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## COMMENT



# Conflictology: A Multidisciplinary Vision

Eduard Vinyamata

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## Abstract

Conflictology is defined as the way of understanding conflicts assuming all related areas, such as conflict resolution, transformation and management, while at the same time it is based on the principles of non-violence as a paradigm opposed to the conviction that violence is the way to resolve conflicts. It is, therefore, a form of cross-disciplinary, comprehensive and synthetic knowledge. Conflictology is the culmination of knowledge that helps us understand conflicts, crises, violence of all kinds, and, simultaneously, the compendium of transformation, intervention and aid techniques, resources and procedures.



## Keywords

conflictology, peace culture, mediation, conflict resolution, conflict transformation, conflict management, non-violence

One of humanity's greatest concerns and where it has made a lot of effort has been to try and live in peace, as individuals and with each other, leading to the accumulation of wide-ranging thoughts and procedures. The fragmentation of science due to specialisation, a lack of communication between different human cultures, and competitiveness, has created multiple denominations with the same aim: to live in peace. Conflictology brings them together.

We learn about conflictology when we change how we think and, therefore, how we live. Without this change, the violent paradigm in which we firmly believe and, consequently, practise, there is no true learning. Conflictology is the compendium of knowledge and skills in the environment of conflict, crises and violence that leads us to seek non-violent ways of interacting and the full meaning of peace as a way of thinking and acting.

If we believe that deceit is legitimate and useful, that repression is legal and pragmatic, violence and exploitation understandable, and limitation of freedom reasonable, then we have not yet rid ourselves of barbarism and we still have a long way to go to become civilised. Without an integral transformation of the ways we relate to one another as individuals and in social relations, we will continue to act as we always have and real solutions will as always be de-

layed. Conflictology, therefore, is a system which proposes change, a reform of the main social institutions such as politics, justice and security, as something truly necessary to put an end to the degradation of relations due to violence, permanent conflict, social injustice, insecurity and the lack of an efficient system for peaceful coexistence.

It is not a question of values, principles or ideology, or a set of theories. It is a different way of thinking that can be reached through many different routes, using the rationality of empirical science, philosophy, simple life experience, feelings, emotions such as love, poetical or mystical inspiration, and through meditation, contemplation, ascetics, logic, and more, from any cultural or ideological vision. Conflictology is a plural, cross-disciplinary and open discipline. It is not limited by closed laws or training programmes, nor is it the domain of a specific organisation. The fact is that, as well as psychologists, sociologists, teachers, lawyers and philosophers, it is also of interest to doctors, biologists, diplomats, the police, members of the armed forces, engineers and many more, since conflicts can be found anywhere, at every level and in every sphere.

Open to all fields of knowledge, as well as social sciences such as psychology, sociology, history, politics and anthropology, it also includes biology, neurology, phi-



losophy, and even mathematics.<sup>1</sup> Conflictology embraces rationalist thought and oriental philosophy and benefits from contributions by psychology and the neurology of emotions. The importance of knowing how to resolve conflicts should not be restricted to one occupation, but should be part of the culture of everyday life. Specialists should only have to intervene in processes involving conflict where the seriousness or complexity of the situation exceeds the ability of people to find a solution for themselves.

It has even been proven that, in the field of violent conflicts and criminal activity, the use of conflictology is more effective than traditional police and judicial systems, which by definition are used to defend established power rather than justice, devoted more to repression, which violates basic rights on many occasions, and which, surprisingly, are not at all effective. In an area of the city of Guayaquil in Ecuador, which has some of the highest levels of violence and crime in the country, where police could enter but not leave because of the power of armed criminal organisations, with few resources, violence and crime rates fell by 60%<sup>2</sup> in six months using conflictology procedures.

Conflictologists learn mediation, negotiation and conciliation techniques, about the bases of neurobiology in violence, and the philosophical foundations of conflicts and peace. There are contributions from the schools of psychology, also from anthropology and history relating to conflicts, war and violence. Other study materials include the use of teaching methods and social communication techniques, "proxemics", the sociology of conflict, the influences of neurobiology on human and social behaviour, teaching and communication and even non-violent combat techniques, such as aikido.

Conflictology, which is a synonym for conflict resolution and conflict transformation as established multidisciplinary occupations, has its roots in pacifism and non-violence as a moral approach, political system and expression of life. Unlike a pacifist movement that focuses on denouncing war and the apology for peace, conflictology is not restricted to denouncing the barbarity of war and violence, but there is a decision to intervene directly, first-hand, in war and in conflicts, with scientific knowledge of conflicts, violence and crises, using methods that do not contradict its objectives, i.e., non-violent and peaceful. And the aim is clearly to end violence, achieve reconciliation and be able to live in peace. Conflictology is, there-

fore, basically a pragmatic, applicable and, above all, vital occupation.

In conflictology, the idea of peace goes beyond that of classic war and notions of conflict based exclusively on physical violence. It includes violence in the broadest sense of the word, that does not always use knives or firearms but resorts to other methods that can also injure, kill, dominate and harm: deceit, hatred, political and economic structures or a legal system that limits freedom, eradicates dignity and fosters harm to others are refined and highly efficient forms of extreme violence. These forms of violence are commonly used in social and political relations, in judicial processes and in a large part of family and interpersonal conflicts.

It also includes all forms of terrorism as a way of waging war, both groups of citizens in revolt against the state they are a part of and the terrorism of states and criminal organisations against the democracy and civil liberties that challenge their supremacy and their monopoly of power. In classic security policies, terrorism is tackled as an abnormal phenomenon that needs trial and imprisonment if not physical destruction, without heeding the origins, causes or motivation of the armed groups that carry out terrorist actions. Terrorism cannot be comprehended without understanding – which does not mean agreeing with – the belligerent party, the states, the victims, the organisations that carry out terrorism and the population that supports it morally and politically, that justifies it. We could say the same of criminality, of Mafia-type organisations. Simple repression normally does not solve the problem but defers it, and the cost of repression is very high.

If violence is anything that can cause harm to oneself, to another or to the social or natural environment, non-violence is exactly the opposite: it consists of causing good, even to those we may consider to be our competitors or adversaries, those who think differently from us, who live differently. This, which may seem very philosophical or moralist, ends up being what predetermines behaviour in business, in the Justice Administration, in governability, education, and so on. And it is exactly the beliefs contrary to these that predetermine the actions of government, of financiers, of politicians, of judges and others that have led us into the current crisis. We should not underestimate the moral, ethical or philosophical foundations of human behaviour: these philosophical foundations are the cognitive bases from which social and political behaviour and attitudes are derived.

1 Anatol Rapoport, mathematician and his game theory. In the field of theoretical physics, the so-called chaos theory, in biology, scientific ecology and the Gaia theory.

2 *Pandillas y Maras: Aproximación a su comprensión y propuestas de estrategia de solución del conflicto que éstas generan desde la perspectiva de la conflictología*, Latin American Countries' Ministries of Justice Conference, Editorial Tirant lo Blanc, Valencia 2008. The methodologies proposed are being applied gradually by the General Directorate of Citizen Security of the Department of the Interior of the Catalan government, by the Catalan Police specialising in organised gangs, and also by the Spanish Security Forces.



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Eduard Vinyamata Conflictology: A multidisciplinary vision ■

Religions and philosophies seek loyalty to principles and, especially, to hierarchy rather than freedom and spiritual peace of people. The fear of uncertainty brings totalitarian systems of thought to submission in the search for convictions that distance themselves from the unknown and the anxiety due to the insecurity of living without knowing everything. Dual thought is a structure of conflictive thought, discovering the possibility of thinking other-

wise means accepting uncertainty and discovering mental peace.

Conflictology brings together the diversity of approaches and procedures to understand that living peacefully requires effort, but at the same time teaches us that the different strands of knowledge conflictology is based on enable the desire to live in peace to be achieved. ■

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## ARTICLE

# A Narrative Approach to Working with an Organization in Conflict

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John Winslade

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## Abstract

This article is about how to apply narrative practices as tools for mediation in organizations. It offers a range of theoretical reflections that guide the use of narrative practices in this context and illustrates these points by analyzing an organization in conflict and a subsequent narrative mediation process. In particular, the paper discusses the implications of transferring narrative practices from a context of two-party mediation to an organizational context.

## Keywords

mediation, conflict resolution, narrative, narrative mediation, discourse, positioning, organization, deconstruction, externalizing

## INTRODUCTION

Narrative mediation in relational conflicts has been extensively addressed (see for example Cobb, 2004; Cobb, 1994; Cobb, 1993; Winslade, 2006; Winslade, 2003; Winslade & Monk, 2009; Winslade & Monk, 2000; Winslade, Monk & Cotter, 1998). This paper adds to this work by reflecting on how narrative mediation practices can be shaped when transferred from the context of two-party relational conflict to one of organizational conflict. The change of contexts calls for a number of reflections of both a theoretical and a practical nature. In this paper we particularly focus on two aspects. First, we briefly conceptualize how organizational conflicts are produced discursively. We suggest that organizational conflicts are conditioned by a web of privileged and marginalized organizational discourses that function as a background for negative positioning, and we argue that this understanding of organizational conflicts gives rise to an alteration of the mediator's gaze and practice. Second, we reflect on the concrete, practical ramifications of using

narrative practices in multi-relational settings such as an organization.

These points are illustrated through a case study of a Danish health organization (called here Centre for Motor Disabilities, CMD) which is an interdisciplinary research team. At this centre, it is assumed that muscular pain is the result of a complex network of physiological, psychological and social factors that all play a part in producing and maintaining pain. As a result, a doctor, a social worker, a physiotherapist, a psychologist, and an occupational therapist have been recruited to establish a multi-perspective team that can treat patients holistically. Recently, members of the organization have experienced patterns of conflict and frustration in their decision-making practices. The conflict is not paralyzing the organization's practice, but it does cast a significant negative shadow over the organization's life. The first author of this paper interviewed all seven team members twice (the team consists of the specialists mentioned above and two secretaries), participated in a number of staff meetings, and organized a two-day seminar where narrative practices were used as mediation tools.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Narrative practices were developed in a therapeutic setting by Michael White and David Epston (White, 2007; White & Epston, 1990) in the 1980's and 1990's. Drawing upon Bruner's (1986) conception of identity as a narrative construct, White and Epston developed a number of retelling practices that proved extremely helpful in various therapeutic contexts (see for example Freedman & Combs, 1996; Payne, 2006; White, 2007; White & Epston, 1990; Zimmermann & Dickerson, 1996). Building on this promising prospect, mediators have since made use of narrative practices in their effort to resolve conflicts (see for example Cobb, 2004; Cobb, 1994; Cobb, 1993; Winslade, 2006; Winslade, 2003; Winslade & Monk, 2009; Winslade & Monk, 2000; Winslade, Monk & Cotter, 1998). This approach, known as narrative mediation, is theoretically supported by Foucault's concept of discourse as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1969, p. 49). In particular, narrative mediators focus on what can be coined 'relational discourses', which are local systems of meaning that shape the identities of the parties in a relationship. These relational discourses map onto larger, more pervasive, discourses, or orders of discourse, but at the personal level, they are manifest through the 'positioning' of each of the parties in a power relation (Davies & Harré, 1990; Drewery, 2005; Winslade, 2006). For instance, when neighbor 1 responds to neighbor 2's suggestion to fell an inconveniently placed tree with the following response: "Could we be reasonable just for a second, please?"; neighbor 1 positions neighbor 2 as 'irrational' and represents himself as more legitimately 'rational'. The prioritized modernist discourse of rationality constructs neighbor 1 as privileged and qualifies neighbor 2 as an incompetent speaker whose perspectives and opinions are unworthy of consideration.

Conflicts are understood, from this perspective, as the end results of such marginalizing and polarizing positioning practices. Consequently, narrative mediators focus on the redistribution of the discursive resources that are drawn upon in such positioning practices by cooperating with the persons in conflict to build alternative relationship stories (Winslade, 2006). If this is successful, a new discursive background is constituted, which potentially short-circuits the current polarizing positioning practices. The discursive underpinning of the conflict is eroded and, as a result, the conflict is either dissolved or a basis for smooth negotiation of outstanding issues is established.

A number of studies have shown that narrative practices are useful mediation tools in the resolution of conflicts that involve two-party relations such as couples (Winslade, 2003; Winslade & Monk, 2009) or neighbors (Winslade, Monk & Cotter, 1998; Monk, Winslade, Crockett & Epston, 1997). In the light of this promising trajectory, a new ques-

tion emerges: Can narrative practices be applied for mediation in conflicts within organizations?

Before setting out to answer this question it seems important to clarify how a conflict in a two-party relation differs from a conflict in an organizational context. In this paper we draw on the work of Winslade and Monk (2000) in defining a relational conflict as a conflict that involves two parties who are in polarized positions from where they find themselves unable to move forward. An organizational conflict, on the other hand, is defined as a systemic pattern of positioning practices that concentrate marginalizing lines of force (Deleuze, 1988; 1995; Winslade, 2009) and negatively define various groups and individuals across an organization. At times, but not always, such negative definitions can lead to a pattern of domination that brooks no opposition or challenge. Thus, an organizational conflict goes beyond specific interpersonal communications and constructs patterns of negative definition of various persons across an organization. A conflict between two parties in an organization, therefore, is not an organizational conflict unless it is part of a larger pattern of negative positioning practices that involve other persons in the organization.

## THE ORGANIZATION AS A SPACE FOR DISCURSIVE STRUGGLE

When mediating it is important to be reflexively aware of how a conflict is created and what drives a conflict. The mediator's theoretical conceptualizations guide their vision and, consequently, practice. In this section we develop an understanding of organizational conflict that may help to establish a gaze that qualifies the use of narrative practices in an organizational context.

As described, mediation in relational conflicts aims to open up background relational discourses for inspection that, according to Foucault, operate as "the great anonymous murmur of discourses" (Foucault, 1989, p. 27) against which relational identities are being constructed. The effect of these discourses behind people's backs is then made available for challenge. We suggest making a distinction between relational discourses and organizational discourses. Relational discourses are those that shape identities in a specific relation. Organizational discourses, on the other hand, are those that shape practices across various fields, or planes of practice, in an organization. Thus, we suggest a view of organizations as a range of practice fields (such as the fields of decision making, management and communication) all of which are shaped by organizational discourses that establish positions from which people can act and speak. Importantly, discursive positions incorporate a conceptual repertoire and a moral location for people who accept this position as their own (Davies & Harré, 1990). As such, subject positions provide people with a specific





way of seeing the world and a way of acting morally in this world. In other words, on taking up a subject position, a person assumes a moral intention as a guideline for their actions. Based on these reflections, we proceed to analyze which discourses are shaping the practice field of decision making at CMD. We do so by asking the analytical question: what are the moral intentions in structuring decision-making practices in the organization?

Looking at CMD with this question in mind, it appears that the practice field of decision making is being predominantly shaped by a discourse of professional equality: all members of the team seem to espouse a moral commitment to equal status with regard to each other's professional training and background. Thus, the empirical material shows that two decision-making practices are dominant in the team's behavior. First, the majority of the team members apply a cross-functional gaze when diagnosing the patients. When observing the patients, the gaze is not limited to a strict mono-functional vision, but is directed to all dimensions of the patient (the physiological, social, and psychological). Second, the team members tend to communicate about the patients in a reflective manner that implicitly recognizes the possibility of other perspectives. The occupational therapist, Josephine, for example, formulates a suggestion as a hypothetical reflection:

"In that case, I might think about proposing that she [the patient] is seen by Pernille [the psychologist]."

Here Josephine reflects upon whether she wants to propose her suggestion before she can even begin to propose it. Arguably, these decision-making practices are organized by a discourse of equality. Observing patients with a holistic gaze meta-communicates that all perspectives are equally important. Likewise, speaking in a reflective mode suggests that all proposals articulated will be assumed to be equally justifiable. In other words, the majority of the decision makers speak and act from a moral position that is produced by a discourse of equality.

Inspired by Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) account of discourse theory, we argue that different organizational discourses will frequently engage in a struggle for dominance, including, ironically, a discourse that is named 'equality'. Thus, we prefer to think of organizational discourses as systems of meaning that strive to determine social activities by defining their subject position as the 'proper' social identity in the organization. If we analyze CMD from this point of view, a discourse of difference that challenges the discourse of equality becomes visible. We shall explain these two discourses with reference to some examples. In particular, two members, Thomas and Pernille, seem to be adversely positioned by this discourse of professional differences. They both prefer to observe the patient strictly from their own mono-functional perspective and believe that the quality of the treatment is enhanced if the team

members stick strictly to their own functional perspectives. Furthermore, instead of wording treatment proposals as reflections, they prefer to formulate their proposals as knowledge-based expert assessments. We will argue that this position is produced by a discourse of professional difference. Thus, both practices seem to be structured by the moral intention to activate the team's differences in functional perspectives and knowledge resources. The practice of observing the patient from a strictly expert perspective and of wording suggestions as expert assessments is based on an implicit assumption that the team holds a number of differences that should be activated. In other words, the position from which Thomas and Pernille talk shapes a decision-making rationale in which differences are valued and should be made explicit.

The ongoing struggle between these two discourses is expressed as a hierarchy of a dominant and marginalized discourse. In the case of CMD the discourse of equality dominates the discourse of difference. Analytically, we have determined this by means of what we term 'double descriptions'. Double descriptions appear when a member simultaneously observes two subject positions of which one is explicitly preferred but nevertheless feels obliged to assume the other. In the empirical material a number of such descriptions appear which clarify that the discourse of equality rules the field of decision making. For instance, on several occasions Thomas describes how he prefers to act in accordance with the position dispersed by the discourse of difference (i.e., he explicitly makes it clear that he prefers to formulate his perspective as an expert assessment), yet in fact he chooses a tentative, reflective voice. These sequences show that the position of the equality-seeking member is privileged at CMD, and, consequently, that the discourse of equality has managed to suppress its discursive opponent.

Seeing organizations as discursive hierarchies helps to understand the emergence of organizational conflicts. It allows for a distinction between privileged and disadvantaged social positions. The dominant discourse singles out a privileged social position, whereas the position produced by the subjugated discourse is marginalized. We suggest that organizational conflicts are the results of discursive power operations that distribute privilege unequally in the organization through the control of discourse and the allocation of discursive positions. Specifically we suggest that persons who assume marginalized subject positions risk being negatively defined by persons supporting the dominating discourse. On such occasions, the experience of the negatively defined person is not having their identity recognized as legitimate, which may likely be followed by a "struggle for recognition" (Honneth, 2006). Such struggles are often destructively expressed in the shape of intimidation of others' preferred identities, which, in turn, may force others to struggle for their own recognition. Thus, the hierarchical discursive structure legitimizes practices of negative positioning which drive and escalate conflict patterns.



In CMD, Thomas and Pernille, who assume a position generated by the discourse of professional difference, are subject to these negative definitions. Both are indirectly, but systematically, urged to suppress their ambition to make the differences among team members explicit. For example, Thomas describes a situation where the team is in process of deciding whether or not a patient should be offered assistance when doing physical exercises. Thomas knows from previous experience that this type of patient needs such support, but says that somehow he is not permitted to word his knowledge as an expert assessment. Instead he is urged to formulate his knowledge in a reflective manner. As he puts it, he can do nothing more than “peep like a bird”. We will argue that Thomas, in this situation, is subjected to a negative definition. His intention to apply his specific knowledge is not acknowledged and is overruled by his peers. Indirectly he is told that his contributions to decision-making practices are not appropriate, or ‘proper’, and instead he is offered a more ‘correct’ position in the decision-making practices, in this case the reflective position.

We suggest that organizational conflicts frequently result from such discursively driven processes of negative definition. The discursive hierarchy in an organization distributes power and entitlements unequally, resulting in systemic patterns of positioning that negatively define various groups or individuals across the organization. Importantly, these negative definitions are driven by a hierarchy of organizational discourses that go beyond specific relations in the organization. The dominant organizational discourse (in this case the discourse of equality) shapes the preferred practices in the organization’s practice fields. Patterns of negative definition are thus established and those individuals or groups who have these definitions assigned to them are relegated to a marginalized position in the organization. On this basis, we suggest that the narrative mediator working with organizations in conflict should look for the positioning effects of the dominant discourses in an organization that are likely to be fueling conflict. In particular, it seems helpful to assist the organization to examine how the dominant discourses in an organizational context are effectively constructing privileged identities and suppressing others.

## ENGAGING IN THE DECONSTRUCTION OF DISCURSIVE HIERARCHIES

Below we give an account of a possible way of using narrative practices when working with an organization in conflict. Guided by the above theoretical account, we direct our attention to how narrative mediators can cooperate with an organization in reorganizing its discursive hierarchy, and thereby create new conditions for positioning practices.

Using Jacques Derrida’s (2004) term, we engage in a ‘deconstruction’ of the discursive hierarchy. In Derrida’s analysis, any discourse is distinguished from another discourse by its constitutive difference. At CMD this is expressed by the team defining itself in opposition to the traditional health system. Team members repeatedly stress how they are different from a traditional hospital section in terms of their horizontal structure and democratic decision-making processes. According to Derrida, this “setting of differences” reflects a construction of the discourse of equality that establishes itself in its difference to the discourse of difference represented by the traditional health system. However, the construction also contains within it the seeds of a deconstruction of the discourse. When the discourse of equality needs the discourse of difference to constitute itself, it must contain an inherent lack that the discourse of difference complements. If this is the case, then the setting of difference is also implicitly a deconstruction of the discourse of equality. The function of the discourse in the organization needs the tension with another discourse to organize relations between people. As such, the setting of differences both constructs and deconstructs the discourse. Any discourse is thus inherently unstable. No discourse can constitute itself as a stable identity if it always needs another discourse to become itself, so a discursive hierarchy must be equally unfinished and unstable. The discursive hierarchy that produces organizational conflicts may seem stable but is in fact vibrating or quivering, as the hierarchy is in a constant process of deconstruction. For the narrative mediator the main task, consequently, is to assist the organization in taking advantage of this inherent instability to reorganize its discursive hierarchy.

## WHY NARRATIVE PRACTICES?

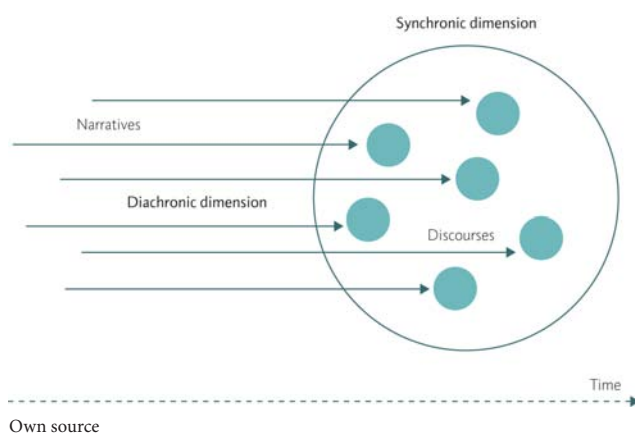
So far we have argued that organizational conflicts are driven by a hierarchy of organizational discourses and that it is the task of the mediator to assist in reorganizing this discursive field. At this stage an important question arises: Why are narrative practices interesting in this context? Why not discursive practices?

We suggest making a distinction between a synchronic and a diachronic dimension. A diachronic perspective looks at how an organization developed over time, whereas a synchronic perspective concentrates on the current structuring of the organization without reference to its past. Organizational discourses operate in a synchronic dimension. The analysis of CMD shows that a number of discourses (the discourses of equality and difference) operate simultaneously in shaping practices in the various fields of an organization. In the diachronic dimension, on the other hand, we find the organization’s narratives. These are the results of collective everyday communication processes that evolve over time (Boje, 1995; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1997). When colleagues



talk and gossip, in effect they construct stories about what has happened, is happening, and what will happen in the future in the organization. These stories will highlight competences, values and principles (or the lack of these) of protagonists in organizational narratives. Our main assumption is that an organization's discursive hierarchy is shaped through the everyday narrating processes. Storytelling in the diachronic dimension shapes organizational discourses in the synchronic dimension (as indicated in figure 1). For example, if the team at CMD successfully knit experiences of the holistic treatment approach into a coherent story that highlights the value of equality, the discourse of equality is supported and regenerated. If this assumption holds true, then the telling of new stories will reshape the discursive hierarchy in the organization and structurally alter the conditions for negative positioning practices. In the following section we develop a number of ideas about how narrative practices may be used to this end.

Figure 1. Diachronic/synchronic dimensions of narratives and discourses



## A NARRATIVE MEDIATION APPROACH

In this section we propose three ways of working with narrative practices in organizations: stimulating an organizational sense of contingency, using externalizing language, and building alternative practice field stories.

### Stimulating an organizational sense of contingency

Mediators working with organizations in conflict are often met with the assumption that conflicts are an inherent and unchangeable part of the organization. Conflicts are seen as disputes between fundamentally contradictory and irreconcilable parties. However, the rationale of deconstruction implies that there must always be cracks in the

discursive hierarchies that produce conflicts. The dominant discourse cannot monopolize social practices, as it is always challenged by competing discourses that pop up and allow for alternative practices. The discursive hierarchy 'shivers' and is constantly on the verge of forming a new shape.

The first task of the mediator is thus to stimulate a sense of contingency among the members of the organization. As a mere precondition for meaningful mediation dialogue, the parties must realize that existing conflicts are the results of contingent decisions that can be changed. On this basis, the mediator should aim to establish an unstable and open discursive field that lets people see the 'cracks' in the discursive hierarchy and makes other possibilities for social action visible. In practice, the mediator may achieve this by meta-communicating that change is possible, for example by drawing on experiences with organizations that managed to change their conflict patterns, by asking questions that stimulate a sense of urgency about resolving conflicts, by inquiring into people's desire for change in the organization or by inviting participants to voice their preferred future in the organization.

### Externalizing language

When some sense of contingency is established, the stage is set for the use of externalizing language (White & Epston, 1990; Winslade, Monk & Cotter, 1998) for talking about problems. Externalization is a rhetorical mode that makes a distinction between the problem and the person. It articulates problems as external forces that have momentarily taken over the social life of a person, a relation or an organization, rather than viewing them as essential to the 'personhood' of the protagonists. Consequently, problems are talked of as an 'it' or 'them' and they exercise their 'evil' influence on individuals, so that conflicts are not seen as the result of some members being immanently 'conflict-provoking'.

In the resolution of organizational conflicts, the use of externalizing language is supported by at least three rationales. Firstly, separating the problem from the person(s) helps to avoid identification and blame. Much conflict resolution (especially through the legal system) is based on the opposite idea, namely that only when the responsible parties are identified is it meaningful to engage in resolution processes. On the contrary, narrative practice argues that pointing fingers at guilty parties will likely only further enhance polarization. Secondly, externalizing conversations render conflicts tangible and addressable. Thirdly, externalization stimulates the telling of new stories. When problems are placed outside the persons involved, the likelihood of discovering new stories is enhanced. If problems, on the other hand, are articulated as essential parts of the persons involved, curiosity about alternative stories is blocked. What would be the use of building alternative stories, if the blame was already fixed on particular, conflict-



producing individuals? In responding to an organizational conflict, care needs to be taken to phrase the externalized description of a problem in language that does not subtly leave a group of people (for example one department) bearing the burden of blame. In other words, it is of no use to avoid the effects of individual blame, if you then leave the blame at the feet of a whole group of people.

The rationale of externalization is consistent with the analysis of CMD that shows that the conflict is not anchored in 'evil' persons but is fueled by the organization's discursive hierarchy. The mediator invites the participants to see the conflict as a result of external forces that are haunting the organization. One way of doing this would be to ask the participants to get together in pairs and reflect on what problems have taken over the organization. These problems could be written on a whiteboard where they materialize the common enemies that stand in the way of the organization's preferred future. In contrast with mediation in two-party relations, it is important to externalize problems that affect the organization's practice fields: if only problems that affect concrete relations are externalized, mediation efforts may solve relational problems, but will not be targeted towards more complex organizational conflicts.

## Building new organizational narratives

When conflicts have been successfully externalized, the task is to build new organizational narratives. A narrative consists of a number of organized events, highlighting competences and values, performed by the persons involved in the story. Thus, a process of spotting untold events or experiences is developed, bringing to the foreground competences or values which have been forced into the background by the conflict, so they can serve as the building blocks for the construction of new stories. There is a similarity here with the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach to organizational change (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), but a fundamental difference is that the narrative approach builds on the identification (and externalization) of problems, whereas AI practitioners begin by focusing on the organization's current resources. AI, moreover, places explicit value on inquiry into the positive, whereas narrative practice does not make the same distinction between positive and negative aspects of functioning, preferring to see these as products of the discourse to be deconstructed.

At this stage, we suggest that two circumstances must be taken into account when transferring narrative mediation from a context of mediation in two-party relations to an organizational context. First, the theoretical account of organizational conflicts leads to a changed focus on retrieving hidden organizational experience. Mediators who engage in two-party conflict resolution interview the parties about past events in the relationship in the hope

that values and competences that have been masked will surface. However, in organizational conflicts, the focus should change from discovering experiences tied to 'persons-in-relation' to experiences tied to 'persons-operating-in-practice-fields'. In short, the mediator should encourage the organization's members to investigate forgotten experiences about concrete organizational practice (for instance decision making) in order to reiterate hidden values and competences carried by the members of the organization.

Secondly, the practical circumstance that more people are participating in an organizational mediation than in two-party mediation implies that the interview process must be altered. In traditional narrative conversations participants are interviewed directly by the change agent. However, in this context we suggest that participants interview each other in order to allow all members the time to tell their story. Thus, we propose a structural change in the interview process from a mediator-participant-relation to a participant-participant-relation. An example of such a process is recorded by Winslade and Monk (2008), in a chapter co-written with Allan Holmgren, on a series of outsider witness processes within an organization.

Consequently, the concrete mediation process is based on an interview guide prepared by the mediator beforehand. This guide could be organized using the structure of the so-called Position-Map 1. This map consists of four phases: naming the problem, mapping the effects of the problem, evaluating the effects, and justifying the evaluation.

Following this structure the first section of the interview could invite the interviewee to elaborate on the problems or dilemmas that most significantly influence their work life, and to give these problems and dilemmas appropriate names. The interviewee could be asked, "What would be suitable names for the problems or dilemmas that influence your team?" Next, the effects of the problems could be mapped by questions such as "How does 'X' (the problem) make you think and feel about yourself in the organization?" or, "What would you call the atmosphere that 'X' creates in the team?" and, "What would you call the position that 'X' creates for you as a colleague?" In talking about problems as external forces, this line of interviewing stimulates taking a position against the problem.

Taking a position against the problem could be further actualized by inviting the participants to evaluate the effects of the problem. "Do you like the effects that the problems have on the team?" If the participants evaluate negatively, we see this as an entry into retrieving preferred organizational practices, competences and values. Questions might be asked that stimulate participants to justify their negative evaluation by describing preferred practices in the organization. The participants could be invited to elaborate on questions such as, "When you do not like the effects of the problems, can you describe how you would prefer the team members to act and communicate? If possible, give



examples from your everyday life,” or “Which values in the organization would support this preferred practice? If possible, give examples,” and, “Which competences in the organization would gain a bit more space if your preferred organization became reality? If possible, give examples”. The intention is that these questions result in the discovery and increased visibility of un-storied events or hidden values or competences.

As mentioned, a chronological list of events is not a narrative. Recovered events, therefore, must be organized into a coherent storyline. One way that this “performance of meaning” (Bruner, 1986) can be stimulated is by means of the technique described in narrative therapy as the “outsider-witness group” (White, 2000). This process could start by each pair offering a summary of their interviews with all participants. The larger group could be divided into smaller groups of two or three who are asked to witness their colleague’s account of un-storied events and hidden values.

The technique includes four steps (outlined more fully in Winslade and Monk, 2008). First, the outsider-witness group selects an expression they have particularly noticed in the summaries of the interviews. (For example: “We noticed that she said that she preferred to use functional perspectives more actively in decision making.”) The exact phrasing should be used in order to make sure that there is a direct link to the concrete utterances. The second task is to offer an image of the person telling the story. (For example: “We see her as a lioness fighting for the patients’ well-being;”) which aims at highlighting the intentions, competences, and values of the person being witnessed. In the third and fourth phases the outsider-witness teams are asked to reflect on how the accounts are resonant in their own organizational lives, (“We have talked about how we recognize the ambition to take more care of our patients;”) and to account for how the story has transported the out-

sider-witness group to some new territory where they can see or think differently about practices in the organization. (“We have talked about how using our functional perspectives a little bit more might add quality to our decisions.”)

This process opens the space for crafting alternative narratives of organizational practices. The flurry of newly recovered events constitutes material that can be organized into narratives articulating hitherto untold organizational values and practices. Thus, the participants are given the opportunity to collectively author alternative stories by linking events into a coherent story about the organization’s preferred practices and values. At the same time these diachronic narratives effectively alter the synchronic system of power relations in the organization.

Here we have laid out and explained the rationale for a set of practices that are built upon the theoretical assumptions outlined above. They are specifically designed for the context of organizations in which conflict troubles relationships across a field of practice rather than simply the relationship between two individuals. It is beyond the scope of this article to demonstrate these practices in more detail in action.

The main point of our argument is to open up a perspective on organizational conflict resolution that focuses upon the narratives at work within a discourse field rather than within a personal relationship. Future study needs to be devoted to the further application of these principles in organizational contexts. We hope that this work will direct attention to the differences between relationships and discourse fields. The former concept pulls our thinking towards the domain of interpersonal exchanges between individuals and the latter redirects our gaze to the discourses that organize and give shape to a multitude of interpersonal exchanges among groups of people. We believe that the field of conflict resolution can benefit from widening its focus in this direction. ■

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## ARTICLE



# Techniques for Resolution of Work Conflicts in Organisations: The Loyal Fight

Josep Redorta Lorente

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## Abstract

A new methodology is suggested, the 'loyal fight', for intervening in conflicts which have become chronic within an organisation. The application and results obtained in a specific case are given, and also an evaluation of the importance of innovation in the field of work conflict resolution.



## Keywords

conflict resolution, organizational conflict, methodology, mediation, tools

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to demonstrate a technique for conflict resolution in organisations, based on its application in a specific case of conflict in work relations.

The 'loyal fight' is a methodology which has its origins in family mediation. It is based on the idea of generating a space for expression in non-threatening surroundings which allows strong emotions, pent up over a long period of time, to be released. This requires the organisations to adapt a space, something which has not yet been tried in Spain, and also a specific methodology.

The effects of this technique are immediate. It favours empowerment and recognises people's ability to express themselves outside the boundaries of formal hierarchy. It also acts to liberate strong emotions tied to specific problems which have become chronic over time, and releasing the emotional situation a new start point can be established. Finally, resources are generated so that each participant can recover their self-esteem and rework future relations on new foundations.

In the following we describe the rules for applying the technique and the conditions used in a specific case along with the results.

## 2. THE LOYAL FIGHT METHODOLOGY

The basis of the method is to first release aggressiveness, through the symbolic exercise of throwing darts as an attack on certain roles but without attacking the individuals involved. This should be done under highly controlled operational conditions.

Once the contained aggressiveness has been released, the confronting parties are placed in safe surroundings to be able to talk openly. This phase is called 'fight for change', and the aim is to work on more cognitive aspects in the relation and in some way draw up an agenda of topics to deal with in normal surroundings.

In the third stage, mutual recognition is worked on in such a way as to release tension and allow a second working session on the agenda drawn up.

The aim of the technique is to create conditions for dialogue and, very likely, the deeper problems should be approached in a later session of meditation, once the chronic tensions have been overcome using the resource proposed.

Here we look at the practical details for application:



## 2.1. Releasing aggression

The materials needed are darts and a dartboard used as follows:

Each one throws a dart, giving their reason. Only four possibilities are represented on the dartboard: the company, management, the company trade union committee and the trade union itself.

In this method, it must be emphasised that the person who throws the dart should say who they are aiming at and why, but this should never be against an individual, only against an institution, expressed abstractly, because of its role in one of the four possibilities on the board.

For example:

I, John Smith, throw a dart against the company because they did not fulfil their promise of promotion.

The rules are as follows:

Taking it in turns, each person should take part in at least three rounds of dart throwing.

From the third round, it is necessary to evaluate the energy in the group and those who want to throw more darts should be left free to do so.

The role of the moderator is as follows:

It is important to ensure messages are in the first person 'I', make them repeat their name and give a reason, just one for each dart (flexible interpretation of the reason). Note the message as material to be reused.

The aim of the exercise is to reduce tension by giving a way of expression through an indirect shot. Avoid direct attacks at individuals. Protect self-esteem. Reduce anxiety.

The time for the exercise is discretionary, depending on the energy of the group, but around 30 to 45 minutes.

## 2.2. Fight for change

In this phase, the appropriate setting is to form two groups around a table: the management team and the company union committee.

The groups should be well-differentiated in a confrontational position (sitting by a table, with the distances well defined). The moderator should occupy the most central position possible.

The rules are as follows:

The object of the exercise is to say things to each other's face avoiding direct attacks at self-esteem. Opinions are not as important as feelings, which should be brought out. All this must be explained before starting. Through the moderator, all agree that nothing that is said there will be held against them (no reprisals will be taken against anyone). Very aggressive criticism should be redirected by saying: "Express the same but in other words." There should be no immediate reaction. One speaks and the others listen. They express themselves only when it is their turn. The modera-

tor must be inflexible on this point. The expressed feeling must be listened to. Debate is only allowed at the end of the exercise, when discussion is open, so that there is complete liberation of feelings. It does not matter whether the complaints originated recently or 20 years ago (they are still present).

The role of moderator is important, and there should ideally be somebody to help. One takes notes and the other concentrates on the process. The emotions and their justification should be noted down. The problems themselves are not important, but how they are experienced. Reading basic emotions should be practiced.

Important resources to be considered for moderation are: order a break if things get too complicated, protect self-esteem, reformulate questions in extreme cases. It is useful to go from the person to the behaviour.

This stage should be at least an hour, generally depending on what happens. It is important to be flexible.

The objective of this phase is to rationalise the relation by bringing negative emotions to the surface. It is not a case of resolving a specific problem. It is important to build relations on new foundations.

## 2.3. Expressing recognition

In this last phase A4 paper cut in quarters and ballpoint pens are the materials needed, in the same room.

This is a writing exercise. All the participants are asked to send a written message to the others present which should be sincere (the writer should believe in what they write) and should express praise (criticism is prohibited).

The message can be anonymous or with the name of the sender (this is up to each participant), but the person it is sent to must be clearly identified.

Each one should take their time to briefly express praise. Each participant will receive the same number of flattering messages as the number of participants, minus one. The messages must be folded up and, when the moderator says to, each participant must open theirs and read them out loud. The exercise ends with applause.

At this level, the aim is to heal wounds, to come through the experience intact, strengthen self-esteem and to build a positive view of the participants.

The exercise should last about an hour, depending on the participants.

## 2.4. Practical advice

The location should be appropriate. It can be in a quiet room at the workplace. Make sure mobile phones are switched off. Landlines are disconnected. No interruptions are allowed.



The time for the whole process should be verified. The process should be controlled right from the beginning. The process should be explained only at each phase. Maintain interest in what will come next. Maintain the 'magic of the exercise' by not revealing this to the participants until it is to be carried out. Consider the possibility that the committee invites somebody from outside it to join in the experience if they want to, but control the number of participants whatever happens, as it will affect the time taken.

### 3. EXPERIENCE OF THE APPLICATION

#### 3.1. The background

X, S.L. is a company in the automobile support sector, located near Barcelona. The company makes safety components for all the major brands, employing around 320 workers on three shifts.

It is a typical industrial company, with the corresponding mentality of the workers and a major presence and influence of the major trade unions in the sector.

Over the years, a great deal of mutual distrust between Management and the Company Union Committee has built up. The union committee accuse management of not living up to their promises and of calling for sacrifices at times of huge profits. The point of view of the management is that the workers' representatives do not really have the interests of the workers in mind, but their own, basically an interest in not working, under any pretext.

In October 2003, the Company Manager retired, after more than 30 years working there, and a new management arrived. But the distrust was so deeply entrenched that the new directors were unable to re-establish a constructive relationship, for the good of all, using conventional methods.

The progress of the company – and this time it was true – did not allow the situation to continue as it was: not only did 5% of the workforce not work, but they also filed such a constant stream of grievances against the company, largely without any sound basis, that the Human Resources Manager spent more time at various Employment Tribunals than in the company, where he was needed to make the qualitative jump in management of the personnel.

The situation was intolerable, so the management had to do something out of the ordinary, more than just react with sanctions which achieved no more than add to the spiral of the conflict and to the destruction of any new input.

The decision was taken to look for professional help from an expert in conflict resolution in companies. After analysing the situation of the company with the management team (Company Director and Director of Human Resources), as well as the personalities of those involved, the business environment and other relevant variables, the expert suggested to us some extraordinary and innovative measures.

One of these ideas was a seminar on collective negotiation, which he himself gave, first to the management team and then – and this was what had the impact – to the union members. Another idea was that of the loyal fight.

#### 3.2. The experience of the loyal fight

Here we describe the experience in the words of the person who lead the session. She has training in psychology and human resource management, and is a member of staff of the company:<sup>1</sup>

“One day, we, the Management, and the Company Union Committee met in a room at a convention centre outside the workplace. The assistant moderator of the loyal fight was a colleague from the Human Resources Department, equally recognised by both parties as being impartial.

Once in the meeting room, I explained to those taking part in the loyal fight (Management and Company Union Committee), the rules to follow and the exercises, as has been explained previously. We started with the darts exercise, which was very positive because each participant used the dartboard to release all the negative emotions which they had felt for years. There was even an extra round so that everything was said.

With each exercise, we moved from a defensive, negative attitude to a positive one with trust. Each participant was even able to find positive aspects in the others, an exercise which seems easy but was the most difficult for all. They were aware that it is much easier to say something bad about others while it is difficult to highlight a person's positive aspects.

What was the result? Relations between Management and the Company Union Committee are now based on mutual trust. Management has recognised the positive side of each and every one of the workers' representatives. And the Union Committee understand that, in the end, we are all in the same ship, and that Management is certainly not against the interests of the workers, but act within the limits of reality, a

<sup>1</sup> By the Director of Human Resources of the company, published with authorisation.



highly competitive environment in which, today, every company must fight to survive.

We, Management and the Company Union Committee, still do not agree on many points when we meet. But we have developed a culture of coexistence and collaboration which does not look to defeat the other but strives towards a win/win situation. A culture which is based on trust that the other party is sincere and accessible.

For more than a year now there has been good feeling. And as we all understand the conditions for fruitful collaboration, we are sure that the quality of our relations will last.

Is this all the result of the loyal fight? It is impossible to say, as the loyal fight was one of a number of measures. What is certain is that, during the three hours of the fight, the atmosphere changed and the aggression which accompanied the throwing of the darts has not been heard again.”

#### 4. NEW WAYS FOR RESOLUTION OF WORK CONFLICTS

This experience is of great value as an indicator. On one hand it demonstrates that many legal conflicts cannot be resolved in court as they are really an expression of much more profound problems that affect the organisation. When one problem is solved another one appears because a medium has been generated for the growth of conflict.

Looking at management of companies, permanent conflict, to a certain extent chronic, should be seen as a loss of quality of interaction between people. Nowadays the quality of products is assumed, but not the quality needed for labour relations. From a different point of view, the workers suffer from a high level of dissatisfaction which becomes a real psycho-social risk. Generating conditions to improve the situation will be, or already is, an imperative.

Despite this, companies tend to think that, if conflict exists, it is due to management errors and, with this attitude, tend to minimise its existence. We understand that there exists a level of conflict which is perfectly admissible within a company, and this does not necessarily imply management errors. In fact, conflict may be a source of much innovation. In the case study we deal with, it is important to highlight the capacity of the new management of the company to assume controlled risks and experiment with unusual paths.

We believe that organisations should be capable of generating different and divers forms of management. Nowadays, it is known that organisations can learn and in the context of change, this new ability will be critical over the next few years. Negotiated rather than forced solutions are the future.

We have presented this specific case, because it is unprecedented and to encourage both companies and workers to reflect on whether their legitimate aspirations are adequately steered. Alternative Conflict Resolution has much to offer to help both sides understand better the legitimacy of their interests and their capacity to reach fair solutions. Nowadays, innovation means to be intelligent and to have understood. ■

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**PIONEROS EN PRÁCTICAS  
INTERNACIONALES EN EL SISTEMA  
DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS**  
desde  
1997

**Máster en** [Título Propio UPV/EHU]

## **Cooperación Internacional Descentralizada: Paz y Desarrollo**

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## INTERVIEW



# Conflicts in Africa and Afghanistan. An Interview with Professor Johan Galtung

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## Overview

Professor Johan Galtung was interviewed at the Freie University in Dahlem-Berlin on 4th July 2009 as he ran the workshop Inside the Paxologist Mind. In the interview, Professor Galtung speaks of his experiences, thoughts and suggestions on the conflicts that have dogged Africa and other regions, focussing on the ethnic violence in Kenya in 2007-2008 and violence-prone Afghanistan. He also answers questions regarding some of his methodologies that are in practice today.



## Keywords

Johan Galtung, ethnic violence, Afghanistan, reconciliation, peace and conflict, Kenya

## THE INTERVIEW

**Question:** Kenya created the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) in light of the ethnic violence that broke out in 2007-2008. What would be your advice to the commission?

**Galtung:** Well, the model is South African, I find it positive.

The TJRC in South Africa was too limited to the domestic aspect. In other words between police and the black resistance and you will find similar things between Odinga (Prime Minister of Kenya) and the Kikuyu (largest ethnic group in Kenya). I would broaden it to the international field and look at which outside forces were intervening in it and had interests. If you have a country run to a large extent by the Kikuyu who surround Nairobi, and transnational companies are located there, then guess three times who would be in it?

This is important. If you locate some of the causes outside Kenya you liberate some of the Kenyans from the causes of burden. In other words, expansion to other ac-

tors. Without the Maasai on one side and the Kikuyu on another, and so forth. That would be superficial now, but could have a unifying effect. It can also strengthen the sense of autonomy in Kenya. This would make Kenyans ask themselves whether they are working for the transnationals or for themselves. Then come up with distribution formulas.

TJRC must be tied to solutions. If you go in for reconciliation without a solution, then that is also called pacification – it is a lollypop – the truth about South Africa is that they had the election in 1993 and an end to apartheid. Then they did reconciliation. Are you sure you have a reasonable solution in place so that this does not become lollypop politics?

Another point would be after my own reconciliation experience. The more efficient one than the TJRC in South Africa was the German way of doing it.

**Question:** And how did the Germans do it?

**Galtung:** Textbooks write new books. In other words you rewrite the understanding of Kenyan history. In all



history texts there is propaganda and there is no way you can avoid that. What the Germans did is quite interesting. They simply told pupils in all schools that “yes, we have committed terrible crimes – and this is what we did and it will never happen again”. The way you write about what happened in connection with the elections (Kenya) would then be very important. The part of reconciliation is the written version of what happened. That can only be done with the parties cooperating and saying “I can’t accept this unless you accept this”.

**Question:** Looking at Transcend and where you have worked in the world in terms of conflicts – we are talking of how many conflicts?

**Galtung:** 122 conflicts. Yes. And there is one country that comes up almost all the time – United States of America. One way or the other.

**Question:** Do you think that Transcend would be ideal in solving some of the conflicts in parts of Africa? Let’s look at Sudan, Chad, Northern Uganda and Kenya.

**Galtung:** In the book called 100 Peace and Conflict Perspectives, there are about ten conflicts in Africa. Sudan is not yet published in that book. It will be in the next book. Yes, I think we have reasonably good ideas.

**Question:** And do you think it will be successful? Look at lawless Somalia. This has been going on for a long time. What would be your input to this?

**Galtung:** First you have to use the methods of Somali’s themselves. The so-called Shir. It is a genius method which is not a linear agenda. But you have to look at it. Also, you must respect and know that the main issue is not territory but land. I have been working on that a lot. It is a failed state and that had much to do with Mohamed Siad Barre and Mohamed Aidid. Mohamed Aidid murdering the former because he had made a deal with the Americans and sold much of Somalia to three American oil companies. And for that reason America wanted to kill Mohamed Aidid. So they launched the January 1992 invasion under the pretext of the food crisis which was caused by fishing by the EU. And they intervened but as the American-in-Chief told me privately, the mission was to kill Aidid and they spent two years doing that. In the end he died from a heart attack.

I say it only because such solutions are very far away from the way the West is thinking. The West is now concerned about piracy because it is the West. They are not concerned about the role of the European Union. They (the USA) destroy whole economic bases of a country.

**Question:** Still on the same, I want to refer to a Zulu word – Sabona, ‘I see you’. I am looking at schools in Chad and Somalia, do you think the programme can be used successfully to work there?

**Galtung:** It is the name of one of our biggest projects. It was fantastic that we found that word Sabona, ‘I see you’. And they translate it as ‘I take you in’ not ‘I take you on’ in English, ‘You are part of me.’ We have had enormous success in the schools we have worked in – the children pick the five essential points of conflicts immediately, they can do it in one week. They start by saying “that’s terrible, we have to do something about it”. Then another says “he may have a point too”. Then there is some open communication. So the moment you learn that it is not just your side but his/her side too, you are making an enormous effort. Adults have been indoctrinated for instance by Christianity-God vs. Satan and things of that kind. They are indoctrinated to a point of being lost. Children get it immediately. So if Sabona could be something to inspire all classes, it would change the whole face of conflict.

I am thinking of something else to do with Kenya and Zimbabwe. That is the old African tradition – the elders meeting under the shadows of a bushy tree. It was not democracy but it was dialogical. The idea was to lay out something. So the idea of bringing contenders together has roots in the African traditions. The West sees it and calls it coalition government. I would not approach it that way. I would rather say, let the people at the top meet and they run all the ministries together. It’s not a question of one having this or that. Find the peaceful solutions – ideas in all cultures. Sabona is one and there is another important one – Under the Bushy Tree.

**Question:** You have worked in Ecuador, Peru and Sri Lanka among other countries. But what results have you had in Afghanistan?

**Galtung:** We had a big mediation in 2001 run by the Taliban organised by an Afghan who is also a Canadian. He had been imprisoned for three years by the communists. He came out not liking communism that much. But he came out with the idea that as Afghans they had a bad way of handling conflicts. So they contacted me and we ended up in Afghanistan. So we organised a major mediation session – 100 people. Thirty cabinet members, 30 sheikhs from various groups, 30 professors – who were not very useful – and ten women who were fantastic. In Afghanistan, to be a woman and be taken in to consideration at that level is exceptional. We had seven days. On the first day I gave them exercises and told them there was one word that was not permitted on that day – Afghanistan. Out of it emerged five ideas which I would like to mention.





- Coalition government with the Taliban. The Taliban are part of Afghanistan. Talib means seeker-student. They are seeking for the truth in the Koran. And they are dead against secularisation. Among the Taliban you find moderates and less moderates.
- Afghanistan can't be run by Kabul. It consists of at least 12 nations that are very autonomous. It might be an idea for Kenya.
- Afghanistan is surrounded by countries that are quite interesting in the sense that parts of those countries are in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan-Tajikistan. So why not make a community like the European Community. Make a central Asian Community. Much of the restlessness and violence in Afghanistan comes from the relationship with neighbouring countries.
- Policy based on basic needs. Food, education and health care. They have to find a Koranic solution like Turkey, the Philippines and Indonesia and this can't be imposed by the West.
- It is a violent country. It needs security machinery. That can't be NATO. NATO is just a western kind of thing. To run it in such a way that the UN Security Council cooperates with the Organisation for the Islamic Conference about non-aggressive peacekeeping.

**Question:** The Peace Fund in 2009 ranked Afghanistan and Kenya at no 7 and 14 respectively in the failed states index. Do you think there is a justification in this, looking at the violence in Afghanistan and the ethnic violence that took place in Kenya?

**Galtung:** What has failed in Kenya is western colonisation and in Afghanistan it is something else. Things could work if all stayed in their own areas but with modern transport and communication, maybe they have come too close to each other. These are very different situations now. In Africa, Westerners came and drew borders all over the region and took Kilimanjaro and moved it from one country to another as a wedding gift or whatever it is – that kind of incredible behaviour. In Afghanistan it's something else.

**Question:** What would you give as the road map for the conflicts in Africa? Look at what happened in Sierra Leone. Others like Charles Taylor are at The Hague.

**Galtung:** I would first have an African Unity saying that they would not accept any more Africans for the court before you bring in other countries to it. Because this is not an International Court of Justice, it is an African Court of Justice run by the worst colonisers – The Netherlands. The Netherlands came in 1652 before the English and the French. It's unheard of.

I once recommended in Sierra Leone that they get an old atom bomb and put it in the diamond mines and explode the way down (metaphoric). What good has these diamonds done? The problems are different but there is one problem they have in common. You have 53 countries and 500 nations. And the borders are drawn for western convenience. It does not mean to necessarily change the borders but it means to have sub-regions or strong cooperation. And one region could be Tanzania-Uganda, Rwanda-Burundi with the two Congo's. That would be bi-oceanic. In other words from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic and the other one would be the five frontier states – Zimbabwe-Zambia-Mozambique-Angola and Botswana. Again bi-oceanic. Trade less with Europe and trade more with the third world. And at the same time, as you promote regions in Africa and sub-regions you promote more local autonomy which means more federations. In other words you make the borders less important.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Professor Johan Galtung is a Norwegian researcher and winner of the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize. He is among the founders of TRANSCEND, a conflict mediation organization founded in 1993. He is also the founder of TRANSCEND Peace University, TRANSCEND Media Service, TRANSCEND University Press, TRANSCEND Peace Service, TRANSCEND Research Institute. He founded the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, in 1959. He has published over 100 books and 1,000 articles.

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## About the author of the interview

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**CAMPUS  
FOR PEACE**





# Adam Curle: Radical Peacemaker and Pioneer of Peace Studies

Tom Woodhouse

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## Abstract

This article presents a biographical account of Adam Curle, focusing especially on the development of his ideas on peace and peace studies and the impact these had on the evolution of the field at the level of theory and of practice. Curle was the founding Professor of the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford in the UK. Appointed to the Chair in 1973, the department launched its teaching and research programmes in 1974. Curle's influence on the department and his development of a theory and practice of peace and peacemaking is traced and analysed in this article. His theory of peace was based on a synthesis of academic perspectives drawing on psychology, anthropology and development theory, and on the early peace theory of other innovators in the field of peace studies, including Johan Galtung and Kenneth Boulding. His peace practice was based on the experience of large scale conflict in the Nigerian Civil War and the India Pakistan conflict in the 1960s and 1970s, and was distinguished by his use of non-official or track two mediation as a complement to formal diplomacy in such conflicts. His use of mediation was modified later when, in the 1990s, in the context of the civil war in the Balkans, he helped to mobilise support for local people who wished to resist the civil war and to build peaceful communities and cultures of peace. In this way he also pioneered the idea of peace building from below, currently recognised as a leading mode of peacemaking amongst academics and practitioners.

## Keywords

peace education, mediation, peace theory, peace building from below

## INTRODUCTION

Now that peace studies have become well established in the global academic community, with institutions like UOC operating worldwide via e-learning systems, it is useful to reflect on the origins of the discipline of peace studies and to uncover the ideas and values that inspired its pioneers. This article presents a biographical account of Adam Curle, focusing especially on the development of his ideas on peace and peace studies and the impact these had on the evolution of the field at the level of theory and practice. In terms of theory, he established a broad conceptualisation of peace which merged both positive (fulfilling human needs and liberating human potential) and negative (preventing violence) dimensions. This broad concept of peace,

initially conceived by Johan Galtung, became decisive in influencing the formation of the Peace Studies department at the University of Bradford in the UK, and now defines the majority of peace studies and peace research centres which have emerged worldwide. The article begins by outlining the key stages in Curle's academic career, his transition from psychology and development, and his formulation of a theory of peace which was enriched by the idea, drawing on an eclectic mix of academic, theological, and philosophical sources, that true peace depended on liberating human potential.

In addition to his influence as a theorist and academic, Adam Curle was also a practitioner of peacemaking, especially in the area of what has since become known as citizen's diplomacy or track two mediation. His work as a



pioneer of peace studies is outlined in the discussion below, and the conclusion will show how, as a result of his work in the civil war in the Balkans in the mid-1990s, he also developed his ideas about mediation into a new mode or model which was based on the innovative concept of peace building from below, an approach to peacemaking which continues to influence peace studies and peace action today.

## ORIGINS AND IDEAS

Born in L'Isle Adam in Northern France in July 1916, Curle had an unconventional academic career. In 1935 he went to Oxford to study history but switched to anthropology in the course of his first year. He conducted field research in various areas of the Middle East for which he obtained a Diploma in Anthropology, and then spent six years, from 1939 to 1945, serving in the Army, and in this period became interested in the work of the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations, particularly in their approach to the socio-psychological problems of post-war reconstruction. This formative influence on his thinking was to stay with him, and the damage caused by war on human communities, on their culture and psychological health, remained a constant concern. His first academic publication was for the Human Relations journal and described the special problems of prisoners of war as they adapted to the strains of returning to normal community. He was awarded a postgraduate degree in anthropology in 1947, worked for the Tavistock Institute on a project on rural decay and was appointed lecturer in social psychology at Oxford in 1950. During this time he became interested in the link between social psychology and education policy, and in 1952, at the age of 36, he was appointed to the Chair of Education and Psychology at the University of Exeter. Between 1956 and 1959 he served as consultant in Pakistan on issues of education and development policy. Between 1959 and 1961 he was Professor of Education at the University of Ghana, and from 1961 until his appointment to the Chair of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford in 1973, he was Director of the Harvard Centre for Studies in Education and Development.

## EARLY IDEAS ON PEACE STUDIES

His role in the emergence of peace research and education, and in the definition and application of specific modes of peacemaking, is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Bradford Department of Peace Studies,

founded by Curle with support from the Society of Friends (Quakers) in the UK, was one of the first full academic departments operating the complete range of peace studies, from BA through to Masters and PhD programmes, and has progressively served as a stimulus for groups around the world seeking to establish their own centres for peace research. Secondly, Curle, in his writing and in the pedagogic tradition he established at Bradford, validated a broad definition of what constituted legitimate peace research. He identified three main strands of activity which are relevant to peacemaking; to nurture social and economic systems which engender cooperation rather than conflict; to oppose violent, dangerous, and oppressive regimes with non-violence; and to bring about reconciliation between those who are in conflict. The first strand has been explored within Bradford in terms of a focus on critical research on weapons technologies, the arms trade, arms control, resource conflicts, and institutions for international co-operation and interdependence. The second strand has been represented by work on peace and anti-war movements; and the third has focussed on mediation as a specific component of peacemaking, and it is one to which Curle brought his distinctive style. This third area emerged in large part because of Curle's practical involvement with Quaker mediation, a firm basis of track two or citizen's diplomacy.

The Bradford 'tradition' has then, through Curle's initial conceptualisation, contained both the structural analyses of conflict which appears in the work of Johan Galtung and the subjective-psychological orientation which appears in Burton, Fisher and other problem solving approaches (Woodhouse, 1991). The third strand, the subject of this paper, includes the original conflict resolution content of Curle's work, and how he applied and extended it in his thinking and writing, as well as others working within what has been called the track two approach.

## DEFINING PEACE

Curle's initial work on education and development embodied a fairly conventional approach embedded in an underlying belief in progress through economic modernisation, though he also registered an early concern that development should not be measured in economic terms but through social and cultural dimensions, in particular in the emergence of a purposive society capable of fulfilling human potential in social relationships. By the late 1960s he was less convinced about the whole underlying project of development. Above all, conflict and violence were beginning to feature in his work as subjects



demanding urgent attention and especially so because of his direct experience of the Nigerian Civil War between 1967 and 1970, and the war between India and Pakistan. In Pakistan, the events of 1971 swept away the fruit of development in a tide of death, destruction and hatred.

Curle's academic interest in peace was a product of this kind of demanding front line experience where he not only witnessed the threats to development from the eruption of violent conflicts, but where in effect he was being drawn increasingly into the practice of peacemaking, especially in the form of mediation. Most importantly, during the intensive and searing experiences of the Biafran War he felt a compelling need to understand more about why these conflicts happened. Violence, conflict, the process of change especially as this affected social attitudes, and the goals of development began to be seen as linked themes. Three major studies in which these changed perceptions are hardened into substantial analyses are Education for Liberation, Making Peace and Mystics and Militants. Making Peace was written in the course of a sabbatical year spent as a visiting research fellow at the Richardson Institute of Conflict and Peace Research in London in 1969-1970, when he was able to reflect on both his own previous academic work in educational policy and psychology, and his by now considerable experience of major conflicts. Mystics and Militants established him as a leading influence in a small pioneering group of academics in peace research, and involvement in this community was to result in his appointment to the first Chair in Peace Studies at the University of Bradford in 1973. Making Peace represents the deliberate application of ideas from peace research to his own work and experience. In this book he tackles problems of definition, looking at peaceful and unpeaceful relationships and in a general sense at the process of peacemaking; Mystics and Militants, written as a sequel to Making Peace, looks more closely at the personal beliefs of the peacemakers themselves and at the qualities and skills they need to build.

Both books have had a decisive influence on the emergence of peace studies as a coherent area of study. They established Curle as an original and innovative thinker, capable of providing a comprehensive view of the academic validity and viability of peace studies, and were a significant reason for his move to Bradford when that University decided to add peace studies to its set of new study areas. Making Peace presents Curle's definition of peace and conflict as a set of unpeaceful and peaceful relationships, and it is this focus on relationships as the subject of peace which above all distinguishes and characterises his work:

"I prefer to define peace positively. By contrast with the absence of overt strife, a peaceful relationship would, on a personal scale, mean friendship and an understanding sufficiently strong to overcome any differences that might

occur... On a larger scale, peaceful relationships would imply active association, planned co-operation, an intelligent effort to forestall or resolve potential conflicts." (Making Peace, p.15)

Peace was concerned then not with the containment of conflict, but pre-eminently with building relationships:

"As I define it, the process of peacemaking consists in making changes to relationships so that they may be brought to a point where development can occur." (Making Peace, p. 15)

Peacemaking consists of moving a wide range of human relationships out of the set of unpeaceful categories identified in the book into peaceful ones. But where other peace researchers have tended to concentrate more on social, political, and military systems as subjects for analysis, Curle generally stressed the importance of the attitudes and values of people within those systems to peace and violence. A good part of Making Peace, for example, concentrates on the skills of conciliation and mediation, tasks with which he particularly identified himself. He thought that the skill of resolving conflict by mediation was little understood and developed because:

"... we do not really understand the roots of conflict, seeing it primarily as an objective state of affairs and not as the states of mind that led to and subsequently sustained or exaggerated that state of affairs. Consequently our approach to conflict resolution is confused and inefficient. We really know very little about it and after hundreds of years of diplomacy... have little scientific understanding of it. Our chief fault is failure to recognise that conflict is often largely in the mind and to that extent must be dealt with on that level; and that even when it is less so, as in the case of political oppression or economic exploitation, emotional factors exacerbate what is already serious." (Making Peace, p.15)

Despite his own preference for analysis which proceeded by concentrating on human feelings and beliefs, he saw peace studies as a venture which could only succeed by recognising and using a wide range of skills and backgrounds. Indeed one of the longest sections of Making Peace is on conciliation, (what he subsequently came to call mediation) where Curle elaborates an approach which is drawn from insights from social and in particular humanistic psychology applied to peacemaking in public conflicts. Much of the conflict of which he had direct experience was founded on fear derived from ignorance of oneself.

"This fear of what self-awareness might reveal frequently leads to the development of a 'public face', a mask; the complement to the mask is the mirage... what we see when we peep through slits in the mask: to the extent that we depend on the mask for self protection, we see a mirage of others.



If they accept us at what might be called our mask value, thus strengthening our defences, we see them favourably. If they do not, they make us anxious and they become unpopular. At this point, through the psychic trick of projection, we are apt to attribute to them the very flaws we dimly sense in ourselves and are attempting to conceal from ourselves and others by the use of the mask.

Mask and mirage are interconnected to the extent that altering one almost inevitably involves altering the other. My view of my enemy is related to my view of myself, therefore I cannot change my attitude to him without a corresponding change of attitude towards myself.

The concept of awareness takes these ideas a step further. At the personal level the idea of awareness corresponds exactly to the degree to which the mask is put aside."

So awareness is a key element in peace; awareness in turn is related to identity, but while loss of identity can lead to insecurity and disintegration, it can also lead to rigidity and intolerance: in fact there are two types of identity, one of belonging, an important but limited tool; and one of awareness, which refers "both to the inner life of the individual and to his consciousness of society".

"It is the task of the conciliator to find ways of stemming the psychological current so that, however briefly, the mask can be dropped, the mirage forgotten, awareness heightened, and the sense of identity broadened beyond the bounds of nationalism."  
(Making Peace, p. 210-216)

## PEACE AS THE LIBERATION OF HUMAN POTENTIAL

Given this approach to peace studies, which evolved slowly from Curle's experience and academic formation in anthropology, psychology, and development education it was natural that he should see peace broadly in terms of human development rather than as a set of 'peace-enforcing' rules and organisations. The quest for peace is not solely a quest for appropriate structures and organisations which are only means to human ends; there is also room in peace research to identify the kinds of social structures which enhance rather than restrain or even suppress human potential.

By the early 1970s, Curle had moved beyond the work which had preoccupied him for most of the 1950s and 1960s. He had become more interested in the causes of conflicts because he was experiencing the destruction they caused, he had been drawn into the role of mediator, and these experiences had led him directly to think about the

resolution of violent conflict and the cultivation of peaceful relationships.

Curle's own values and beliefs fixed substantially on ways of understanding and realising the potential for good in human nature and human relationships. His intellectual debt to the humanistic psychologists in this search was clear in his published work. His desire to 'seek within', to meditate on the sources of peace within the human spirit and psyche, was sustained by his increasing involvement with and membership of the Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers) and by a broader interest in mystical and spiritual exploration which he followed through the works of Ouspensky, Gurdjieff, and later in Buddhist teachings and meditational techniques. The end of all this study and meditation was to find a means of understanding the full range of conditions which led to peace, but the fundamental quest is rooted in a profound optimism in human potential, despite frequent evidence to the contrary.

By 1970, Adam Curle had created an imaginative and broad ranging vision of peace education and research. He had behind him involvement in a wide range of unpeaceful situations. He had mediated in two large scale armed conflicts, experiencing two gigantic tragedies in which hundreds of thousands of people had died. He had experience of racial conflicts in Africa and the USA, of tribal clashes, and of oppressive tyrannies in remote parts of the world. His time at Harvard saw him concerned with development in over twenty countries in the Middle East, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. He was able to draw from his period as an early staff member of the Tavistock Institute and from two university appointments in psychology. By the end of the 1960s and increasingly during the early 1970s he became aware of the work of Galtung and of Kenneth Boulding, when he realised that his work and theirs was leading, along different pathways, to the same general goals of emerging peace research, concerned especially to find new ways of dealing with violent conflicts. For Curle the peacemaking tool which he hoped would realise this goal was mediation.

## MEDIATION IN CURLE'S THEORY AND PRACTICE

Within his broad theory and philosophy of peace, Curle's specialisation was in the skills of conflict mediation and conciliation. Making Peace offers his first reflections on his experiences in Africa and in Pakistan. Curle's *In the Middle* points to the importance of mediation and reconciliation themes in peace research and practice in the conflict-ridden world of the late 20th century.



“Mediators, as the word implies, are in the middle. This is true in two senses. Firstly they are neither on one side nor the other; secondly, they are in the centre of the conflict, deeply involved in it because they are trying to find a satisfactory way out of it... What mediators do is to try to establish, or re-establish, sufficiently good communications between conflicting parties, so that they can talk sensibly to each other without being blinded by such emotions as anger, fear and suspicion. This does not necessarily resolve the conflict; mediation has to be followed up by skilled negotiation, usually directly between the protagonists, supported by a measure of mutual tolerance and by determination to reach agreement. But it is a good start.” (In the Middle, p. 9)

The strength of Curle’s form of mediation is that, even in conflicts which are characterised by a very clear perception of differing interests for which people are prepared to fight, the fighting creates its own dynamic where the fighting groups cannot de-escalate from their set positions without appearing to be weak. Mediation is appropriate when the parties in a conflict are willing to at least consider, however tentatively, that third party intervention might have benefits, and at this point skilled mediation may, through the removal of misperceptions and the calming of violent emotions, provide the window of opportunity for negotiated settlement. Curle identified four elements in his mediation process: firstly the mediator acted to build, maintain and improve communications; secondly to provide information to and between the conflict parties; thirdly to ‘befriend’ the conflicting parties; and fourthly to encourage what he referred to as active mediation, that is to say to cultivate a willingness to engage in co-operative negotiation.

His philosophy of mediation is essentially a blend of values and experiences from Quaker practice, with the knowledge of humanistic psychology absorbed in his early professional career, and both of these influences are tempered by his experiences in the field. His understanding of human nature via religious systems is explored further in *True Justice*, and his belief that the negative feelings in the human personality (jealousy, anger, fear, hatred, etc.) are not inherent and fixed characteristics in any human being, but are the result of “our failure fully to grasp, and so to develop, the amazing potential of our natural endowment” (In the Middle, p. 5)

A number of studies have contributed to a fuller understanding of the methods and approaches of mediation and third party intervention in conflicts at both official-governmental and at unofficial-citizens diplomacy levels. A very good general account of unofficial diplomacy is

provided by Berman and Johnson in the introduction to their book, which includes a definition of what later came to be called track two mediation and a classification of the types of citizens’ organisations which conduct it. The definition is from Berman and Johnson, citing Curle:

“Adam Curle, writing of the work of the private diplomat, whom he describes as someone who engages in mediation or conciliation of conflict under personal or unofficial auspices, makes it clear that he is not describing bumbling amateurs impelled by purely good intentions, but individuals who are as ‘subtle and experienced as the average public diplomat’ ... and as well informed, not in the sense of having access to intelligence reports, but in the sense of knowing the people or comparable situations elsewhere, and perhaps in addition, having a high degree of academic competence.” (Berman and Johnson, p. 7)

General aspects of third party intervention were dealt with in an early study by Oran Young, which included an assessment of the role of the United Nations and its agencies, including peacekeeping (Young 1967). Mitchell and Webb have provided an excellent account of how the practice of mediation, which has a history traceable to Greek and Roman times, became the subject of scholarly analysis during the 1970s and the 1980s. This interest emerged from an earlier concentration on the role of negotiators and bilateral bargaining which preoccupied scholars in the 1960s and the 1970s. By the 1980s, this study of negotiation had taken on the win-win, principled negotiation and mutual gain vocabulary of conflict resolution, particularly through the work of Roger Fisher and William Ury on the Harvard Program on Negotiation. At the same time, studies of negotiation strategies led to a closer examination of third party roles in helping to bring negotiations about and in facilitating them. This literature is now extensive and in addition to Mitchell and Webb includes Touval and Zartman’s *International Mediation: Theory and Practice*; Touval’s account of mediation initiatives around the conflict in the Middle East, Bercovitch and Rubin’s *Mediation in International Relations*, and a special issue of the *Journal of Peace Research* published in February 1991, which focussed on some criticisms and encouraged constructive revision of the efficacy of new paradigm approaches in relation to power-coercion-reward models from the old paradigm. As the literature on mediation has grown, and as knowledge has increased from an accumulating base of case studies and reflections, one of the most significant questions which has emerged is that related to the relative merits and possible relationship between two contrasting types of mediation: firstly that of the biased mediator, often acting as the agent of a mediating state with



its own interests (moral and material) in the outcome of a conflict; and secondly that of the unbiased mediator, the neutral, unofficial peacemaker/citizen diplomat operating with the support of an NGO, church group, academic institute or similar non-state agency, without an explicit interest in the outcome.

## FROM TRACK TWO MEDIATION TO PEACE BUILDING FROM BELOW: CURLE'S WORK IN OSIJEK AND THE IDEA OF NURTURING CULTURES OF PEACE

Curle's later work, from the mid-1990s, led to a revision and broadening of his concept of mediation and its place in peacemaking. Throughout his academic career, (which ended in 1978 when he retired from the Chair at Bradford), and also through the period of his 'retirement', Curle had been deeply involved in the practice of peacemaking. In the 1990s much of this involvement took the form of supporting the activity of the Osijek Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights. Osijek, a town in the Eastern Slavonia province of Croatia, was, with the adjacent town of Vukovar, the site of the most violent fighting of the Serb Croat War. This involvement with the people of Osijek, who were trying to rebuild a tolerant society while surrounded by enraged and embittered feelings caused by the war, motivated a considerable amount of reflection by Curle on the problems of practical peacemaking. It was apparent, for example, that the model of mediation specified in his book, *In the Middle*, and distilled from his experiences in the conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s was very difficult to apply on the ground, in the confusion and chaos of the type of conflict epitomised by the wars in former Yugoslavia. It was still the case that the use of mediatory techniques would be much more likely to produce the shift in attitudes and understanding necessary for a stable peace, a resolution of conflict, than the use of conventional diplomacy alone: "solutions reached through negotiation may be simply expedient and not imply any change of heart. And this is the crux of peace. There must be a change of heart. Without this no settlement can be considered secure." However, Curle realised through his involvement with the Osijek project that the range of conflict traumas and problems was so vast that the model of mediation based on the intervention

of outsider-neutrals was simply not powerful or relevant enough to promote peace. He made an important revision to his peace praxis, as follows:

"Since conflict resolution by outside bodies and individuals has so far proved ineffective (in the chaotic conditions of contemporary ethnic conflict - particularly, but not exclusively, in Somalia, Eastern Europe and the former USSR), it is essential to consider the peacemaking potential within the conflicting communities themselves." (*New Challenges*, p. 96)

Curle came to see the role of conflict resolution in post-cold war conflicts as providing a variety of support to local peacemakers through an advisory, consultative-facilitative role with workshops and training in a wide variety of potential fields which the local groups might identify as necessary. The task is to empower people of goodwill in conflict affected communities to rebuild democratic institutions, and the starting point for this to help in "the development of the local peacemakers' inner resources of wisdom, courage and compassionate non-violence". (*New Challenges*, p. 104)

## CURLE'S LEGACY

Adam Curle died in Wimbledon, London, on 28 September 2006. His life and work touched many people worldwide, and his academic thinking is now firmly embedded in modern peace theory. Adam Curle's career in peace studies spanned over forty years. During this time he created the first department of Peace Studies in a British university and established the credibility of peace studies as an area worthy of academic recognition. Through his publications and teaching he built up a rich theory of the nature of peace and peacemaking, and was a pioneer and practitioner of the process of track two mediation, which, in his later practice, he transformed into a model of peacemaking based on the idea of peace building from below. He remained undogmatic and eclectic in his thinking. Influenced especially by his peacemaking work during the Balkan wars of the early 1990s: he was one of those peace intellectuals who led a revision of thinking about the process of peacemaking, including the idea that effective and sustainable peacemaking processes must be based not merely on the manipulation of peace agreements made by elites, but more importantly on the empowerment of communities torn apart by war to build peace from below. ■





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