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Konfliktbearbeitung

The Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management

Seminar Report

“Theories of Social Change and their Contribution to the Practice of
Conflict Transformation: Developing the State of the Art in Conflict
Transformation Theory and Practice”

26-27 September 2005, Berlin, Germany

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1 Introduction

This Seminar brought together key scholars, representing diverse schools of thought, to discuss their approaches and to debate current cutting-edge thinking and practice in the field of conflict transformation. They were asked to make a presentation outlining their most up-to-date approaches, theoretical or practice-oriented, to the transformation of violent conflict. These presentations then formed the basis for a free-ranging discussion to generate both an assessment of the best of current thinking and practice, and a future agenda to address the most pressing needs of the field in the 21st century.

The Seminar was designed to assist the planning of Berghof's future work, by stimulating, clarifying and challenging some of the emerging ideas that will shape the Berghof Research Center's agenda for the coming years.

Our goal in the Seminar was to bring together a wide range of perspectives. In this, we were largely successful. Despite our best efforts to include Southern perspectives, however, our discussion was Northern-dominated. It also featured a predominance of men (six of seven presentations were from men, although the overall attendance was almost equally split). We tried hard but unsuccessfully to include specific perspectives from feminism, from critical theory, and from the German tradition of conflict analysis.

Nevertheless, our presenters represented a very valuable range of the highest quality input from the fields of: alternative dispute resolution, interactive conflict resolution, security studies, conflict prevention, and the internal critique of conflict transformation, and also included an excellent interaction of scholarship and practice. This mix was richly enhanced by our other guests. We can safely say that we had a very broad range of views in the room.

A central theme arising from the discussions was the necessity to clarify and improve the linkages between the theory and practice of conflict transformation. This resonates directly with the Berghof Center's core focus on the interaction between the two, reflected in its structure of two closely-coordinated institutions: the Berghof Research Center (BRC) and the Berghof Foundation for Peace Support (BFPS).

This report reflects on this productive tension between the analysis and practice strands of conflict transformation, first concentrating on themes around the

theories of conflict formation and the values that guide the field (Section 2), then exploring the dilemmas of intervention faced by conflict resolution practitioners (Section 3). Section 4 summarises the discussion that followed the presentation by Berghof of the systemic approach to conflict transformation – a potential tool for linking the stages of analysis and intervention in a more dynamic way and for devising strategic priorities for both research and practice. Finally, Section 5 outlines the vision for future research at Berghof, as inspired, endorsed, and enhanced by the Seminar.

2 Conflict Analysis and Assumptions

A first set of debates revolved around different explanatory approaches and concepts. The participants discussed the root causes of violent conflict, changes and challenges in the structure of international conflict, groups of actors and stakeholders, as well as interveners, and the dynamics of violent conflict. Underlying the discussion was the recurring realisation that guiding principles, implicit values and assumptions have a strong influence on analysis, theory building and practice.

2.1 Root causes of violent conflict

A core hypothesis regarding the difficulties in contemporary conflict transformation was presented by Herbert Wulf. He argued that the unsatisfactory outcome of many attempts to resolve conflicts peacefully had to do with the “insufficient analysis of the root causes of conflict” which leads in turn to competing and contradictory strategies: “A whole range of complementary, competing and contradictory assumptions about the root causes of conflict are offered. This is not an abstract or theoretical question. If the causes of conflict are misperceived, then the remedies suggested or implemented will not solve the problems.” (Wulf: 3¹)

¹ Unless otherwise noted, quotes without a date are from seminar presentations, available on the Berghof Center website (www.berghof-center.org) along with this Report. Unsourced quotes are from seminar discussions.

He proceeded to review the most prominent explanations for protracted violent conflict (Wulf: 3-7):

- Today's conflicts are sometimes described as a new *barbarism*, similar to Thomas Hobbes' vision of "war of each against all".
- Alternatively, some see the risk of civil war systematically related to *economic factors*, in the sense that the availability of resources tends to contribute to war making, while objective measures of social grievance have no systematic effect on risks of war.
- The *grievance concept*, on the other hand, postulates that those who are deprived of economic and social development opportunities tend to resort to violence to ensure their livelihood.
- The *erosion of states* and the failure of domestic politics, leading to endemic state weakness and collapse, are conceived by many social scientists as the central cause for war, armed violence and conflict.
- Sometimes, *external support* – embedded in the context of intensifying globalisation – is taken as a main cause of violent conflict. Examples are economic aid, granting sanctuary to rebels, funds from a diaspora or trade with conflict parties, foreign armed forces and arms dealers.
- *Ethnicity, religious and cultural cleavage, fundamentalism, and group identity* – sometimes referred to as "traditional ethnic hatred" and often exacerbated by elite manipulations – have frequently been considered a factor of war and conflict.
- The *availability of weapons*, especially the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, also contributes to violent conflicts. This factor focuses primarily on the accelerators and multipliers of violence.
- *Privatisation and outsourcing of traditional police and military functions*, while not the causes of conflicts, influence how wars are fought.
- Multi-cause explanations are also popular. One example is the argument that *authoritarian rule, weak states, socio-economic deprivation and inequity and exclusion of minorities* form the primary cause of large-scale violence.

An overarching explanation was offered by Michael Lund, who argued that most contemporary conflicts arise from processes of liberalisation and are in fact symptoms of a clash "*between differing societal and international normative orders* – between a status quo order and a rival new order – and thus between the competing entitlements and rights that the antagonists each claim are inalienable" (Lund: 2).

Seminar participants agreed that the analysis of root causes underlying conflict intervention is often rather *ad hoc*, patchy and even contradictory. Some participants observed that even in Wulf's long list some important factors, for example poverty, were still underdeveloped. It was also noted that the dimension of gender was entirely missing from the discussion. And a strong argument was made for the need to include history more fully into the analysis of causes of conflict. However, others cautioned that across the full range of root causes, accurate analysis was difficult to achieve.

Ultimately, it was asserted that there is no single root cause or set of explanatory variables that would work in all cases. An in-depth analysis of contextualised factors, regularly updated, is indispensable. Theories should be applied to explain the most salient factors in a given place at a given time – thus allowing for a range of theories rather than searching for one meta-theory of conflict resolution/transformation. Christopher Mitchell in particular cautioned against trying to take account of all possible causes – thus potentially prolonging the stage of analysis indefinitely – and recommended that the field of conflict transformation focus instead on the more straightforward questions of

- How did the conflict start?
- What keeps the conflict going?
- What are changeable/tractable causes and factors in the short, medium and long term?

Mitchell's presentation drew attention to dynamic factors of conflict formation and escalation that need to be included when analysing violent conflict (Mitchell: 4, 7):

Most analysts who write about the causes or the sources of social conflict agree that change, particularly extensive and sudden change, has the capacity to create conflict. However, whether the conflict protracts and turns violent depends upon a host of other variables within each type of setting – international, intra-national or local. ... [T]here are three aspects of the general phenomenon of change that are important in its conflict generating effects; the *nature* of the change, the *intensity* of the change and the *rapidity* of the change. ... We thus confront the following queries:

1. *What is the nature of the change that gives rise to goal incompatibility?*
2. *How rapidly has the change come about?*
3. *How extensive is the change that confronts those affected?*

...It seems plausible to propose that changes characterised by the following qualities are likely to have the most effect on generating or modifying protracted conflicts:

1. *Major* changes – large in scope and intensity
2. *Sudden* changes – taking place abruptly

3. *Unexpected* change – with no prior indication, warning or time to prepare
4. *Rapid* changes – taking place over a short time period
5. *Irreversible* changes – with no way of returning to the status quo.

Having reviewed the host of potential root causes, one thing is clear: most violent conflicts today are fought in the intra-state context. Thus, they escape the earlier boundaries of army-to-army wars, and broaden out to encompass civilian communities and, indeed, whole societies within the vortex of violence. The easy availability of small arms, the accumulated global experience of guerrilla warfare, the increasingly porous nature of state boundaries, the growing international challenge to the barrier of internal state sovereignty: all these factors and more have facilitated a post-bipolar explosion of “small” (i.e. local) but increasingly devastating (i.e. society-wide) wars.

Assessing the current state of the art of conflict analysis, we face a four-fold challenge:

- We need to acknowledge that we are dealing with a great number of “multi-cause conflicts” which call for multi-cause conflict analysis. At the same time, we need to be aware that there are conflicting interpretations and assumptions (within and between organisations) about what keeps a certain conflict going and what can be done about it. It is vital to make explicit such assumptions, to share and compare conflict analyses, and to test for potentially contradictory and counterproductive sets of strategies.
- We need to acknowledge that causes and factors fuelling conflict are in dynamic interaction, rather than forming a static relationship. Much more needs to be learned about the directions and intensity of conflict dynamics to enhance our analysis.
- We acknowledge that most protracted social conflicts contain a core element of identity – even if, at the surface, they seem to be fought mainly over power and resources. Conflict analysis must take this complex dimension into account in more meaningful ways.
- In general, still more time and effort need to be spent on the analysis of root causes of conflict and on the documentation and sharing of conclusions from such analysis.

2.2 The structure of conflict

Given the shifts in world politics over recent decades, participants discussed two specific challenges that arise from changes in the structure and environment of violent conflict across the world.

- **Regionalisation and globalisation of intra-state wars**

It was generally agreed that there is an increased *regionalisation and globalisation* of intra-state warfare. In almost every instance, such wars affect conditions beyond state borders. National conflict thus becomes a regional problem (for example in West Africa, the Great Lakes region, or the Balkans), since the issues at stake, the self-defining communities involved, and the effects of violence all implicate actors, communities and resources beyond national borders. Given the need already acknowledged for a more effective analysis of root causes that permits greater complexity, this demands strengthened analysis of regional and global networks and dynamics.

A further particular challenge for the field is the fallback from the range of post-9/11 changes in the global conflict environment. It was repeatedly noted that the so-called “war on terror” carries severe ramifications for non-violent conflict transformation. The question was raised whether we are focusing on the wrong developments if we, as a field, do not actively seek a role in the discourse on a “new world order” and help devise effective strategies to counter globalised terrorism. No-one suggested that our concentration on non-violent methods of social change should be pursued any less, but some participants felt strongly that conflict transformation had a role to play in this particular political discourse and should work harder to make its voice heard.

- **Asymmetry of power – A neglected structural cause of conflict?**

The issue of the often asymmetrical nature of international conflicts raised one of the most passionate debates during the two-day seminar.

It is in the nature of most intra-state conflicts that there is a significant degree of *asymmetry* between the warring sides. This has serious implications, some of which we may be underestimating or ignoring. Most such conflicts can be seen as comprising state (or occupying) forces, powerful in military, economic and political capacities, ranged against insurgent groupings representing communities with much lower power levels. But this has not led to a series of easy victories by the stronger over the weaker. Rather, the pattern has usually been to produce a degree of stand-

off or stalemate: neither side can achieve outright victory, but neither can be completely defeated. In part, because this is not a simple equation of military might, this stand-off is also based on the subjective, identity-based element. A military defeat no longer puts an end to a quarrel over who holds the power, when subjective interpretations of the conflict as a war of liberation, or a struggle for freedom and self-expression, or a defence against anarchy and separatism, are in the ascendant. On the contrary, such perspectives serve to fuel the conflict's intensity.

While there was little dispute over the categorisation of most protracted social conflicts as asymmetrical conflicts, there was sharp criticism from Nadim Rouhana that neither conflict analysis nor conflict transformation practice were doing justice to this fact. Conflict analysis, he asserted, was often "symmetrical" even in the face of clearly asymmetrical power relationships, and he criticised "the assumption that both parties' needs, fears and hopes are the same" and equally valid, even equivalent. Interactive conflict transformation practice focuses on strengthening the understanding of each side for the other. Yet, in the opinion of this participant, unless one contextualises the analysis, taking into account history (as a history of objective wrongdoings), justice (as an objective aspiration), rights and the power balance, one is missing a central dynamic of the conflict and supporting impractical and even unethical analysis and practice. To equally valorise the narratives of oppressor and oppressed, to give the same value to the sense of victimisation felt by both antagonists is, in his opinion, a highly dangerous path for the field of interactive conflict resolution. And furthermore, to strive for reconciliation without first addressing the extent of power asymmetries is highly problematic and perhaps doomed to failure.

Reactions to this critique varied. Some found much supporting evidence for the thesis that conflict analysis neglects power asymmetries and conflict transformation practice avoids or underemphasises the issue. At the same time, many warned against viewing the field as too homogeneous, and stressed the need to be careful with generalisations.

The dichotomy of powerful parties and powerless parties was particularly disputed. It was asked, "Who defines who is powerful and who is powerless?" Some stressed that even the powerless can have power (for example, "the power of making themselves a nuisance," the power of surviving undefeated) and the powerful can be powerless in many aspects (for example, to achieve complete military victory). Ideally, conflict analysis should help to paint a more differentiated picture of conflicting parties. Conflict transformation which is based on such analysis can help to find common ground between seemingly completely opposed camps. Instead of portraying conflict lines to look like Figure 1, stressing that "every single

oppressor is better off than every single oppressed” (Rouhana quoting Memmi), one should rather think of them as cutting across groups, as shown in Figure 2. Such differentiation can also be a safeguard against an overly simplistic interpretation of conflict lines: one example of such oversimplification would be an exclusive focus on political divisions, while overlooking alternative and interwoven patterns of discrimination and marginalisation (gender, ethnicity, etc.).

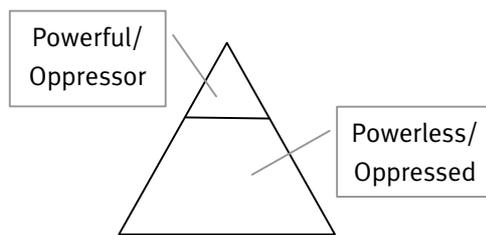


Fig. 1

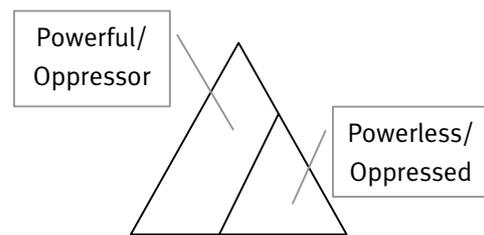


Fig. 2

Some participants recalled that Burton and Azar in particular did carefully examine the idea of power asymmetries in conflict (Azar 1990, Burton/Dukes 1990). Yet, neither Burton nor Azar address themselves in pragmatic detail to the questions of how power asymmetries – often manifest in identities and entrenched by history – could or should be acknowledged, assessed and shifted.

The challenge remains to integrate social justice credibly into the agenda of conflict transformation, starting with conflict analysis. We need to think through more creatively the tension between the advocacy of just solutions (and, by implication, acknowledgement of injustice) and one of conflict transformation’s core tenets, the necessity of non-judgemental, process-oriented neutrality/multipartiality. (More on this below in Section 3.)

One proposition remained unresolved: It was neither agreed nor dismissed that the whole field needs a *paradigm shift*, starting with the acknowledgement that its analysis and practice are guided by values that are not universally shared, and that individual exceptions (e.g. a feminist critique, or the inclusion of a historical analysis among many non-historical analyses) are not enough to bring about this shift.

2.3 Stakeholders/Actors

Accurately identifying stakeholders and actors, and their roles, in a conflict setting is a central element in conflict analysis. Seminar participants discussed a number of cutting-edge concepts of categorising and approaching such conflict stakeholders. (This section collects insights that help internal and external peacebuilders with the analysis. In section 3, we will look in more detail at the strategic roles to be played in conflict transformation.)

Norbert Ropers named two critical analytical steps:

- (1) Identifying key “drivers of conflict”, taking into account the self-fuelling character of many protracted conflicts
- (2) Identifying potential “drivers of peace” using a similar systems analysis approach

The ultimate challenge, as seen by Berghof and shared by many of the participants, is thus, first, to identify those stakeholders and dynamics in a conflict setting who/which will try to block a shift from destructive to constructive patterns of conflict; and, second, to identify a “critical yeast” (Lederach) of stakeholders who will promote constructive ways of dealing with conflict and just social change. For both groups, it is important to analyse the motives that are behind their stance. Ropers added that it was helpful to conceptualise “drivers of conflict” also as pathological learning processes and negative feedback loops embedded in a web of cyclical causality, which cannot be simply “turned around” by agreements on the Track One level.

Such analysis needs to be flexible – since stakeholders can be both drivers of conflict and drivers of peace at different times or in different environments.

▪ Spoilers

Seminar participants called for particular care – in terms of differentiated analysis and attention to the consequences of negative labels – with the group often referred to as *spoilers*. There was considerable reluctance to use this term at all, since it has a tendency to denigrate a group of people as unhelpful or peace-resistant when in fact they may simply be adhering strongly to values central to their society (e.g. “not giving up the faith”, “carrying the flag”). It should be made clear that spoilers are not automatically those who will benefit from the continuation of violent conflict.

Two analytical approaches were suggested for dealing with this challenge (besides avoiding the “spoiler” label altogether). One was to focus analysis on

factors that represent obstacles to constructive change, thus broadening the intellectual approach. The following categories were presented by Mitchell (16-18):

- *Policy* factors, e.g. the perceived importance of existential issues at stake; the consequent perceived unfeasibility of alternatives; and the long-term investment character of social conflict, where advantages are only to be gained at the very end
- *Psychological* factors, especially those associated with miscalculation and misperception, including the tendencies to measure incurred cost and sacrifice against the value of the goals for which sacrifices have been made; mechanisms of self-justification, avoiding acknowledgement of responsibility; denial of the evidence of impending stalemate or failure; and skewed evaluation of gains, losses and associated risk-taking behaviour
- *Social* factors, particularly the dynamic of “face saving” and the pervasiveness of “social norms that support consistency rather than flexibility, steadfastness rather than learning from experience, and willingness to sacrifice for the cause rather than accepting that the time has come to cut losses”
- *Political* factors, especially the factor of party-political rivalry and the threat to existing leaderships, very similar to the way “job insecurity” can mitigate against willingness to admit mistakes
- Finally, *entrapment* is a mental model that encompasses psychological, economic and political factors inducing conflict parties to refuse to change, thus appearing as “spoilers”.

The second approach stresses the need for more *intra*-party work (and analysis), which several participants called important and useful. Mari Fitzduff reported from her experience in Northern Ireland that intensive “single identity” work enabled people to move from “soft talk” to “tough talk,” and to proceed from easier to more difficult issues which would previously have stalled processes and led people to “defect” or “spoil”.

▪ **Agents of change**

To quote from Mitchell’s paper once more (21ff.): “Given the existence of such a complex variety of factors that help perpetuate conflicts ... the final conundrum ... necessarily becomes a question of *who* can successfully initiate and oversee such strategies. ...The question deals with the nature of change ‘agents’ ... but given its implications, that term seems somewhat misleading. ‘Agent’ implies – in some sense – a prime mover, which seems somewhat unrealistic. ... In many situations, it seems most likely that the best any ‘agents’ can accomplish is to take advantage of the opportunities for revolutionary activities afforded by major alterations in the

environment or structure of a conflict, rather than bringing about such changes themselves.”

The prime challenge for conflict analysis remains to identify those stakeholders in a conflict setting and its environment who are best placed to enhance processes of social change and take advantage of opportunities, taking account of persons as well as institutions and processes. The second task of conflict analysis is repeatedly to assess, and communicate, which opportunities are opening up in a conflict setting, and to be well situated to share such analysis with those in influential positions.

- **Peace constituencies**

The concept of “peace constituencies”, finally, has been a *leitmotiv* in the work of Berghof over the last decade. We present it here as a potential way to combine the requirements of sound analysis and vertical and horizontal networking.

For a long time Berghof has given particular emphasis to supporting civil society actors in ethnopolitical and protracted conflicts, with a focus on the establishment of “peace constituencies” – those intra-societal actors who are supporters of, or themselves pro-actively engaged in, peace-relevant work. (A wider frame looks at the “peace potential” comprising all the available social capital which in principle could be tapped for peacebuilding purposes.) However, as David Bloomfield explained, especially given the recent interest in, and experience with, combined-track approaches, Berghof does not limit the concept of peace constituencies to civil society actors. Peace constituencies can – indeed often should – comprise individuals and groups from all the various levels and sectors of society where stakeholders are to be found. They need, for example, to include labour and business interests, civil society and politics. To do otherwise would be to risk a too-clear distinction between politics and civil society and thus encourage an opposition, rather than a complementarity, between the two. While they remain usefully distinct analytic categories, in practice particularly this can risk supporting a false dichotomy.

It has been found most useful to focus on the *interaction between different spheres*, namely (a) the interaction between the official macro-political and the unofficial societal levels; (b) the interaction between different realms of support work, particularly peace, human rights, development and humanitarian assistance; (c) the interaction between international and domestic actors and organisations. Bloomfield pointed out that one of the core issues is how (external) support can be organised in a way that it empowers the partners in the region and nurtures the domestic peace constituencies. Partnership and respect were identified as important

principles, notwithstanding remaining challenges in ensuring local ownership (see section 3).

It was undisputed that peace constituencies can form potentially powerful alliances and achieve inter-track cross-fertilization. An important next step will be to better strengthen such alliances to span the vertical, multi-level dimension, as well as the horizontal, multi-sector dimension.

2.4 Dynamics of violent conflict and conflict transformation

Discussion of the dynamics of violent conflict and its transformation focused mainly on two points: first, a refined understanding of the processes of escalation and de-escalation, and second, the necessity to take better account of the dynamics that create or mitigate conflict. A main research focus of Berghof for the coming years – on transitional roles – was also discussed in this context: What are the individual and group processes involved in changing roles when moving from primarily violence-orientated conflict systems to systems of peaceful change? What are entry and turning points in trying to bring about or accelerate such transitions?

Escalation as such has long been accepted as a principal dynamic in analysing violent conflict. Mitchell proposed that it was now imperative to move away from understanding de-escalation merely as a reversal of the escalation process, and ventured to say that not much useful literature existed on how effective de-escalation worked.

In the 1960's and 1970's, it was common for scholars to talk about an escalation 'ladder' and to discuss the 'rungs' or thresholds on that ladder, as though climbing upwards towards mutual destruction could be reversed simply by re-crossing the same thresholds in a 'downwards' direction. (One stopped bombing Haiphong harbour, for example, as a de-escalatory move that was supposed to elicit a positive counter move by the government that was the target of the bombing.) This whole approach ignored one of the basic types of change in the conflict structure, which linked the behaviour of one side to the perceptions and emotions of the other. This implied, at least, that increasing coercion on the Other, or crossing some culturally significant threshold (e.g. 'first blood'), often profoundly changed the attitudes of those Others and inevitably resulted in a counter escalation on their part ('making them pay'). This 'ladder' model's indiscriminate use also tended to obscure the fact that a wide variety of change processes could be involved in making the conflict more 'intense', or taking it to 'a higher level', and that some of these

processes made it much more difficult to reverse direction and bring about change that could lead towards a resolution. (Mitchell: 8)

Another participant likened escalatory processes more to “changes in the chemistry”, from which a new quality of relationship would likely ensue. “De-escalation”, all participants agreed, “is not a mirror image of escalation.”

A first step in refining analysis must be to examine the intensifying dynamics that foster escalation. Mitchell proposed that “at least 5 dynamics seem commonly to be involved in intensification processes: *mobilisation, enlargement, polarisation, dissociation and entrapment*” (Mitchell: 9). The next crucial step was to understand – in a less piecemeal fashion than to date – what obstacles there are to conflict transformation, and to deal systematically with means of arresting or reversing “malign conflict spirals” (Deutsch 1973).

One element in furthering the field’s comparative understanding of obstacles to change is to look at the transition that stakeholders go through in the process of moving from violence to peace. Bloomfield identified this as one core research project at Berghof, aiming to understand from the bottom-up how such processes played out, what influenced stakeholders in their decisions, and what ultimately enabled or encouraged them to chose nonviolence.

Furthermore, the need to work towards a more systematic understanding of positive social change has firmly taken root in Berghof’s approach. Ropers and Bloomfield presented some preliminary thoughts on using a systems approach to better understand the dynamics of protracted social conflict.

As a starting point, they adopted Galtung’s conflict triangle (Galtung 1969) consisting of a *situation of goal incompatibility, behaviour* (aggression, oppression, discrimination, reaction, escalation, etc.) and *attitudes* (stereotypes, beliefs, other-images, suspicion, fear, hatred, etc.): conflict can begin at any of these points, and each of the points can subsequently reinforce the others to produce the familiar process of escalation (see Figure 3).

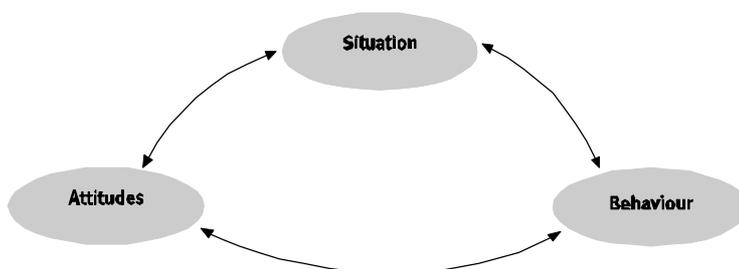


Fig. 3

Such an approach, Ropers hopes, will encourage scholars and practitioners to focus on feedback loops and circular causality chains, analysing the self-reinforcing nature of elements in the conflict. Drawing on recent thinking (e.g. Lederach 2005) that examines the limits of characterising conflict development in purely linear terms, Berghof sees great potential in adopting an innovative approach. “The key elements are a view of conflict as systemic and consisting of self-reinforcing patterns, and an analysis that searches for, or devises, entry-points for disrupting such reinforcement or for generating the reinforcement of constructive cycles and patterns” (Bloomfield/Ropers: 8).

A number of future directions for research and practice follow from this discussion:

- Rather than focusing on a static set of conflict causes and stakeholders, the challenge now is to understand how dynamic interactions between different levels and stakeholders and between attitudes, behaviour, goals and structures can be described and how developments in one area affect the other(s): in sum, how they must be seen as constantly interweaving.
- A further challenge is to understand better the transition that stakeholders go through in the process of shifting from violent conflict to peace, breaking with escalation and entrapment.
- Such a holistic view demands a more effective holistic methodology, which needs to be developed, tested and refined.

2.5 Guiding principles, implicit assumptions, and norms and values

The questions of which principles, assumptions and values guide the field of conflict transformation, and with what consequences, were discussed intensively throughout the seminar.

From the international relations point of view especially, there was vivid criticism that conflict resolution rhetoric and practice are plagued by inconsistencies. Goals, envisaged solutions and definitions of success among interveners can sometimes be incompatible. This leads to very different strategies (which will be elaborated further in section 3). Wulf challenged the participants with the following critique (Wulf: 7-9): Interventions are selective (“Why Somalia and not Rwanda?”) and more often than not supply-driven (whether by an excess of military capacities or expertise in certain methods), leading to “the wrong people doing the right tasks”, or too many people doing a too-limited set of tasks. They are also

guided by an orientation towards short-term success, rather than long-term commitment and realism. Conflict interventions turn a blind eye to the dilemma that propagating democracy and market economy can actually lead to an intensification of conflict, at least initially, and that human rights advocacy can similarly exacerbate conflict. Blueprint solutions (like nation-building modelled after the century-old nation-state model, or democracy delimited to the holding of multiparty elections) are endangering the principle of local ownership. Lund seconded this critique, stressing that “all good things do not necessarily go together”, and arguing that many post-agreement programmes try simultaneously to incorporate “opening up political participation vs. economic growth vs. inter-group reconciliation vs. nonviolence vs. human rights vs. strong states vs. social equality” (Lund handout: 2). Finally, Rouhana strongly criticised the disconnect between conflict analysis and conflict resolution/transformation.

One explanation offered for these observations was that little clarity exists about underlying goals, assumptions and values. (It has to be noted that some participants did question the degree of real confrontation between, especially, human rights and conflict transformation, calling for a more careful and differentiated analysis of where synergies lie and when contradictions arise.)

“No analysis is neutral”, one seminar participant stated. The challenge is to avoid being “heavily value-laden and top-down Northern” – a criticism that some also levelled against the permutation of participants at the seminar itself. The challenge for conflict analysis and resolution in general is to reach agreement on what kinds of norms would warrant intervention in societies, and which sets of values and goals may prove counterproductive.

Joseph Folger suggested an examination “around this table” of the motivations of people involved in conflict transformation, since “purpose drives [analysis and] practice”. What guiding notions do we have? Are we aware of our assumptions? And do we question our assumptions?

Rouhana offered a detailed criticism of the norms implicit in the interactive conflict resolution (CR) approach, on the basis of many years’ involvement in problem-solving work in the Middle East. He highlighted starkly how the parameters of seemingly value-free process-facilitation can prove controversial if probed more deeply, and can produce a biased emphasis completely at odds with the stated goals of the approach (Rouhana presentation):

(1) Emphasis on pragmatism and rationality

Even initial conflict analysis pays more attention to delineating achievements that are possible in the given conditions (pragmatism) and to delivering rational assessments, along the lines of ‘getting a little is better than getting

nothing at all'. (Program on Negotiation authors Robert Mnookin and Lee Ross, for example, argue to 'get what you can'.) This avoids an analysis of dignity, justice and entitlement. As one consequence, CR has difficulty in making sense of 'irrational behaviour,' which may arise because a group's sense of justice and equity has been systematically violated.

(2) Emphasis on the future, de-emphasis on history

The claim is that one cannot reach agreement on historic truth, that what matters is the future. Yet how can we talk about identity without considering history? In the Palestine/Israel context, it is futile to attempt to understand or tackle the conflict without addressing history. For years, CR initiatives have tried to convince Palestinians that Israelis have a perceived security problem. The question why they have this security problem is not often asked in a serious manner, and history is only consulted sporadically. (My explanation is: the Israelis did take the land from the owners and this makes them feel insecure; while the Palestinians need recognition of their own experience of this loss which formed an important part of their identity.) Examining history is avoided for reasons that should be explored. By forgetting history, CR becomes complicit in the creation or sustenance of a power imbalance, because it is the history of the powerless that is being forgotten in the process.

(3) De-emphasis on justice

There is an inter-subjective agreement on justice (transitional justice discourse), yet a blatant absence of justice in CR work. Why have these attempts stayed at the margin of CR? There may be a tension between retributive justice and peace but there does not need to be a tension between justice and peace as such. How can justice be brought into the CR toolbox, rather than being seen as the exclusive preserve of 'outside' legal experts.

(4) Emphasis on development and distribution of resources

The material development discourse and the field of conflict transformation have become more integrated in post-agreement environments. The restructuring of power relations, on the other hand, is not analysed or dealt with very much at all.

(5) De-emphasis on local cultures

Northern/Western science as a science of achievement is presented as universal. But such a normative approach brings its own social understandings, practices and values. It minimises or excludes, for example,

values of struggle and sacrifice, which play an important normative role in many non-Western societies (compare Salem).

Some of Rouhana's provocative propositions were contested. The emphasis on the future was seen by some participants as the only way out of malign conflict spirals, appealing to a shared sense of parenthood and responsibility for the future of "our" children. The stylisation of a group as overall powerless ("the oppressed"/"the victim") was seen as problematic (see the discussion in 2.2). The exclusion of human rights work and justice from conflict analysis and practice was not pervasive in the experience of many participants.

However, there was agreement that norms and assumptions needed to be critically analysed in order to become aware of blind spots and of the potential for doing inadvertent harm. In the discussion, more examples of the influence of norms and assumptions on analysis (and practice) were found, which are briefly presented below:

- **Criteria for success and failure**

Norms and assumptions shape our criteria for success and failure. To name but one example from the seminar discussions, one foundation recently decided to withdraw all their support for conflict resolution projects because an assessment had reached very negative conclusions. The sole criterion of success in the assessment, though, was efficiency. Measured this way, conflict resolution – or Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) – was not saving money in the courts. Participants of the seminar thought it important to continue to advocate for alternative measures of success in the field of conflict transformation. (Compare section 3 on impact assessment.)

- **Governance**

Conflict transformation is faced with the challenge of how to put people in a situation where they can think innovatively about political alternatives and options. The example of work in Liberia was discussed, where an attempt to restructure a more effective political system proved unpopular and unsuccessful because the existing system of "winner takes all" seemed more familiar and even "comfortable". Lederach (2005) claims that "the peace builder must have one foot in what is and one foot beyond what exists". Yet what are the alternatives that the CT community itself is open to?

The question arose of how much we are, for example, wedded to our own ideas of good governance, e.g. the nation-state ("on the basis of 17th/18th century

ideas”), territorial sovereignty, electoral democracy, federalism, etc. How could the field become more responsive to – and more effective in supporting the implementation of – locally grown requests for democratisation without superimposing cookie-cutter solutions in response?

- **Security**

Security, one seminar participant claimed, was still mostly discussed in terms of national security. What would happen if one focused instead on human security? This concept is gathering momentum. It offers humanitarian work, for example, the potential to circumnavigate national-sovereignty arguments to supply aid to sub-national groups in need. Could it also offer conflict transformation some new potential? However, the added value of the concept on the macro level remained somewhat unclear among participants.

- **Coexistence and reconciliation**

Fitzduff explained that the programme she is heading at Brandeis University consciously adopted the term *coexistence* rather than conflict prevention, management or transformation. Coexistence, in their definition, transparently encompasses values of actively pursued equality, respected diversity and acknowledged interdependence (=“EDI”).

Taking this as a starting point, participants discussed the connotations of frequently used terms in conflict transformation. A number of participants had serious qualms about the term “coexistence”, as it referred, in their understanding, to a pseudo-equal coexistence of oppressor and oppressed in the same setting, without striving to address underlying structural asymmetries. Yet it might be argued that the coexistence of the Cold War proved that progressive structural change was possible underneath the blanket of rather hostile coexistence. Others were critical about the missing link to action: not many people would argue with the values of EDI, “But how far does that actually get you? The crucial question is how do we go about this?” There also was a sense that coexistence was a rather “empty” term, lacking challenge and vision, and in need of “having a motor put in”. Rouhana warned once more that if the CR community enters a conflict setting, particularly an asymmetrical and segregated one, with values like “EDI” on their banners but fails to act upon them, the endeavour of conflict transformation loses credibility.

Another term discussed was “reconciliation”. Again, participants challenged whether the term itself did not convey too strong roots in Northern/Western Christian culture to be appropriate in all settings. For some, reconciliation seemed to

suggest that victims and perpetrators were expected to fast-forward into forgiveness and forgetting. Others stressed that all societies with a violent past need to find ways of dealing with that past, so the *process* referred to as reconciliation was indeed pro-active and universal, even if the label might not be used universally. Finally, it was proposed that the reconciliation process (and the term) contained the active challenge (“had the motor”) which coexistence might lack.

- **Processes: Top-down and Bottom-up**

It was claimed that top-down or bottom-up approaches rested on different assumptions regarding human capability. Folger clarified that *transformative mediation*, a strictly bottom-up approach, has an optimistic view of human nature and believes that all people are capable of finding good solutions to their own problems (building on Gilligan). His research on mediation practice in the US showed that a top-down directive stance was often adopted when mediators were getting nervous about where a self-determined process might lead. Top-down approaches, he claimed, hold a special appeal when conflict interveners believe that conflict interaction is inherently unproductive or destructive and must always be contained.

- **Change**

Finally, as the seminar addressed itself to the theme of social change, it needed to confront whether concept(s) of change are normative concept(s) as well, both in terms of processes and outcomes. Seminar participants had become aware that in many societies, a norm of persistence and determination could be contrasted against a norm of flexibility and learning, and one participant encouraged others to “go and see whether we can find cultures that actually admire ‘quitters’ – where learning is valued over determination”. In order to become more self-reflective about this issue in general, one suggestion was to look more deeply into *resistance* to change during the conflict analysis phase.

In conclusion, the lessons to be re-emphasised concerning assumptions and values are:

- Methods or concepts are never free from the purpose they are put to: reality testing can be used to get parties to see where they are; it can also be used to push parties to where they should go, according to the intervener. A discussion of history can be treated either way, too. Systems theory can focus on points of equifinality or open systems.

- Some further lessons can be adopted from Folger’s reflections on the transformative mediation approach (Folger: 4, 6):
 - 1) The articulation of underlying ideological premises is essential for developing bottom-up approaches to conflict intervention practice. Without such clarification, transformative conflict intervention work is difficult to clarify in purpose and to sustain in practice.
 - 2) Clarification of ideological premises for conflict intervention work is a controversial undertaking. Articulation of the ideological premises supporting alternative forms of practice can be perceived as challenging by those committed to prevailing approaches to practice.
- In the end, the challenges arising from the debate on assumptions, norms and values can best be taken on by adopting a stance of reflexivity, transparency and modesty by all who intervene in violent conflict.
- A first step would be to more consciously document assumptions in our approaches, and ask whether what we do in our work is consistent with our premises, since, in our field of activity just as in any other, “what people think they do and what they actually do is often very different”.

3 The Parameters and Boundaries of Conflict Transformation: Dilemmas of Third Party Intervention

The Berghof Center advocates a holistic approach to conflict transformation which encompasses several fields and disciplines (human rights, development, peace, security, etc), and engages both state and non-state processes, and inter-group and intra-group levels of intervention. However, it could be argued that such an ambitious research and practice agenda might contribute to a lack of clarity regarding the boundaries of conflict resolution. The issue of the parameters of practitioners’ intervention into conflict systems arose as a critical dimension of the seminar, highlighting a number of dilemmas on which scholars and professionals need to position themselves. As discussed in the previous section, different assumptions and theories on root causes of conflict and processes of social change lead to very dissimilar sets of techniques and approaches to conflict transformation

practice. What are the tensions, and possibly contradictions, at stake in the roles and agendas of third-party interveners? What are the elements of incompatibility and complementarity, and is it possible to prioritise, sequence and coordinate the various components of conflict transformation work? What role could the Berghof Center play in this ambitious endeavour? This section presents related questions and suggestions that came out of the seminar.

3.1 Concepts and timeframes

A first area of contention refers to the definition of the scope of conflict transformation, and the set of activities that are referred to. It was felt that there is a lack of clarity regarding the timeframe of intervention. A number of classical debates which divide the field of conflict management were touched upon throughout the seminar, including the classical dichotomy between resolution and settlement approaches, the seminal distinction between conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding activities, and the often incompatible orientations of short-term versus long-term instruments and definitions of success.

- **From interactive conflict resolution to peacebuilding**

It was agreed that although the field was previously mostly associated with the tools of interactive/facilitative conflict resolution, the new mandates of international organisations and agencies in post-conflict situations have encouraged many scholars and practitioners to broaden their scope of inquiry and encompass peacebuilding instruments (writing constitutions, creating civil institutions, training police, etc.) as well as traditional peacemaking techniques. “One of the major limitations in the conflict resolution field has been the belief by many practitioners that dialogue work, mediation or problem-solving workshops are the most vital part of any strategy to resolve conflict. Many courses on conflict resolution are often just training courses on what factors and skills will facilitate such processes. However, the reality is that the approaches required to prevent, manage, or resolve conflicts usually need to be much more comprehensive than existing conflict resolution approaches sometimes imply.” (Fitzduff: 1)

Therefore, participants were curious to hear where the Berghof Center stands within these debates, and what the parameters are of its research and intervention. The description of the Berghof agenda in the joint paper presented by Bloomfield and Ropers makes it clear that the areas covered pay respect to the informing principles of the interactive conflict resolution approach, but go far beyond it to

include pre- and post-violence transformation mechanisms, with a particular focus on peacebuilding elements such as reconciliation or the peace-development nexus. Below are a few examples of the themes that emerged most prominently from the presentations and general discussion on the scope and timeframe of conflict resolution.

- **The peace-development nexus**

If the conflict transformation field really wants to encompass long-term peacebuilding strategies, it needs to clarify the interactions between peace and development programmes in post-war societies. It was felt that peacebuilding offices and agencies, such as in the Balkans, suffer from a systematic lack of strategic integration between conflict resolution activities (inter-ethnic dialogue, support for “peace constituencies”, etc.) and development work such as relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. For example, recent research on the causes and dynamics of conflict has highlighted the economic incentives behind the protracted nature of modern wars (see section 2), which demonstrates the necessity to emphasise the creation of “peace dividends” (i.e. economic benefits) in peacebuilding programmes. The Berghof Center is seeking to contribute to the exploration of the peace/development nexus, “on the ground level by exploring innovative methods of linking the two, and ... on the research and policy level by emphasising the need for a holistic approach” (Bloomfield/Ropers: 6).

- **Reconciliation**

If peacebuilding programmes should include the obvious challenges of infrastructure reconstruction (social, political, economic, etc.), they also need to address the broken (or effectively non-existent) relations between the alienated communities who face the challenge of co-operating to build a stable future together, and the absolutely urgent legacy of pain, hurt, trauma and injustice that comes from the business of doing violence. Addressing these two factors comes together in the process of reconciliation: a relationship-building process that works throughout all layers of society to use the tools of truth-telling, justice, healing and reparation to address the past, the better to move towards a shared non-violent future. In most of the regions where Berghof has been involved in practical work, this topic has not been addressed in a sufficient way and represents a painful and lasting obstacle to sustainable progress towards positive peace. The Center is therefore making reconciliation one of its thematic priorities for its future agenda, understanding it not only as a long-term post-agreement process, but also relevant in “interim measures in phases between ceasefires and political settlements and in

cases where political settlements are not based on a sufficient societal consensus” (Bloomfield/Ropers: 5).

- **Conflict prevention**

At the other end of the spectrum, it was also suggested that the Center could orientate some of its activities and research towards pro-active conflict prevention in “countries at risk”, moving away from the reactive international agenda regarding “the usual suspect post-conflict countries”. One participant believed that there is a “persisting conceptual blind spot” which prevents research organisations and foreign agencies from fostering strategies for evolutionary peaceful transformation in pre-violence situations. The OSCE High Commissioner for Minorities was cited as a rare exception to this rule. An example of work that could be commissioned by Berghof concerns the analysis of peaceful breakdowns of states (e.g. Czechoslovakia). Another participant recalled the strong connection between the conflict prevention and peacebuilding components of conflict transformation. She mentioned the example of INCORE, which envisaged focusing part of its activities on pre-settlement work, before realising that its programmes in post-conflict contexts were actually applicable to prevention processes as well.

- **Timing and entry-points for intervention**

The issue of timing was considered central to the discussion of intervention strategies in pre- and post-settlement processes. All participants agreed that theorising about conflict transformation and social change should enable the clarification of possible entry-points for interveners. “What changes will clearly indicate that the adversaries in a protracted conflict are likely to be receptive to suggestions about alternative, non-violent methods of fulfilling their interests and entering into a new relationship with their adversary?” (Mitchell: 17). The example of the timing of reconciliation work was already mentioned above: which stage of conflict de-escalation is most appropriate for the introduction of relationship-building and transitional justice mechanisms, and what is the pertinence of “interim reconciliation measures”? A staged model of conflict transformation suggests that the different components of conflict transformation cited above (i.e. mediation, reconstruction, reconciliation, violence prevention mechanisms) should be treated as complementary rather than competing processes, a theme which will be explored below (in 3.5).

3.2 Levels of intervention

A second area of debate that arose in the discussion of conflict resolution strategies concerns the division between micro- and macro-level instruments. Several participants noted the conceptual and practical conflict intervention gap, “from the interpersonal, where things seem a little more simple, to the international”. Scholars coming to the field from an international relations background, especially, reproached conflict transformation specialists for their excessive focus on measures rooted at the micro-level, and wondered how small group techniques could possibly achieve “peace writ large” in national-scale struggles, without challenging the existing system of nation-states. In other words, “can typically undernourished NGOs who implement on a project-by-project basis influence the wide variety of actors and donors across the levels?”

However, the predominance of a multi-track terminology in conflict resolution work demonstrates that the field has integrated the need for multi-level intervention strategies. The impossibility of bringing about social change at the grassroots level independently of the elite level is widely recognized, and inversely, “it is too easy to assume that the prime necessity is to work with those people who are apparently key to any peace process, for example the politicians, or in the case of an armed conflict, military or paramilitary leaders” (Fitzduff: 5). Demonstrating the need for a better integration between distinct levels of change in a conflict system, Wulf introduced the notion of a “legitimized multi-level oligopoly of violence”, which promotes intervention strategies based on at least four levels of authority: local, national, regional, and global (Wulf: 12).

Because priorities vary greatly across the different levels of change, it is necessary to identify strategies for better connecting multi-level interventions, and one participant asked what the Berghof vision was for combining and integrating conflict transformation at the various levels of society. Historically, the Berghof Center has been adopting a multi-track strategy, focusing more particularly on the point of confluence between Tracks One and Two of decision-making, labelled the Track 1.5 approach. Its original narrow understanding of peace constituencies as limited to the civil society level has also expanded to include a wider range of actors through the whole pyramid of decision-making, thus moving away from an overly simplistic distinction between politics and civil society (see section 2.3).

Folger noted that his transformative approach to mediation, although designed for inter-individual or small inter-group settings, could potentially be applied to other levels of interaction (including international conflicts), and that the main element of distinction from other techniques does not concern the scope of

application, but rather the style of third-party intervention. “The question is then not whether we work with the big guys, but *how* we work with them.” Especially, he presented two competing types of mediation which correspond with the top-down versus bottom-up approaches to conflict transformation, to which we now turn.

3.3 Directions: top-down and bottom-up strategies

The discussion around the values and assumptions which underpin conflict transformation work, summarised in Section 2, was closely linked with the presentation by Folger of the distinction between top-down and bottom-up mediation processes, since these approaches are based on very different assumptions regarding the role of third-parties in conflict resolution. The debate on directive versus facilitative mediation in domestic, inter-personal disputes is also highly relevant in international mediation, and resonates strongly with the discussions of concepts such as local ownership and indigenous conflict transformation which unfolded during the seminar.

- **Process: directive and facilitative mediation**

Folger presented a summary of the main arguments of his book (Bush/Folger 2005), where he reviews various applications of transformative mediation in the United States. He explained that this innovative approach had been designed to counter the tendency of many US mediation professionals (especially within the ADR school) to control both the process and the substantive outcomes of their interventions. “Mediators tended to focus heavily on their own sense of appropriate settlement outcomes, often at the expense of the parties’ involvement in, or engagement with, each other or the issues that divided them. In addition, mediators were found to move ahead of the parties, actively directing what the outcome of the parties’ conflict should be and influencing interaction to bring it about” (Folger: 2). This was the case for example in victim-offender mediation, as well as in family mediation: a study revealed that in divorce cases, 75% of mediators would not have accepted an outcome put forth by the parties, which demonstrates clearly that a mediator’s sense of “good outcome” shapes the outcomes and their acceptance by the parties.

Even though it might be effective in terms of reaching an agreed settlement, “third party control is usually counterproductive, because it reduces the parties’ opportunity and ability to activate [their] inherent capacities for personal strength and connection to others” (Folger: 5). In contrast, Folger and Bush outline a bottom-

up approach to mediation practice that relies on a transformative rather than settlement view of conflict, where the role of the mediator is to support productive shifts in parties' interaction. "The mediator follows and supports what the parties want to discuss and helps to clarify the decisions they want to make, based on fuller understandings of themselves and others, understandings that arise from the positive changes in the conflict interaction" (Folger: 3).

This presentation encouraged a discussion on the values carried by third parties, and on the false claim of neutrality in socio-psychological approaches to mediation. Even in bottom-up facilitation of dialogue encounters, "there is no way a mediator cannot influence what is going on in the group": information is always selectively supplied to the parties. This is reflected for example in the conflict resolution work of the Berghof Foundation Sri Lanka office. Although the team claims to organise primarily process-oriented workshops and its staff seeks as much as possible to avoid being perceived as solution advocates, facilitators are bound to orientate the discussions towards certain favoured outcomes (such as federalism) and acquire an outside reputation as being in favour of certain directions.

- **Local ownership and empowerment**

Despite the claim by some participants that "things are more complicated on the international level", it was agreed that "power-based mediation occurs in both domestic and international environments". Many international facilitators in interstate or inter-ethnic conflicts use their various sources of influence (US or European diplomatic or financial backing, personal connections, etc.) to direct the process in specific directions, and function in a system of three, a full triad of actors, where the third party is upfront and clear about their purpose. Thus, to the dilemma of power balance in a conflict system (addressed in section 2), one needs to add the variable of power in the conflict intervention system, and ask who defines the parameters of analysis, who chooses options, and who defines sequences and elaborates strategies.

Beyond the restricted field of third-party mediation, it was recognised by all participants that "the international community has always an interest" in the war-torn conflicts where it intervenes. "Outsiders come with fixed ideas about what needs to be done", for example by overtly promoting the establishment of liberal democracy and market economy as the basis for state-making (Lund).

The concepts of domestic ownership and local empowerment were cited as possible remedies against the domination of conflict transformation processes by outside (Western) powers and interests. According to the conveners of the seminar, "the very fact that we, like so many other well wishers in the peace support field,

came and are still coming from outside of the crisis and conflict regions represents one of the core issues in the peacebuilding field” (Bloomfield/Ropers: 6). This was indeed reflected in the fact that Northern/Western scholars were over-represented at the seminar, at the expense of their Southern partners. One participant indicated that the need for local ownership in development programmes and nation-building was conceptually uncontested, but that in the reality of practice international donors, both governments and NGOs, were more than often violating this rule. “It is typical for conflict-endemic societies that the groups capable of taking the local ownership of a transformation process are limited or difficult to find by the international donors. In such situations the international community tends to go ahead with their programs, usually with good intentions, but regardless of the potentially detrimental effects on the indigenous structures” (Wulf: 9). Wulf offered three possible remedies: “First, it is vital that transitional strategies emerge from an extensive process of local consultation and that they are based on local conditions. Second, a commitment to establish peace and foster development should only be incorporated into a peace process if this reflects a bona fide desire to deal with the past and to take local ownership of the process. Third, post-conflict reconstruction should regard capacity building as a core of the mandate, and an indicator of success should be what is left behind, not just what happens presently” (Wulf: 12). These principles strongly reflect the Berghof approach to the relationship between external and internal actors, which centres around the concepts of “partnership” and “respect” (Bloomfield/Ropers: 6).

Another participant insisted on the need for conflict transformation workers to “decide whether they work as ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ ..., as each approach may require different tactics”. Finally, it was argued that third parties should best see their role as *enablers* rather than *drivers* of change, for example by acting as *enhancers* of resources (providing additional resources to change an underlying situation of scarcity) and allowing insiders to be the primary drivers of their own conflict transformation process (Mitchell: 15).

3.4 Third-party roles: facilitating dialogue vs. advocating social justice

There is a direct link between the Berghof Center’s promotion of domestic ownership and the necessity for facilitators to manage the *process* of peacemaking and dialogue, but never the *content*, with its insistence upon the principles of *inclusiveness* and *multipartiality* in conflict transformation intervention. However,

these deeply held principles of intervention, which have been variously labelled in the field as “neutrality”, “parity of esteem”, “even-handedness of third parties” or “equality of treatment”, are severely challenged in conflicts characterised by a significant disparity of power, described in Section 2 as asymmetric conflicts. One of the most interesting and lively debates stimulating the seminar showed two divergent approaches to third-party intervention in opposition, which we could respectively describe as the “dialogue” or “transformative” versus the “rights-based” approach.

According to the first approach, it is not for the facilitator to make value judgements on issues of justice or injustice; in fact, in most conflicts (such as those in South Eastern Europe), all sides perceive themselves as victims and should therefore be treated as such by external peacemakers. Justice is seen as an external field of expertise belonging not to the conflict transformer but to the specialised legal community, and to the domain of post-war peacebuilding (which incorporates the elements of retributive and restorative justice). Lund also highlighted the dangers posed by the rights-based approach in international aid and foreign policies, which can lead to unintended effects in fostering conflict or collapse. He stated: “if international programs provide unqualified and singular political support for rapid democratisation and respect for human rights, such as by championing existing minorities *alone*, whatever the context – even at the expense of creating serious political and economic uncertainty for status quo interests – they can contribute to the breakdown of a state and help to precipitate violence or armed challenges” (Lund: 22-23). He cites the examples of international responses to Croatia, Bosnia, and Rwanda in 1993–94; Burundi in 1993; Kosovo in 1992–98; and East Timor in 1999. His recommendation is for conflict transformers to view conflict not as “a clash of right versus wrong” but rather as “competing conceptions of rights under one order versus those under another in a larger global process of modernization” (Lund: 32).

On the contrary, proponents of the rights-based approach believe that in conflicts characterised by a gross violation of human rights, the international community needs to take a stance, and “neutral” intervention which treats as equals the oppressor and the oppressed can be not only ineffective but also harmful, by implicitly siding with the powerful side in reinforcing an unjust status quo. The conflict transformation tradition thus suffers from a serious “blind spot” when it comes to recognising the role played by power asymmetries in conflict dynamics (see Section 2) and designing appropriate conflict transformation mechanisms. Rouhana has become highly critical of intervention strategies that do not integrate the parameters of justice and power. If such variables are not taken into account both in the agreement phase and the subsequent implementation phase of peace

processes, resource and power asymmetries will persist or even become exacerbated. Another participant agreed that if the field gets too narrowly associated with facilitating dialogue, mediation and problem solving, and does not manage to tackle issues of social justice, it will lose its credibility. Interactive conflict resolution tools, according to Rouhana, even bear the risk of being treated by “the powerless” as “a tool for the oppressors to bring about limited change within the boundaries of status-quo”. This has been, for example, an abiding perception among Palestinians, most of whom are highly critical of the dialogue encounters organised during the 1980s and 1990s, whose parameters were fixed by “outside powerfuls” (Israel, the US or European funders), and left them with three options: collaborate and become a tool in the hands of the powerful; participate mindfully and cynically and “hope to get the best out of it”, knowing that their voice would not be heard; or choose to boycott collaborative projects, and risk being labelled as “extremists” or “fundamentalists” (Rouhana presentation). It is therefore not a surprise to find that in asymmetric conflicts, “those who currently hold most of the power favour psycho-cultural approaches, while those who see themselves as having been excluded from power, e.g., Palestinians in the Middle East, Catholics in Northern Ireland, Albanians in Macedonia, and Tamils in Sri Lanka, prioritise structural approaches that deal with the equalization of power within a territory, or with political secession that will hopefully supply a group with its own territory and power” (Fitzduff: 1).

Although the conflict transformation rhetoric commits third parties to the construction of a “just peace”, there seems to be a lack of consciousness about what might constitute a “just process”, and a shortage of effective methods for implementing it. Single identity work, in the form of capacity building and empowerment training programmes, was suggested by some participants as a form of advocacy for the weaker party which can be used in combination with inter-party mediation work. Another suggested path of inquiry was for conflict transformation experts to envisage more coercive ways of interaction where “force might have to be used” against perpetrators of gross human rights violations. “Can third-parties committed to respectful ‘dialogue’ accept the use of conditional aid, sanctions, *realpolitik* power-brokering, coercive state action and use of force in state-building” in conflicts which cannot be resolved through facilitative techniques alone (Lund handout: 2)?

Both in his presentation and in the discussion, Folger argued that transformative mediation does not shy away from the parameters of justice and power, and that his method of intervention integrates empowerment as an essential component of the mediation process, although in the form of *elicitive* and bottom-up empowerment. This means that instead of attempting to rebalance powers from

inside the facilitation session by means of direct advocacy, “in the transformative framework, the mediator is there to support any party who wants to challenge power distribution and to help him or her think through the approach to doing so or the consequences that are likely to occur. This premise requires a full commitment to the parties’ own deliberation and decision-making – allowing the parties to take the risks associated with the power structures they may choose to challenge” (Folger: 12). He also adds that transformative mediation professionals proactively pursue and facilitate “tough discussions” on difficult conflict issues related to cultural, religious, ethnic and racial differences, “if the parties themselves suggest they are relevant to the evolution of their conflict” (Folger: 14).

However, it was also forcefully argued that the roles of rights advocate and facilitator cannot be easily combined. “It is not a question of what should be done, but also about whether we are the right people to do it,” noted Fitzduff, and she also added a temporal dimension: “There is a time for dealing with conflict resolution issues as well as a time for human rights issues”. Folger also remarked that the rights and transformative mediation approaches rely on very different sets of assumptions about intervention, and that the credibility of a facilitator would be affected if he/she tried to combine them and perform them simultaneously.

3.5 The key challenge: sequencing and coordinating a division of labour

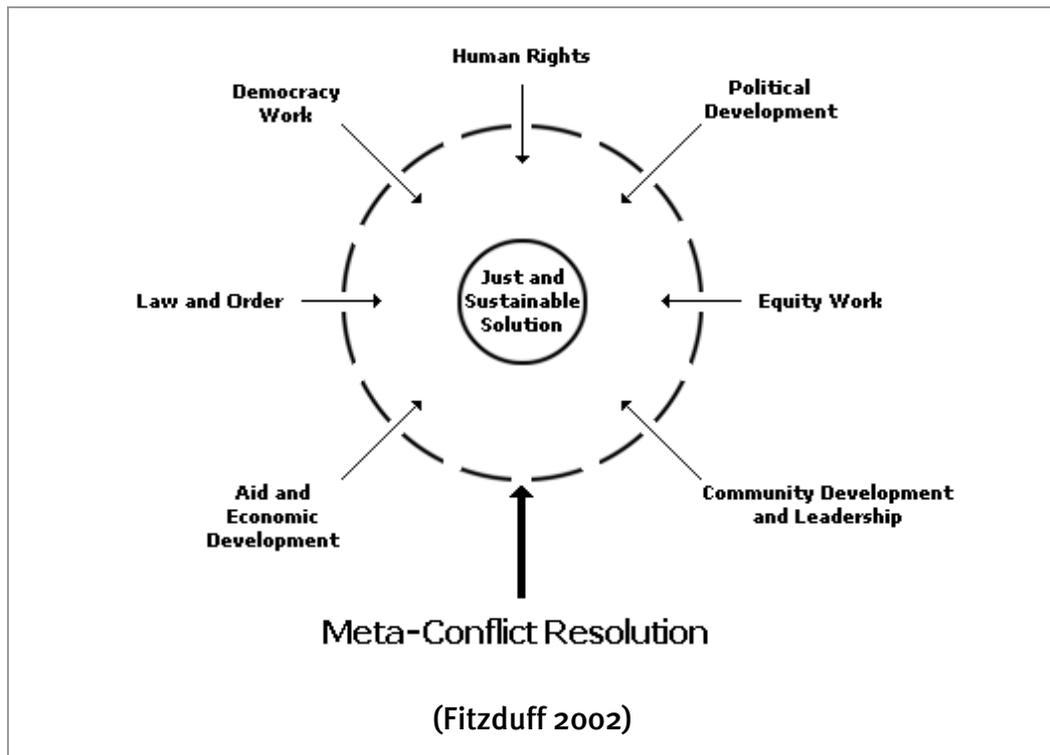
Although the seminar was animated by lively debates on seemingly stark oppositions and “either-or” choices, most of which have been exposed above, it would be simplistic to conclude that the field of conflict transformation is divided by irreconcilable dilemmas. In fact, several speakers stressed the need for creative thinking to integrate all the different types of conflict transformation activities (from short- to long-term, top-down to bottom-up, facilitative to directive, multi-partial to partisan, etc.) into a complementary framework, and several examples of such inclusive meta-plans were offered and discussed.

- **Interactions and complementarities**

One participant expressed the view that many of the dichotomies are in fact less stark than they appear. There was indeed a general agreement that the different components of conflict transformation (e.g. mediation, reconstruction, reconciliation, violence prevention mechanisms) should be treated as complementary rather than competing processes. For example, Bloomfield and

Ropers mentioned the need to “deepen our understanding of the interaction between development work and peacebuilding work. What more can be done to reduce the tensions of these approaches and to foster more genuine cross-fertilisation and complementarity between the two?” (Bloomfield/Ropers 2005: 20). Another participant stressed the need to spell out clearly the distinctions and interactions between security and peacebuilding (i.e. military, policing, civilian) functions in post-conflict regeneration work, in order to avoid having “the wrong people doing the right tasks”.

The tension between justice and peace (and the corresponding “rights” and “dialogue” approaches) was also strongly contested by a significant part of the audience. According to Fitzduff, “Even the most ardent and radical advocates of structural reform can, with good facilitation, recognize that without a context of dialogue, it is much more difficult to attain agreement among communities about issues of territory and justice”. Conversely, “those who are primarily involved in psycho-cultural approaches can also realize that such hard issues cannot be avoided but must be included as part of their programs if such are to be eventually successful. The practitioner can thus help assure that the differing aspects are not being developed either in ignorance, or in opposition to the other strategic areas, as can frequently happen in situations of conflict” (Fitzduff: 2). She suggested envisioning the interactions between distinct but complementary approaches to conflict intervention through a “meta-conflict resolution” plan (see diagram below). “While the process of facilitating meta-conflict resolution may appear daunting to the practitioner, the results of encouraging such a complementary and comprehensive approach to the resolution of a conflict in any society is likely to be ultimately more successful and sustainable than many of our current piece-meal approaches are likely to be” (Fitzduff: 5).



This integrative approach has been applied in Northern Ireland, through “new legislation which ensures that all aspects of public life have to take into account the need to foster not just equality between the communities, but also ‘good relations’” (Fitzduff 2002). Hence all existing and developing programmes of economic, social, and security development have to integrate bridge building and conflict resolution mechanisms into their processes so as to ensure that they prevent and mitigate tensions between the communities (Fitzduff: 5).

On a transnational level, it was also argued that “there is potential for change if we choose to look to the left and to the right of our discipline,” for example by creating more direct liaisons between the conflict resolution and human rights communities or social movements, who “do not talk to each other at present”.

- **A staged model**

Starting from the recognition of the multiplicity of conflict resolution roles and their necessary complementarity, the contingency approach to conflict intervention suggests that the different components should be sequenced according to the stages of escalation and de-escalation where they are most appropriate. During the seminar, reference was made for example to a model by Fisher and Keashly (1991), which stipulates that more forceful measures are needed as the conflict escalates.

However, it has since been demonstrated that conflict transformation does not follow such simplistic linear dynamics; Mitchell noted that escalation and de-escalation patterns rarely mirror each other mechanically in reality (see Section 2.4). In his paper, he explores which roles and functions carried out by agents of change are most pertinent during the pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-agreement phases of conflicts (Mitchell: 24).

Stage	Role	Function
Pre-Negotiation		
	<i>Monitor</i>	Tracks developments in the conflict system and its environment
	<i>Explorer</i>	Determines adversaries' readiness for contacts; sketches range of possible solutions
	<i>Reassurer</i>	Convinces adversaries that the other is not solely or wholly bent on victory
	<i>Decoupler</i>	Assists external patrons to withdraw from core conflict; enlists patrons in other positive tasks
	<i>Unifier</i>	Repairs intra-party cleavages and encourages consensus on core values, interests and concessions
	<i>Enskiller</i>	Develops skills and competencies to enable adversaries to achieve a durable solution
	<i>Convener</i>	Initiates talks, provides venue, legitimises contacts
During talks or negotiations		
	<i>Facilitator</i>	Within meetings enables a fruitful exchange of visions, aims and versions
	<i>Envisioner</i>	Provides new data, theories, ideas and options for adversaries to adapt; creates fresh thinking
	<i>Enhancer</i>	Provides new resources to assist in the search for a positive sum solution
	<i>Guarantor</i>	Provides insurance against talks breaking down and offers to guarantee any durable solution
	<i>Legitimiser</i>	Adds prestige and legitimacy to any agreed solution

Stage	Role	Function
Post-Agreement		
	<i>Verifier</i>	Checks and reassures adversaries that the terms of the agreement are being carried out
	<i>Implementer</i>	Imposes sanctions for non-performance of agreement
	<i>Reconciler</i>	Assists in actions to build new relationships between and within adversaries

Mitchell's paper also argues for the need to organise these various roles, carried out by multiple actors, through a central *coordinator*. The formation of strategic partnerships and networks of effective action also emerged from the seminar as an increasingly important area of research and practice in conflict transformation work.

- **Impact assessment**

There was a general agreement that the dilemmas discussed at the seminar and the call for coordination between the multiple strategies for intervention in micro- and macro-conflicts are not new debates and have long been discussed within the field: "conceptually, the holistic strategy has taken firm root", noted one participant. It was also recognized that "most donors have already adopted a multidimensional, multifaceted, multilevel approach, especially with regard to development policies". However, "many of the international programs are not necessarily poorly designed or conceptually wrong but ... there is a wide gap between what is practiced and what is preached. In other words, many international post-conflict reconstruction programs do not meet the standards set by themselves." (Wulf: 3)

In order to bridge this gap, the need for comparative evaluation of intervention methodologies and outcomes in different contexts was highlighted by several contributors, who referred to the contribution of peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA, which was extensively discussed in the first and fourth of the Dialogue Series in the Berghof Handbook). Several presentations (Lund, Fitzduff, Bloomfield/Ropers) mention, for example, Mary Anderson's *Do No Harm* approach, which aims to pool the experiences of humanitarian and development assistance agencies, thereby furthering awareness and knowledge about the conflict-worsening impacts of aid. Lund strongly argued in favour of policy research on the comparative cost-effectiveness (for peace/democracy/security/growth in the long and short

term) of: the whole range of distinguishable alternative policy instruments, not just small group techniques/processes (micro-level assessment); various mixes and sequences of instruments (macro-level assessments); and mechanisms for inter-organisational strategic coherence (Lund handout: 2).

The Berghof Center has been, and continues in, providing policy analysis and advice on assessment practice to other organisations engaged in conflict transformation. Moreover, the systemic approach recently developed by BFPS is envisaged as a particularly useful tool for identifying the overall macro-impact of micro-projects and especially their linkage to the key drivers of conflict as well as the potential drivers of peace (Bloomfield/Ropers: 5).

4 The Systemic Approach to Conflict Transformation

A presentation was given to the seminar on one of the key ongoing avenues of enquiry at Berghof: the development of the systemic approach to conflict transformation. The approach is being tested and developed by Berghof as one possible solution to some of the dilemmas discussed in this report. What follows here is a reflection of critical discussion which followed the presentation of the systemic approach, and which analysed its strengths and weaknesses.

The concept of systemic conflict transformation represents a *comprehensive* and *integrative* approach to conflict analysis and transformation. It constitutes a serious attempt to give the accepted rhetoric of a holistic approach a clearer conceptual and practical definition. It aims to enable different and diverse actors to act cohesively on all tracks and all relevant issues, linking a *multi-track* with a *multi-issue* approach. It prepares for the strategic support of peace processes and accompanying those actors that promote peace from within (World Bank 2005; BFPS 2005; Zunzer 2004).

Ropers opened the discussion with a presentation of the key steps of a systemic approach (Bloomfield/Ropers: 9-10):

Systemic conflict transformation suggests that interventions designed to address the diverse array of conflict perpetuating loops must (1) clearly identify the key drivers of conflict within that system, and (2) themselves also be conceptualised as self-reinforcing feedback loops. If not, the danger is that an intervention will itself join the cyclical dynamic as part of the problem, not

of the solution. Such analysis examines a conflict system, its drivers and multipliers.

The *second step* is the envisioning of potential drivers of peace and their strategic localization within reinforcing loops.

The *third step* is the development of working hypotheses concerning which entry-points are possible to produce a strategic alteration of the chain of causality, and which could then in turn act as the drivers and multipliers of this alteration: what are they, where do they arise (from the system, a sub-system, or the environment?), and what reinforcement loops would they themselves generate? One key concept here is the generation of the ‘critical yeast for peaceful change’.

The *fourth step* of systemic conflict transformation is to take into account that an equitable and sustainable peace is only possible if the basic needs of *all* identity groups (sub-systems) in a political system can be fulfilled by socio-economic development and political participation, which in turn argues for the necessity of a genuine transformation of the conflict. Systems theory offers one interesting thought which might be helpful to address this requirement: that the social and political system generally possesses *within itself* significant resources for the realignment and alteration of chains of causality to address the needs of actors in the system. The primary (though not exclusive) focus should therefore be not on external resources, but rather on how internal resources can be effectively mobilised.

The *fifth step* emphasises that a systemic analysis is always context-specific, because it is conscious of the complexity of interactive factors. But while it is thus in a sense empty until applied to a context, this does not imply that it has no parameters. On the contrary, essential to the systemic approach is the role of defining the borders of the system and the borders of component sub-systems. While such components are distinct, they are also often overlapping. Thus a classic challenge in many violent protracted conflicts is this simultaneous differentiation and overlap between, for example, the conflict system of the main warring parties on the one hand, and the other conflict system(s) of all other conflict parties on the other. This is to do no more than to more accurately account for and reflect the deep complexities of violent social conflict.

Systemic conflict transformation benefits from the fact that in the last two decades a multiplicity of concepts have been developed which have acknowledged the necessity of comprehensive, holistic and diverse

interventions. The optimal usage of these instruments is an important component of systemic conflict transformation.

Ropers then exemplified the potential of the systemic approach with respect to the case of Sri Lanka, where Berghof's Resource Network for Conflict Studies and Transformation (RNCST) has been active since 2001.

4.1 Potential strengths of the systemic approach

Seminar participants discussed several advantages of a systemic approach. It has some potential to close the gaps of conflict transformation practice: 1) the disconnect between conflict analysis and conflict resolution, 2) the weaknesses of impact assessment, especially in connecting upwards to meso and macro levels of intervention, and 3) the missing bridge between official (Track 1) and unofficial (Track 2, 3, etc.) levels of activity.

- **Enriching theory-building and theory-testing**

Various referred to as a theory, a framework or a model, the systemic approach depicted by Ropers was assessed favourably by most participants: on the one hand, it rests on a careful examination of conflict dynamics and transformation practice (it emerged from the activities of the Berghof Center in Sri Lanka), and on the other hand, it provides avenues linking the analysis of social change (theory) to designing effective intervention strategies (practice).

It provides a more comprehensive explanation of the patterns of violent conflict than simplistic linear models, by offering a dynamic framework accounting for interactions and mutual influences between various systems and sub-systems (or units of analysis). This helps to generate working hypotheses and to prioritise strategic goals.

Consequently, the systemic approach helps to identify access and entry-points for third party interveners eager to support the system's drivers of peace. It is also able to clarify obstacles, resistance, loopholes, and surprises in conflict transformation processes.

- **Better impact assessment**

Several participants recognised that this approach also encourages a more systematic evaluation of the impact of micro-level conflict resolution work on the

overall situation at the macro level. It might provide avenues for comparing the effects of different types of intervention (including non-intervention – letting a conflict run its “natural course”) on the various stakeholders and on the systemic chain of causality. It helps practitioners to better target and prioritise their activities, and to decide “who [they] want to affect”.

- **Working across levels and improving support roles**

A systemic conflict transformation framework, finally, is judged favourably because it integrates and combines change movements on different levels and simultaneously addresses the activities of various actors (internal and external, official and civil society-based, etc.). It establishes viable working relations with conflict actors, activates and strengthens those actors willing to promote peaceful change, and identifies areas of useful external contribution. It might be especially useful for organisations present in conflict zones (e.g. GTZ) whose work combines a variety of roles which might contradict each other (this theme was explored in section 3).

4.2 Possible limitations and areas of uncertainty

Participants also pointed to a number of limitations and areas in which the potential of a systemic approach remained to be tested. In particular, no certainty was reached whether the approach might be able to address the key challenge to prioritise activities and access point,s or more effectively identify what is changeable in the short, medium and long term.

- **Value added?**

It became clear from the seminar discussion that work remains to be done to distinguish the systemic approach from many existing tools and frameworks for (comprehensive) strategic analysis and intervention. Especially, it needs to be clarified in what ways systemic means more than holistic, comprehensive, strategic and multi-actor: “what do we gain by calling it a ‘systemic approach’?” Calling attention to this semantic confusion, one participant also warned against the risk of associating Berghof’s research too closely with the technocratic tendency of systems theory.

- **Boundaries**

A systemic approach seems vulnerable due to its endless complexity, and work remains to be done on setting boundaries and finding criteria for setting priorities: how can it become more than a catalogue of variables? It seems most useful where variables are measurable (i.e. degree of correlations, paths of influence, etc.), which is rarely the case in most conflict resolution research. Much remains to be learnt about the interaction between variables and the weighting of their relative importance.

In order to provide a better analysis and intervention path than alternative models produced by a profuse literature, it needs to be able to address areas of neglect which they fail to address, such as the challenge of asymmetric conflicts. Ropers admitted that it still needs to be determined whether the approach will be useful in such contexts.

- **From rhetoric to reality**

Conceptually many donors, government agencies and NGOs have adopted a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, multi-level approach, especially with regard to development policies. The problem remains that simply voicing this approach does not automatically create a working strategy; nor does it resolve contradictions and tensions between competing approaches. With all the holistic approaches available to date, there is still little sense of prioritisation or effective sequencing. What contribution could the systemic approach make in moving the field from rhetoric to reality in this respect?

- **Values and subjectivity**

If one of the most important challenges is to clarify values, rather than to continue to refine formats, the systems approach might not be able to deliver. One participant noted a tendency towards the disappearance of the subject (individuals) in the model, which might then fail to account for subjectively felt experience, for example in reconciliation processes.

- **Local ownership and grand schemes**

Some participants were concerned about “trying to bring in everything” and subsequently manoeuvre a country into a certain direction. They argued that such an approach would not work if grievances are at stake. Conflict transformation should be about “facilitating what the people want, not about engineering states in

a big game”. Participants needed to be convinced that a systemic and strategic approach was not forgetting the local level once more.

This is especially relevant for the delimitation of the systems which form the core of this approach: “whose system?”, wondered one contributor, and “who is to determine their boundaries?”, calling into question once more the tensions between outside researchers’ and conflict parties’ own determination of their systems.

To sum up, if one of the challenges confronting the field is to deliver a theory of change informed by the study of transitional societies, the systemic approach needs to be carefully tested against, and compared with, other models for its potential to contribute to such a theory of constructive social change.

5 The Future Berghof Research Agenda

As noted in the introduction, our discussions included a very broad range of perspectives. Nevertheless, despite the diversity of views, considerable consensus was achieved over the key issues facing the field, providing a sound basis for extrapolating a future research agenda for the BRC in the coming years. In some cases, our existing plans were strongly endorsed; in some, our developing ideas were quite rigorously critiqued; and in some instances, we received suggestions for fresh and potentially exciting innovations.

Naturally, we have had to sift these ideas according to several criteria: the prioritisation of problematics which was made by discussants themselves; the selection of issues that fit coherently into Berghof’s remit and scope; the realistic choice of, and careful design of, work that is achievable in terms of resources; and the identification of work that builds on and enhances Berghof’s uniqueness and added value, and that complements, rather than duplicates, the work of others.

Our overarching approach, and the aspect that gives Berghof much of its added value and unique focus in the field of conflict transformation studies, is the interactive blend of research and practice. Few other institutions give similar focus to this approach; very few others have formalised it, as we have in the BRC-BFPS structural relationship. This is the key to our potential to provide innovative and original work that not only adds to scholarly knowledge but generates, tests, and implements effective strategies in real situations. In effect, at Berghof our preaching and our practice are dynamically interrelated. The developing partnership, and the

converging focus, between the two “wings” of Berghof will enhance this innovative potential. In short, on our proactively combined approach we can build a future of important, cutting-edge work with a unique niche.

Within that approach to the exploration of conflict transformation theory and practice, two fundamental dimensions should underpin more consciously all of our work. These basic points were voiced time and again in the Seminar:

- Firstly, all our work must include a more vigilant questioning and testing of the basic assumptions and values of conflict transformation in general, and of third party intervention in particular. Therefore, while we continue to extend the ideas and practice of such intervention, we will also aim to bring to consciousness more clearly our own and others’ assumptions: for example, the meaning and practice of what we term multipartiality (and related concepts of impartiality, even-handedness, and so on), the process-advocacy tension (critically questioning the received wisdom that process facilitators cannot engage in advocacy and maintain multipartiality, for example), the responsibility of facilitators such as ourselves to design a “just process” of conflict transformation which reflects in our approach and our practice the same understanding of and commitment to justice that we argue for in the design of conflict settlements.
- Secondly, the Seminar acknowledged unanimously that many of the ideas, concepts and tools of our field have developed largely from interpersonal and inter-group conflict resolution work, much of it in the individual and social psychological sphere. We need to interrogate more closely these basic building-blocks of our approach as we continue to apply them to the larger inter-communal or national contexts within which we deal with ethno-political conflict transformation, to discover their limits, their necessary adaptations, and perhaps even possible alternatives. Moreover, many of these building-blocks were developed in contexts of power equivalence between competing parties. But the power asymmetry of most of the ethno-political contexts on which we work was repeatedly emphasised in the Seminar as a crucial and under-explored factor: our interrogation must therefore also include the dimension of examining the limits inherent in such a transfer of concepts from the power-equivalent interpersonal realm to the harsh and complex realities of mismatched power-levels in protracted social conflict.

These two dimensions should fundamentally shape the overall approach of all of our work, giving us an interrogative stance of critical reflectivity, which will keep our

work self-aware, focused and above all relevant to the constantly shifting dynamics of conflict and its transformation. Within such a focused approach, the Seminar has inspired and/or reinforced us in identifying the following key avenues of enquiry, all of which are closely interlinked, overlapping and satisfyingly complementary:

1. **Research on Social Change and Conflict Transformation.** Can we develop a model of social change that usefully reflects, explains and assists the massive and complex challenge of making peace in violent contexts? We will continue the work we have recently embarked upon regarding models of the *transition from violence to peace*, exploring in the first instance a staged model based on both theory and recent practice, and then a specific comparative analysis of civil society organisations' management of social change within such transition. This research will develop a model of transition that encompasses the long-term view, including pre- and post-agreement phases, and identifies stages within that transition in order to generate more accurately focused criteria for the design, timing and nature of peacemaking interventions, and to explore conceptual interactions with the systemic model. Accepting the Seminar's comments regarding simplistic positive-escalation/negative-de-escalation frameworks, we will explore Lederach's more complex observation: "conflict transformation envisions conflict as an ecology that is relationally dynamic with ebb (conflict de-escalation to pursue constructive change) and flow (conflict escalation to pursue constructive change)". As the model develops, we will continually implement its comparative application to a range of contexts, especially from, but not limited to, BFPS practice, seeking innovative analysis that both enhances the theory from empirical study and provides a deeper conceptual basis for future practice. At each stage of the transition model, we will seek to identify potential and actual roles regarding agents/drivers of conflict and of revolutionary change. Such study will include the important dimension of examining the variables of asymmetric power relations as they affect such transition. This avenue links closely to the examination of changing roles during transition, some especially relevant to asymmetric contexts, outlined in paragraph 3 below.
2. **Research on a Systemic Approach to Conflict Transformation.** Closely allied to the developing theory of social change from violent conflict, we will push our research agenda closer to the systemic practice agenda of BFPS and aim to develop richer theory for that approach. We will co-operatively develop research to systematise the Berghof experience in Sri Lanka, and to place it in a comparative study with other conflict contexts. We will push the

boundaries of current thinking both in a study of the relationships and roles within the concept of “local ownership,” and through the production of a Handbook Dialogue on the systemic approach. We will also examine more deeply the new and developing idea of institutionalisation of peace processes (e.g., the formation, structures, processes and outcomes of peace secretariats), as a potential for developing alternative methods for more effective process management. All such efforts will aim to strengthen and make more explicit the theoretical underpinning of the systemic approach as a methodology for analysis, intervention, support, monitoring and evaluation of conflict transformation work. The eventual result will be that the Research Center can ultimately offer fresh and substantive conceptual thinking to the research field. The plans for examining peaceful agents of change (outlined in the next paragraph) will also link closely to this systemic focus.

3. **Research on enhancing and redefining dynamic Peace Constituencies.** We have gradually moved beyond an initial definition of “peace constituencies” as civil society-based networks, and beyond the goal of enhancing the influence of such groupings on the more formal peace process. What can further research teach us about the potential of peace constituencies with a more broadly defined *horizontal* dimension (i.e., crossing civil, political, security and private sectors), and a more clearly defined *vertical* dimension (i.e., linking through all levels, from elites to grass-roots), and the potential dynamic they could generate for collective change? How could such an enhanced definition of peace constituency relate to the concept of building “critical mass” or “critical yeast” within a peace process? In one research project, we will examine the experience of civil society organisations in transition, and in particular their potential relationship and interaction with other actors as the basis for proactively building broader and deeper peace constituencies. In the longer term, and again bringing our transitions agenda into parallel with the systemic approach, we will study the roles of four categories of potential *agents of peaceful change* within a conflict system, and gather evidence from instances of their transitional shifts, at the same time looking for insights regarding the variation of roles and potentials in the context of specifically asymmetric conflict. In particular, we will examine these actors in the light of their potential membership and function within broader and deeper peace constituencies. These four categories are: non-state armed groups (what is the experience of organisational transition from insurgency to democratic politics?); non-state organisations (what is the

comparative experience, potential and limits of civil society actors in driving, and also in responding to the challenges of, the transition towards peace?); governments (how do, for example, the rigours of democratic, non-violent principles restrict and/or facilitate fundamental change in addressing violence and in building revolutionary partnerships with violent or formerly violent stakeholders?); and political parties (how can homogenous political blocks address, and contribute to, the challenge of adaptation to changing and novel political realities and alliances?). Additionally, the support role of external actors will be examined (e.g., what are the actual contributions and limits of the nexus of peacebuilding and development work in transitional and in post-violence contexts, especially as related to reconciliation initiatives? See also paragraph 4 below.)

4. **Research on Post-Violence Peacebuilding.** Drawing together many of the actors and inquiries noted above, we will continue our examination of the peacebuilding-development nexus, through partnerships with relevant actors in conflict and post-violence contexts (this also relates to the work on local ownership mentioned in paragraph 2 above, and on the support roles of external actors in paragraph 3). We will also pursue an exploration around the interlinked issues of *reconciliation* and *transitional justice*. Our approach to this topic, again reinforced in the Seminar, is one of acknowledging the field of transitional justice and human rights protection as an area of expertise beyond our remit and our capacity, but of constantly striving to locate such justice in the broader framework of reconciliation as multi-level relationship-(re)building after violence. Where then does transitional justice fit within such a framework, and how can the framework benefit from, integrate with, and enhance the outcomes of justice? What interim linkages and processes of reconciliation and justice can be developed during the pre-Agreement phase of transition, especially those that can be seen as usefully preparatory and facilitatory of post-Agreement work? (These could, for example, be postulated as initial “co-existence” efforts to pave the way for subsequent and fuller reconciliation initiatives.) This will entail both exploration of the definitions and usages of forms of justice complementary to the retributive (social, economic, distributive, restorative, etc.) and their inter-relations, and of questioning and resolving the remaining tensions between conflict transformation and human rights-based work. Crucially, too, what implications are there for international community policy as regards the interplay of peace-building (including reconciliation) and development support? While the conflict transformation approach (including

reconciliation) addresses primarily root causes generating the conflict, transitional justice focuses more specifically on the patterns of violent behaviour generated during the conflict. What hypotheses can we usefully develop concerning parallel and converging elements within these approaches?

The Seminar was a vital exercise in confirming the validity of our plans, and in enhancing them with innovative direction. In itself, the two-day discussion was acknowledged by all participants as a very valuable and all-too-rare exercise in deep collegial reflection. For Berghof, it has increased our confidence and clarified our vision. Thematically we have a clear research agenda, closely tied to practice, that will maintain and improve our niche in the field, as we continue to implement innovative research projects. We will also further support such work significantly through commissioned studies in a broader focus for the Berghof Handbook (for example, addressing the peace-development nexus with an enquiry into the assumptions, rhetoric and challenges of meaningful local ownership; and initiating a debate on the interactions and frictions between conflict transformation and human rights advocacy.). Our next challenge must be to review our own structural and resource bases, to see how we can most effectively achieve our ambitious agenda. This will entail reviewing human and financial resources and their future allocation within the Research Center, the development of our key interactive relationship with BFPS in terms of more closely linked co-operative projects, and our relation to the funded external research of the Berghof Foundation.

Finally, our sincere thanks go to our presenters who gave their valuable time and intellectual effort not only in attending, and engaging deeply at, the Seminar, but in preparing stimulating and challenging presentations; to our guests who truly brought the conversation to life and deepened it with their diverse perspectives and critiques; to the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Research for generously funding the event; and to the staff at Berghof who put great effort into effectively planning, hosting, facilitating and reporting the Seminar.

List of Participants

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List of Publications

Berghof Reports

Berghof Report	Title	Author	Published
12	<i>Dialogue Processes in the Georgian-Abkhasian Conflict</i>	Oliver Wolleh	Forthcoming
11	<i>Seminar Report: "Theories of Social Change and their Contribution to the Practice of Conflict Transformation: Developing the State of the Art in Conflict Transformation Theory and Practice"</i>		March 2006
10	<i>Youth in War to Peace Transitions. Approaches of International Organisations</i>	Yvonne Kemper	November 2004
9	<i>Kollektive Traumata. Annahmen, Argumente, Konzepte. Eine Bestandsaufnahme nach dem 11. September</i>	Angela Kühner	Februar 2003
8	<i>Local Peace Constituencies in Cyprus. Citizens' Rapproachment by the bi-communal Conflict Resolution Trainer Group</i>	Oliver Wolleh	März 2001
7	<i>Macht und Differenz. Ein erweitertes Modell der Konfliktpotentiale in interkulturellen Auseinandersetzungen</i>	Anja Weiß	März 2001
6	<i>Die soziale Eingliederung von Kindersoldaten. Konzepte und Erfahrungen aus Mosambik</i>	Peter Steudtner	März 2001
5	<i>Friedensförderung in Bosnien-Herzegovina. Ansätze der Jugend-, Bildungs- und Kulturarbeit</i>	Martina Fischer/ Julie Tumler	September 2000
4	<i>Krisenprävention und zivile Konfliktbearbeitung durch die EU. Konzepte, Kapazitäten und Kohärenzprobleme</i>	Tobias Debiel/ Martina Fischer	August 2000
4	<i>Crisis Prevention and Conflict Management by the European Union. Concepts, Capacities and Problems of Coherence</i>	Tobias Debiel/ Martina Fischer	September 2000
3	<i>Konstruktive Haltungen und Verhaltensweisen in institutionellen Konflikten. Erfahrungen, Begriffe, Fähigkeiten</i>	Eva Maringer/ Reiner Steinweg	Juni 1997
2	<i>Interkulturelle Mediation – eine schwierige Vermittlung. Eine empirisch-analytische Annäherung zur Bedeutung von kulturellen Unterschieden</i>	Frank Liebe (unter Mitarbeit von Nadja Gilbert)	Mai 1996
2	<i>Intercultural Mediation: A Difficult Brokerage. An Empirical-Analytical Attempt to Assess the Impact of Cultural Differences</i>	Frank Liebe (with the assistance of Nadja Gilbert)	Mai 1996
1	<i>Friedliche Einmischung. Strukturen, Prozesse und Strategien zur konstruktiven Bearbeitung ethnopolitischer Konflikte</i>	Norbert Ropers	Oktober 1995
1	<i>Peaceful Intervention. Structures, Processes, and Strategies for the Constructive Regulation of Ethnopolitical Conflicts</i>	Norbert Ropers	Oktober 1995

Berghof Arbeitspapiere / Berghof Occasional Papers

Arbeitspapier / Occ. Paper	Title	Author	Published
26	<i>Diaspora Communities and Civil Conflict Transformation</i>	Wolfram Zünser	September 2004
25	<i>Kooperative Friedensförderung? Die OSZE und lokale NGOs in Mosta.</i>	Anne Jenichen	Juli 2004
24	<i>War Veterans and Peacebuilding in Former Yugoslavia. A Pilot Project of the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA)</i>	Oliver Wils	Februar 2004
23	<i>Contract or War ? An Essay on Institutional Logic in Violent Conflict</i>	Benedikt Korf	April 2003
22	<i>Constructive Discourse Transformation. Media Work in asymmetrical, intercultural Conflicts: The Case of the Middle East</i>	Hannah Reich	Februar 2003
21	<i>Zypern: Gesellschaftliches Rapprochement im Spannungsfeld von impliziter Anerkennung und Repression. (Griechische/ Türkische Version)</i>	Oliver Wolleh	Juni 2002
20	<i>Handlungsspielräume und Hindernisse für die Beteiligung von Frauen am demokratischen Aufbau in Afghanistan. Ergebnisse und Interviewtexte aus einer journalistischen Recherche vor Ort</i>	Antje Bauer	August 2002
19	<i>Prevention of Ethnic Conflict. Lessons from Romania</i>	Wojciech Kostecki	August 2002
18	<i>Conflict Transformation by Training in Nonviolent Action. Activities of the Centre for Nonviolent Action (Sarajevo) in the Balkan Region</i>	Martina Fischer	Juni 2001
17	<i>Southeast European NGOs for the Stability Pact</i>	Martina Fischer/ Giovanni Scotto	September 2000
16	<i>Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung deutscher NROs und Einrichtungen – Ein Wegweiser, 1998/99</i>	Cordula Reimann	September 1998
15	<i>The Intercultural Mediation Project: The Bléré Experience: A Study of Conflict Management in an Intercultural Context</i>	Jon Sebastian	November 1997
14	<i>Roles and Functions of Third Parties in the Constructive Management of Ethnopolitical Conflicts</i>	Norbert Ropers	November 1997
13	<i>Natural Law, Agents and Patients, and Minority Rights</i>	Gabriel Andreescu	November 1999
12	<i>Peacebuilding Aktivitäten der bikommunalen Conflict Resolution Trainer Group in Zypern</i>	Oliver Wolleh	November 1997

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11	<i>Advanced Networking: A Conceptual Approach to NGO-based Early Response Strategies in Conflict Prevention</i>	Anton Ivanov	Oktober 1997
10	<i>Peace Work by Civil Actors in Post-Communist Societies</i>	Diana Francis / Norbert Ropers	September 1997
9	<i>Ethnopolitical Legitimacy and Ethnic Conflict Management. The Case of the Russian Federation in the Early 1990s</i>	Airat Aklaev	Juni 1996
8	<i>Eigeninitiativen einheimischer FriedensstifterInnen. Wirkungsmöglichkeiten in den neuen östlichen Demokratien</i>	Sonja Borski / Holger Hess	September 1998
7	<i>Strategies and Needs of NGOs Dealing with Ethnopolitical Conflicts in the New Eastern Democracies</i>	Anja Weiß / Aleksej Nazarenko	März 1997
6	<i>The Protection of National Minorities and Regional Stability</i>	Kinga Gál	September 1996
5	<i>The International Relations of the DAHR 1989 – 96. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania. An Introduction</i>	Anna-Mária Bíró	August 1996
4	<i>The Hungarian Concept of Autonomy for Romania. The 1993 DAHR Draft-law on National Minorities and Autonomous Communities and Reactions from Other Political Parties in Romania</i>	Kinga Páll	September 1996
3	<i>Warsaw Workshop for Peace Builders. 28. Januar – 2. Februar 1996</i>	Anja Weiß / Aleksej Nazarenko	September 1996
2	<i>Golitsino Workshop for Peace Builders. 25. – 29. September 1995</i>	Anja Weiß / Aleksej Nazarenko	August 1996
1	<i>Ergebnisbericht: Interkulturelle Konfliktbearbeitung. Einführungsseminar in neue Konzepte der innergesellschaftlichen und internationalen Mediation und präventiven Diplomatie. 30. November – 2. Dezember 1994</i>	Norbert Ropers	Juli 1996 vergriffen

Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation (www.berghof-handbook.net)

	Title	Author	Published
Handbook	<i>Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict. The Berghof Handbook</i>	A. Austin/M. Fischer/N. Ropers (Eds.)	2004 (print)

Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series (www.berghof-handbook.net)

Handbook Dialogue Series	Title	Author	Published
No. 4	<i>New Trends in PCIA</i>	D. Bloomfield/M. Fischer/ B. Schmelzle (Eds.)	2005 (print)
No. 3	<i>Transforming War Economies – Dilemmas and Strategies</i>	M. Fischer/B. Schmelzle (Eds.)	2005 (print)
No. 2	<i>Security Sector Reform</i>	C. McCartney/M. Fischer/O. Wils (Eds.)	2004 (print)
No. 1	<i>Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment – Critical Views on Theory and Practice</i>	A. Austin/M. Fischer/O. Wils (Eds.)	2003 (print)

Berghof Reihe Konflikttransformation (LIT-Verlag)

Band	Title	Author	Published
5	<i>Peacebuilding and Civil Society in Bosnia-Herzegovina - Ten Years after Dayton</i>	Martina Fischer (ed.)	Forthcoming, Nov. 2005
4	<i>Friedensbildung in Mostar. Die Rolle der internationalen NRO</i>	Giovanni Scotto	2004
3	<i>Hilfe die nicht vom Himmel fällt. Gewaltprävention in der Entwicklungsarbeit von NGOs</i>	E. Forberg/U. Terlinden	2002
2	<i>Die Teilung überwinden. Eine Fallstudie zur Friedensbildung in Zypern</i>	Oliver Wolleh	2002
1	<i>Konfliktbearbeitung in der Zivilgesellschaft. Die Workshop-Methode im rumänisch-ungarischen Konflikt</i>	P. Haumersen/ H. Rademacher/ N. Ropers	2002