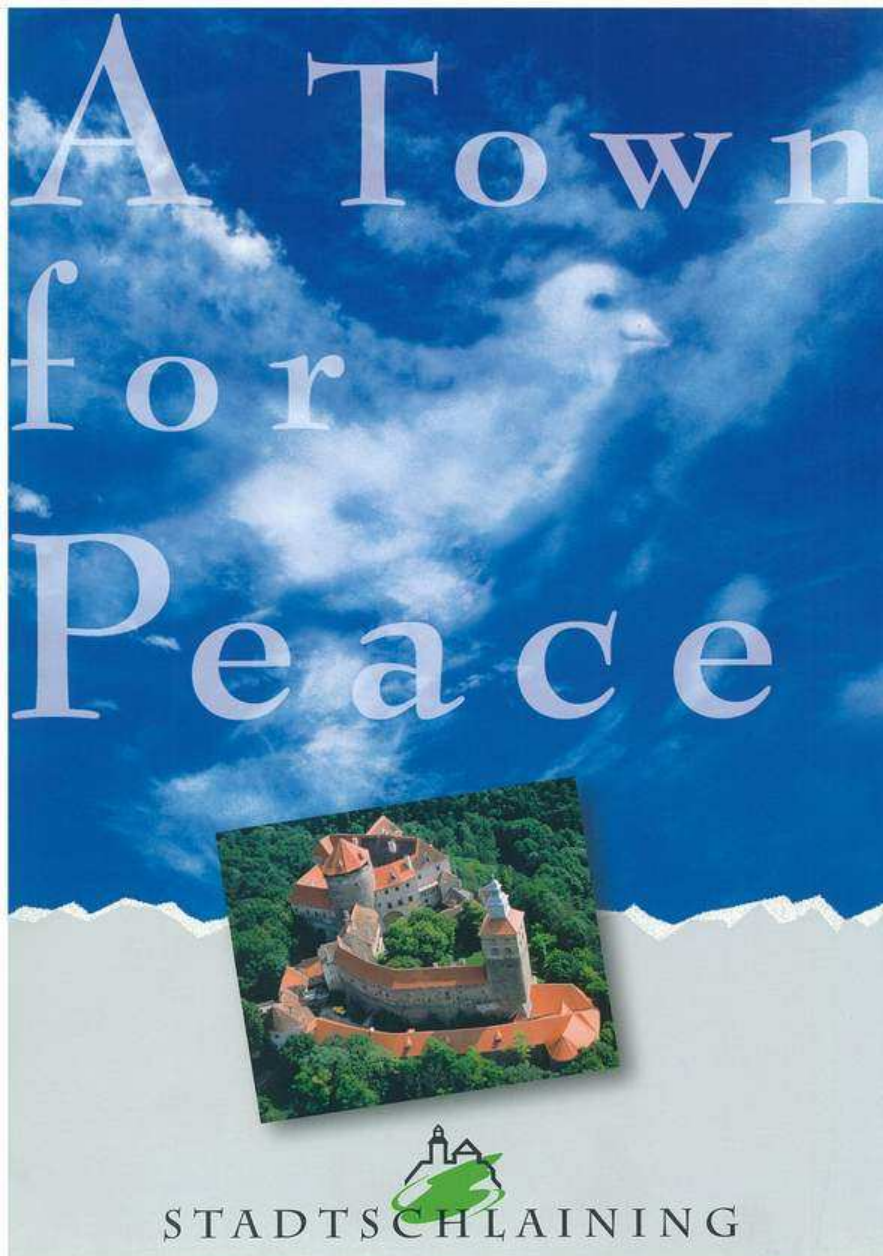




EPU Research Papers
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**HOW TO BUILD PEACE
NETWORKS**

Research Project Co-ordinator: Ronald H. Tuschl



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Ronald H. Tuschl: Editor's Note

The EPU (European University Center for Peace Studies) is an international, non-governmental organisation with UNESCO status, and is affiliated to the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR), also located at Stadtschlaining. It was founded in 1988 by Gerald Mader in his capacity as president of the ASPR, with the support of European UNESCO commissions.

Primary Goals of the EPU are spreading the idea of peace in the spirit of the UNESCO; giving scientific and educational support to global peace building; promoting a "world domestic policy" based on sustainable development, cooperative responsibility and ecological security; contributing to the development of a global peace culture; training and improving individual capabilities in peace-making and conflict resolution.

The second issue of the EPU Research Papers is the result of a research project which took place during the Spring Semester 2006 of the EPU. The authors of this issue are describing and analyzing the constitution of working peace networks.

Kristin Famula (USA) and Luis Gustavo Florez (Colombia) attempted to compile "lessons learned" and "good practices" from many different fields of work in an effort to disseminate the knowledge in a way that will be productive and straightforward for future partnerships and networks.

Ronald H. Tuschl,
Research Director and Editor

Stadtschlaining, May 2006

Kristin Famula/Luis Gustavo Florez: How to build Peace Networks

HOW DO WE WORK TOGETHER EFFECTIVELY?

This project came about from a need recognized in a non-profit peace institute in Eastern Europe: The *Peace, Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania* (PATRIR). The team expressed frustration with their previous experiences with networking and building partnerships, especially their difficulty with the initial phases of building a network, and the complexity of problems that it created later in the process. PATRIR acknowledged their pitfalls when working with other individuals and organizations, but needed suggestions for improvement and an example to follow for future work. As outsiders, we were surprised that a group of professionals that obviously had so much experience with peace work could still be coming up against problems with a seemingly basic means of working effectively. Subsequent discussions with individuals at the Institute determined an outline of skills and lessons that may be helpful to other organizations, and more specifically to groups working for peace.

In an attempt to not re-invent the wheel and gain a better understanding of material that could be useful to peaceworkers, we conducted interviews and distributed questionnaires to individuals working for peace. At the same time, we realized the need to get feedback from people that may have more experience with networking and partnerships, and so we also interviewed a wide variety of workers in various fields – from actors to the president of a chemical company, business-people to fighter pilots. The following report is by no means a finished product. As professionals continue to learn more about successful techniques for effective collaboration, future guides such as this one will continue to be more comprehensive. We have attempted to compile “lessons learned” and “good practices” from many different fields of work in an effort to disseminate the knowledge in a way that will be productive and straightforward for future partnerships and networks.

In each interview, we also attempted to determine what types of information would be helpful when working in a network, and used the information we gained to direct the research that we conducted. Overall, the people we spoke to suggested that in general, working in collaboration with other individuals or networks is a *good* thing. So with that in mind, we have written this guide as a way to make the hard work that is put into these partnerships more productive, effective and fun! We recognize the problems, such as lack of communication, discordant goals, and differences of method, that seem to occur on a regular basis and through our interviewees anecdotes, propose positive ways to handle them. At the same time, we have taken a look at some great achievements and suggested ways to create more of these success stories.

We recognize that a guide such as this can tend towards being dictatorial. Although we've developed this as a guide that can be followed from the initial phases of building a partnership to measuring the overall effectiveness after a partnership has reached its goal, it is up to the user to determine which pieces of the guide make sense for their particular collaborative effort.

Despite the dozens upon dozens of reports, articles and studies conducted on exactly this topic, for some reason peaceworkers have not been able to work together in a fully effective way. Most networking guides are written for businesses and do not specifically look at techniques for peaceworkers. In an important study on the effectiveness of peace work written by the Collaborative for Development Action, entitled, "Confronting War", Mary Anderson notes that, "all of the good peace work being done should be adding up to more than it is. The potential of these multiple efforts is not fully realized" (Anderson, 2003, 10). This influential report concludes that in order for an organization's work to truly have an impact, it must contribute to "Peace writ Large", which they define as "the large goals—sometimes thought of as the long-range goals...[which] point to changes at the broad level of society as a whole... 'the big peace'" (Anderson, 2003, 12)¹.

Our interviewees all seemed to agree that building partnerships was a good thing. And peaceworkers especially, have realized that in order to have a positive effect on social change, we must learn how to work together in an efficient manner. How can organizations, and more specifically organizations working towards creating positive changes for peace, productively work in teams, partnerships and networks in a way that will be helpful and constructive for all involved while at the same time having an overall positive impact on Peace writ Large?

One of the most interesting realizations was that although all of the individuals we spoke with believed that building networks was a constructive and effective tool in their work, they did not have a clear idea of their overall achievements. Many based their "success" on whether or not they reached the determined goal. Many individuals also established accomplishments on the long-term sustainability of the network or partnership, either through lasting work relationships or real friendships that developed in the process. Many of the interviews suggested that simply the act of working as a team – showing a wider range of support for "the cause" – was enough to illustrate the success of a partnership.

Possibly, the reason why these networks have not felt wholly successful is because networking guides are usually not written specifically for peaceworkers. Since working for nonviolent conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and reconciliation are difficult tasks, working together to have one's work be lucrative may take a different approach from ordinary networking guidelines.

The goal of this project is to identify the most important tools for working in partnerships and to ascertain what peaceworkers can do to reach maximum effectiveness within these networks. One of our peacemaker interviewees aptly described our goal without realizing it:

So often getting people to work together is like herding cats -- a challenging thing to do. But, the key to herding cats is giving them what they want – a project where they

¹ The Reflecting on Peace Practice Project (RPP) -a research on effectiveness and criteria for peace work which involved the participation of over two hundred international, national and local peace agencies- is that although there is not a "right way to peace", rather a wide range of definitions and interpretations, in overall, the programs undertaken aim at two primary goals: 1. Stopping violence and destructive violence 2. Building just and sustainable peace. These are programmatic goals, specific and different from organization to organization. The other level, "Peace Writ Large", needs to meet and connect with the programmatic goals and assess if it contributes, and if so how, to the ending of violence or achievement of justice. For a better understanding see ANDERSON Mary B. & OLSON Lara in "Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners".

can get positive attention for their group, credit for good work . . . camaraderie. (Zeese, 2006)

Our goal is to take the networking tools that have been developed in many different fields, and for many different types of networks, and adapt them to fit the needs of peaceworkers.

It is first necessary to clarify what we mean when we talk about networks, partnerships and collaborations.

DEFINING THE TERMS

One of the most frequent and trite statements of organizational and work dynamics in general is that group work is overall an effective and advantageous tool for accomplishing objectives. It has become almost a cliché and dogma that people continuously repeat and then implement sometimes without even questioning or reflecting on its meaning and implications.

As a human race, we are historically inclined to live with one another. This doesn't imply that we necessarily have to do it, but it is the common, natural and socially acceptable trend or "way of living". Of course someone can become a hermit and exclude him/herself from any contact with the exterior world, and there is nothing wrong with that, but sooner or later, directly or indirectly he or she will need others to survive. Since the biological and physical act of being born we are in the presence of/with other individuals that throughout time help in our personal, intellectual, emotional and physical development. Human beings grow up in groups (family, clan, tribe), learn, teach, play, love, build roads, wage war, govern -still the most authoritarian ruler- and die with, from, to and for others. In short, we are group beings (Brown, 2000).

In a more macro level there are collectivism doctrines, terms and theories like communalism and communism that stress the importance of a collective rather than individual. The creation of the Nation State and of democratic systems were, and still are, products of a joint effort for liberation, auto-determination and freedom from the oppressors, among other principles. The result of a constitution or other political instrument, guidance or charter that a nation adopts is the result of a participatory and group process, as well as the informal agreements that regulate life in community. Philosophers like Lock and Rousseau called it social contract, Hobbs used to say that it is necessary for man not to go back to his state of nature where he would be devoid of positive rights and have natural rights instead, thus a *Bellum omnium contra omnes*, "war against all". Further on, his idea of living and enjoying peace is precisely when societies give up some of their liberties to enter this social contract.

In this way, groups have been present all around and are part of our daily existence. We may sometimes not label it like that because they have different appearances, can evolve into other stages, or maybe suddenly disappear. These are precisely some of their properties. So, whether we like it or not, we see them and participate in some kind of activity that involves working with others (Group as a reality), who can sometime serve as a point of reference, inspiration or role model to evaluate our opinions and validate and reaffirm our conducts.

Groups shape our identity, sense of belonging and entrenchment to cultures, ideals and values. They support, mobilize and unite us. Being a member of a group contributes to who we are and how we act. Likewise, depending on its internal structure and organization, it can foster participative and democratic practices, communication and leadership skills, self-esteem, socialization, creativity and imagination², and be a source of inspiration, comfort and relaxation for achieving goals and at the same time know more people, make friends and keep on learning from their experiences.

When the artistic and production team works well they can create something that is a pleasure for everyone involved. Ideas just jump out of people and they're willing to share them. And they're open to ideas from others too. When you know you're being heard then you are willing to listen too. It's a very safe environment for creativity (Wells-Famula, 2006).

In the peace field working together is an enriching input and contribution for finding new alternatives, strategies and nonviolent ways of diminishing violence and reaching peace. Learning from others experiences, cultures, conceptions and understandings of peace nurtures the process, making it more inclusive and internationalized.

One good thing about having so many partners is that it adds a certain kind of international dynamic to the process and I think that especially with peacebuilding and conflict transformation the more perspectives from the more cultures you are working with, you get greater richness and greater diversity (Rivers, 2006).

In pragmatic terms groups are said to be more productive and efficient than working alone. How many times have we heard the phrase, "two brains work better than one". Also, the outcomes may be more legitimate, certain and influential in the way they comprise more people, encompass a plurality of points of view and in occasions help reach consensus. True or not, these are just some of the general assumptions and since we are aware of the distortion and prejudice generalizations can cause, by no means would pretend to impose them as an absolute truth. Groups, as any other social phenomenon, have their supporters and detractors, advantages and disadvantages. Some of the disadvantages are: loss of autonomy and subordination to the collective; more time in decision making, debate, discussions and less "showing results"³; authoritarian leaders who impose their decisions and can lead to demagogic or messianic figures; social loafing (Brown, 2000), weaken and in cases loss of beliefs and principles on behalf of a collective agreement; complexity and frustration⁴; stop of self-realization; social prejudice and isolation because of a closed structure and radical group thinking.

² This is commonly associated to brainstorming. An idea-generating technique that businessman usually adopt.

³ "What didn't work so well was the first attempt at achieving the joint statement that all members could sign. We spent one extended weekend sitting around in a circle with all 30 people and we believed we all believed the same and then one person would say "I disagree!" and we never got anywhere. So we drew the conclusion that people could speak as a member of the network but not on behalf of the network. I think that trying to reach unanimous agreement is so difficult. One Transcend member said, it's like peeling an onion until you reach the core and the core is in fact empty" (Fischer, 2006).

⁴ ". . . and so the more partners you involve, the more complicated and the more difficult it is to coordinate and so I think that . . . the more partners you have the more complexity you have and that could probably bring richness but it also brings a lot of frustration" (Rivers, 2006).

Just by common reasoning, one may predict that the presence of working with others is better than doing it alone. When all individual skills and strengths are combined the group potential is fostered and enhanced, but can often have some exceptions. As it has been demonstrated, groups can sometimes be more than the sum of the individual and exceed their potential productivity (Brown, 2000). Another typical assumption is the increase of creativity and imagination due to brainstorming. Surprisingly, in the majority of cases it is the contrary (Taylor as referenced in Brown, 2000, 176). Nonetheless, this is not exactly a shortcoming of groups, rather of their internal coordination, organization and way in which these kinds of techniques are implemented (Brown, 2000, 176).

Regardless of these negative aspects and prejudices, for this paper, “groups” - including its different forms: networks, partnerships and coalitions⁵- will be considered as an undeniable reality and social behavior.

Groups have as many definitions as forms of expression. One form of group work is a network. These consequently vary in the way groups are understood. For example groups can be structured formally or informally; can have centralized or decentralized power and decision making structures, and can vary in the quantity of members, time of duration, cohesion and recognition. Groups can be constituted around individual tasks, communication channels and status. The latter is often formalized into positions of high or low leadership and the social influence within and outside them.

Many theorists, sociologists and social psychologists have devoted their lives to comprehending how groups behave (Brown, 2000). From empirical studies, experiments and analysis, they have tried to determine the efficiency, dynamics, strengths, weaknesses, potential and viability of group work. Accordingly, the interpretations range from being very strict and academic to flexible and simple. A group then can be defined as the addition or aggregation of its individual compounds; a number of people who share some experience, fate or goal that unites them, which is embodied in a hierarchy or social structure that influence their roles and relationships; or a gathering of individuals with common values and goals that identify them and distinguish them from others. Moreover, groups can have a clear task or mission that requires some specific activities and a long and definite period of time, while others can be of short duration, sporadic, ad hoc, and unattached to norms, codes or statutes of regulation and internal organization.

For the purpose of this document groups will be defined as a collection of people bound together by some common experience or purpose, or who are interrelated in a micro-social structure, or who interact with one another. All these may be sufficient conditions to say that a group exists. But perhaps the crucial necessary condition is that those same people also share some conception of themselves as belonging to the same social unit (Brown, 2000).

⁵ IMPORTANT: This is precisely why some of these concepts will also appear, most of all in the interviews. So there is no misunderstanding when talking about, for example coalitions or partners, as they are just different interpretations that to some the word network has. The important thing is that the essence and *raison d'être* is not distorted.

Networks and Partnerships

Networks and partnerships are primarily group manifestations. As such, they can be part of and form part of any discipline or theme: arts, sports, politics, business, entrepreneurial, social, sexual, transport, advocacy, service, and for this case, peace networks. Each one emerges from the process of social action, interaction, or by establishing public relationships and making personal contact to enhance their impact and productivity, diversify their human resources, participate and gain credibility, among others. These networking practices, associated also with the natural and simple action of entering into conversations, knowing the “right people”, exchanging information and lobbying, can be done in a wide variety of settings like parties, cocktails, phone conversations, in hallways, conferences, professional meetings, lunchrooms, elevators, trains, airports, buses, classrooms, and others. It can be seen as very spontaneous and informal but at the same time sometimes consisting of advanced preparation through procedures and trainings. It is a combination of both.

Networking, as a practice, can be learned and taught, improved through time and experience, but with the need of some personal skills and techniques which can also be in constant formation. Leadership, charisma, solidarity, good humor, consistency, long term vision and patience are some of them. In addition to all the benefits it may bring in doing the work better and increasing the probability of achieving an objective, it has

. . . a less tangible benefit, but one that is just as important. If you network, you become well informed about your field and related activities. You develop and keep a competitive advantage. Networking should be one of your continuing activities (Winer, 2005).

In a more precise way, and not as a subsidiary derived from a group definition, a network is, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, “an arrangement of intersecting horizontal and vertical lines; a complex system of railways, roads, etc; a group of broadcasting stations that connect to broadcast a programme simultaneously; number of interconnected computers, operations, etc; a group of people who interact together” (Compact Oxford English Dictionary).

Even though the most suitable definition is the last one, the importance of all the others consist in showing an intrinsic condition or characteristic of relating and interconnecting with “others”. These others can be lines, railways, stations, computers, and human beings. So, again, this takes us back where we started, in defining a network essentially as a type of group interaction. In this sense a network “. . . refers to a group of individuals or organisations that share a concern or interest. And who contribute knowledge, experience and resources for joint learning and action, or to achieve a common purpose” (Bruning, & Yocarini).

Unfortunately the conceptual clarity and understanding of what a network, partnership or group is, is not reciprocal to how they work, are organized, their effectiveness, how to measure it, and other aspects of internal development. There is little knowledge about this, and even less in regards to peace work⁶. At first glance a

⁶ This is a common perception and conclusion from the interviews and research.

peace network differentiates itself by working towards peace, but some may argue that a transport or business network can also have a similar aim. Perhaps this is a broad definition that requires more accuracy. Without deeply discussing what is peace and all the connotations it has (Negative and Positive peace), we will define a peace network when the sharing of common interests or goals for designing and establishing such networks are peace driven or founded on principles which lead and contribute to peaceful objectives. But, who determines what peace interest is, and how to achieve it? Apparently this seems a vague and complex judgment but at the same time responds to what peace is and to the multiple interpretations it has.

“Peace”, as a multidisciplinary, eclectic and art oriented idea, is susceptible to any possible, tangible or intangible manifestation. Defining it in one phrase or as a specific term would mean an absolute and authoritarian decision to limit its participatory scope, reduce its creative and transformative potential for violence, neglect other sources of inspiration, close dialogue and plurality of ideas, opinions and thoughts that enrich our lives as human beings. In this way, peace is possible, respectfully understood and needed in any kind of network. In other words, there shouldn't be unique criteria; rather it depends on the organization, aims, objectives and internal decisions as to how each one of us defines peace. However, one framework or a set of guidelines common to all that advocate for and practice nonviolence, gender equality, nonviolent communication, social justice, and other principles would be constructive. These are some sine qua non for any peace to prevail.

Besides this approach and tentative definition, for a peace network to be successful and efficient there should also be a bigger contribution to peace that transcends the mere organization, partnership or network into more global scenery. So instead of just accomplishing the stipulated objectives (programmatic objectives), these can also benefit and reinforce other efforts that tend to contribute to Peace Writ Large. There is a directly proportional relationship between both. The better the results at an organizational and networking level, the better the impact at the broader one.

BEFORE: SETTING UP A PEACE NETWORK

There is not a single, correct or formal way of setting up a network. They arise because of different reasons and interests. But one thing is for sure: they are rapidly increasing in numbers. For example, “according to the UNDP [United Nations Development Program], in 2003 there were some 20,000 international NGO networks”, and in continue rising because of their donor support, recognition, and more and better access to information and technology (UNDP as quoted in Bruning & Yocanini, 2006).

Networks are a remarkable transformation in the political, structural and organizational system of a society. They are products of an inflection in the power paradigm and decision-making process, allowing other actors and sectors to participate. They are gaining acceptance, displacing the traditional centralized source of power and opening and diversifying the channels of expression and influence in the public policy.

Civil society and non state actors are being empowered and there is a consciousness raising, desire and interest in their importance in addressing problems and creating social change. This can also be attributed to the consolidation or transition to a democratic system, its practices, and openness of the political sphere. Other interests to be considered for setting up a network are to establish a credible, formal and legitimate dialogue and relationship between governmental actors (national and international) and be the interface or channel between them and the specific group or sector being represented and advocate for.

However, there are several steps, guidelines and personal experiences to consider that can serve as a model, suggestion and inspiration for others. Remember that these range from network to network and are not to be taken rigidly. Better to learn from them and adapt them according to the internal characteristics. Here is one of many examples:

These are the "rules" that I have followed over the years in establishing a successful coalition:

1. Clearly define and stick to the objective. Avoid all other issues, especially those that could divide.
2. Insist that no member of the coalition be able to speak for the others without agreement.
3. Reach consensus from the start on the steps that must be taken to accomplish the objective and who will do them. Build a culture that values the success of the objective rather than organizational prestige.
4. Create a clear structure for making decisions. Having a coordinating committee is a good idea.
5. Determine a policy for fundraising -- who pays for what.
6. Set a schedule for regular communication -- conference calls, meetings, e-mail exchanges.

It is easier to list these rules than to achieve a smooth, well-coordinated coalition effort, however. Give-and-take is an integral part of coalition work, since every individual and organization in the coalition has its own identity (and ego). It is important to keep in mind that organizations working in the coalition have different purposes and assigns (Keller, 2006).

On the other hand, there is a need to be as clear and direct as possible and determine what kind of network you want, what the goals will be and how will it be composed - the cohesion, control and efficiency of the group can be affected by the high quantity of its members, meaning individuals and/or organizations . It seems obvious but is strictly fundamental and sometimes even disregarded. It's useful to receive advice and be surrounded by people who have experience in this matter, can motivate and engage the team, and make proposals for achieving long term results. One of the possible solutions is a facilitator.

Choose your partners carefully. Don't let the team get so big that it's unwieldy. Find a good facilitator who has done this kind of thing before. The woman who facilitates the Professional Development committee that I'm on has absolutely no experience in the arts or in education. But boy can she facilitate a group. She is patient, listens, knows how to keep meetings on the allotted task, recaps ideas effectively, and keeps people reminded of the tasks that were assigned them. And her enthusiasm is completely contagious. And she is so good at finding genuine ways to compliment

people for their work and to find tasks that match peoples' skills (Wells-Famula, 2006).

After assessing all of these factors, there is one much more implicit and "hidden" that is often internalized without questioning about. It references the organizational culture or networking culture inside each group or organization. Sometimes there is a specific and standardized way of "doing things" than can oppose and defy the personal ones, and alter the productivity of the network. This can also be present with the integration and participation of new members or working methodologies imported from other organization or parts of the world. So, instead of being undermined by this cultural diversity, make good use of it and take it as challenge to continue enriching the networking process.

"There's a certain culture sometimes of business networking, and what you find amongst corporations. There's a culture of networking amongst large organizations and NGO's and then there's a very different type of culture sometimes amongst anarchist groups or new-age groups, or progressive groups – guiding how the people involved *approach* networking. That's what affects the different types or the different cultures of networking there are. What's interesting is that normally those principles are not consciously brought forward by the people involved in a network. Now if you have a network which involves people that come from many different cultural or principled approaches, then you can get conflicts between them because they have different understandings and framings of how they see the network. So I think one of the things that is important for a successful network is for everybody that's in it to collectively develop a common frame of reference for understanding how do we see the network and what do we want to get from it. If you have people coming in with different expectations and understandings which are not communicated to each other, and we don't understand how it is that we see this issue differently, then conflicts can arise over trivial things (Brand-Jacobsen, 2006).

Besides the "how" to build a network, there is an underlying cause -inextricable with some of the advantages of groups mentioned above- that first has to be acknowledged, specifically for peace work, and that is, *why* work together? One of our interviewees, a grassroots organizer with many years of experience working for peace explained his reasons:

It has been my experience as a grassroots organizer in the peace movement for nearly a quarter of a century that broadening one's base of support is essential in influencing the outcome of public policy, especially when it comes to the issue of alternatives to war. The ability of peace activists to reach out to others as individuals and organizational representatives is vital to their success.

My goal in building a coalition is to bring together a variety of groups and individuals with varying strengths, skills and resources to demonstrate the broad support which exists for peace issues and that our positions are not shared by just a small band of left-wing activists. The role of a coalition is to develop and coordinate strategy for mobilizing local support. The benefits of a coalition are more than "strength in numbers"; coalitions help to make everyone's work more productive by enabling tasks to be assigned to the people (regardless of the organization) who have the best skills to carry them out. Coalitions share workload and boost creativity (Keller, 2006).

DURING: BUILDING REAL RELATIONSHIPS

While good partnerships do not always produce big impacts on the broader peace, they are necessary, if not sufficient, factors for doing so. Bad partnerships put peace work at risk, undermining programs and sometimes having clear negative impacts (Anderson, 35).

Preserving networks and partnerships is an ongoing effort. The organizing aspect does not end when you have finally gotten everyone together. To ensure success, the progress of a network needs to be constantly measured, goals revisited and revised, tools expanded and techniques managed. Peaceworkers in particular, are faced with the difficulty of not seeing immediate progress. However, many realize this and despite the complex and demanding nature of this group work, they persevere:

We have all the possibilities to fail and this is what you have to take into consideration when you do something. And sometimes an initiative, a network a collaboration of groups or people . . . can lead to a great amazing change in reality, and sometimes you're just another small stone in the wheels of the wagon that is going downhill. And if you tell me I'll just be a small piece of stone that will maybe not stop this downhill, I will also do it. It will not stop us (Shapira, 2006).

Contrary to the realization that all efforts may fail, it is possible to acknowledge the downfalls and work to counteract possible complications. Even with a well-thought out and prepared plan for a partnership, the actual process of working together is sometimes more difficult than one would think. After finding a goal or reason for building a network, it is sometimes difficult to remain on track for the goal. Our interviewees admitted that ongoing checks to ensure that every partner is on the same page – either through a facilitator or coordinator or collectively – is imperative for a successful network. It is necessary to continuously utilize good communication skills and networking tools throughout the process. Another drawback that was acknowledged during our interviews was the difficulty of agreeing on a common goal while recognizing each individual partners needs. The idea of creativity was raised time and time again. The knowledge that without newness and imagination, a partnership may not have as large an impact as it could. Lastly, our research showed groups felt higher levels of success when *real* relationships were built in the process of networking.

Individual Goals vs. Network Goals—Finding a Collective Vision

In an ideal situation, a clear goal will have been established from the get-go. The goals and strategies for reaching that goal however need to be re-evaluated and clarified on a regular basis. As one peacemaker notes, “often peace partners assume that a common vision and values will be the glue of their relationship and they rely only on verbal, open-ended agreements to this effect” (Anderson, 42). Many individuals in a partnership are busy on other projects and can't be expected to always be on the same page. Recognizing this early on can prevent miscommunication and confusion. Contributors to this project suggested many different methods for having a plain and transparent goal (*having* a goal – or goals –

being the most important observation). The following three methods are explained through our interviews' anecdotes: not being tied to the coalition; finding a way to communicate individual goals in a way that will illustrate the impact on the wider collective vision; and even sometimes letting go of your own goals, or at least being open to trying new ways of approaching these goals.

It is not always necessary to be tied to the team that you are working with. It is important to know what can be done together and what is better to be done as individuals. As one interviewee noted, "groups should not be afraid to say – on this one we need to form an ad hoc coalition for a particular project without all the organizations being involved – and then all get back together for other projects" (Zeese, 2006). There is no rule that says that all activities must be done together. Trying to always work in partnership can sometimes be detrimental to the success of the overall project goals. Peacemakers realize that partnerships meet the need for "strength in numbers", but sometimes working together only for that reason is not enough. Partnerships are ideally based on common ideals and a common goal(s), but occasionally it will be impossible to achieve every small goal as a team.

One of the people that we interviewed had many years of experience in negotiating and teambuilding in a wide range of organizations. He developed a theory for explaining one's goals to a wider team. He calls his model, "Slice the Salami":

Slice the Salami: A person can choke trying to get a whole salami down his throat, but a tasty sandwich, with a slice of salami, and his favorite additions (mustard, mayonnaise, tomatoes, whatever) can be eaten one bite at a time, followed by another sandwich, perhaps another day, and before you know it you've eaten the whole salami. Prepare your . . . team members for your end-wishes by instilling the appetite to hear more, learn more, work with you more in order to meet their own needs. Hook them with the benefits to them, and help them to adjust to change. Before you know it they've eaten the whole salami. They've come around to your point of view, and perhaps in the process you've come to appreciate their point of view better and have modified your overall approach or plan (Lynnworth, 2006).

But at the same time, being flexible enough to let go of your own goals and go along with the rest of the network will sometimes result in even more productive results. The following anecdote is a great example of why it is sometimes ok to not remain tied to your goals:

One time I was working with a team on a project that I had been pushing for a long time. We put together a committee of good people to create a Professional Development workshop for teachers. I knew EXACTLY what I wanted. But once that committee got their hands on my idea they were off and running. I was so upset. They started to form a mission statement and it was so off-base from my vision. After awhile I sat back and just listened and threw in an idea here and there when it was appropriate. Gradually I realized that they were going through the same process that I had done when I first came up with the idea. They said things that I had said to myself months or even years before. It took several meetings with me keeping my mouth shut but ultimately they created a vision statement that mirrored what I had wanted in the first place (only better because they had more ideas to add) (Wells-Famula, 2006).

Necessary Tools—and Sharing Those Tools With Others

Our interviewees agreed that networking is a skill that can be learned, taught and regularly refined. The best way of learning how to best work with others is through experience, but the techniques can also be shared so that others do not make similar mistakes or so that the overall output of a network is more productive. One of the most common comments about teaching these tools was that people should set a good example for others to follow. Even if there is not a leader or facilitator in a coalition, experienced individuals can still provide direction and “indirect training” (Lynnworth, 2006). The following necessary skills were compiled from all of our interviews. All are techniques and tools that can be learned through practice and training. In most cases, we’ve included a specific description or definition of what we mean.

TOOL	WHAT IS MEANT
Help those in trouble and even more importantly, ask/accept help when in trouble	Most interviewees mentioned the importance of helping others – expressing the importance of building real relationships ⁷
4:1 Rule	Help 4 times before you ask for help
Understand and accept the value that each one adds (little or much)	Every member of a team has a certain skill, idea, “name” that contributes to the rest of the team. Be aware of these roles and utilize the addition of every unique tool
Ask “good” questions	Ask questions that can be answered—that have no hidden agenda
Respect	A good network must contain an aspect of respect –even if there are disagreements about techniques or methods
Teambuilding	Build real relationships within the team
Communication strategies	See the section on “communication”
Delegation	Do not feel the need to take on every task that the coalition has to accomplish. Sometimes another member of the coalition will be better at the task at hand
Focus on win-win goals.	Look for areas of common agreement Before jumping into

⁷ One of the difficulties expressed in nearly interview was the worry that “helping”, sometimes led to an abuse of that kindness – with one or more team members not pulling their weight because they knew others would “help”.

	areas of disagreement
Understand “why”	Understand the WHY in every situation. Why does a partner feel the way they do. Why are they involved?
Seek the basis for discomfort, disagreement, discord.	Work to resolve concerns in a way that is livable for your needs.
Think before you speak or write	Compliment in public, criticize in private

In addition to these skills, the following seemingly obvious *human* qualities were suggested: respect, staying cool, courtesy, compassion and supportive body language (smiling and using eye contact).

The Role of Facilitators and Coordinators

Our interviewees overwhelmingly concurred that having a facilitator or coordinator (either with minimal or very influential roles in a network) was a good idea for keeping all partners on the same page and for consolidating the sometimes tremendous amounts of information that get circulated. As has been recognized over and over again, every partnership is different. Sometimes the role of facilitator would just be to set a date for meetings and ensure that every partner is aware of the plan. Some of our interviewees suggested having internal and external evaluators. External evaluators that could see problems from outside of the organization—an open opinion of the situation. And an internal evaluator that could stay on top of the partners and make sure they are all upholding their side of the task. In general however the suggested tasks for a facilitator fell into three roles. We’ve defined them as follows: mediator/negotiator, organizer or “cheerleader”. Some of the people we interviewed suggested actually separating these different roles and distributing them amongst different partners. Regardless, the following are important tasks for any partnership.

Mediator/Negotiator

A mediator or negotiator can be the colleague that keeps everyone on the same track. They can take the role of helping keep disagreements from becoming too controversial and troublesome. Through their knowledge of each partner’s goals and needs, they can catch these clashes early on and find ways to transform the problem so each partner’s ideas and missions are incorporated into the final vision. This person can take an active role from the beginning in using their good judgment to bring in people that will not be destructive or quarrelsome for the partnership. They can watch for people that may insist that their view is the right one (Fischer, 2006).

Organizer

One facilitator that we interviewed, who spent 3 years coordinating an international network of professional peacemakers explained the importance of building genuine relationships in a network. We discuss this later in a section specifically detailing the importance of this type of relationship and explaining methods for achieving such

relationships, but this interviewee detailed his task as a relationship-builder within his role as facilitator. His understanding of success in this role included finding the “knowledge, the passion, the skills, the interests” that each of the individual partners in a network could contribute or connect to. He also found it important to know their worries and daily problems, building a direct relationship that could complement and encourage their professional and personal development (Brand-Jacobsen, 2006). Understanding each partner’s strengths and weaknesses greatly enhances the overall vision and achievements of the group as a whole.

After these relationships are built, basic organizing is sometimes necessary to supplement the work being done by all members. This could include re-stating the mission and vision of the partnership to all of the associates every so often—giving everyone a common base (Wells-Famula, 2006, Brand-Jacobsen, 2006). Other organizing skills that are helpful for at least one member of the group be able to implement are answering questions; distributing documents; consolidating emails and information; integrating ideas; coordinating meetings and events; developing a clear work plan and other administrative tasks.

Cheerleader

It is important for coalitions to come together around a task or goal that will help everyone involved while at the same time reaching some overarching goal that it is easier to achieve together than apart. Peace work is difficult and time consuming though and working together can be very challenging. It makes a significant difference in the outcome of the teamwork if there is a person that can be a constant reminder of *why* you are doing this work in the first place. This person should be able to keep an open mind, motivate members of the team, stay positive and inspire people. This is a skill that takes talent and training.

The role of cheerleader is important in keeping up the spirits of all participants. One person that we interviewed suggested that the coordinator could provide positive reinforcement for behaviors that were beneficial to all partners:

If we want to prepare and train individuals to build networks, then we need to reinforce their behavior when it moves in the direction of network building, and we should work to modify their behavior when it drifts away from teamwork or networks, such as when it moves towards isolation, hard positions, and lack of cooperation. If you want others to do more of what you consider the “right things,” then you need to learn what makes people do “the wrong things.” Then you need to know how you can help them to modify their choices of how they behave. This understanding is critical to all human interactions, including how to get people to work together effectively (Lynnworth, 2006).

The coordinator is not the only one that should be organizing and planning the goals, techniques and strategies for the network. If it is assumed that the facilitator can or will handle all of these things, it can quickly lead to some partners feeling like they’re putting in more work than is worth it.

Not Only Facilitators need to Talk! — Communicating Effectively

Although many of the people we interviewed suggested that the best way of communicating was having a coordinator to facilitate dialogue, some had other proposals for making communication a little simpler. On the whole, the interviewees agreed that face to face communication was not only the best way to build fulfilling relationships, but also to convey ideas in general. One person suggested that “face-to-face meetings are still essential – at least once or twice annually for national groups. Once a month for local coalitions. And, once a week if you are in the midst of a campaign” (Zeese, 2006).

However, some people also had favorite techniques for long-distance dialogue. Using new technology as a form of communication, although difficult for some, was seen as making networking and building partnerships a much easier endeavor than in the past. Things like email, internet/telephone conference calls, and faxes were found to be an easier and cheaper manner of being in contact with a variety of people. Interviewees warned however of being very careful of what you write in emails. The fast pace of today’s technology makes it easy to type something quickly and hit “send”. But a moment of reflection and thought can help avert misunderstandings.

One of our interviewees suggested a tool that we agreed was a very valuable tool for communicating. We’ve attributed the reason that only one person mentioned this tool to the fact that many of our interviews were held with professionals that were not necessarily trained in skills that peaceworkers are more frequently given. The technique that was suggested was Marshal Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication (NVC). As peaceworkers, it seems like there are many tools that we have for transforming difficulties, but unfortunately our tools don’t always get translated into our everyday lives. Some of these simple skills can be used (and taught) when networking.

Nonviolent Communication is a method for forming connections with people that you have a relationship with. The technique is an approach that allows each individual’s *needs* and *feelings* to be recognized and understood without blame or judgment (www.cnvc.org). In any form of communication, today’s technology makes it much more difficult to form connections with the people that you work with. As we mentioned earlier, email can completely remove the human side of a relationship. In Spring 2005 a journal article written by an NVC trainer noted that much of the communication “between NVC trainers takes place via email and from this, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that it is possible not only to use NVC to build relationships through electronic communication and provide support . . . but also to plan training initiatives and to resolve conflicts” (Cox & Dannahy, 4). The Journal article goes on to show that the style of communication promoted by NVC provides a method for email interactions that allow for the “real meaning” of the message to be heard and understood and for an increase in transparency and trust (Cox & Dannahy, 5).

Nonviolent Communication enables humans to understand each others feelings and needs and from that to recognize what “request” will openly and clearly express their need. Even a basic understanding of this form of communication has been shown to have very positive impacts on relationships that rely on email and other forms of long-

distance technology to communicate (Cox & Dannahy, 3). This mode of communication could enhance the clarity of dialogue within a network.

Creativity, Imagination, Being 'New'

Many of our interviews suggested one of the reasons for creating a partnership was to answer the need for a fresh and innovative approach to the work they were all doing. This is especially important in the peace movement, where conflict transformation often depends on imagination and ingenuity. Three ideas were proposed to sustain the level of excitement and creativity: combining interesting partners, maintaining a sense of humor, and setting aside space for the celebration of life.⁸ Sometimes, the innovativeness of a partnership comes simply from the people involved (the combining of interesting partners), as one of our interviewees, an Israeli Military Pilot refuser notes:

. . . I think it [the partnership] has a great potential, because it's the first time in this situation that the combatants are working together. Former combatants . . . are cooperating; people who were really fighting each other. Sometimes it's people who were shooting . . . each other and once they are transforming themselves, and the situation, to a position that they can go together and give lectures and be . . . a political voice...it's very new and in other places in the world where it happened, it always happened after the war after the violence, not during. Mil So we have a group like that in I think, Bosnia and there's a group in Northern Island, and the group in Miramar if I'm not wrong. But it [the partnership] happens now, when our friends from both sides are still fighting each other. So it has this sexy appearance (Shapira, 2006).

Sometimes this "sexy appearance" is not as straightforward and requires a bit of coaxing. Still, it is necessary to collectively cultivate new ideas and fresh thinking while working towards group goals, otherwise the difficult work becomes stagnant and even more arduous. Many of our interviewees thought that simply fostering and encouraging a sense of humor would be enough (or at least have a big impact on) maintaining this idea of newness.

Some feared that losing sight of the "fun" of the work of peace activists can also lead to stagnation and further complications. One of our interviewees expressed concern that despite all of the work that had been put into his partnership the work may still miss the mark:

I think that sometimes people in the peace world can be so detailed and . . . project oriented that they forget that part of this process is trying to live out what we are actually trying to create, and so for me . . . I find that, yes [our project] . . . is going to create some really good documents and is going to do some great stuff but I wonder if at the end of two years we are actually going to . . . embody what we want the world to see (Rivers, 2006).

⁸ Rivers, 2006 paraphrasing an idea put forth by Marshall Rosenberg. Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (NVC) idea is to help "connect us with what is alive in ourselves and in others moment-to-moment, with what we or others could do to make life more wonderful" (www.cnvc.org).

Building *Real* Relationships

In general, the people that we interviewed agreed that building solid, REAL relationships was key to ensuring a successful collaboration. They had many similar suggestions about how to actually build these relationships including efficient communication, celebrating the work and accomplishments of the partnership and finding ways to do informal activities together (Zeese, 2006, Wells-Famula, 2006, Rivers, 2006). One of the professionals that we interviewed continuously came back to the idea of nurturing these genuine relationships. He had years of experience developing sincere relationships with people from all different cultures, backgrounds and experience levels. We realized that his dedication to growing relationships was in response to his knowledge and appreciation of the many benefits and success that he had through these connections and bonds that he had formed. The following are some of his thoughts on the importance of cultivating these relationships and some examples and tools for how to do it:

One of the things that's common for networks as for any type of work relationship, you need to develop a . . . [strategy] to deal with small challenges in conflicts which might arise. You need to develop a fuller understanding of the people you're in the network with. It's the same as working in an office. If you're working in an office where you have daily challenges, then you develop a certain frame of reference for interacting with them. If you have a fuller understanding, and it doesn't have to mean going out to a pub and getting to know each other . . . but if you have a basis of respect for knowing where the persons coming from, professionally and personally, so that you have a relationship of trust . . . develop the personal confidence and trust, by showing that you work well together. That's very important for networking because it means that you don't need everything spelled out always, and small things that could lead to misunderstandings don't, because you trust the people you're with.

I think there are a lot of multiple mechanisms that you want to use for it, and it really depends on what are your resources and capacity. Say for example you're a network spread across a geographical area – do you have the opportunity to bring members together? Because, some networks may have regular meetings, face to face interactions where you can discuss. Other times you don't have that possibility. When you're in a network . . . part of what you're doing is relationship building. Honesty and trust are very important in the network. It's essentially a type of contract. Part of it is through having a conscious process. Start out at the beginning with recognizing 'what are you trying to achieve in your network?' and that you have people coming from different backgrounds, approaches and issues. So recognizing that that trust in relationship is something you have to build.

One of those aspects of a real relationship is the imagination and curiosity about the other . . . imagination and curiosity mean human respect; knowing the other person that you're working with. And again, if you are looking at it from the purely cost-benefit output analysis, it makes your work more effective, it does it better. This is what corporations have realized over the last 30 years. That investing in the human environment, they do it of course to make capitalism more effective and to take out more profits, but investing in the human environment, creates a better workplace. It motivates workers more, it gets them to produce better, now they're doing it for their own reasons...but it creates a work environment where there's sometimes less

stress, because you can do it for the principle perspective . . . that in itself is not only good for it's output, but it's good in and of itself.

You give in a small bit of time and energy on your part and what you come out with is much better. Because then you have solid relationships, you have positive relationships, you have friends and colleagues, people in the network that can provide a higher level of commitment, a higher level of engagement, and better quality output in what you're doing . . . it's being able to be conscious of the other person, being able to read—say for example if you're communicating over email. Understand the lines that are written behind and around what's actually written. Pick up on things, listen to what's actually being said. Someone might mention in passing that this person has just had a child or this person has just lost a loved one, or this person is looking for a job. Be more aware and open to the total experience of what a person's going through, as well as their background. Read their writings, know their perspectives, where they're coming from. These are the types of things that are relevant in networks . . . you understand the person better, you know their context, you know where they're coming from and it allows you to make your communication with them more relevant and more effective (Brand-Jacobsen, 2006).

MEASURING AND IMPROVING THE SUCCESS OF PEACE NETWORKS

The plethora of resources on networking and building partnerships that have arisen, for some reason, have not fully been incorporated into the efforts of peaceworkers. The European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation acknowledges this, saying, the effectiveness of civil activity is often hampered by a lack of coordination between groups operating in similar fields. As a result, scarce resources are wasted through duplication of tasks and failure to achieve synergy. There is a great need to create civil networks and/or platforms that promote coalition and constituency building. Global networks are needed to further strengthen individuals' and communities' capacity for peace building (http://www.gppac.net/documents/pbp/part1/10_refle.htm, 20 March 2006).

Although similar, the work being done for peace often has interesting differences from work being done in other fields. The same is true for networks—we can learn good skills through stories from other areas of work (although it's debatable whether this information is actually getting incorporated into peace networks), but the failure to recognize that there *are* differences hinders the opportunities for enhancing effectiveness.

In the introduction of this paper we set out to identify the most important tools needed for working in coalitions and what peaceworkers could do to fully realize the potential within these networks. In this section we'll attempt to determine how to measure the effectiveness of partnerships and establish a method for understanding and increasing the impact of these partnerships on peace. In "Confronting War", the report on increasing the effectiveness of peace work, the authors create an outline for measuring how efficient peace work is and how valuable it will be towards achieving Peace writ Large ("the big peace"). The conclusions suggested in this report are a

good jumping off point for determining how to fully achieve all the possibilities for contributing to peace in our partnerships.

Measuring Effectiveness

Most of our interviewees explained very basic methods of determining the value of their partnerships. The responses suggested that longevity or sustainability was one sign of success, as well as long-lasting friendships, a wish to work together again in the future, and requests for future services provided by a network (Dubee, 2006, Zeese, 2006).

While these gauges for effectiveness are reasonable and valid, does the overall goal have more far-reaching outcomes? Do the end achievements balance the huge effort exerted to sustain a partnership? With the amount of frustration working in partnerships that was recognized from our interviews, *and* the uncertain answers that we received when we asked about successes, it is questionable as to whether peaceworkers have managed to wholly realize the potential of these networks. Answering this question is doubly imperative when faced with increasing 'burnout' in the workplace—in all fields, but especially for people working for social justice (www.cdc.gov). "Confronting War" concludes that four questions should be asked of one's work when determining whether it will contribute to Peace Writ Large:

- Will this effort cause participants and communities to develop their own initiatives for peace?
- Will this effort result in the creation or reform of political institutions to handle grievances that fuel the conflict?
- Will this effort prompt people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence?
- Will this effort result in an increase in people's security and in their sense of security? (Anderson, 2003, 61).

These questions would ideally be asked throughout the networking process—from beginning to end—as reminders of the overall achievements that the network is hoping to accomplish. And as a method for celebrating the met objectives along the way.

PEACE MOVEMENTS AS NETWORKS

The bleeding heart many of us have is rarely accompanied by a clear mind that provides strategic thinking and operational planning (Turner, 2006).

One question that has still not fully been answered in the process of researching and writing this paper is how to overcome the competition for resources and repetition of efforts that exists in the peace movements. This is a question of how, different networks that may well be functioning in fully effective and satisfying ways independently, can realize the potential of joining forces—if this is even a feasible

and necessary step to be taking. Is there a disconnect between the human rights/social justice groups that shouldn't be there? Or is it indeed more beneficial to work separately on other issues? Have so-called conservative groups (especially in the United States) managed to find ONE common goal they can all rally around? And is it possibly necessary to, in addition to our other goals, make a conscious effort to add "Peace" as the issue that all people can support? Should peace movements follow the same basic principles as networks and partnerships? Again, from the Oxford English Dictionary, "movement" is defined as "a group of people working to advance a shared cause" or "a series of organized actions to advance a shared cause". One of the activists that we interviewed expressed his disappointment with the techniques that the peace movement that he is a part of:

The peace movement is missing much. I'm a bleeding heart peacenik myself, but find it frustrating to participate in the "peace movement" (if there is such a thing). I go to the marches in DC calling for peace, or to bring our troops home, or whatever the case may be and just shake my head. It has been the same everywhere. There is no common message—you are as likely to hear about Leonard Peltier, global warming, or HIV as you are about the mobilization to demand troops leave Iraq. . . the peace movement is missing talking points, unified message, common theme (I think this should rotate as each is accomplished but for there to be a focus on one issue until that is addressed) . . . there is no organized partnership [and a] lack of leadership, this would resolve most of the other issues, the person or organization could create the partnerships, the themes, the communication strategies, the outreach, etc . . . it just doesn't happen. A few organizations on the more radical end of the peace movement have had a very limited amount of success in coordinating bodies to move, but that is about it in the last few decades (Turner, 2006).

Peace Movements, as a type of network, have a unique opportunity to use their efforts for creating an organized force towards impacting Peace Writ Large.

PEACE NETWORKING STEPPING STONES

In the following guide, we compile the tools, ideas, techniques and methods suggested by our interviews.

BEFORE

Agree on definition for Peace

Define clear objectives and goals—including timetables, locations etc

Determine what the overall contribution will be to "Peace Writ Large"

Understand interests, motives and contributions that each partner brings to the network

Determine Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools to be used

Decide on a method for facilitation or coordination

Establish mechanisms for measuring success

DURING

Find a collective vision

Acknowledge when it is ok to not work in coalition

Concentrate on overall impact

Be open to new ideas and goals

Utilize all tools available and share them with others
Fill the roles of mediator/negotiator, organizer, and ‘cheerleader’ either through a
facilitator or in some other way
Communicate Effectively
Utilize NVC tools
Find ways of stimulating creativity and imagination
Build “real” relationships

AFTER

Did the effort cause participants and communities to develop their own initiatives for peace?
Did the effort result in the creation or reform of political institutions to handle grievances that fuel conflict?
Did the effort prompt people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence?
Did the effort result in people’s security and in their sense of security? (Anderson, 61)
Did the network lead to long-lasting relationships?
Did the network result in requests for future services?
Create a final report for documenting the successes, lessons learned and best practices from the effort.

CONCLUSION

There are many aspects of partnerships and networking that have been left out of this paper. We have consciously not discussed the issue of funding in this paper. Much has already been written about this topic and, as one of our interviewees mentioned, “money is the absolutely vital and fundamental issue when building networks, *if* you have no imagination and no idea of what you’re doing” (Brand-Jacobsen, 2006). Since we have spent time discussing the importance of imagination and creativity when working in a partnership, and the importance of this aspect when working for peace, we feel like the issue of money is less important for this paper.

We recognize that the information here is predominantly from anecdotal interviews – from people from Europe and North America. It is by no means meant to be a final all-encompassing document with all of the answers. More, we hope that the information here will be a jumping-off point for more thinking and research on this important issue. We realize that subsequent research must be more inclusive—encompassing different areas of work—as well as much more research from those already working for peace. It must build on new theories and practices from different regions of the world, and acquire knowledge from all genders, age groups, and levels of experience.

We were surprised and somewhat disappointed to not find solid answers and suggestions from our interviews. It was shocking to realize how much effort and love are put into the work that is being done, but that there is a serious lack of self-appreciation and acknowledgement for the every-day accomplishments. From our research, it seems that without a clear understanding of a networks impact on the

wider goal of “Peace”, it is difficult to measure their effectiveness, and to value the immense amount of work and courage that it takes to collaborate. Our interviewees were all very eager to learn how to make their networking efforts more efficient and effective for their peacework. We wish that the answers that we found were more straightforward and uncomplicated and not purely anecdotal. However, we suspect that these stories are partially what is missing from previous networking guides, and believe that they are necessary and unique tools for peace partnerships. We deeply appreciated the honesty and candidness we received from our interviews. The hope that they expressed, guided our belief in the importance of enhancing our mechanisms for effective peacework.

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About the EPU

The EPU program represents a challenge to students both inside and outside the classroom. It facilitates conversations and reflections on the many theoretical and practical issues the world is confronted with today.

Inside the class-room a high standard prevails given the high quality of EPU's international faculty. But learning also occurs outside class, facilitated by the fact that EPU students and faculty live together in a small community, in close proximity to each other, with little of the distractions that characterise modern cities. Ideas raised in the academic courses continue to be debated informally afterwards. This stimulates a growth of a community of scholars (around thirty to fifty persons) that is particularly rich not only because of the transnational character of the faculty but also because of the many different cultural backgrounds and practical experiences of EPU students.

Students admitted into this program should therefore be prepared to find themselves living together with students from Bosnia, Bhutan, Pakistan, Japan, Nigeria, Columbia, Mexico, the USA, Uganda, Rwanda, Germany or Russia, to name just a few of the countries which EPU students call home. Since EPU began in 1990, over 700 students have come from 85 different countries. The individuals themselves often reflect the cross-pressures and dislocations of the modern world. Thus, one student may be a Muslim from Los Angeles, another a feminist from Indonesia, or a young diplomat from Uganda. Many will have experienced war and lost loved ones.

The EPU Experience

Upon completion of a semester at the EPU, the chances are high that the students' perceptions of their own societies as well as that of others will have been challenged if not changed. A new web of relationships is woven into the fabric of an individual student's life. The EPU staff have seen intimate friendships develop between students of disparate backgrounds. You may find yourself invited to a wedding in India, a rock festival in Denmark, or for a holiday on the beach in Gambia. Or you might be asked to help support peace work in Georgia, rebuild a town in Bosnia, or resettle someone fleeing war.

The EPU provides students with an understanding of peace and conflict in the world that reaches beyond purely academic limits. The EPU's effort has been to create an embryonic experience of what a true transnational culture might be like, respectful of diversity and pluralism, without the constant threat of conflict, but with a permanent need for tolerance, understanding and mutual learning.

Editorial

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