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ALTERNATIVE

Developing alternative understandings of security and justice through restorative justice approaches in intercultural settings within democratic societies

Deliverable 9.5: Dissemination through the EFRJ Newsletter

SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

COOPERATION PROGRAMME

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Deliverable 9.5: Dissemination through the EFRJ Newsletter

1. The EFRJ Newsletter

The European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) newsletter, which is being put together by an editorial board, is one of the EFRJ's instruments to act as a platform for communication and participation for all who wish to support restorative justice (RJ) developments. The EFRJ publishes three newsletter issues a year. The newsletter typically contains three to four articles, which usually deal with new developments in RJ in European countries. The EFRJ aims to provide the readers also with short information about new publications, upcoming events and other news. Some newsletters are special issues, focusing on specific projects of the EFRJ itself. This was the case of the present (Vol. 14 Issue 2 - 2013 September) issue of the newsletter, which was fully dedicated to the ALTERNATIVE project.

The newsletter is distributed in an on-line format to the members of the organisation. The members of the EFRJ receive the electronic version of the newsletter some three months before the issue is posted on the www.euforumrj.org website, therefore later it will be accessible via the website of the EFRJ, as well as the project website (www.alternativeproject.eu).

2. Procedure of the realisation of the present issue

The preparation of this issue started on the 3rd Steering Committee Meeting in Vienna January 2013, where the partners agreed to propose a structure and contribute with articles. After the meeting, the EFRJ informed the Editor of the Newsletter, Dr. Kerry Clamp and involved her in the preparation of the newsletter structure. Partners were asked to send proposals for the content and for their contribution by February 2013. Christa Pelikan (IRKS) and Brunilda Pali (KU Leuven) were the most active to invent and

accomplish the structure of the newsletter in close cooperation with Kerry Clamp and with the Leuven team. After the structure was agreed on by the partners, everybody was asked to send the first versions of the articles by 15th July 2013. All partners agreed to contribute; NOVA finally took part mostly in reviewing the articles. The first versions were reviewed by the partners as well as by the Editor of the newsletter. According to the feedback, second versions were shared at the end of August. These versions were again reviewed by the Editor and were discussed on the 4th Steering Committee Meeting in Budapest September 2013. Some authors were asked to reduce the length of their articles and the Editorial and the two first articles on the research had to be made more coherent. After submitting all the final articles on 18th September 2013, the Editor made the final review. The EFRJ, with the contribution of the editorial board, took care of the visualisation of the newsletter. It has been sent out on the 28th September 2013 to 309 individual e-mail addresses by the EFRJ`s online campaign tool.

3. Content of the newsletter

1. Editorial – by Prof. Ivo Aertsen (KU Leuven), project coordinator
2. Alternative thinking/theorizing - What about the alternative in the ALTERNATIVE project? – by Brunilda Pali (KU Leuven)
3. Alternative research approaches - Let's get into action! – by Christa Pelikan (IRKS) and Inge Vanfraechem (KU Leuven)
4. Alternative research sites

   4.1 Social housing estates as intercultural settings: the research site in Vienna – by Katrin Kremmel (IRKS)

   4.2 The quest: finding the Site for the Hungarian action research – by Gabriella Benedek (Foresee)

   4.3 Activating community through a multi-agency approach: The ALTERNATIVE research project in Northern Ireland – by Tim Chapman and colleagues (UU)

4.4 Fostering victim-oriented dialogue in a multiethnic society: description of the local research sites in Serbia – Bejan Saciri (VDS)

5. ALTERNATIVE dissemination – Summer school, films and more – by Edit Törzs (EFRJ)

The online version of the full newsletter is accessible here: http://mail.statik.be/t/ViewEmail/r/92DCC67329D17DC42540EF23F30FEDED

The PDF version of the newsletter is downloadable from here: http://www.euforumrj.org//assets/upload/Vol_14_2_full_issue.pdf

According to the campaign reports, the e-mail containing the newsletter has been opened 288 times until noon 30th September.

European Forum for Restorative Justice

Newsletter

Volume 14 Number 2

September 2013

Editorial

This special issue of the European Forum for Restorative Justice Newsletter provides insight into the European project 'Developing alternative understandings of security and justice through restorative justice approaches in inter-cultural settings within democratic societies' (acronym: ALTERNATIVE). ALTERNATIVE is a large project currently being carried out by researchers and practitioners in the field of RJ in six different countries, with the involvement of the EFRJ and with KU Leuven Institute of Criminology (LINC) as coordinator. The project runs from February 2012 to January 2016.

The project is part of the European Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), which is the 'science-line' of EU funding, and in this regard ALTERNATIVE is different from the majority of projects done so far by the European Forum which usually respond to calls within the funding line of 'Criminal Justice'. To meet the requirements of the Seventh Framework Programme (soon to be followed up by the Research programme 'Horizon 2020'), the applicants had to come up with — and they did so successfully — a demanding and highly sophisticated research design.

It is important to emphasise though that not only external requirements are responsible for this design and its theoretical underpinnings. It is also due to the specific purpose of this research and to the policy intentions we — the team of researchers — have adhered to. We hope to make a real contribution to the field of theory building about restorative justice and its relevance for experiences of security and justice, and we hope to impact on restorative justice practices in the countries included and in other European countries as well.

In the pages that follow we will present some of the thinking that informs the ALTERNATIVE project. We begin by outlining the theoretical framework of the project and some initial findings (Brunilda Pali). Next, we explain the methodological approach of the project which places action research is the core (Christa Pelikan). Action research means that the boundaries between researchers and practitioners are challenged. Information about each of the research sites in the partner countries (Austria, Hungary, Serbia and Northern Ireland) is subsequently presented. Research at the four sites explores conflicts at different social levels: the micro-, meso- and macro-level with a special emphasis on the active participation of citizens in conflict resolution and how different forms of active participation influence citizens' perceptions of justice and security. Katrin Kremmel describes how in Vienna we look into the way people of different nationality or ethnicity are living together in social housing estates. The Hungarian colleagues have selected a village where living together with Roma people appears to work well. This is dealt with by Gabriella Benedek. For Serbia, Bejan Šaćiri explains how three different multi-ethnic regions have been chosen to carry out action-research focusing on victim-oriented dialogue. Finally, in Northern Ireland the research activities, as presented by Tim Chapman and colleagues, are directed at conflict between a local community and gangs of youth, and at inter-community political conflict.

In the final part of the newsletter, Edit Törzs outlines the dissemination activities planned for ALTERNATIVE, for which the European Forum is responsible in particular. The dissemination activities include filmmaking and go far beyond the traditional ways of dispersing research information. We hope you enjoy reading about our project and we would welcome comments on this.

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Alternative Thinking/Theorising: What is Alternative in the ALTERNATIVE Project?

The ALTERNATIVE project aims to provide an alternative and deepened understanding of justice and security while handling conflicts in inter-cultural settings. This implies developing, on the one hand, a *coherent theoretical framework* and, on the other, *actions* that can respond to such conflicts. This reflection offers insight into what is alternative about our theoretical approach (for a reflection on the action see the reflection by Christa Pelikan and Inge Vanfraechem on the following page) and provides information on what have we done so far in relation to the theoretical framework and why have we chosen to do it in this alternative way as opposed to a conventional way.

What have we done so far in relation to the theoretical framework?

Developing a coherent theoretical framework for an alternative understanding of security and justice involved two strategies: first, undertaking a critical analysis of existing theoretical frameworks and second, proposing alternatives ways about how we might understand justice and security in inter-cultural settings. Thus, two questions were important for our research:

1. What are the existing epistemologies of doing justice and enhancing security in inter-cultural settings in Europe, and what are their major limitations?

2. Can restorative justice be an alternative epistemology of doing justice and enhancing security in inter-cultural settings in Europe, and if so, what are its limits and potentials?

At the onset of the project, we realised a few things. The first was that individual objectives and activities of local work (work packages) had to be constantly redefined and adapted to follow the direction and the aim of the whole project. We did not start with a rigorous set of criteria or research plan but worked with general guidelines. These enabled the different researchers to carry out the research in-depth in their own country and its specific cultural context, but at the same time ensure reasonable similarity between the different inquiries.

The second thing we had to grasp with was the fact that the project is based on *collective action research*, whereby theory and action interact and influence each other mutually; knowledge is produced communally (therefore it is not unidirectional) and the knowledge acquired is subsequently used to produce some form of social change (knowledge is thus not an end in itself).

In relation to this understanding, we agreed that we all need to engage in a theoretical way and understand both the safe and the shaky grounds on which we were standing. This meant mainly that we all had to take up theoretical work, instead of making a clear 'I do the action, you do the theory' division, and attempted to create an organic critical and theoretical reflexivity on the practices. At the same time, we will allow the practices and action to feed back on the theory, which is work in progress as the actions are about to start. But 'all taking up theoretical work' is not enough of an indication of a common approach, and especially of a critical approach, therefore we had to make clear efforts to craft a common theoretical approach, which we have called a *socio-historical approach*.

In our project we situate the process of theory construction in a socio-historical space, rather than in a natural, essentialist, formal, or empirical space, and by doing so we problematise its truth-effects. This leads us to accept the assumption that everything resides on a base of human practice and human history. It also gives us the potential and hope for change, since things that have been made, can also be unmade, especially as long as we know how they were made.

According to such an approach, all discourses can become objects of critique. Thus finding ourselves at the intersections of the restorative justice discourse and security discourse, we started our theoretical exercise by tracing and mapping the main discourses through the interrelation of several key concepts, like interculturality, security, justice, active participation, culture, democracy, crime, conflict and community.

Why have we chosen to do it in this alternative way as opposed to a conventional way?

By working at the borders and intersections of issues like inter-culturality, justice, security, and conflict, we had to make sure that we would not be further reifying or essentialising concepts that were already reified and essentialised, including restorative justice.

First in relation to the security discourse, we had to come to terms and grasp with the fact that we are at this moment actors who find ourselves right in the middle of the security discourse, by having proposed through our project to 'securitise' certain types of conflicts all over Europe and are in this sense very much accomplice to the security discourse. Therefore, in light of this 'trap' we had to come up with normative reasons of why we have done this and what was on our minds.

In other words, by linking culture with conflict (crime) and security and (restorative) justice, some of the questions we asked ourselves were: are we creating a new nexus (link)? Are we exploring an existing nexus but in a different way? Are we challenging, or de-securitizing that nexus? Are we proposing 'more security' or challenging the concept all together? What is it that we are proposing that will be better or will make a difference? We therefore need to offer a normative basis to criticise the existing practices and conceive emancipatory alternatives.

By *producing knowledge* from the framework of restorative justice, our project commits to this way of doing justice as a possible alternative discourse of justice and security. In relation to restorative justice, we also thought that most of the existing literature is not critical and often not put into a socio-historical frame. The result of this has been a reification and essentialisation of restorative justice objects, without giving account of who is behind the discourse and what the intentions and constitutive interest that have led to its production are.

As a reminder, our project relies overall on a constructivist and critical approach which means accepting two main assumptions:

1. everything resides on a base of human practice and human history, and
2. knowledge does not exist apart from the constitutive interests that lead to its production.

The main challenge we have to face is how ready and willing are we in our project to speak of and question restorative justice as a (constructed) discourse, instead of an essentialised one? This implies embracing distance from our own work and critiquing it before we move forward.

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Alternative research approaches: Let's get into action!

This decision to embrace action research was made at an early stage of designing the project. From the outset we were striving for a project that put forward a demanding and sophisticated theoretical framework and that would be relevant for restorative justice practices. Action research was deemed a research strategy that is in accordance with these goals and apt to promote a relationship between theory and practice that is truly innovative. In this brief reflection we will highlight why we have chosen action research in the ALTERNATIVE project and outline the role of the researcher in action research.

Why have we chosen action research in the alternative project?

Action research has been described as a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worth-while human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview. As Ivo Aertsen has stated, the partners in the field are not only taking care of the action, they are also contributing to the research or are even carrying out the research themselves. The separation between practitioners and researchers fades away in favour of a relationship of co-operation and a process of influencing each other. Researchers and researched are equal in the discussion and a priori expertise from only one side is not accepted.

In ALTERNATIVE, action research comprises two aspects. First, it is about participation and this implies involving practitioners working in the field as well as the subjects of research (the people living in our research sites) in the research process. In this way we intend to come closer to the reality of people's lives and to arrive at truly 'alternative' understandings of justice and security. These understandings will in turn prove relevant for creating and trying out alternative practices in dealing with conflicts in inter-cultural settings.

Second, there will be interventions, actions instigated by the research teams in each of the four research sites as an integral part of the project design. These actions constitute the research activity and are the object of research. The methodological approach of action research is thus in line with the theoretical approach as outlined above by Brunilda Pali. We understand the theoretical concepts and the way they are set out as (wo)man-made and depending on (wo)man's place within a socio-historical power constellation, and we rely in our research efforts on (wo)man-made processes. Both in theory and in our research practice we do not assume a reality 'out there' to be detected but interactively constructed webs of relationships. In this way, we see action research as an alternative to the more typical

research methods such as standardised questionnaires that try and observe practices from a distance.

What is the role of the researcher in action research?

The researcher has a number of potential contributions and tasks. First, they become part of an interactive web. Notwithstanding this participation, the researcher takes a specific stance of observation (so-called 'second order observation'), a stance that is supposed to produce a perception of social phenomena that adds something to the perceptions of the immediate actors. The perception of the researcher draws on knowledge of the societal ecology. The concept of societal ecology pertains to processes of socio-political reform activity. It attempts to perceive these processes as part of broader developments in the socio-political arena as we find them in our research sites. It adds a dynamic perspective to a mere static contextualisation. The researcher also draws on knowledge of theoretical concepts and pieces of theory, or rather elements of different discourses that offer *ad hoc* interpretations of the phenomena observed.

Second, while conventional empirical research distances the knowledge generated from immediate action and the pressures this may exert, this is decidedly different in action research, where researchers get involved in action at the research sites and they initiate interventions that lead to social change. In fact, in conventional research both characteristics, 'second order observation' and 'being relieved from involvement in action' allow for perceiving phenomena and developments through a different lens — one that makes for a distancing effect.

We would like to ask whether it is necessary for research to retain such a distance in order to make its specific contribution. And does such distance open new paths to acquire knowledge? Which kind of knowledge? Does it make a contribution possible of research that is broader and more balanced? Or does it rather introduce pretence of objective and 'rational' knowledge that claims a kind of superiority we strive to overcome? In other words: is distance to be equated with staying remote and being reduced to a 'cold' rationality?

When taking a closer look at the research activities that have been carried out so far, we have arrived at the following conclusion: reflection, as an interactive exercise carried out by the team of researchers and as a joint effort together with practitioners appears as the path to achieve a kind of distancing effect that avoids and overcomes the dangers of remoteness and abstractedness but retains the surplus value of a 'scientific' point of view thus contributing to a broader and more balanced understanding. In that sense, it forms an alternative way of doing research.

Finally, and of paramount importance, all the empirical evidence produced by research activities through interviews, through the observation of discussions in focus groups, or through the self-observation and the group reflection of our active involvement have to undergo the process of being analysed and interpreted by using and applying theoretical concepts, the ones we have selected and deliberated in the course of our theoretical endeavours. How to reconcile this core task of scientific research with the aims and principles of action research? The solution is a simple one: researchers have to become partners in a dialogue. The interpretations of 'reality' as guided by theoretical concepts have to be confronted with the everyday understanding and the common sense interpretations of actions and practices. What does this mean and imply? The researcher 'offers' the practitioner her/his interpretation, using theoretically based concepts. And s/he enters a discourse whose aim it is to examine the plausibility and the 'practicability' of these concepts. The concepts s/he introduces have to make sense to the practitioners and to the people affected and they should produce a surplus value of understanding, and be able of impacting on the practice.

Summarising, we would like to contend that the methodological approach as expressed in action research implies acquiring knowledge through a process of continuous interaction and dialogue between researchers and those researched and a process of on-going reflection on those interaction. The knowledge thus produced is hoped to be truly valid, i.e. close to people's everyday life and therefore also capable of leading to social change.

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Alternative Research Sites/Constellations

A. Social Housing Estates as inter-cultural Settings — Vienna

Within the framework of the ALTERNATIVE project, the Institute for the Sociology of Law and Criminology (IRKS) in Vienna is studying conceptions of justice and security, informal ways of handling conflicts in Viennese social housing estates and the potential of restorative practices for these settings.

The context

A third of Vienna's population is living in social housing estates (or municipal housing complexes). Between the first and the second World War Vienna's social democratic government started building these housing estates with the objective of providing decent housing to its constituency, the working class of Vienna. Ever since 2006, when immigrants were granted access to social housing, the housing estates are said to be sites of conflicts between Austrian majority members and immigrants. These neighbourhood disputes receive considerable public attention, especially in the midst of political campaigns during pre-election times.

Yet when looking closely at existing neighbourhood disputes, we come to see that they were the same 20 years ago, when almost all residents belonged to the Austrian majority: e.g. quarrels between kids and elderly, who were complaining about the noise the kids made. What is different today, is that these conflicts are no more framed in intergenerational terms only, they are 'culturalised' as the kids today are regarded as too loud, because they are 'Turkish' (which means more than just a nationality in this context).

However, the social housing estates are clearly more than just 'inter-cultural'. Differences in these neighbourhoods evolve along manifold lines, which intersect — there is the 70-year-old Imam from Egypt, who considers himself to be Austrian, ever since he received Austrian citizenship. There is the 35-year-old nursery school teacher, of Jewish origin, and taking pride in the coming-out of her transsexual husband. Furthermore, some residents take interest into the background of their neighbours, and dedicate their free time to get in touch and build social ties. Others have made different personal experiences along their life stories and have come to blame their neighbours for the injustice they perceive as being done to them. Nevertheless we could argue for calling life in these housing estates as peaceful and secure — crime rates at '*Am Schöpfwerk*', a housing estate with more than 5000 residents, are lower than in the rest of Vienna.

The project

Therefore the focus of present research activities does NOT rest on 'the problem' of neighbourhood disputes only, but we rather ask: How does social life work in this setting, how are present conflicts successfully being dealt with and which lessons can we learn from here?

We are gaining access to our research field through chosen partner-organisations: '*Wohnpartner*', one of the service agencies of the City of Vienna and a community centre '*Bassena Am Schöpfwerk*' in the housing estate mentioned above. *Wohnpartner* is active all over Vienna's social housing estates providing assistance and mediation to residents that come forward with neighbourhood disputes of various kinds. Thus their work decisively shapes the picture of what mediation practice in social housing estates looks like today. The community centre *Bassena* stands for a different approach as the team of social workers does not carry out mediation any more but tries to actively engage residents in activities aiming to increase the quality of social life in their neighbourhood.

Especially the cooperation with the community centre *Bassena* has allowed us to set up the framework necessary to approach our research questions through a participatory research process. Throughout this process one of our researchers is working as an 'intern' at the community centre, while two social workers are contributing as researching practitioners, what allows for a bi-directional exchange of knowledge. However, while opening up possibilities, this choice of field access also exercises certain restrictions on the researcher, as the close association with the community centre is leading to some bias of her modes of perceiving and of being perceived by the residents.

At the same time, interviews with social workers and team-leaders of *Wohnpartner*, as well as with residents are being carried out, and we have made observations of some of the 'community outreach' projects *Wohnpartner* is performing.

After analysing social life and existing neighbourhood conflicts through these activities, the project proposal foresees the introduction of restorative practices to deal with neighbourhood disputes at the research sites. From 2014 onwards we will try to build local capacities by offering training courses in restorative practices to groups of residents. With the ongoing support of social workers and the research team the trained residents will hopefully be able to actively contribute to the resolution of conflicts they experience in their close

surroundings. Interviews with the trainees, focussing on their experiences of conflict resolution, will allow us to get insights into the application of restorative practices in an extra-judicial field — which is news for the Austrian national context.

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B. The Quest — Finding the Site for the Hungarian action research within the ALTERNATIVE project

Foresee Research Group, an independent, not-for-profit institution established in 2008, is conducting a research within the ALTERNATIVE project, named *Community Encounters*. Our aim is to explore if and how the restorative approach and practices can positively affect the attitudes, conflict resolution methods, and feelings of security/safety of a small community. Originally, the primordial root of inter-culturality characterizing the context of the Hungarian action-research was to be 'Roma and non-Roma people living together.' However, the research has become ready to embrace not only this special characteristic, but any facts of life: the whole societal ecology: whatever ways the context may be interpreted as 'inter-cultural.'

The Roma/Gypsy is a sensitive issue and not just since recently. This is the biggest national minority group in Hungary, already mentioned as early as the 13th–14th century. Roma or Gypsy are mostly Hungarian citizens, segmented into several different groups *per se*, making up 8% of the country's population. Due to hostile or degrading attitudes, the Roma ethnic background is often times denied in census, and sometimes from one's identity, too. Educational, health, housing and employment disadvantages, discrimination and often segregation strike gypsy Hungarians. According to a survey conducted in 2011, two-third of Hungarians would not let their kids play with Roma children. The 'Roma problem', is overtly on the flag of the extreme-right movement Jobbik, the Party which achieved 15% of the votes during the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections. All in all, the research may run afoul of the securitization beehive, as endangered 'public security (*közbiztonság*)' and 'Gypsy crime (*cigánybűnözés*)' — just two of the most frequent concepts of the mainstream discourses, with an obvious anti-gipsy overtone. In 2009, 58% of the population believed that 'crime is in the blood of the Roma.'

Restorative justice initiatives are rare and unfamiliar in Hungary. 'Conflicts' are also a dubious topic in our country. Negative connotations, as 'anger,' 'argument,' 'shouting,' 'disagreement,' 'harm,' 'broken relations,' 'injury' — in fact, these are what we usually get as associated to the word *conflict*, almost invariably from the context. Thus, the first and main challenge to start our research was to find an appropriate and willing settlement for this particular action research, a 'Site,' and to establish a bearing working relation with its opinion leaders and with ordinary local people.

Criteria for Site selection

Only a few specific criteria for site selection were predefined. We were looking for a village with 2000–5000 inhabitants within 1.5 hours of driving from Budapest where our organisation is located. We insisted that some elements of national social/educational/health service institutions operated, and that some activity of local civil society organisations worked there, too.

For pre-assessing whether the potential site fit the criteria of an 'inter-cultural context,' Foresee conducted some background research. We explored whether local projects had been established for the benefit of the local Roma Community within the locality, and checked whether an established Romany Minority Self-Government visibly operates at present. Our decisive, but least specific site selection criteria, was the potential for a significant relationship with a local partner in order to develop a long-term developmental intervention.

Site selection process: hopes and doubts

Site selection proceeded from two directions: by filtering databases, and by establishing a virtual inter-professional advisory board whom we asked for direct or indirect experiences with settlements alike. Then we paid a visit to Kakucs — where we met István Szalay, the visionary mayor. He told us bitterly about the village split into two between 'pure-blooded' villagers and the new-comers (moving in as early as 5–30 years ago!), and proudly about the settlement-elimination of the 150 years old Roma hamlet in the outskirts of the village, 'a shame on the whole country.' (Naturally, we heard other interpretations of events from several different perspectives as well.)

The mayor claimed that the village was still a peaceful place, compared to others:

> I think we do not have anything to hide ... If there was something worth hiding; it is good to face it. To my understanding, the research monitors the Kakucs community. To be honest, I did not clearly understand what it is about; I am more down-to-earth than this ... I cannot yet foresee the result, the outcome of the research. All in all, I trust you because you are scientists and I am curious about our community. I wish to see the picture of ourselves, as if in a mirror and if there is something we did well, it is good to know and acknowledge ... After all, it is better to bring issues to the surface than to cover up.

At the same time, it turned out that some villagers felt anxious, and wondered why we selected their village over others. We heard that some of them doubted that problems were so serious, that they required help from the outside. Indeed, someone is reported to have asked:

> Is there such a severe Roma problem here? Why don't they conduct the research where there are really serious problems?

Other mistrusting voices stated:

> We have lived here in peace. If they snoop around for conflicts, they will find some for sure, or stir them by asking about. That's exactly what we don't need.
>
> Conflicts have always been around, and we can very well live with them. We have not changed: we do not need to fluff them.

The school director recalled her thoughts later in a video-interview

> Maybe, researchers just came to see, why and how it works here well, or at least better than elsewhere ...

Decision and support

When time was ripe for the debate in the village council, the above arguments were rehearsed, and then representatives voted and allowed the action-research to be launched in Kakucs. Grateful to the gatekeepers, we clearly understood that there is a requirement to engage in trust-building. The next day, together with József Oláh (alias Pöli), the local research coordinator (head of Roma minority Government and representative of local government, himself a trained mediator), Eva Györfi, from Foresee started preparations to organise an operative Local Support Group with most stakeholder groups represented in it, in order to form a communication platform. The monthly meetings allow space for discussion, planning, and evaluation of the action-research. The support group have fostered the duplex information-flow and supported the problem analysis research conducted with the leadership of Gabor Hera by suggesting participants for the interviews and connect researchers with community members. Later, the Local Support Group prepared the event where Foresee researchers shared the first findings of the diagnosis research and discussed it with a group of community representatives.

Conclusions and steps forward

Foresee was looking for a partner, a site for the action-research where the situation was not dire, but where inter-cultural conflict was apparent. We are seeking insight into a supposedly typical 'inter-cultural' locality: people's concepts of a safe and just life, their conflicts and their ways to resolving them. We believe that researchers and local people can learn a lot from each other about how to make coexistence in inter-cultural context smoother and richer. Local solutions and the potentially new restorative practices are and will be further introduced, tested and reflected in a dialogue folding out in the next year.

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C. Activating Community through a Multi-agency Approach: The ALTERNATIVE research project in Northern Ireland

After thirty years of violent civil conflict Northern Ireland is engaged in a peace process. There is a government in which former enemies now share power. Most of the armed groups have declared a cessation of violence and decommissioned their weapons. There have been structural changes intended to protect human rights, to assure parity of esteem for the two main communities, and to reform the police service. There has been a substantial reduction in violence and Northern Irish society is generally more stable and peaceful.

However, a legacy of problems remains. The hurt felt by people who have been victimised in the past has not been healed. The sectarianism that lies just below the surface of the society erupts from time to time stimulated by contentious issues. Issues around identity have not been satisfactorily resolved. Violence is still too often seen as a solution to conflict.

New problems are also emerging. As Northern Ireland became more peaceful, it became more attractive to economic migrants. As the control of local communities by paramilitary organisations reduces, the use of illegal drugs has increased and organised crime has developed. The economic recession has created a high level of youth unemployment resulting in anti-social behaviour and an emerging gang culture in some areas.

The research sites

It was in this context that the University of Ulster team chose three sites in which to test the contribution of restorative justice to local communities' experience of security and justice. Each of the sites continues to experience a range of conflicts that result in harm to local people. In each of these sites there was a non-governmental organisation that was prepared to enter into partnership with the University for the purpose of research. To this end we have spent many hours in consultations with our partners and other stakeholders. We now have the relationships and the baseline information we require to progress this research.

West Belfast and Community Restorative Justice Ireland

West Belfast is a vibrant and resourceful community which has been deeply affected by the violence of the conflict and also includes some of the most deprived communities in Northern Ireland. Our preliminary consultations have led us to identify intergenerational conflict as the key area of study in this area. This involves in some areas large groups of young people engaged in anti-social behaviour and creating a sense of fear and insecurity among local residents. More seriously some young people are forming themselves into gangs and becoming involved in more serious crime and harming the well being of their community. These problems are being addressed through a mix of security initiatives by the police and attempts by community organisations to divert young people into more positive activities. However, little work is being done to restore relationships and respect between the generations. This could be the contribution of restorative justice.

Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) has delivered restorative solutions to harmful conflicts in west Belfast and other republican areas in the north of Ireland since 1998. While community based and employing mainly local people, the organisation has established itself as a very professional, competent and respected service. The ALTERNATIVE research project will study how it goes about addressing issues arising from intergenerational conflict.

Two 'frontiers' limit the effectiveness of community based restorative justice: the relationship between state and civil society and the ethnic frontier between catholic, nationalist, republican communities and protestant, unionist, loyalist communities.

To be effective in this work CRJI needs to have good working relationships with state agencies such as the police, probation and youth justice. While it has made considerable progress with these agencies, issues around trust and mutual respect continue to limit the potential of community based restorative justice in west Belfast. The relationship between the state and community will also be a site of potential conflict that we will be studying over the next two years. We will also explore how CRJI attempt to create with a loyalist community organisation a 'shared space' in which they can cooperate to resolve harmful conflicts that impact on both communities. This leads us to the second research site.

South Belfast and Community Actively Restoring Empowerment

Community Actively Restoring Empowerment (CARE) was established in 2010 and aspires to deliver restorative solutions to conflicts in loyalist working class areas of south Belfast. It is much less developed than CRJI. The ALTERNATIVE project will support it to develop its capacity and effectiveness so that it can become an accredited and credible community justice project. It is also working closely with CRJI to learn from its experience. This is remarkable as sectarian and political tensions continue between their two communities. The two organisations plan to establish together a community justice house where people from both communities can use safely to seek support on issues affecting the sense of security and justice.

CARE also intend to raise the awareness of the Loyalist communities in south Belfast with regard to restorative solutions to conflict and harmful behaviour and in doing so enable these communities to move away from violent responses. As in west Belfast CARE will also address anti-social behaviour among young people in the area aiming to increase mutual respect between the generations through restorative justice. Finally south Belfast has a relatively large population of ethnic minority communities. CARE will test the relevance and effectiveness of a restorative justice approach to harmful conflict experienced by ethnic minorities.

Derry/Londonderry and the Northlands Centre

The Northlands Centre in Derry is a well established centre for the treatment and support of people with addiction problems. It has strong community links

and has always reached out to local communities. It wishes to develop a more community oriented approach to drug use in Derry. It has identified the need to identify the concerns of local communities caused by drug use through community conferences and to develop responses to these concerns restoratively rather than through violence.

There has been in recent years a 'moral panic' around the use of illegal drugs in Derry. Armed groups, which have rejected the peace process, have taken advantage of this insecurity and have acted as a vigilante force against drug dealers. This has involved violence including killing alleged offenders. The ALTERNATIVE research project will support and assess a community based restorative approach to the problems of both drug use and violent responses to it.

Conclusion

The ALTERNATIVE research project has offered the University of Ulster an exciting opportunity not only to study issues of contemporary relevance to Northern Irish society but also to stretch the boundaries of the restorative justice contribution to community security and justice. The next two years should be interesting.

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D. Fostering victim-oriented dialogue in a multi-ethnic society: description of the local research sites in Serbia

Armed conflicts in the territory of the former Yugoslavia during 1990s had the characteristics of inter-ethnic (Serbs, Slovenians, Croats and Bosniaks) and interreligious (Orthodox, Catholics and Muslims) conflicts during which about 140,000 people were killed (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009) and between 3.5 and 4 million others were displaced (Opačić et al., 2010). These conflicts and the way the Serbian state dealt with them had a significant impact on the long-term worsening of inter-ethnic relationships in Serbia itself.

Many unresolved problems, conflicts and tensions at both the state-level and between individual citizens remained after 1990s. Even today relationships and conflicts between members of different ethnic groups in Serbia are still very much under the influence of the wars from the 1990s and their consequences, particularly in the regions where multi-ethnicity is the most emphasised. Thus, in Serbia the security of citizens requires dealing with both past and present inter-ethnic conflicts and their very complex histories, but also with finding out alternative, non-violent models of solving existing and preventing future conflicts to halt the cycle of violence and increase the overall security of citizens.

Within the ALTERNATIVE project, the Victimology Society of Serbia intends to identify, propose and implement a restorative model of conflict resolution in multi-ethnic contexts through involving all citizens, particularly victims. This will be pursued by identifying both problems and positive experiences in solving inter-ethnic conflicts in Serbia. We began our research with a literature review and qualitative research on dealing with inter-ethnic conflicts by the state and civil society (Nikolic-Ristanovic and Copic, 2013). This was followed by an action research on inter-ethnic relations, existing conflicts and ways of dealing with them by citizens in three multi-ethnic regions in Serbia: South Serbia (the Preševo Valley), Vojvodina (the north part of the country) and South-West Serbia (the Sandžak or Raška oblast). In each of these regions we selected particular municipalities to be our research sites: Medveđa (South Serbia), Bač and Bačka Palanka (Vojvodina) and Prijepolje (South-West Serbia).

The municipality of Medveđa

The common characteristic of these sites is that they are located in the border regions of the country and they are multi-ethnic: Serbs and other ethnic groups (in particular, Croats, Bosniaks, and Albani-

ans) that were in conflict during the wars in the Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s live there.

The research sites

Medveđa is located in the far south, and together with Bujanovac and Preševo constitutes the so called 'Preševo valley.'

Conflicts in Kosovo in the 1990s, especially during 1998 and 1999 between Serbian army and police forces, on one side, and the Liberation Army of Kosovo, on the other, worsened the multi-ethnic relations in this region. Military and police points were set up and Serbian security forces dispersed throughout Medveđa, which contributed to the feeling of insecurity by local Albanians. The situation was even worse during the NATO bombing of Serbia, when insecurity increased due to the cases of torture, harassment, arrests and robberies of Albanians performed by the members of the Serbian army and police forces. Consequently, a number of Albanian families fled to Kosovo and Macedonia; some of them remained there, particularly in Kosovo, while some have returned to Medveđa.

Tensions over ethnic Albanians have continued even after 2000: they were discriminated and prevented from exercising their civil rights, while cases of physical violence performed by the members of the Serbian police were noticed as well. Although some conflicts still exist, especially between young people, multi-ethnic relations are relatively good today. However, what is emphasised by the members of the Albanian community is the bad and inadequate relation of the state towards them. Albanians and Serbs differently perceive the present day situation and the past events: while Albanians say that they have been pressured to leave Medveđa and been victimised by the Serbian state, Serbs seem not to be aware of problems that Albanians have been facing. Nevertheless, both Serbs and Albanians report long-term good relationships between 'ordinary' people of both ethnic groups.

The municipality of Bačka Palanka

The fountain in the centre of Medveđa with two memorial plaques with the following words:

> *'The glory to the combatants of the second battalion from Đakovica (a town in Kosovo) who died in defending the homeland from the Shqiptar terrorists and NATO forces'*[a]

and

> *'To the combatants who died in defending the homeland from the NATO forces. Grateful citizens of the municipality of Medveđa'*

(the names of three (Serbian) men are engraved in this plaque).

[a] Names of 15 (Serbian) soldiers are engraved on the plaque. As to the name Shqiptar (Šiptar in Serbian), it is an Albanian language ethnonym, by which Albanians call themselves. However, in Serbian language it has a negative connotation and it is considered to be an insulting term.

Bačka Palanka and Bač are located in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, in the region that borders with Croatia by the river Danube. The war and the proximity of the border with Croatia contributed to the feeling of insecurity and fear of citizens, especially Croats, during the 1990s. At that time, there were pressures over the Croats by formal and informal groups (such as the police, paramilitary groups, members of volunteer corps), as well as cases of verbal and physical violence. Members of the Croatian community faced house searches, assaults, and even bombs thrown at their homes. This contributed to the insecurity and mistrust between Croats and Serbs in general.

Even after 2000 there were incidents that increased the feeling of insecurity such as hate graffiti against Croats and vandalism of houses, churches, and monuments. There were also verbal and physical assaults on Croats, as well as destruction of their property. Even peace activists who have been working on peace build-

ing and reconciliation during the 1990s and after 2000 have been exposed to assaults and violence during this period.

The municipality of Bač

What can be noticed in respect to this local research site is that Serbs have different perceptions about current events and the past. Some of them say that relations between Serbs and Croats are good and that there were no conflicts in this region, while others described the cases proving the contrary. On the other hand, members of the Croatian minority said that relations are good as well, but they also spoke about violence they faced during the 1990s and afterwards.

Monument in front of the Museum in Prijepolje: Mother with two sons

Prijepolje is located in the South-West part of Serbia on the border triangle of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. During the 1990s when the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina escalated, there were arrests (and harassment) of Bosniaks in Prijepolje and the whole region by the police. The most important event from the 1990s, which disturbed relations between Serbs and Bosniaks was the kidnapping of the 19 Bosniak civilians from the train in Štrpci on 27th February 1993. Among the kidnapped there were nine citizens of Prijepolje. Members of the Serbian paramilitary group took the passengers from the train to the village near Višegrad (in Bosnia and Herzegovina) where they were lined up, robbed and beaten. Afterwards, they were executed not far from the river Drina. This event brought insecurity, mistrust and fear among citizens in Prijepolje and created the threat of a larger armed conflict. Fortunately, the conflict did not escalate.

After 2000 there were no multi-ethnic conflicts in Prijepolje. This period was marked by searching and facing the truth regarding the event in Štrpci. Both Serbs and Bosniaks consider this event as a war crime and all condemn it. Good examples that illustrate the current inter-ethnic relations in Prijepolje are two monuments. The first one, which is in front of the Museum in Prijepolje, presents a mother with two sons: one an Orthodox Christian, and the other a Muslim. This monument reflects the harmony and good inter-ethnic relations that traditionally exist in this municipality.

Monuments dedicated to the victims of kidnapping in Štrpci

The other monument in the shape of the traditional Muslim tombstone is dedicated to the victims of kidnapping in Štrpci. Local authority was united in deciding about building the monument, which was set up in 2009. It has an engraved message: 'Who in this land forgets the station in Štrpci and the 27th February 1993 has given up the future.'

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ALTERNATIVE dissemination — Summer school, films and more

A project's dissemination strategy to share research findings or other results generally begins toward the end of the project. Within ALTERNATIVE dissemination is seen and done differently and thus undertaken during the whole four year period. We aim to communicate with professionals — researchers, restorative justice practitioners and those involved in security or inter-cultural issues — as well as with those who seek solutions to security issues to share our results and raise questions. Therefore, through the different dissemination activities, we also would like to collect and share experiences, interests and needs from the field.

The ALTERNATIVE dissemination consists of different tools and activities. First, we have set up a project website (www.alternativeproject.eu), where detailed information on the project, on the partner organisations, on events and the content of the different work packages are published. This is the site on which we also share all the public interim research reports, free for download. A project Facebook page has also been set up as a useful way to give news to those interested in the project and receive comments.

In a more and more visual era of communication we cannot disseminate only with written words. A considerably big, though challenging, part of the project is an ongoing filming strategy. We aim to make a documentary by the end of the project showing the process and results of using restorative justice approaches in conflicts within inter-cultural local communities in Austria, Hungary, Northern Ireland and Serbia. Researchers receive basic training in film making and a small filming kit. In addition to the project partners' reflections, we aim to involve local community members as much as possible in the filming and make it a participatory process. Having an insight from local community members' point of view is not only interesting as part of the documentary but also supplements our understanding of local realities and the effects of applying restorative justice approaches. Film making is a learning process for us and we have practised by making some short films which also can be watched on the project website.

In the third year of the project we will organise four local workshops in Europe and a final conference will close the project. A practice manual, academic publications and books will summarise the research. As part of the dissemination activities the EFRJ Summer School this year was also dedicated to the ALTERNATIVE project. The Summer School held between 29 July and 2 August was entitled 'Restorative justice in inter-cultural settings: business as usual?' and focused on questions of restorative justice applied within inter-cultural conflict settings. More than 30 restorative practitioners, trainers and researchers gathered in Vienna, Austria from thirteen different countries for a week to learn and share about this topic. Besides the interactive training and role plays, our local host the project partner IRKS organised local visits and another day was dedicated to workshops offered by the ALTERNATIVE project partners.

On the local day some organisations being involved in the Austrian part of the project, as well as others dealing with inter-cultural issues welcomed Summer School participants for a visit. It was not easy to choose where to go — possibilities included: *Neustart*, the organisation using victim-offender mediation as well as piloting family group conferencing in criminal cases in Austria. *Wohnpartner* which is a service by the city to improve quality of life in the municipality housing estates and which offers mediation in conflicts within these very diverse neighbourhoods. *Arbeitersamariterbund* who provide shelters to asylum seekers and refugees and although do not use restorative justice in its strict sense they find the safety of often traumatised refugees really important which includes handling of everyday conflicts within the shelter. *Romano Centro*, an organisation offering mediation between Roma families and schools. Last but by no means least, *Fair&Sensibel*, an association dealing with conflicts as well as building trust between police and Africans.

On the ALTERNATIVE workshops day participants could choose between two parallel workshops. Gab-

riella Benedek and Borbala Fellegi from the Foresee Research Group, Hungary put the participants in the role of a community representing the village they work in the project. Would they let researchers to work in the village? How the researchers see the village and different conflict-lines and what are the reactions of the community members to it? A role play of a peacemaking circle based on a real case with participants from different cultural background closed the day. The other ALTERNATIVE workshop was offered by Derick Wilson from the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland. He made a very clear statement answering the summer school title — RJ in inter-cultural cases cannot be business as usual. In his point of view relationships matter and restorative justice should grow to create restorative societies, where people look out for each other and feel safe in terms of relationships.

Our aim is that the project and its dissemination activities will contribute to this.

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Calendar

The National Restorative Justice Symposium, 17–19 November 2013, Toronto, Canada. This conference seeks 'to promote, develop and grow restorative justice in Canada and around the world by providing new insights with a focus on Innovation.' More information can be found at: http://nrjs2013.com/. Alternatively you can contact Mandy Halabi, YOUCAN Youth Services at mandy.halabi@youcan.ca, Fax: +1 780 444 3349.

Coming Home 2013: Justice, Reconciliation, Forgiveness, Peace, 3–6 November 2013, Abbotsford, British Columbia — Tradex Exhibition Centre. Coming Home 2013 seeks to offer opportunities for community members and professional workers from North, South, East and West to share in educational activities, traditional ceremonies, and special presentations that pay tribute to the vision of those who have worked for justice, reconciliation, forgiveness and peace. For ticketing and further information on the event, contact: globalrestorativejustice@gmail.com or info@nottusmarketing.com or by phoning +1 604 613 4757.

Readers corner

Restorative Justice in Transition, by Kerry Clamp (2014) has just been published by Routledge. This book explores how restorative justice is used and what its potential benefits are in situations where the state has been either explicitly or implicitly involved in human rights abuses. The book is available in hardcopy format as well as an eBook from Routledge.

Justicia Restaurativa mucho más que mediación (*Restorative Justice: Much More than Mediation*) by Virginia Domingo (2013) is written in Spanish. The book consists of a collection of some of articles written for a digital newspaper Criminologia y Justiciacosiders. The book considers the relationship between victims and society, justice and society, justice and politics from a restorative justice perspective. The book is available from Amazon.

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SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

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