Peace Communication – A Call for a New Approach in Peacebuilding

- Abstract –

The following article suggests a new approach of Peacebuilding on community level, arguing that communication in the sense of Communicative Action as described by Habermas is the key to conflict transformation on interpersonal level. The local level is usually neglected by classical approaches of intervention, which are predominantly specified for activities on the international level. Our model is built on a set of criteria derived from Habermas' work such as the need to provide environments for an ideal speech situation and to create a shared frame for interaction and a vision of stable peace, aiming at the establishment of institutional structures on local level rooted in the community and its traditions – not on the national level and western traditions of representative democracy. The Peacebuilding potential of these criteria is exemplified along a case study of a Peace Zone in Mindanao (Philippines), where peace was reached by means of communication in a community surrounded by ongoing conflict. We show that this Peace Zone gives a concrete example of how activities, developed by a multi-ethnic and divided community itself, based on principles of Communicative Action, can not only mitigate conflict on the base of institutionalization, but even reach a certain stage of conflict transformation by creating a shared lifeworld and common identity among its inhabitants.

- Main text -

Introduction

> The Purposes of the United Nations are:
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> 1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.
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> Charter of the United Nations, Chapter I

Since these principles have been formulated, the world has seen a huge number of conflicts and the application of the full range of conflict-related and peacekeeping measures developed by the United Nations accordingly. Figures provided by the UN show that in 2007 there were more than 80.000 uniformed members of peacekeeping units engaged in 16 missions (United Nations, 2008: 44). Particularly the 1990's saw a dramatic increase in conflict all over the world and subsequent UN missions: one can't really say that the world of 2008 is more peaceful than the one of 1948. Doubtless, there are a lot of different reasons for this, but some of them are of special importance to understand the problems of actual peacekeeping efforts: First of all the end of the east-west-antagonism in 1989/1990 played its role in changing the type of conflicts. The unifying pressure of military blocks was removed and ties between peoples within multi-ethnic countries like the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia or Rwanda weakened. Secondly, while the UN repertoire of measures was designed to keep peace between nations, these new conflicts evolved mainly within the borders of countries and were mostly directed towards separation or at least autonomy of regions or populations (not mentioning the extinction of whole ethnic populations – genocide).

In regions of internal conflict, the field of conflicting parties is quite confusing as a multitude of self-appointed leaders and warlords appear on the scene and the motivations for the conflict very often involve a multitude of ethnic, religious and emotional factors, as for example the civil wars in the countries of former Yugoslavia, but also in several other regions of conflict (Indonesia, DR Kongo, Sudan, Iraq) have proven. Particularly the case of Yugoslavia is an example illustrating the current

problem of Peacebuilding, which is the focus of this paper: UN, NATO and EU have tried to end the outburst of violence by the standard repertoire of peacekeeping as described above. In fact, the situation seems to be quiet and under control as troops provided by EU (Bosnia) and NATO (Kosovo) are taking care of security in this regions of conflict. Following the criteria the UN defined for 'successful peacekeeping missions', this should definitely be a successful one (United Nations, 2006: 9-11): Basic services, government and law enforcement structures have been restored by several political programs (EUPM, UNMIK), there have been elections and international and local military (EUFOR, KFOR) and police (EULEX) provide a mostly secure environment. Nevertheless, recurrent outbursts of violence and an extremely tense political situation with little hope for progress in these two territories show clearly that the hostile attitudes of ethnic groups have not yet changed at all, and a withdrawal of troops and other international aid would most likely lead the region back into war.[1] Although the existing strategies of Peacebuilding and peacekeeping have succeeded in momentarily stabilizing the situation under conditions of a semi-occupation, they seem not to be able to affect the deep-grown roots of modern ethnopolitical conflict.

In the light of these realities this article argues that focussing on (1) communication activities on (2) local level would be a much more successful strategy for resolution and post-conflict rebuilding in ethnopolitical conflicts than diplomacy, military and humanitarian interventions or other activities, which are mostly neglecting the decisive role of local actors and their interaction. At first we will define the concepts of ethnopolitical conflict and Peacebuilding, together with a critical discussion of traditional concepts of Peacebuilding. Then we will exemplify how communication theory can be applied to improve existing approaches of Peacebuilding in intra-state conflicts. Here our communication-based approach, focussing on the theory of Communicative Action of Habermas, will be developed. Finally, a case study will illustrate how approaches as identified in this theory did lead to a slow but continuing improvement of the situation in the so called 'Peace Zones' in Mindanao, Philippines, a region being tormented by armoured conflict for at least three decades now.

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[1] The example of Ethiopia and Eritrea shows that even a complete separation of ethnic groups in two states may not end violence: civil war was in this case just transformed in 'conventional' war between two now sovereign countries.

Ethnopolitical Conflict and Peacebuilding

Ethnopolitical conflicts are usually defined as conflicts where at least one of the combating parties defines ethnicity as a central reason for conflict (Meyer, 1997b: 327-328). Those conflicts are of high complexity, usually long lasting and combined with a high risk of escalation (Dehdashti, 2000: 163, Glasl, 1994: 118, Nicklas, 1997: 224). When national systems of order break down, it is very likely that people fall back on ethnic or confessional identities that may exclude others, with whom they formerly lived together without major problems (Zartman, 2007: 4). Such quasi-native categories are of high attraction, especially in times of unstable and quickly changing environments (Esman, 1990: 56-58). This problem is in many cases further augmented through international pressure (by institutions like the IMF or the Worldbank) for installing competitive, pluralist political and economic systems which frequently overstrain the political actors and the countries citizens, creating just a new context of conflict that those societies cannot handle productively (Zartman, 2007: 4).

Conflicts among groups identifying themselves in terms of ethnicity, religion, language and similar attributes rather than ideology became more salient in recent decades, increasing the attention to cultural attributes and emotional factors as a source of intercommunal conflicts (Kriesberg, 2007: 34). In regions of ethnopolitical conflict, the 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 is difficult to be put into question by the involved individuals (Volkan, 1999: 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, 1999: 70-83). An attack on aspects of this ethnic concept is therefore seen as an attack on the persons' identity and thereby on the person itself. As a result, psychological and even cultural features often drive 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, making abuse and killing justifiable (Volkan, 1999). 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 usually leads to segregation processes complicating conflict resolution and to the

breakdown of centralized authority and, in some instances, state infrastructure (Lederach, 2006: 13).

Peacemaking and Peacebuilding[2] have to find answers to these specific psycho-social conditions of ethnopolitical conflicts, which differ from traditional wars between states. But still our knowledge about what works and what doesn't in conflict resolution is based primarily on studies of what practitioners do rather than on theory based research (Zartman, 2007: 12). Underlying theories of change are missing and the conceptualisation of activities is usually led by the motivation that positive goals will lead to positive developments (Collaborative for Development Action, 2006).

Table I here

Existing approaches in international relations usually focus on (re-)establishing state structures and powers and thereby stabilizing the situation (as for example in Afghanistan, Kosovo or Iraq). Other measures try to improve the immediate situation by sending humanitarian aid, building up evacuation centres, or establishing singular health stations or schools. But the current situation in conflict regions makes it obvious that these two approaches do work together neither in a parallel nor a sequential way because they have not enough connecting points in terms of time, space or means. To improve this situation approaches are needed that fill the gap between immediate humanitarian aid and the establishment of institutional structures on the long term and therefore primarily focus on Peacebuilding. Such approaches have to take care of the strong individual and psychological dimension of the conflict. Approaches trying to resolve conflicts on a macro-level of negotiations between political leaders and trying to rebuild state structures focusing on administration, authorities and parliamentary system without the involvement of civil society are doomed to fail. Democracy and non-violent citizenship require people to have a minimum amount of trust in their fellow citizens and the governmental institutions (Newton, 2007: 342). Therefore it is necessary to foster forms of interpersonal communication between the antagonized groups. This is an indispensable precondition to build up mutual understanding and trust. Such re-started interaction requires the parties to reinterpret social narratives, to alter prejudices and to

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[2] Following a rather classical definition of Miall et al. (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 values and attitudes of people/citizens.

rehumanize the other; a very involved and deep-going form of communication that could be transformative in nature when successful (Ellis, 2006: 7).

These findings emphasizing the need to include the civilian population as well as their identity-based perceptions are not entirely new to scientific discussion (e.g. Pearson, 2001; Fisher 1997), yet a comprehensive framework that goes beyond singular approaches about what and how the process of Peacebuilding could be instead has not been developed yet.

Peacebuilding through Communication – New Approaches

Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action may be able to provide a starting point for such a comprehensive framework. His social theory (Gesellschaftstheorie) based on the assumption that communication constitutes the central element of human interaction and therefore of every societal activity (MacCarthy, 1989: 320) aims at identifying, understanding and reconstructing universal requirements for consensus oriented interaction (Habermas, 1976: 174),

The goal of Communicative Action is to seek a reasoned consensus – a situation in which the participating actors are not coordinated via egocentric calculations of success but through acts of understanding on the basis of shared definitions of the situation (Habermas & MacCarthy, 2006b: 285-286). In deeply divided societies with minorities claiming independence and/or weak state power, means to enforce political decision (*imperative action*) do not lie in only one party's hand. Even international interventions are often unable to provide for it as they lack legitimacy or get defined as enemy by at least one of the conflicting groups. Therefore an alternative form to coordinate action, *communicative action* seeking for a mutual consensus, becomes necessary (Habermas & MacCarthy, 2006b: 278). Such a mutual consensus relies on three parameters: (1) the creation of an ideal speech situation, (2) the acceptance of truth, rightness and truthfulness and (3) the existence of a shared lifeworld. Agreements achieved under these conditions can lead to (4) structures and institutions securing sustainable peace.

(1) Ideal Speech Situation

The development of a shared lifeworld and the regulation of dissent through communicative action are only possible in situations aiming for ideal speech (Habermas, 1992: 391). In such situations, actors need to recognize each other as

equals and need to have equal access to the discourse, which must also be open to other participants and public in nature. These presuppositions of *symmetry between the communication partners* and their *goal to convince the other by nothing but the better arguments* are challenged in identity conflicts. They are opposed to the existing communication patterns of *refusing contact* and trying to convince the other by *threat and extortion*. The asymmetric (power) relationship between the conflicting parties and the fact that minority groups are often not recognized by the government as negotiation partner and that recognition itself forms the key issue of conflict (Bonacker & Imbusch, 1996: 67, Dehdashti, 2000: 151, Meyer, 1997a: 41) therefore seem to make communicative action impossible and a recourse to violence the only option.

But even Habermas himself describes the ideal speech situation as a contra-factual ideal and thereby puts his own pre-suppositions into perspective. Neither does he assert that all power structures need to be absent nor does he claim that a valid consensus can only be reached when everybody is trying to convince the other by nothing but the better argument and none of the participants is having any strategic intentions. But he what he does assert is that a reasoned consensus cannot be achieved unless the participants in the discourse **assume** that they persuade each other only on the basis of better arguments. If one side uses privileged access to arms, wealth, or prestige in order to wring agreement from the other by way of sanctions or rewards, none of the participants will doubt that the conditions for argumentation are no longer satisfied (Habermas, 1995: 553). Through fostering deliberative and sectoral approaches, power distances between and inside groups can be minimized and the idealistic vision of an ideal speech situation comes closer. This vision as an ideal thereby fulfills two criteria: that of a guideline of how to set up discourses and that of an ideal along which existing discourses can be evaluated and criticized.

(2) Truth, Rightness and Truthfulness

Every statement made in such a situation can be challenged along three criteria: Truth, Rightness and Truthfulness. The aspect of truth is referring to the objective world, demanding that certain physical presuppositions on which the statement is based on are true. The aspect of rightness refers to the normative context, demanding that the statements which the speakers claim to be valid do not offend any moral values or norms that at least one of the speakers claim to be valid. The third claim is

truthfulness. It further refers to the subjective realm of personal experience, demanding that the speaker does not follow any hidden, strategic and unexpressed intentions with his statement. The communication partner can reject speech acts referring to each of these three aspects, because true accordance needs agreement on all levels (Habermas & MacCarthy, 2006b: 307-371).

This is one central challenge for communication in the context of ethnopolitical conflicts. These conflicts are rooted in identity and identity conflicts as such are intractable. Accordance might be reached regarding to the truth of statements but the acceptance of rightness is harder to achieve. The associated demand to accept common ethics implies the existence of such a fundamental base. Especially in interreligious conflicts, such are usually neglected by the conflicting parties. But the main reason for the failure of communication is most likely the third parameter of truthfulness, implying that none of the speakers is hiding any strategic intentions. In situations where thinking is shaped by traumatic experiences, prejudices, rage and mistrust, hidden intentions are not only frequently alleged but also often actually exist. Communicative action is threatened by mistrust, as the solution of violent conflicts is threatened by broken social relations. But here again studies have shown that personal interaction between groups does actually create trust (Pettigrew& Tropp, 2006) if it takes place in situations ignoring power distances and focusing on personal experiences rather than collective traumas. Differentiating between Truth, Rightness and Truthfulness makes it possible to include material issues as well as group values and personal emotions into the discourse. This means, not only to include instrumental issues, but also identity issues in the process, and to acknowledge that such identity issues consist of both collective or inter-subjective aspects as well as individual aspects.

(3) Common Lifeworld

Such a positive communicative contact can further lead to the creation of what Habermas defines as a common lifeworld. According to his theory, communication can only be successful if it is based in a common lifeworld of the communicators (Habermas & MacCarthy, 2006a). Thereby the lifeworld appears as a reservoir of 'taken-for-granted', unshaken convictions that participants in communication draw upon in cooperative processes of interpretation (Habermas & MacCarthy, 2006a: 124). For daily communication the lifeworld provides a solid, unquestionable and

implicit background (Habermas, 1985: 241). But language and culture are the basic constituencies of the lifeworld. Towards these factors neither the communicator nor the recipient can take up an extramundane position (Habermas & MacCarthy, 2006a: 125). Nevertheless migration and nomadism, relocation, the need for guest workers and artificial boundaries lead to the fact that in many nations and villages different and rather autonomous religious and/or speech communities are living together – differences that are further enforced by internal or external instrumentalisation. To make communication nevertheless possible, 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 that has continuously adapted to changes in the environment, but it can create accordance in relevant aspects. The examples of regions in which different cultures co-exist or even live together provide some evidence, that the development of such a partially shared lifeworld is possible.

The communication 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 unconscious, have to be questioned and thereby converted into consciousness. These new insights and perspectives on the situation can then be challenged for their rationality and adjusted to reality (Habermas & MacCarthy, 2006a: 131). Therefore it has to be discussed and negotiated in a democratic process, how this 'reality' should be, to ensure that all parties involved can accept the results (Habermas, 1992). 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, reconciliation in the sense of 'Aufarbeitung'[3] has to be all-inclusive. Thereby, this is one of the core assumptions of this concept: '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 inclusive view of the oppositional groups.

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[3] The term 'Aufarbeitung' is a typical German word that has no adequate expression in any other language. It refers to the process of dealing with the events in the Third Reich and positively integrating the results of this process into the conception of a new state, a new society but also in the individual and social identity of every citizen.

(4) Communicative Action on Individual and Institutional Level

Following Habermas, cooperation between ethnic groups, at least on community level, is essential to stabilize peace and to reach a certain degree of development and well-being. To enable such cooperation even in protracted settings it is necessary to establish definite structures to enable communication even under circumstances where disagreement is likely to appear and to lead to an outbreak of violence and the end of all communication (in the sense of communicative action). 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.

Following the argumentation of Habermas it can be stated that an ideal speech situation, or at least the presupposition of such, forms the base for positive interaction. If structures and situations based on an ideal speech situation are established successfully, they reinforce this positive climate of dialogue and thereby strengthen the peoples' trust in such measures to mitigate conflict. This positive communication has the potential to form the base for trust on individual level, leading to further interaction and the continuous development of a shared lifeworld, either conscious through dialog or unconscious through shared experiences. This trust on individual level further provides the base for a normative foundation of institutional structures in the society. Societal structures are based on trust and individual relationships; but also individuals and political institutions have to be seen as deeply interwoven, especially on community level, where decision makers or judges usually are neighbours and family members and decisions have a strong influence on the immediate daily life of the people. If such trust on individual level is reached and institutions are rooted in the very society they claim to speak for, the conditions for ideal speech situations are further being reinforced. This dynamic leads to a spiral movement of an increasing common identity among the individuals and institutions deeply rooted in society, finally reaching a situation of stable peace. Stable peace implying a peaceful management of new or older and resurfacing conflicts, and forming the foundation for a positive development of a person, his or her family, social environment and community (and thereby region and nation).

Conclusion

In the same way communication is used to escalate conflict it can be used to de-escalate and transform conflict even under challenging circumstances. The presented approach of Habermas thereby may lay the foundation for an overarching concept of conflict transformation that encompasses singular local activities as well as national approaches to re-establish state power. It might in particular fill the gap between short-term humanitarian aid for war victims and attempts to establish stable institutional structures. The overarching goal of such an approach adapted to ethnopolitical conflict has to be to reach stable peace grounded on normatively rooted societal structures. Therefore a close connection between individual and institutional development is necessary, founded on situations where positive communication is possible and based on a (at least partially) shared lifeworld, so to say a shared identity and common motivation. Following this theoretical assumptions, each approach or concept that claims to reach sustainable peace on the base of settled dispute has to be questioned whether it:

- creates an environment where <u>ideal speech situations</u> are encouraged,

- provides a <u>shared frame of interaction</u>, leading to the creation of a partially shared lifeworld that mediates between the (perceived as) competing normative systems and builds trust on individual level,

- leads to the establishment of <u>institutional structures</u> on a local level, rooted in the society and enabling positive communication in situations of conflict.

Therefore conceptualisation and evaluation have to focus on individual dynamics and developments rather than on elites and multiplicators only. The individual and its environment have to be in their focus rather than national actors, strategies and institutions. They have to be sensitive to and leave room for cultural and contextual characteristics and concentrate on the visions and traditions of the very people they claim to be made for. They should not aim at supporting international pressure for competitive, pluralist political and economic system, but at providing a framework for the development of sustainable institutional structures rooted in and adapted to the special dynamics of the individual community, region and nation.

Communicative Action in Peacebuilding – an Example

The case of a Peace Zone in Mindanao, Southern Philippines, will show how the elements of the theory identified above can be effective in practical Peacebuilding. We will show which of the relevant theoretical aspects can be found in the course of their set-up and throughout their further existence, trying to work out what role this might play in explaining the surprising success of the Peace Zones, which enabled locally limited peace for more than eight years in a region while in the surrounding areas violence and war continued. The Filipino Peace Zones thereby are of special interest, as the Peace Zone movement in the Philippines has constantly risen in importance.[4] It embodies the wish of large parts of the population to remain uninvolved in struggles, 'that seem remote from their interests and way of life (…)' (Mitchell, 2007: 16) and is based upon the initiative of indigenous people in a time where the awareness increased that civil society can actually make a difference and force the conflicting parties to listen (Lee, 2006: 9-10). Sine the year 2000 up to 80 and counting Peace Zones, each encompassing about 500 families, spread all over the southern island of Mindanao, providing a unique example for the possibilities of this concept (Garcia, 2004: 41) and a model for similar undertakings in other countries (Avruch & Jose, 2007: 24).

Figure 1 here

Background

The roots of the Mindanaoan conflict, during which most of the Peace Zones emerged 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 independence (1946)[5] many of the governments (administrations) ignored large segments of the population and their needs, as a result the poor, usually Muslim and Indigenous population has gotten poorer while wealth and power continued to be held by a privileged few (Hancock & Iyer, 2007: 32). This endangered 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%, but 80% of those landless tenants (Dictaan-Bang-oa, 2005:

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

[5] The Philippines unofficially got independent from Spain in 1898 but later got occupied by the USA and Japan. They had officially been released to independence in 1946.

154). Today the Christian settlers do not only dominate in numbers, but also in socio-economic development and political power (Stankovitch, Conciliation Resources, et al.).

The first Peace Zones in Mindanao, such as the Peace Zone in Pikit, had been founded through the support of a local NGO named Tabang Mindanaw. Later on, through continuous Networking activities and a theoretical as well as practical embedment in the Grassroots Peacebuilding Learning Center, standards and courses of action, as well as teaching modules had been developed to ease the foundation of new Peace Zones. The Space for Peace in Nalapaan (later extended to the bigger Peace Zone of Pikit) became a prototype for these early Peace Zones and it's course of action a model for the foundation of many other Peace Zones (Ramos & Abinales, 2004: 14). 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 destroyed farmland, machineries and infrastructure (Catholic Relief Services, 2003: 24, Layson, 2003a: 1, Margallo, 2005: 6). This was when the local elites, themselves trapped in the evacuation centres and continuously loosing power to influence their own situation, agreed to support the integrative concept of the Peace Zone and to discuss it among their fellows. Collective efforts, supported by local and international NGOs started, lead by the unifying wish of the population to return home (DuFort, 2004: 2).

> "That's why we came up with the idea, that maybe we need to negotiate with them [the military]. We did not drive them away but we asked them to be a part of it. But that means that we had to change our attitudes from confrontational to dialogue. And that is based on the assumption that there is no monopoly to goodness in the world. The church does not have the monopoly to goodness in the world, even the NGOs, the government. And we had to think that even the rebels are having some goodness in their heart and even the military in their uniforms there are still some good people there. And that's why it [the Space for Peace] came to be and why during the long thing it still exists." (Layson 2006)

In order to realize return the buy-in of all warring parties, a temporary ceasefire, was necessary. Such a geographically limited stop of violence was achievable because it did not affect the conflicting parties' national strategies, given the limited extension, purpose and duration of the concept (Hancock & Iyer, 2007: 46). Additionally, the local military leaders did not want to appear to be acting against the wishes or

interests of the very people whom they were pledging to defend and liberate (Avruch & Jose, 2007: 65). This ensured a certain amount of safety and certainty that the community's efforts would not only be of short duration and destroyed by resurfacing external violence. To keep this agreement going the Peace Zone, as a concession to the warring parties, had to remain neutral and peaceful and therefore prevent interior dynamics from undermining the dialog oriented and partially democratic process of decision-making and implementation. These first steps – being possible only on a local level through the inclusion of all stakeholders – prepared the ground for the starting of the communication process aiming on enduring peace that will be described in the following paragraphs.

Empirical Base(Basis?)

This description is based on a multi-method design encompassing 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 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 five guided interviews, each of about 45 minutes long. They provide an in-depth overview on the magnitude of activities and there effects on the population, which in such 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 soldier with the national army himself and who as mayor 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 mayor 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 is stationed with

German Development Service in another Mindanaoan community that has recently started to set up a Peace Zone. This is how a wide variety of persons was included in the study: normal inhabitants, Muslims as well as Christians and Indigenous through documents of the Peace Zone and NGOs, the leaders of the project (either supporters from the very beginning or convinced critics) and representatives from both an international GO and an NGO.

All this information had been evaluated following the method of 'global/comprehensive analysis' by Legewie (1994) and combined with personal experiences and observations on the spot by one of the authors. Through 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 this new field of study.

After a short overview on the most important activities, which took place in the Peace Zone before, during and after its declaration in the year 2000, those will be analyzed following the question to which extent they contribute to (1) providing environments for an ideal speech situation, (2) providing a shared frame for interaction and (3) leading to the establishment of institutional structures on local level.

Case Study

> „The war has created socio-economic damage to the community. And even more damaging was the effect it had on the relationship of people. What we tried to do was to address the visible effect by implementing socio-economic projects. This was the easiest part of rehabilitation I found out. The most difficult part, indeed, was to heal the invisible effect that lies beneath the surface – feeling of hatred and anger, traumas caused by dehumanization, increased prejudice, lack of self-confidence, polarization, and worst, breakdown of people's faith in the peace process and in peace in general." (Layson 2005a: 7)

The activities that took place in the Peace Zone of Nalapaan throughout foundation, establishment and expansion of the Peace Zone 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 moods of thinking of the people. They 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 (Nayal, 2006; Layson, 2006; Antipuesto, 2006; Catholic Relief Services, 2003). Therefore they did not impose exterior points of view but rather encouraged Peace Zones inhabitants to develop their own concepts,

perspectives and projects, reaching a high level of participation, which is regarded crucial for the success of the Peace Zone (see Hancock & Iyer, 2007: 45-46).

Figure 2 here

> "At the start of course it was not easy to us. Some people would not believe, some were not immediately convinced. So we have to show them our efforts. We have to talk to them that this initiative needs your support. And of course the people are suffering poverty. So we also have to support them with economical assistance. We have to support them with farm inputs (...) so having them lead there farms, means that you help them getting their one day meal. So we had to make sure that we have to support them. (...) but then they see and they accept." (Unggui 2006)

When the Peace Zone founding was 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. The following Declaration Workshops aimed at formulating a Peace Zone manifest, serving as a shared basis of cohabiting. Establishing the Peace Zone started with the ceremonial Declaration of the manifest, where representatives of the conflicting parties showed their approval and support, and thereby affirmed respecting the Peace Zone and its values to the residents. Other important activities that still are conducted include the Leadership Training, which teaches administrative skills and a basic understanding for democracy to local leaders and the Culture of Peace Seminar, which conveys an understanding of the conflict background and first steps towards reconciliation to the residents and establishes further activities of interreligious dialogue and traditional means of immediate conflict resolution such as the concept of Restorative Justice. Those are later being implemented and conducted by the people on their own means. The Interreligious Dialogue consists of a series of workshops held with local religious leaders, emphasising interreligious similarities and eliminating prejudice and initiates the joint celebration of religious festivities such as Easter, Ramadan or the native Thanksgiving. The concept of Restorative justice, continuously pursued, provides an alternative method of conflict resolution. Further the Peace Zone members monitor the national ceasefire agreements (Ceasefire Watch/ Monitoring teams) and establish close contacts to other Peace Zones, GOs and NGOs (Networking). In addition, the implementation of material projects is accompanied by mediating and constant dialogical escorting of the projects in order to prevent new conflicts.

"Even our water and sanitation project our public help has also a peacebuilding component. Because once they fight over the area where we construct the pump, we say stopp the construction and do peacebuilding first. We talk together and we settle the conflict (...) our engineer would say lets stop the construction and we do peacebuilding first. (...) I think its a complementaring tool. I think the rehabilitation will not happen unless the relational gap is not resolved. (...) So we sit together, we handle with dialogue. And they are accepting it."
(Nayal 2006)

(1) Providing Environments for an Ideal Speech Situation

"Every activity is a tri-people[6] activity. We did all do it with the participation of everybody."
(Unggui 2006)

All activities described are based on a dialogical approach, guaranteed by multi-sectoral and multi-ethnic groups, trying to include all those in decision-making, decisions or implications are made for. Layson and Unggui explained that many activities include all members of the Peace Zone in their processes (material projects, Consultations, Declaration Workshop, Culture of Peace Seminar, Interreligious Dialogue) others are based on representative committees (such as the Ceasefire Monitoring Teams, the judges for Restorative Justice or the political representatives), trying to encompass members of all relevant groups, especially of such groups and sectors that are usually excluded (women, youth, indigenous). The inter-group stratification was further balanced through sectoral activities where women and youth as well as other previously marginalised groups could develop their own agendas and present them in common sessions where their group opinion was equally reflected. Such emphasis aimed at reducing paternalistic structures at least in political discussions.

(2) Providing a Shared Frame of Interaction

"Every family suffered after the war. There was no income because there were no jobs and capital. (…) Life was very hard as we struggled to rebuild our lives from the scratch. Cases of salvaging and extra-judicial killings continued. There was no security and certainty to our life and our livelihoods.

As our response to the aforementioned situation and to strengthen the peace process and to restore the prosperity and peace we once enjoyed as a tri-people in our communities, we hereby DECLARE out barangays as **GiNaPaLaDTaKa SPACE FOR PEACE and Children as Zones of Peace.**

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[6] Der Begriff der tri-people bezeichnet die Gemeinschaft von Lumads (indigener Bevölkerung), Muslimen und Christen.

We dream of a life where there will be no more oppressors and oppressed. We aspire to restore our trust towards one another. We seek to rebuild our community life where love reigns, and where there is forgiveness and recognition of mistakes. We strive to build our community on good moral principles where one is faithful to one's religion and culture." (excerpts of the Declaration)

All activities inside the Peace Zone are based on this Declaration, which had been developed by the community residents themselves in Workshops and can be seen as a first approach to define their own concept of peace. An evaluation of the NGO material shows that theses initial steps before the Declaration aimed at connecting the residents along shared wishes such as to return from evacuation centres and to rebuild their livelihoods in peace. The Declaration itself further references the good relationships among the ethnies before war, the common experience of war, grief and evacuation and emphasizes on the peaceful means and doings of the population. It asks for the support not only form the different Gods (Allah/God/Magbabaya) but from the military and the rebels as well (Layson, 2003b: 2). It captures the collective vision of cooperation, harmony, respect and dialogue that does not only express the overarching vision for development, but further provides specified rules for living together to which the people can recur in case of dissent (Layson, 2005a: 8).[7]

Based on this Declaration local issues were discussed and very own broken relationships mended – detached from protracted national processes. But even therefore rightness and truthfulness in communication and thus trust was needed, not only among the leaders but also among those they represent. First steps into this direction were made through the Culture of Peace Seminar. As described by Bert Layson and Adele Nayal, it provides a shelter in which the people come together and reflect their experiences during war. They are given time for reconciliation, to eat together and revive the communal spirit that once existed in their village. The seminar further provides the needed basics for dialogue and a safe environment for training.[8] 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, lays the foundation for

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[7] Such are for example no gambling, no weapons inside the community area and being faithful to one's religion and culture.

[8] The elements and aimed results of the activities in the Culture of Peace Seminar are not newly developed in a democratic process in each of the Seminars, they go back to a program which has been developed from local scholars and Peaceworkers of all sectors and ethnic groups and is based on the communities wishes and experiences articulated in the Consultation and Declaration Workshops.

the creation of a shared identity, no longer as member of one ethnic group but as member of the Peace Zone (Layson, 2003b). In its six different modules it strongly differentiates between the collective history of each group, related prejudices and attitudes and the personal experiences of each participant that could be but are not automatically related to their group affiliation. Usually a first healing experience takes place in these activities and, unbiased through external manipulation, many prejudices and myths associated with the opposed ethnic groups are cleared up (Layson, 2001: 6, Neufeldt, McCann, et al., 2000: 8). As all the interviewees recollected, those seminars often end with very emotional scenes of reconciliation, realizing that everyone had directly or indirectly contributed to the violence and that reaching stable peace is in everybody's interest.

This Seminar is followed by many other communal and multi-ethnic activities that foster cooperation among Peace Zone members, for example joint sports games or multi-ethnic workshops on nutrition, health or parenting, thus driving a process of integration that is further reinforced through the Peace Zones success in stabilizing the situation and improving the living conditions continuously. 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, leading to an important change on individual level that forms the starting point for a sustainable conflict transformation: a change of identity, no longer making the people vulnerable for any kind of instrumentalisation through national elites. 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:

> (…) there is no perfect guarantee that there will be no more war in Mindanao 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

This joint vision is further being emphasized through networking activities among other Peace Zones and the involvement of the Peace Zones in the national peace process. A network among the Peace Zones as it has been established recently, combined with a common sense of empowerment among the civil society, has given the people a voice, even in national peacetalks where representatives of the Peace

Zone movement are now included, such as the Mindanao People Caucus who has gained observer status from both government and rebels. Through this initiative the Peace Zones can not only present the civil society's point of view on the peace process, but also engage in panel discussions and lobbying (Layson, 2003a). As Adele Nayal mentions, even ordinary members of the Peace Zone become part of the networking process. In surrounding communities they talk about their experiences and successes as Peace Zone members or host national and international journalists and scholars to share their life inside a Peace Zone. This is how the Peace Zone members work to continuously revive their unifying vision ('We pray for the genuine peace to rule our land') stated in the Declaration and thereby reinforce their shared definition of peace.

(3) Establishing Institutional Structures

But as not every issue can be solved through dialogue among all inhabitants, community organisation had to be improved and kept going. Strong internal organizational structures and decision-making processes are needed to reach sustainability (Avruch & Jose, 2007: 61). Therefore existing structures were strengthened and modes of communication established where earlier dispute led to an end of communication and to a restart of violence. As political participation even on communal level did hardly exist before and during civil war, few elected community leaders knew how democratic decision-making did work (Community and Family Services International, 2002: 12-13). 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 mayors 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. The mayors further described different decision-making processes developed for emergency decisions, decisions concerning administration only and such decisions immediately concerning the population. This is how they, in their own point of view, do no longer just apply national standards with few effects on local level, but rather adopt decision-making to the local needs they are facing.

Additional structures to strengthen the Peace Zone were installed such as the interreligious dialogue to support communication between the religious leaders and the concept of Restorative Justice. As religion is an important motivation in daily life in the region (Antequisa & Sanguila, 2004: 2, Layson, 2005a: 9), it is crucial to enhance it as a resource of peace. The interviewees described especially the joint celebration of religious feasts as an element that emphasized understanding for the other religion(s).

> „You have to make them understand that religion is not a problem in terms of relationship. Because if religion is creating a problem with relationship – what is the use of religion? If religion is creating a problem with the people, they would be really better of with no religion." (Unggui 2006)

But also non-religious conflicts have to be solved. 'Imported' methods of conflict resolution such as the American legal system in the Philippines do 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 are not respected by the population. Those concurring national and traditional mechanisms to regulate conflict are being analysed in the Culture of Peace Seminar. An integrative method, following the concept of Restorative Justice was developed and local leaders are trained as mediators to guide the victims, offenders and witnesses through the process of fact-finding, material compensation and reconciliation (Layson, 2004).

Further the Ceasefire Monitoring Teams strengthen the Peace Zone towards exterior dangers by observing and resolving offences against the ceasefire agreements (Arguillas, 2003: 4, Rood, 2005: 29). Despite existing ceasefire contracts singular violations of the Peace Zone by outsiders happen. Those could easily lead to a resurfacing of fighting as the offender usually is unclear and warring parties accuse each other for the offence (Hansen, 2005). Therefore different Monitoring Teams emerged on regional and local level, trying to clear up outbreaks of violence. They are investigating violations of the ceasefire agreement or human rights abuses but also confront the rebels or the military with their findings. They are linked to regional and national organisations watching over the Mindanao-wide ceasefire agreement (Rood, 2005: 29).

These institutions were developed together in the Consultations and Workshops and are taught in the Culture of Peace Seminars and trainings, supported by local NGO

staff; an approach that seems to root them in the cultural practices of the people. Not the ethnic belonging but the commonly developed mechanisms and institutions put certain persons into power. Majority Muslim communities elect Christian leaders and Christian communities start electing Muslim leaders. This can explain why the decisions made are being accepted and the demands put forward are being followed independent of any ethnic affiliation. This, as the eight years of existence of the Peace Zone shows, creates a momentum of ownership and sustainability seldom reached by classical approaches of institution building.

This positive development on local level raises the question what long term influence Peace Zones can have on the national process of institution building. As stated before, Peace Zones have developed alternative methods to make decisions and to administer justice which are much closer to the people but still try to fit in the regional and national governing system. But those institutions strongly benefit from the short communication links between the Peace Zone inhabitants and the inclusive dialogical approach that really can encompass every single member of the Peace Zone, a fact that can not be replicated on higher levels. Therefore one of the key challenges to the concept will be how they can make their own vision 'we pray for genuine peace to rule our land' come true and extend their concept to regional and national level. Addressing the systemic level, influencing the top-level elites and even allying with international organisations therefore seems crucial to extent the influence of Peace Zones.

Conclusion

The Peace Zone of Pikit gives a concrete example of how regulations, developed by a multi-ethnic and divided community itself, can not only mitigate conflict on the base of institutionalization but also reach a certain stage of conflict transformation. Based on tremendous suffering and the wish to rebuild their lives in peace, the community members agreed on trying an alternative approach. Although the movement was originally initiated by local elites, it was immediately transferred down to community level and thereby reached substantial inclusiveness. By their approach, which incorporates many of the aspects of Habermas' theory, mutual understanding and continued successful and peaceful development in a region otherwise marked by conflict and violence was reached.

The great advantage of the Peace Zone concept is, that such kind of Peacebuilding does not rely on the accord of warlords, national army officials or rebel leaders, but on the power and will of civil society. It does not have to find an answer to elites' struggle for power, resources and weapons, but only for the peoples wish to rebuild their lives in peace. But nevertheless it will have to extent its implications to systemic level eventually, if the Peace Zones do not want to rely on the good will of the conflicting parties for unpredictable times. Therefore ways and measures have to be developed, how a joined network of Peace Zones can extent its power, influence the national agenda and transform its institutions to regional and national level.

As we draw these conclusions, some limitations of the theoretical concept and the empirical data have to be pointed out. First, a broader basis of evidence is necessary in order to check whether this locally and communication based concept of Peacebuilding does not only work under special conditions in Mindanao but constitutes a universal strategy and therefore may be the basis of a new 'theory' of Post-conflict Peacebuilding. Future research has to bear in mind, that the success of the Peace Zones in Mindanao might have been facilitated by the collectivist culture in the Philippines, making an individual break out unlikely and by the exhaustion of the population at the starting point, resulting from previous decades of war. Second it has to be acknowledged that not all conflicts existing in the world of early 21st century can be described as ethnopolitical conflicts. Still there are classical inter-state conflicts about political questions, resources, lines of borders etc. (e.g. Russia-Georgia, USA-Iran, Falkland, Greece-Turkey) or outbreaks of violence fuelled by international terrorism that are obviously not accessible to communication based solutions on a local level.

Implications for Future Peacebuilding

Ethnoplitical and domestic conflicts form a special challenge to Peacemaking and Peacebuilding. They don't fit in the concept of 'war' that was predominating until the early 20th century, leading to the still existing strategies of Peacebuilding through diplomacy and military intervention. The long durance and psycho-social dimension of such conflicts as well as the absence of neutral powers make their transformation extremely complicated and nearly impossible by top-down measures that deal with state structures but ignore individual needs. Segregation processes, collective traumas, mistrust, fear and the desire for revenge led to a cut in communication and a pick up

of violence. The longer this communication break lasts, the harder it is to go back to the situation before the outbreak of violence. Elites are captured by the expectations of their followers, publicity and their own desire to strengthen their power and influence. Common people on the other side are usually kept from contact with the members of opposed ethnic groups and just don't know about means how to resume communication. Classical approaches of combined diplomatic and military action can in this context very often just provide a fragile and superficial ceasefire, without resolving underlying conflicts and leading to sustaining peace (as in Yugoslavia).

As we tried to show, mediating instances from civil society are able to fill this gap, but their efforts have to be sensitive to the cultural, traditional and regional peculiarities. If any, external and international organisations can only play a supportive and mentoring role. The concept of Peace Zones as communication based, bottom-up and multi-sectoral approach to disconnect the peoples desire for peace from long-term national processes seems to be a promising approach in integrating the necessary measures to reach the goal of 'real' Peacebuilding. This process has to include every single member of a community or nation and give peace a concrete vision. For communication is the most important instrument in this process, communication theory and research should be regarded in developing measures and concepts of Peacebuilding. It can provide a wide range of opportunities to improve existing methods, create new ones and enhance evaluation practices. Not only the Theory of Communicative Action of Habermas provides answers to challenging questions, but also in the fields of intercultural communication, interpersonal communication or mediated communication existing links with conflict resolution and Peacebuilding can and should be deepened and new links established. To give this discussion, which has so far been loosely if at all connected an embracing name, we suggest the term of Peace Communication, encompassing all forms of organised communication and related research, intending to achieve peace without reverting to violence.

- Tables and Figures -

Table I. Classical Approaches to Aid in Conflicts Analysed for their Main Deficits

	Humanitarian Approaches	**Structural Approaches**	**Deficits**
Who: acting bodies	International org., states, NGOs (e.g. Red Cross)	International org. (e.g. UN, EU), states	Mostly external actors, no inclusion of civil society
What: means	Mainly material: goods, money, temporary voluntary aides	Material/know how: consulting, training of officials, money	Neglecting psychosocial dimension
How: mode of help	Asymmetric: giving - receiving	Asymmetric: giving - receiving	Lack of selfresponsi-bility of citizens
Why: goals	Helping victims of conflict survive, improve physical life situation of individuals	(Re-)building executive, legislative, judicative structures	Failure of true recon-ciliation, rebuilding relational structures
When: time scope	Starts within days, duration dependent on situation (weeks, months)	Timely negotiations before action, long term perspective of aid (years, decades)	People left alone after satisfaction of physical needs
Where: places of action	Refugee camps, areas/ villages of conflict (when possible)	Capital cities, international capitals, conferences	No connection to everyday lifeworld of people

Figure 1. Mindanao and the Philippines in Global Context

Figure 2. The Main Activities in Nalapaan/Pikit in the Course of Time
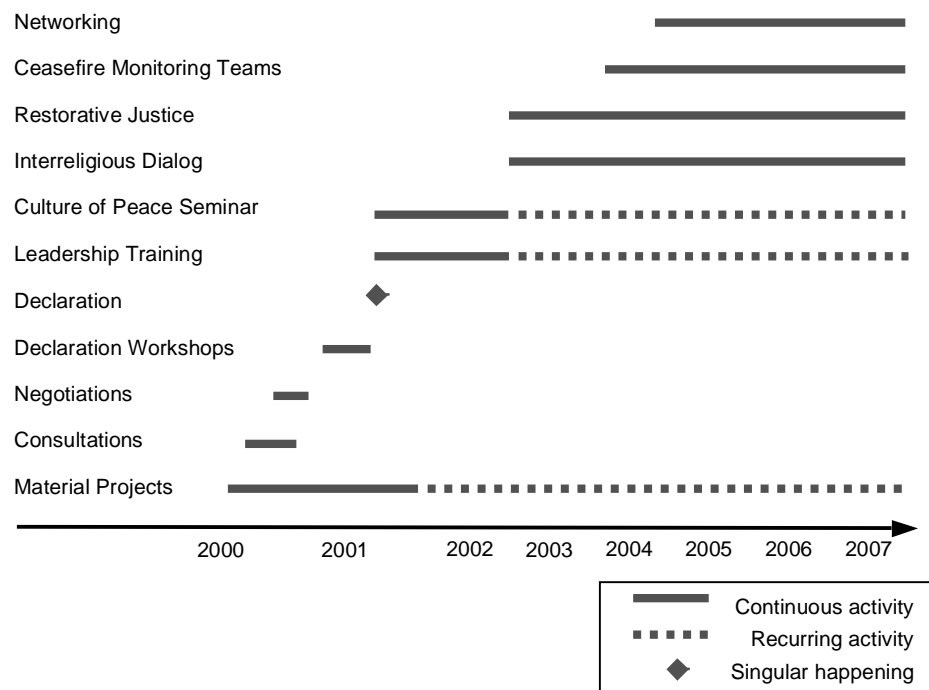
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