the potentials and limitations of this movement, combining different approaches of Habermas (Lifeword), Senghaas (Civilizatory Hexagon) and Lederach (integrated framework for Peacebuilding). Along this theoretical framework the approaches taken and their influence on individual, societal as well as political level will be described, trying to develop a better understanding of the dynamics inside the Peace Zones and their effects on the society and the peace process at large.

2 Background

Since centuries societies have developed codes of conduct during conflict, both for those inside the society and for those who are outsiders. Those range from Egyptian sanctuaries over medieval chivalric codes to the United Nations law of nations (Nan/Mitchell 2004: 159f). Some of them institutionalise geographic zones where fighting would cease (like churches, schools or mosques) or where certain people (like children, priests or doctors) would be immune from attack. These zones are of special use in regions, where protracted, intractable and violent conflict is present. Wishing to remain "uninvolved has been particularly acute in multi-ethnic societies, where ethnic minorities have found themselves caught up in a struggle that seems remote from their interests and way of life (…)" (Mitchell 2007: 16). Under such circumstances it seems more useful to initiate measures to mitigate conflict than to attempt to transform or resolve it from the very beginning (Mitchell/Nan 1997). As many of the Peace Zones developed in an environment best characterized as protracted ethnopolitical conflict, it is necessary to take a closer look at this special kind of conflict and the underlying concept of ethnicity later in this chapter.

2.1 The Peace Zone movement in the Philippines

Figure 1: Map of the Philippines and Mindanao in global context

The Peace Zone movement in the Philippines[1] which is the focus of this paper, can be described as a local movement with global ambition, trying to reach not only individual, but societal change by peaceful means. Peace Zones in the Philippines aim at enabling co-operation and reconciliation in private as well as the re-establishment of decision making and enforcing structures on local level. Filipino Peace Zones are of special interest, as the Peace Zone movement in the Philippines has constantly risen in importance and seems to be, with up to 80 and counting Peace Zones a unique example for the possibilities of this concept (Garcia 2004: 41)[2]. It further provides a model for similar undertakings in other countries (Avruch/Jose 2007: 24). These local Peace Zones are based upon the initiative of indigenous peoples "who saw themselves as very different from those engaged in waging the violent struggle and whose interests were not the same as those of the rival combatants" (Mitchell 2007: 24). On the one hand the long-lasting fighting led to a feeling of having one's back up against the wall, on the other hand the increasing awareness, supported by NGOs, that civil society can actually make a difference and force the conflicting parties to listen (Lee 2006: 9f) motivated civil society actors. In this context the Filipino Peace Zones are seen as an opportunity to live without armed conflict, to fight the causes of conflict, to promote local development and implement new methods of conflict resolution and thereby give the abstract concept of peace a concrete locality (Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute 1995: 2f). Therefore they are intended as multi-sectoral, bottom-up projects trying not only to reach negative peace, as well as to advance in terms of positive peace.

The Peace Zone of Nalapaan, which will be the focus of the following case study, stands as a unique example for the successful Peace Zones in Mindanao, Southern Philippines. This Peace Zone has been the starting point for the Space for Peace in Pikit that now encompasses seven Peace Zones, planning to include another five in 2008. As one of the first Peace Zones in Mindanao, it became a protoype Peace Zone and it's course of action a model for the foundation of many other Peace Zones (Ramos/Abinales 2004: 14).

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[1] Filipino Peace Zones are defined as „Peace Zones are geographical areas, ranging in size from the area covered by a purok or neighbourhood block to a province, which community residents themselves declare to be off-limits to war and any other form of armed hostility. The area becomes a Peace Zone by the people's unilateral declaration that it is such. Recognition of the Zone by the armed parties is an objective to be won and not the basis for its existence. Peace Zones are maintained and reinforced by the community's sustained and creative expressions of commitment to Peacebuilding, managed through community-based implementing structures." (Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute 1995: 5; Santos 2005: 35; Lee 2006: 5)

[2] Further Peace Zones that come close to the Filipino definition exist in Columbia, El Salvador and Bougainville.

2.2 Ethnopolitical conflicts

Ethnopolitical conflicts, such as the one in Mindanao usually are defined as conflicts, where at least one of the combating parties defines ethnicity as a central reason for conflict (Meyer 1997: 327f). Those conflicts are of high complexity, longlasting and combined with a high risk of escalation (Glasl 1994: 118; Nicklas 1997: 224; Dehdashti 2000: 163). When national systems of order break down, people fall back on ethnic or confessional identities that may exclude others, with whom they formally lived in harmony (Zartman 2007: 4). Such quasi-native categories are of high attraction, especially in times of unstable and fast changing environments (Esman 1990: 56ff). International pressure to establish a competitive, pluralist political and economic system may augment the problem, creating a new context of conflict that societies cannot handle productively (Zartman 2007: 4).

Different perspectives on ethnicity

Although the concept of ethnicity is used by many journalists, politicians or scholars as a facile explanation for societal conflict and war, its roots and implications are seldom questioned. The scientific discussion as to whether ethnicity is based on primordial factors and therefore biological reality, or only constructed and instrumentalised by political actors or somewhat in between, rarely enters popular scientific or political discussion. But still, the way in which we understand ethnicity forms the key to how we can change its often destructive influence. Its growing political and scientific importance as alternative sociological category in relation to religion, language or class results from a combination of cultural and territorial elements (Ganzer 1990: 4) and a self-definition of ethnic groups through inner coherence and outer differentiation (Cohen 1985). Based on this core concept, different points of view on ethnicity have developed, either emphasizing on primordial factors or constructed similarities[3].

The *primordialists*[4] see ethnicity as a reflection of the ancient differences in the origins of the people and therefore its boundaries as clearly given. To be a member of an ethnic group therefore is an inherent and natural phenomenon (Banton 2000: 482) based on the human tendency to connect with those who are similar (Tharoor 1999: 2). The bonds of ethnic groups are seen as somehow similar to those of families (Horowitz 1985: 57). Therefore primordial factors such as decent, language or skin tone influence the people since birth and provide them with a fixed individual and social identity that is seen as objective and inescapable (Ganzer 1990: 14). Although very popular among Nationalists, this deterministic point of view fails to explain, why some ethnic groups disappear, others emerge, merge or prevail and why some of these primordial factors seem to be of higher attraction and attachment than others. It further does not provide any explanation for the fact that many heterogeneous societies can live together in peace and interethnic relationships through adoption, marriage, conversion and cooperations are possible (Yinger 1994: 44).

The *constructivists*[5] are in opposition claiming ethnicity as an artificial phenomenon. They do not see ethnic groups as real in the sense of biological groups, but as imagined groups. Ethnicity is being described as a myth (Kaschuba 1997) or as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1988); the cultural differences (either real or imagined), which actors refer to, are only a resource being instrumentalised (Dittrich/Lentz 1994: 34). Ethnic groups therefore serve a distinct social purpose, are basically a product of external influence and only exist because "people believe in their existence and interact according to this belief" (Dittrich/Lentz 1994: 34). Through this situative dependence, they are subject to permanent change; members can define themselves whether they belong to the group or not. The ethnic affiliation is rather subjective; „people can think themselves into difference" (Cohen 1985:

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[3] Due to the complexity of the field and the still ongoing debate about the term of ethnicity, the following discussion about the different points of view on ethnicity will only focus on characteristic differences.

[4] Also known under the name tribalists.

[5] Also known as the situative or instrumentalist approach.

118)[6]. By neglecting the influence of primordial factors this approach fails to explain how ethnicity differentiates from other sociological categories such as profession, class or political affiliation and why especially ethnic groups have such a strong persistence and such a high potential for mobilisation up to the fact that people are willing to sacrifice their lives (for further criticism concerning this approach, see: Smith 1995:40, Elster 1989: 30ff).

An intermediate position, the *situative-primordial approach*, has been developed especially through the works of Smith (1992; 1995), but also McKay/Lewis (1982), Hackstein/Orywal (1993) und Heckmann (1992) combining aspects of primodialist and constructivist approaches. Resulting from the failure of constructivist approaches to explain the persistence of ethnic categories, it suggests, that ethnicity has to be based on socio-cultural aspects that are not randomly produced and easy to manipulate, but grounded on longlasting and stable cultural and political processes. Ethnicity is constructed and invented but therefore „old" and primordial material is being used. Such a rather broad approach allows integration of the many dynamics and connections between the individual, intergroup and societal aspects of ethnopolitical conflict. It raises the possibility to see ethnicity as the base of these processes but also as one of their outcomes. It gives room to define ethnicity as a subjective and instrumentalised tool on macro political level, as well as to understand it as a perceived as objective and fixed source of identity on individual and psychological level, explaining the high mobilisation of population through ethnic categorisation and the resulting irrationally high cost-tolerance of conflicting parties and their members.

Psycho-social dynamics

Especially in regions of ethnopolitical conflict, this concept of ethnicity is deeply rooted in the identity of every single person and is one of the central aspects of its self-definition. It thereby forms a frame for perception and interaction that cannot be questioned (Volkan 1990: 57). It constitutes an unquestionable background for every human interaction and is further stabilized and deepened through intergroup processes such as rituals, symbols or commonly shared traumas and glories (Volkan 1990: 70ff). An attack on aspects of this ethnic concept is therefore seen as an attack on the person's identity and thereby on the person itself. The population gets more and more divided along ethnic lines, making ethnicity the unifying factor among them and therefore one of the driving factors of conflict, further instrumentalised by war-driving elites (Ropers 1995: 228; Debiel 1997).

As a result, psychological and even cultural features often fuel and sustain the conflict more than substantive issues (Lederach 2006: 18). The opposed group is defined as enemy, dehumanized and seen as the incarnation of evil, which makes abuse and killing justifiable (Volkan 1990). Violence takes place between villages, among neighbours and inside families. The population is divided by their affiliation to one of the conflicting parties and thereby everybody inevitably becomes involved, often victim and offender at the same time. This leads to segregation processes complicating conflict resolution and the breakdown of centralized authority and, in some instances, state infrastructure (Lederach 2006: 13). This means that ethnopolitical conflicts do not run from latent conflict over escalation to (hurtling) stalemate and then over de-escalation and settlement to Peacebuilding (conflict stages as defined by Brahm 2003) and stable peace, but follow a rather circular development not seldom leading from dispute settlement straight back to latent conflict, never reaching the phase of stable peace. Or, as stated by Kriesberg (2005) leading from dispute settlement to failed Peacebuilding and finally the institutionalisation of destructive conflict.

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[6] Some Constructivists see the concept of ethnicity or tribe as a (European) construct, invented by scientists and impressed to the indigenous through their colonial masters. One example that is soften stated to undermine this theory is that of the Hutu and Tutsi in Ruanda whose difference only results of an arbitrarily classification through the Belgian colonial masters but nevertheless played a decisive role in the civil war (see Mamdani 2001).

Economical Dynamics

While the states involved usually have lost their monopoly of power, economically motivated warlords are present and try to fill this gap of lacking state power with their own means and purposes (Böge 2004: 5). Warring parties act aside from national authority on international markets (Böge 2004: 5), buying out national resources, receiving financial support from allied organisations and states, or simply buying weapons. Power and violence is personalised in the hands of warlords, regionalised and privatized. In this environment formal peace agreements, once reached, are of little importance as no supervisory body can control them (Eppler 2002: 89) and peace would mean the end to all this illegal economic action. Neighbouring states become further involved in the conflict as violence and refugees overflow boarders, oppositional groups use external territory to regroup and all parties seek allies, leading to a further regionalization of conflict (Zartman 2007: 4).

Peacebuilding

Peacemaking and Peacebuilding[7] have to find answers to these specific conditions of ethnopolitical conflicts, which differ from the well-known wars between states as such conflicts among groups identifying themselves in terms of ethnicity rather than ideology became more salient (Kriesberg 2007: 34). This development has raised attention to cultural attributes and emotional factors as a source of intracommunal conflicts (Kriesberg 2007: 35), continuously leading to the conclusion that conflict resolution has to favour long-term processes and outcomes that take into account all sides of a conflict and that maximize the participation of the people affected (Kriesberg 2007: 45). Social movements can provide such participation. But to really make a difference they have to fill the gap between immediate humanitarian aid and the enhancement or even establishment of institutional structures and therefore primarily focus on Peacebuilding. Such approaches need to take into account, that ethnopolitical conflicts need be understood in all their levels and facets in order to establish a process of conflict resolution. Such an approach seems to be the Peace Zone movement as found in the Philippines, reaching stable peace for more than eight years now, in regions, which are still surrounded by ongoing violent conflict.

3 Criteria for Evaluation

To describe the success, as well as the shortcomings of this movement, criteria for evaluation are required. Criteria for success in the field of Peacebuilding are hard to define (Lederach 2006: 119ff), especially the identification of the interrelations between distinct activities and their impact on peace in regional and national context challenge existing methods. Further, most of the aims defined in Peacebuilding are of a rather subjective case (attitudes, prejudices, values, emotions) and therefore changes not easy to identify (Collaborative for Development Action 2002: 3)[8]. Assessment of the activities in the Peace Zone has to face those problems, but its territorial limitation and its strong distinction from the surrounding areas, which are facing the same preconditions but developing otherwise, make scientific assessment easier. Nevertheless categories guiding the analysis have to be defined and will be derived from an interdisciplinary variety of approaches as follows.

Ethnopolitical conflict results from individual processes as well as societal structures. Therefore Peacebuilding has to address those two levels. On individual level new and comprehensive identities have to emerge, encompassing the ethnic identity, but also forming the ground for a mutual and shared lifeworld on which co-operation can be based following the theory of communicative action of Habermas (see Chapter 3.1). To create stable and

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[7] Following the classical definition of Miall (2005) and Galtung (1996) *Peacemaking* aims at changing the attitudes of the main protagonists, *Peacebuilding* tries to overcome the contradictions, which lie at the root of the conflict and therefore tries to influence the attitudes.

[8] These findings result from a variety of studies conducted by the Development of Collaborative Action as case studies, expert talks, discussion forums within communities and peace initiatives as well as international NGOs (Collaborative for Development Action 2006).

sustainable peace, this transformation on individual level has to be proceeded by societal change, influencing existing structures of decisionmaking and law enforcement as well as structures in other relevant societal sectors, as best described by Senghaas Civilizational Hexagon (Chapter 3.2). But not only what the Peace Zones have or haven't reached is of interest, the question of how or why not is even more urgent, especially to those thinking about adapting the concept. This "how" will be evaluated along the theoretical framework of Peacebuilding developed by Lederach, defining time frames of activity, as well as different perspectives of looking at conflict and relevant actors for sustainable Peacebuilding (Chapter 3.3).

3.1 Individual change (Habermas)

Habermas Theory of Communicative Action provides a theoretical framework for how positive contact can be enabled and sustained, even in situations of protracted conflict. It is a societal theory based on the assumption that communication constitutes the central element of human interaction and therefore of every social activity (MacCarthy 1989: 320). It aims at identifying, understanding and reconstructing universal requirements for *consensus based* interaction (Habermas 1976: 174). It provides an alternative to the so called *imperative action* (Habermas/MacCarthy 2006b: 278), which is in need of means to enforce the decisions made as they might not be accepted by all parties. Especially in deeply divided societies with minorities claiming independence and/or weak state power such means do not lie in only one party's hand. Even international interventions might be unable to provide for it, as they often lack legitimacy and might get defined as enemy by some conflict group. Therefore an alternative form to coordinate action, *communicative action*, is necessary. Communicative Action thereby is defined as a situation in which the participating actors are not coordinated via egocentric calculations of success but through acts of understanding. Participants are not oriented towards their own success but they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can coordinate their action plans on the basis of shared definitions of the situation (Habermas/MacCarthy 2006b: 285f). The goal of Communicative Action is to seek a reasoned consensus. To reach such consensus, a common lifeworld, a shared identity in relevant aspects, among the participants has to be existing, but due to segregation processes, such a common lifeworld is rarely existing in regions of ethnopolitical conflicts. This absence of a shared lifeworld between the opposed groups prevents communicative action (Habermas/MacCarthy 2006a: 131), as following Habermas, a common lifeworld can only be shared with people having the similar linguistic and cultural background (Habermas/MacCarthy 2006a: 125).

To enable communication in such situations, a shared lifeworld has to be created in aspects that are decisive for conflict transformation. These cannot replace the existing lifeworld experienced over generations and centuries and that has continuously adapted to changes in the environment, but it can create accordance in relevant aspects. Regions, in which different cultures co-exist or even live together, give evidence that the development of such a partially shared lifeworld is possible. The communicative problem therefore is not necessarily caused by the cultural differences themselves, but by their instrumentalisation and the resulting segregation. To stop this development, **relevant parts of the lifeworld** that have so far been subconscious and intuitive, **have to be questioned** and thereby converted to conscious knowledge about ones self. This knowledge can then be **challenged for its rationality** and adapted to reality (Habermas/MacCarthy 2006a: 131). Therefore it has to be discussed and negotiated in a **democratic process**[9], what this „reality" should consist of, to ensure that all parties involved can identify with the results (Habermas 1992: 144ff). This consensus has to be **internalised** by everybody involved in the conflict, civilians as well as combatants. In situations where the effects of war affect all levels of society, integration and rehabilitation has to be all-inclusive. Common happenings, shared experiences and social and economic

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[9] This democratic process is described by Habermas as the „ideal speech situation "where validity claims can be challenged, where nothing but the better argument counts and where actors are themselves open to be convinced by nothing but the better argument (Habermas 1992: 391).

interdependences have to be emphasized and encouraged. The emotional belonging to a community, a group of action or a peace initiative can gradually replace the importance of the ethnic affiliation and make individuals less vulnerable to external instrumentalisation and promote a more integrative and cohesive view of the oppositional groups.

3.2 Societal and institutional change (Senghaas)

Based on communicative action and this partially shared lifeworld, not only trust, but also societal structures, can and have to be developed. Those structures have to enable communication even under circumstances where disagreements are likely to appear and tend to lead to an outbreak of violence and the end of all communication (in the sense of communicative action). But to be accepted by all members of society such structures have to be normatively rooted in society (Habermas/MacCarthy 2006a: 183) and therefore be developed by the society itself. Senghaas developed a model of aspects that define requirements to enable reaching peace in modern political societies. It works as a normative framework in which social actors can interact.

The model has a rather Eurocentric focus and critics have further argued that Peacebuilding oriented on this approach of Senghaas intends to stabilize the system and therefore the status quo of those structures leading to and enforcing conflict (Wellmann 1997: 122). Therefore it needs to be adapted to the context of ethnopolitical conflicts, local areas and partially traditional societies as in the Philippines. Further it will not be used to strengthen or justify existing and possibly malfunctioning structures, but only to determine relevant aspects on societal level that need anyhow to be addressed. Therefore it will only be used to provide a first idea of relevant aspects to judge the societal influence of the Peace Zones.
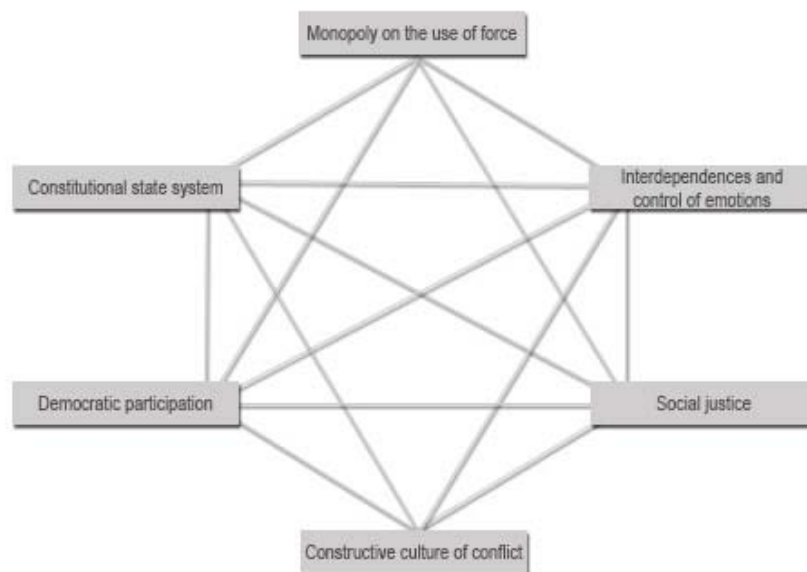

Figure 2: Civilizational Hexagon, following Senghaas 1995, p. 198; translated by the author.

This Civilizational Hexagon consists of six aspects, which are linked to each other as they all depend on each other. The first building block, constituting the top of the Hexagon is the **monopoly on the use of force**, meaning the de-privatisation of the use of force and disarmament of the citizens. This monopoly of force has to be embedded in controlling instances, forming the second element: the **establishment of constitutional state.** Without such, the monopoly on the use of force would create nothing but a dictatorship. Further structures for **democratic participation**[10] have to be developed, fostering a democratic involvement of the public in elections and other decision making in order to guarantee that those institutions really represent the peoples will. Their trust in those must be secured further

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[10] Especially this claim for democratic participation is hard to transfer. Not seldom democratization led to further segregational processes. In the case of the Peace Zone this aspect is seen as the possibility for all groups and sectors to participate and make their points of view part of the process.

by the principle of **social justice**, not only securing just verdicts form neutral courts, but also taking care of the basic needs of the people. Therefore tolerance and the willingness for compromise-oriented conflict solution are needed, so to say the establishment of a **constructive culture of conflict**. This is based on **interdependences** among the civilian population and their institutions, leading to a **control of emotions**, especially in conflict situations (Senghaas 1995: 195ff).

3.3 From individual to societal change (Lederach)

One way to reach cooperation on individual level, as well as to create structures on societal level is described by Lederach. He provides a threefold set of lenses to look at conflict, in order to conceptualize and evaluate Peacebuilding, which has gained importance in practice as well as in recent theoretical discussions. It provides the missing link between Habermas' lifeworld and Senghaas' Civilizational Hexagon as it defines the relevant actors, time frames and levels of response, approaches have to target, if they want to create societal change based on, and rooted in a common lifeworld and thereby reinforcing the latter. He defines a variety of **actors** that need to be included in the approaches (Top Leadership, Middle-Range Leadership and Grassroots Leadership[11]), in order to address those making big decisions and with high visibility as well as those being in close contact with the affected population (Lederach 2006: 37ff). He further defines a variety of **time frames of activity** that Peacebuilding needs to address, starting from Crisis Intervention, over Preparation and Training and Design of Social Change, leading to a vision of desired future[12], encompassing a time period of more than 20 years (Lederach 2006: 74ff). He further adds varying **levels of response**, which activities have to refer to, combining scholars' and practitioners' points of view when looking at a conflict: Issues and Relationships on the practitioners side and the systemic view of the scholars. He further introduces an intermediate level, the Subsystem, describing the immediate environment of the concrete conflict (Lederach 2006: 55ff).
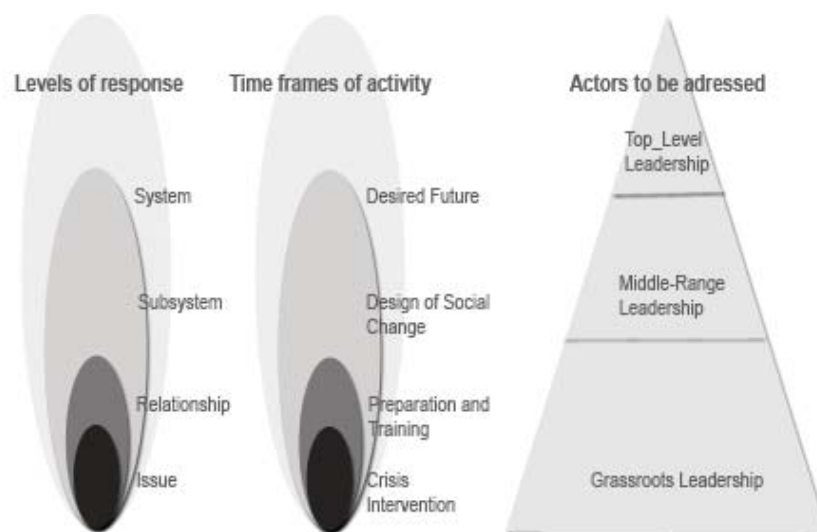

Figure 3: Integrated framework for Peacebuilding; following Lederachs' Building Peace - Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies (2006)

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[11] Top Leadership: military, political, religious leaders with high visibility; Middle-Range Leadership: Leaders respected in sectors, ethnic/religious leaders, academics/intellectuals, humanitarian leaders (NGOs); Grassroots Leadership: local leaders, leaders of indigenous NGOs, community developers, local health officers, refugee camp leaders (Lederach 2006: 39). In the case of the following case study grassroots leadership refers to all those living in the Peace Zone.

[12] Crisis intervention: short-term, emergency relief, cease fire; Training and Preparation: approaches and skills for Peacebuilding and conflict resolution; Design of Social Change: implement mechanisms to make transition to peaceful society; Desired Future: vision of commonly shared and peaceful future. (Lederach 2006: 76ff)

3.4 Integrative framework

The following example of a Peace Zone therefore has to be questioned to which extent and through which means it enables change on individual level and therefore creates a common lifeworld among its residents through

- identifying relevant parts of the opposed lifeworlds,

- questioning and challenging them for their rationality

- providing democratically developed alternatives

- and supporting their internalisation by its members.

It further needs to be evaluated which facets of societal change it addresses to reach stable peace, and therefore whether it

- reaches a de-privatisation on the use of force,

- establishes a rule of law

- fosters democratic participation

- bases its actions on social justice and

- enforces a constructive conflict culture and thereby

- leads to interdependences among its members and a control of their emotion.

Besides the pure implementation of such measures or institutions it has to be questioned, whether they are rooted in the individuals' identity, accepted and shared by the elites and gaining validity on all level of society while being sustainable. Therefore the approach taken has to be seen through the different lenses of Lederach and questioned whether they

- reach actors on all levels of society (Top Leadership, Middle-Range Leadership and Grassroots Leadership),

- respond to different levels of conflict (Issues, Relationships, Subsystem, System) and

- address a variety of time frames (Crisis Intervention, Preparation and Training, Design of Social Change, Desired future) and shift their attention over time.

4 The Peace Zone of Nalapaan/Pikit

The Peace Zone of Nalapaan/Pikit is located in Mindanao. The roots of the Mindanaoan conflict date back to the Christian settlements engaged by the Spanish and American colonialists into the formally Islamic region of Mindanao and the exploitative policies of the colonial powers (Hancock/Iyer 2007: 32). Since formal independence of the Philippines, the governments often ignored entire populations and their needs, especially those of the Mindanaoans. As a result the poor have become poorer while wealth and power continue to be held by a privileged few (Hancock/Iyer 2007: 32). This threatened the social, political and economic practices of the Mindanaoans (Lee 2006: 3). While in 1903 76% of the Mindanaoans were Muslims, in 1990 it were only 19% and 80% of those were landless tenants (Dictaan-Bang-oa 2005: 154). Today the Christian settlers do not only dominate in numbers, but also in socio-economic development and political power (Stankovitch/Conciliation Resources/Research and Development Center Mindanao State University et al.). In the late 1940s and early 1950s social discontent exploded into full-scale armed conflict. Although it was crushed, the roots of the conflict have never been addressed and the conflict revived in the early 70s under Ferdinand Marcos' Martial Law (Hancock/Iyer 2007: 32). Due to the added ethnopolitical dimension in Mindanao the struggle has become one of the longest-lasting low intensity conflicts world-wide (Kreuzer 2003: 3). The region, as well as the conflict, is characterized by massive human rights abuses by the national army, the Islamic rebel groups and resident enterprises (Kreuzer 2003: 3; 2005: 9). The resulting economic fall-back led to the fact that this once rich region became the socio-economically poorest in the Philippines (Kreuzer 2005: 1f).

The situation in Nalapaan/Pikit was not any different to that in the rest of Mindanao. Pikit is located on a strategic location close to an important Highway, and has often been the location of severe fighting, destruction of homes and enduring displacement (Catholic Relief Services 2003: 24). Those fights worsened the relation between the people, caused traumas especially among children and worsened their livelihood situation, destroying farmland, machineries and infrastructure (Catholic Relief Services 2003: 24; Layson 2003b: 1; Margallo 2005: 6). Especially during the fighting in 1997 and 2000 the people had to evacuate for months, lacking nutritional and medical support, which lead to a tremendous raise of infant and childhood mortality in these periods (Catholic Relief Services 2003a: 24). In this situation, a local NGO, called Tabang Mindanaw approached some of the local Elites with the idea of founding a Peace Zone. The concept and its implications were discussed among them, leading to first Consultations with the residents of Nalapaan and the strong desire to make Nalapaan one of the first Peace Zones in Mindanao (Layson 2003b). Despite their desperate situation the residents of Nalapaan managed to recognize, that they were all suffering and that they were all connected by the same wishes: to return home, rebuild their lives and raise their children in peace.

4.1 Empirical base

The following chapters are based on a multi-method design encompassing public and internal documents of NGOs and Peace Zone institutions, unpublished work of national scholars, as well as a number of qualitative interviews. The NGO material describes and evaluates the activities of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in the region and especially in Pikit. It provides insights into the dynamics evolving in the many discussions among the community residents and the Networking activities among the Peace Zones. The internal material of the Peace Zone institutions primarily constitutes of singular protocols of internal activities such as sessions of Restorative Justice or parts of the Culture of Peace seminar. It further describes the situation in Nalapaan before the start of the Peace Zone and the events at the Declaration. But the most important information was gained through the interviews. They provide an in-depth overview on the magnitude of activities and there effects on the population, which in that detail did not exist before. The interviews had been conducted with five key persons of the Peace Zone: Bert Layson, a catholic priest and one of the initiators of the Peace Zone;

Edwin Antipuesto, a local project officer of CRS in Nalapaan who is stationed there since 2000; Tiburcio Flores, who once was a soldier himself and who, as major led his community to join the Peace Zone of Pikit in 2004; Adele Nayal, who is in charge of Advocacy for the Peace Zone and Omar Unggui, a Muslim major of one of the communities of Pikit, who at the beginning was very opposed to the concept of the Peace Zone, but now is Chairman of the Space for Peace in Pikit. The information given has further been contextualised with an earlier interview with Pressia Arifin, who was stationed for the German Development Service (DED) in an other Mindanaoan community that has recently started to set up a Peace Zone. This is how a wide variety of persons were included in the study. The normal inhabitants, Muslims as well as Christians and Indigenous through the Peace Zone and NGO documents, the leaders of the project (either supporters from the very beginning or convinced critics) and representatives from both, an international GO and NGO.

All this information had been evaluated following the method of *global analysis* 'global/comprehensive analysis' by Legewie (1994) and combined with personal experiences and observations on the spot by the author. By strictly following the recommended steps of Yins case study protocol (Yin 2003) especially the demand of triangulation, this qualitative data can provide some factual detail into a new field of study.

4.2 Activities

The activities that took place in the Peace Zone of Nalapaan throughout foundation, establishment and expansion were mostly of pretty simple structure, working with symbols and local traditions, trying to get as close as possible to the ordinary living conditions and ways of thinking of the people. The establishment of the Peace Zone followed a procedural approach. First the acute need for security and livelihood had to be covered before the psychosocial dimension was addressed to reach sustainable conflict transformation. All activities were conducted, based on the wishes and needs of the people, implemented by local NGOs and POs and facilitated through people coming from the region or even from inside the community of Nalapaan. Therefore they did not impose exterior points of view but rather left room for the Peace Zones inhabitants to develop their own concepts, perspectives and projects.
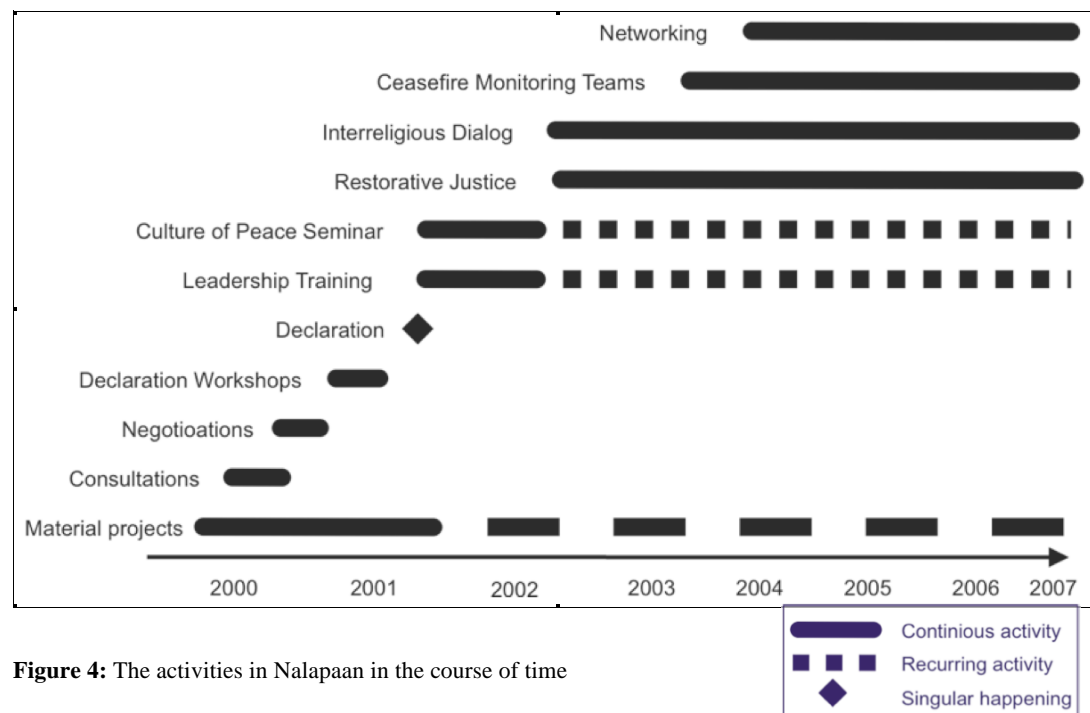

Figure 4: The activities in Nalapaan in the course of time

Before the Foundation of the Peace Zone was being prepared, local residents were asked for their problems and desires during *Consultations*. Meanwhile, the conflicting parties were asked through shuttle diplomacy to publicly announce their support of the Peace Zone as a

space free of violence by *Negotiations*. *Declaration Workshops* that followed aimed at formulating a Peace Zone declaration, serving as a shared basis of cohabiting. Establishing the Peace Zone started with the ceremonial *Declaration* of this constitution like paper, where representatives of the conflicting parties showed their approval and support, and thereby assured the residents to respect the Peace Zone and its values. Other important activities which are still being conducted, include *Leadership Training*, which teaches administrative skills and a basic understanding for democracy to local leaders, the *Culture of Peace Seminar*, which conveys an understanding of the conflict background and first steps towards reconciliation to the residents, and *Interreligious Dialogue*, a series of workshops held with local religious leaders, emphasising interreligious similarities and eliminating prejudice. To consolidate the Peace Zone, alternative conflict resolution methods were implemented (*Restorative Justice*), the national ceasefire agreements are being monitored (*Ceasefire Watch/ Monitoring Teams*) and contacts to other Peace Zones, GOs and NGOs were established (*Networking*). Additionally all implementation of *material projects* are accompanied by mediating and constant dialogical escorting of the projects in order to prevent new conflicts.

4.3 Individual change

To reach change on individual level, the Peace Zones' activities would have to focus on those **aspects, relevant** for co-operation and standing in between the conflicting parties. The central aspect, that led to resurfacing conflict were the peoples' experiences during war. Although all of them have suffered during war, they differed in their understanding of who was victim, and who was offender. The evaluation of the NGO material shows that especially the initial steps before the Declaration aimed at the connecting issues among all its residents, such as the wish to return from evacuation centres and to rebuild their livelihoods in peace. Local issues were discussed and broken relationships mended - detached from protracted national processes. Everyone who felt the destructive power of war thereby was given the chance to contribute to peace by dealing with concrete issues affecting his or her life instead of waiting for decisions about abstract concepts such as the distribution of land or the allocation of resources on national level (Neufeldt/McCann/Cilliers 2000; Catholic Relief Services 2003; 2005). This broke the whole concept of "peace" down to a level the people could understand and handle.

Those workshops were used as a foundation for the later addressing of dividing issues of daily live and resolving resurfacing and new conflicts. Therefore rightness and truthfulness in communication and thus trust was needed, not only among the leaders but also among those they represent. The first step to recreate trust was made through the *Culture of Peace Seminar*. As described by Bert Layson and Adele Nayal, it provided a shelter in which the people came together and reflected their experiences during war. They were given time to rehabilitate, eat together and revive the communal spirit that once existed in their village. The seminar further provided the needed basics for dialogue and a safe environment for training. Through the emphasis on a common history, collective traditions and ancestors, the articulation of shared experiences during war and the establishment of a common vision for peace, the seminar, in the eyes of its participants, laid the foundation for reconciliation. This can further be regarded as the first building block towards the development of a shared identity. The people started to see themselves no longer as member of one ethnic group but as members of the Peace Zone (Layson 2003b). Usually a first healing experience took place in these activities and, unbiased through external manipulation, many prejudices and myths associated with the opposed ethnic groups were cleared up (Neufeldt/McCann/Cilliers 2000: 8; Layson 2001: 6). As all the interviewees recollected, those seminars often ended with sentimental scenes of reconciliation and the realization that everyone had directly or indirectly contributed to the violence and that reaching stable peace is in everybody's interest.

Through these common happenings many other communal and multi-ethnic activities developed, such as joint sports games or multi-ethnic workshops on nutrition, health or parenting that fostered cooperation among Peace Zone members **and internalised these shared aspects**, leading to the creation of new and subconscious elements of a common

lifeworld. In the case of the Peace Zones it seems as if the shared identity of being a member of the Peace Zone thereby does not fully replace the cultural and traditional differences but gives them an integrative frame. A feeling of integration that is further fostered and reinforced through the Peace Zones success in stabilizing the situation and improving the living conditions continuously. A development that is further eased through the collective culture common in the Philippines, meaning that the welfare of the family and community is more valuable than individual well-being. Layson puts this feeling of a common identity and its effects on the population into words, emphasizing that the Peace Zones members do no longer perceive the conflicting parties as their representatives but as a threat to their common Peace Zone, a change of mind that forms a key to diminish the power of the warlords and Elites:

> „(…) there is no perfect guarantee that there will be no more war in Mindanao again. Should that happen, projects will be destroyed again and people will find themselves in evacuation centers again. But if people have undergone peace-building sessions, they could always go back to their villages, no longer as enemies, and together pick up the broken pieces and rebuild their community again, not just as friends or neighbors but as brothers and sisters." (Layson 2003b: 7)

Despite these successes, it has to be stated, that the lessons taught in the culture of Peace seminar are **only partially developed in a democratic process**. The elements and intended results of the activities in the Culture of Peace Seminar are not newly developed in each of the seminars, but they go back to a program, which had been developed by local scholars and Peaceworkers of all sectors and ethnic groups and already been prepared before the seminars. Nevertheless this curriculum is based on the community's wishes and experiences articulated in the Consultation and Declaration Workshops, as well as in the multi-sectoral and multi-ethnic seminars of the Grassroots Peacebuilding Learning Centre, preparing those who conducted the seminars at the beginning.

4.4 Societal and institutional change

But the Peace Zone does not only have to work towards emotional aspects, but also to guarantee stable societal and institutional structures. Therefore, following the framework of Senghaas, it should foster the de-privatisation of the use of force, has to constitutionally embed the use of force, create interdependences among the Peace Zones' members, foster democratic participation, work towards more social justice and encourage a constructive conflict culture. In the case of the Peace Zone this especially means to find ways to deal with the different concepts of shaping one's life and organizing the community, especially concerning jurisdiction and conflict resolution (tribal courts vs. national systems) as well as decisions making (council of Elders vs. clan vs. democracy) that hampered cohabitation and cooperation in close proximity so far.

Concerning the claim a **de-privatisation of the use of force** it has to be stated that the Peace Zone can only influence those aspects inside its own, territorially limited area. In this small area the need for a de-privatisation was made clear and explicit from the very beginning, stated in the Declaration and implemented by the Monitoring Teams and through ceasefire watch. Private as well as governmental armed forces are not allowed to use force in the territory of the Peace Zone. Only such persons who are allowed to wear weapons by the Peace Zone officials may do so[13]. Unauthorised conduct of weapons is investigated through the Monitoring Teams (Arguillas 2003: 4; Rood 2005: 29) and usually punished by the intruders supervisor (Layson 2003b: 5). These mechanisms have worked well so far (Hansen 2005), as the monitoring teams in charge of such violations are linked to regional and national organisations watching over the Mindanao-wide ceasefire agreement (Rood 2005: 29). But nevertheless they are a fragile tool, as especially external violation of the Peace Zones' declaration can only be reported but not effectively punished by the Peace Zone itself.

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[13] this is one of the small differences between a Space for Peace as in Nalapaan and a literal Zone of Peace as in other communities. The residents of Pikit made a concession to the conflicting parties, due to the importance of the region of Pikit. The army and rebel groups are allowed to patroul and wear weapons, but not to use them, different from the original definition of Zones of Peace, which are defined as off-limits to any kind of weapon.

Although this monopoly on the use of force is not in its first sense **constitutionally embedded,** it nevertheless lies in the hand of the community through representatives, chosen by its members and organized either in monitoring teams or tribal courts (restorative justice). In the same way community structures for decision-making had been developed by the community. As political participation even on communal level hardly existed before and during civil war, few Barangay captains knew how democratic decision making works (Community and Family Services International 2002: 12f). The goal therefore was to empower and strengthen existing structures instead of creating new and competitive ones as happened in other regions (Layson 2005b: 2). Both majors described a series of trainings they took part in. They were asked for their deficits, their wishes for training and their recent performance was evaluated. Based on this, trainings were developed on decision-making, capacity building, accountability, financial management and value formation. They further described different strategies for emergency decisions, decisions concerning administration only and such decisions immediately concerning the population. This is how they do no longer just apply national standards with few effects on local level, but rather adopted decision-making to the local needs they are facing. All these guidelines were developed without linking them to concrete topics over which new fighting could resurface, creating a framework for decision-making that enables communication to keep going even in case of dissent.

The same goes for the interreligious dialogue to support communication between the religious leaders and the concept of restorative justice. As religion is an important motivation in daily live, it was crucial to enhance it as a resource of peace (Antequisa/Sanguila 2004: 2; Layson 2005a: 9), .Especially the joint celebration of religious feasts was described as an element that emphasized understanding for the other religion(s). But also non-religious conflicts had to be solved. As Layson continuously mentioned, „imported" methods of conflict resolution such as the American juristic system in the Philippines did in very few points correspond with traditional mechanisms and modes of interaction in the region (such as the respect of the Elders or the concept of retribution) and were not respected by the population. The concurring national and local mechanisms to regulate conflict were analysed in the Culture of Peace Seminar and mechanisms such as guidelines established for such cases in which these differences provoked an end to communication in earlier times. An integrative method, following the concept of Restorative Justice was developed and local leaders were trained as mediators to guide the victims, offenders and witnesses through the process of fact-finding, material compensation and reconciliation (Layson 2004).

In all these activities, the Peace Zone focused on an inclusive multi-ethnic and multi-sectoral approach. Already during implementation of the material projects the spirit of Bayanhian (spirit of communal unity or effort to achieve a particular objective) was revived. Further projects that could only succeed when conducted together were started, such as the collective use of farming machines or the construction of common places to dry rice. But also later activities were based on comprehensive cooperation. The interreligious dialogue, as well as the tribal courts and the monitoring teams would loose every part of their legitimacy if they could no longer rely on mutual cooperation between Muslims, Christians and Indigenous. This is where **interdependences** among the formally opposed ethnic groups can be found, leading to a better **control of their negative emotions**.

The territorial limitation of the concept makes it possible, that every person, regardless of his or her ethnic or religious affiliation, can be integrated into the concept. **Democratic participation** in this way has been fostered from the very beginning, starting with the Consultations, the development of the Declaration as well as its ceremonial proclamation. Therefore a variety of individual interests, fears and wishes had been integrated into the Peace Zones' overarching vision. But even for those decisions where not every member of the Peace Zone could be integrated, representative structures for democratic decision-making were developed. In addition to regular elections, the elected representatives were trained in good governance and guidelines were developed, regulating which kinds of decisions should be made by whom and including whose opinions. Decisions directly concerning the population

(such as the implementation of material projects, school buildings etc.) have to include all members of the Peace Zone, decisions rather focusing on administration or less concrete projects are made among the elected representatives in cooperation with the concerned sectoral groups.

This quite democratic process, combined with its embedment in community-owned structures formed the base for **social justice** in the Peace Zone. But aside and even before democratic participation, basic needs of the population needed to be secured. At the beginning, after return, this was done through livelihood building and nutritional support from external NGOs and continued through the building of community facilities such as school buildings, health stations, streets or market places. These facilities are trying to secure free and equal access to education, health care and infrastructure (of course on comparably low level) and thereby trying to provide equal opportunities and equity on community level.

Aside those material aspects, a variety of approaches can be found, that try to encourage a **constructive conflict culture**. As such a variety of possibilities for articulation and compensation of interests were established. Already during the foundation process, zones of safety were created, that provided room for such activities (Consultation, Declaration Workshops). Later the Culture of Peace Seminar positively challenged the articulation of personal interests, a development which is continued through the interreligious dialogue as well as the tribal courts. Every member of the Peace Zone had the possibility to participate and was asked to do so. Religious and political leaders were asked to facilitate a just compensation of the partially opposed interests between the many individuals and ethnic groups. Further the monitoring teams, as well as the tribal courts left room for all those, who thought they had something to contribute to the settlement of disputes or offences to articulate their points of view. Especially those two instances guaranteed the necessary entrenchment of the monopoly on the use of force its constitutionally embedment that had so far been lacking state courts and national police.

These activities on communal level were conducted in close connection with individual processes, leading to the conclusion that societal change and societal institutions can result from individual change and are closely interlinked with each other. But it also has to be stated that despite the Peace Zones holistic approach, its effects are only limited to communal level so far and always depend on the good will of superordinate structures; the government, the military and rebel forces.

4.5 Approaches taken

This lack in national influence is further reflected when evaluating the activities with Lederachs' set of lenses. Concerning the **actors** addressed, mainly those on grassroots level are included in the Peace Zones' approach. The Middle-Range-Leadership as well as the Top-Level leadership only play a subordinate role in the Peace Zones' concept. Only after the consolidation of the Peace Zone Networking activities, trying to reach out to Middle-Range-Leadership and in few cases even Top-Leadership were emphasized.

The same accounts for the different **levels of conflict**. Societal change, as described above is limited to the level of the Subsystem. The Peace Zone concentrates on concrete issues and relationships in its community. Realizing that a solution of systemical issues (such as resource management, distribution of land etc.) were not possible for centuries, the Peace Zone shifted its focus on the lower level of the Subsystem to reach at least a transformation in its immediate environment (management of resources inside the village, landownership of concrete families etc.) and concerning its inhabitants very own relations (between families, neighbours and elders). This shift of attention constituted a central resource for the movement since its very beginning, as it enabled a development detached from national Elites and ethnic instrumentalisation. But what came as resource at the beginning, now leads to the central limitations of and challenges for the concept. Although the Peace Zone makes regular reference to the idea of connecting their own efforts to a larger, national Peacebuilding

process, it didn't specify much how this is to be accomplished (Mitchell/Hancock 2007: 195) and comparably few activities in this direction were taken.

When taking a look at the **time frames of activity**, it is easy to state, that they had all been addressed through the many activities of the Peace Zone. Material projects and Consultations at the very beginning enabled return. Negotiations reached a ceasefire agreement. The livelihood situation improved. Based on this crisis intervention preparation and training, for the ordinary members of the Peace Zone as well as for the political and religious representatives, took place in many ways. Even structures to reach the desired future, articulated in the declaration, had been established (interreligious dialogue, tribal courts, monitoring teams). But to really reach this desired future ("We pray for the genuine peace to rule our land") the level of the subsystem has to be overcome and many more activities addressing Middle- and Top-level Leadership as well as the systemic level of the conflict have to be conducted. It was characteristic for all these activities that they were supported mostly by local NGO staff, rooted in the cultural practices of the people. This strong link between culture and tradition and the fact, that not the ethnic belonging, but the commonly developed mechanisms and institutions put certain persons into power, can explain why their decisions are being accepted and their demands followed independent of the decision makers' ethnic affiliation. This, as the eight years of existence of the Peace Zone shows, created a momentum of ownership and sustainability seldom reached by classical approaches of institution building.

5 Conclusion

The example of the Peace Zone has shown that strong and holistic social movements can provide an alternative to reach sustainable peace in situations of protracted conflict. They do so by empowering civil society, creating an alternative form of governance on local level, establishing a subsystem where cooperative structures in public and private can develop without influence of regional or national Elites and where the danger of resurfacing violence is comparably low. Thereby they create an alternative but comprehensive identity that includes the different ethnic identities as well as common cultural and historical roots. But still Peace Zones seem vulnerable in case of outside attack and their influence on the national Peace process has not extended the one of a consultative role in negotiations. Not only some local residents identity has to be influenced to really transform deeply rooted ethnopolitical conflict and protracted societies, but societal structures have to be (re-)built on regional and national level for a juster and accepted political and juristical system.

This development raises the question, whether these little Peace Zones, focusing on internal processes on local level can after all have a positive impact on the search for a general peace in a conflict-torn society and connect to national dynamics. In international literature a few vague suggestions are made on how Peace Zones can contribute to the national peace process such as "discovering, that a potential negotiating partner actually exists; establishing hopeful precedents for talks; confidence building, testing the other side, reducing mistrust or demonstrating "best methods" of dealing with the other side through dialogue." (Mitchell/Hancock 2007: 197) But from the example stated in this article further conclusions can be derived. First the shift of mind from perceiving the offenders of the community no longer as allies of one ethnic group, but as offenders of the common Peace Zone is a key to diminish the power of warlords and Elites. This may not be of importance if only a few Peace Zones existed but it becomes a true problem for the Elites if Peace Zones continue to spread among all the country as they do in Mindanao. A Network among these Peace Zones, combined with a common sense of empowerment among the civil society gives the people a voice, even in national Peacetalks where representatives of the Peace Zone movement are now included (Hancock/Iyer 2007: 33), such as the Mindanao People Caucus who has gained observer status from both, the government and the rebels. Through this initiative the Peace Zones can not only present the civil societies point of view on the peace process, but also engage in panel discussions and lobbying (Layson 2003a).

And there is an other aspect how these many Peace Zones can contribute to national Peace. They are being installed in regions that had to adapt to colonialist systems of governance that usually have little in common with traditional law and decision making which is why local governing and jurisprudence never really worked. In the Peace Zones alternative methods to make decisions and to speak law are developed which are much closer to the people but still try to fit in the regional and national governing system. Through a comparison between the varying methods in different Peace Zones, such measures can be identified that work in most of them. They could, once abstracted, serve as a foundation for the establishment of a functioning and accepted way of governing and law-making on local level. But still the question whether they can really reach stable peace without territorial and temporary restrictions remains open.

Peace Zones have started a societal development, which seems somehow lacking in former colonial states that adapted to the western democratic system without rooting it in its societal and traditional structures. To put it in the terms of Habermas, Peace Zones started to create a common lifeworld (collective identity) among its members, which forms the base for positive communication and on which the evolving societal and political structures can and have to be based. They form on local level the base for a societal development, which has the potential to build governing systems that are accepted by the population and rooted on collective values. But this development will surely take a long time to fully reach this goal and the question whether the Peace Zone movement in the Philippines will finally reach it is wide open. But the potential is there, maybe more than ever.

UPDATE: On August 4 2008, the war between MILF and the national army escalated in Mindanao again. So far more than 220 000 people have been evacuated, 50 people were killed. Although civil society uses its strong voice to make the conflicting parties return to the negotiation table, this call has so far not been followed. It has to be seen, how sustainable the Peace Zones are. The people of Nalapaan and Pikit had to evacuate this time for the first time in 8 years. After their return, it has to be seen, how much of their livelihood will be left and whether they will be able to rebuild what has beens destroyed. But despite this material destruction it seems, as if the personal cooperation and the positive relations could survive this crisis. Many of the evacuees are now sharing not only their shelters, but food and medicine, independent of their ethnic belonging.

For further update on the situation see www.mindanews.com

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