The Culture of Silence vs. Restorative Dialogues

How to Break the Silence in the Diverse Mindsets of a Central European Society?

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TO SEE THE PATHS FOR RP
WE NEED TO SEE THE EXISTING WALLS AND THE POSSIBLE BRIDGES
IN A CERTAIN CONTEXT
‘MENTAL WALLS’: BRAIN WASHING BY THE ‘GRAND NARRATIVES’ AND NEGLECTING THE ‘SMALL STORIES’
THE
“BILLBOARD BATTLE”
IN
HUNGARY
GRAND NARRATIVES VS. SMALL STORIES

DID YOU KNOW?

THE ATTACKS IN PARIS HAVE BEEN COMMITTED BY IMMIGRANTS.
Since the migration crises, the number of assaults against women have significantly risen.
Only from Lybia almost 1 million migrants want to come to Europe.
... AND THEN THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT BILLBOARDS....
Did you know? At the Olympic games the biggest risk threatening the Hungarian players is the foreigner players?
Did you know? An average Hungarian sees more UFO during his life than refugees.
FROM MACRO TO THE MEZO LEVEL

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LET’S GO TO A VILLAGE COMMUNITY IN HUNGARY
CONFLICTS IN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXTS and RJ
(NOT necessarily intercultural conflicts!)
2012-2016

international research project funded by the 7th Framework Programme of the EU

Action research sites:

Serbia – macro (multi-ethnic society)
Northern Ireland – macro (divided communities)
Austria – micro (social housing and immigrants)
Hungary – meso (Roma and non-Roma in a village) – by Foresee

Theoretical work: Belgium (University of Leuven), Norway (NOVA)

www.alternativeproject.eu
THEMES/CONFLICT CASES IN THE VILLAGE

1. RED CROSS CHARITY DONATION DISTRIBUTION
   ‘Why not those people get donation primarily who need it the most?’

2. LOCAL PIG-KILLING FESTIVAL
   ‘Why is the entrance fee so high that poor people cannot enter?’

3. CIVIL GUARD ORGANISATION
   ‘Why cannot Roma people join the local civil guard organisation?’

4. SOCCER TEAM
   ‘Why were Roma players asked to create a separate team and quit the old team?’

5. LOCAL ELECTIONS
   ‘How did the local campaign become so personal and painful for the local actors?’

6. THEFT IN THE SCHOOL
   ‘Why weren’t we informed as parents if our kids were charged for the theft?’
ABOUT THE EXISTING CONFLICT RESOLUTION TECHNIQUES....
What burning leaves might cause..

“I [the neighbor] was so angry, I thought I would explode. I went there and shouted at him. “Your motherfucker, I have to wake up at six to find my flat full of smoke!” I came back and, logged in to Facebook and wrote a post “Smelly peasant, he is burning again”.

“He called me outside and told me that ‘I would like to tell you something that is quite unpleasant. Some of us decided not to play with you. I told him that ‘What does it mean “you”?’ He told me that ‘you’ meant Roma. I asked him, ‘what is wrong, why?’ I was shocked. I asked him what about our overall purposes, community building…that we integrate the village and do not let the extremism. ‘Are you excluding us?’ We have been playing soccer for months! What is wrong? Somebody was clobbered or kicked?” ‘No, nothing happened, but this is the decision of the guys.”
THE GENERAL APPROACH: SILENCE
“I do not think you should deal with this conflict. If we focus on it, it will be worse.”

“They [the Roma] have a different culture and we have to accept it. We shouldn’t argue with them.”

“Officially, there is no communication. They are venting silently within their circles and everybody feels their own justice. However, it never comes up to the surface.”

“All the time, native villagers also talked about these oppositions. However, they were not loud as they were sisters-in-law, sons-in-law…They knew it, but they did not talk about it...”
We also know that if we are constantly sweeping our frustrations under the rug without talking it through, sooner or later we will fall over that pile.

Or…

We’re going to need a bigger rug!
NEW LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN THE VILLAGE – WE BECAME THE ‘ENEMY’....
20 MIN VIDEO
EACH ISSUE/STORY CAN BE SEEN FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES
AND OUR DIFFERENT MINDSETS/BELIEFS/EXPERIENCES/TOLD AND UNTOLD STORIES
SHAPE OUR PICTURE
IF YOU DON’T TELL YOUR WHOLE STORY, YOU CAN CONNECT THE VERY SAME DOTS AND COME UP WITH A DIFFERENT PICTURE
Everyone has its own truth!
But one perspective will never show the whole (cheese)

“Square!” “Triangle!” “Rectangle!” ….
THE GENERAL APPROACH: SILENCE
TOWARDS HEALING, 
TALKING IS THE ONLY WAY. 
SO OPEN THOSE ZIPS! 
BUT HOW?
THE ‘DIALOGUE-PYRAMID’

LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

RECONCILIATION

DIALOGUE

LISTENING THE OTHER

SELF-REFLECTION

STORY-TELLING

AVOIDANCE / SILENCE

LISTENING!

ACKNOWLEDGING

NON-JUDGEMENTALLY

NON-INTERRUPTING

FINDING THE BEAUTY WITHIN HIS STORY!
THE ‘GROSS’ VS ‘NETT’ COMMUNICATION

- Complaining
- Emotions and needs regarding the future
- Blaming, defence, or attack
- Personal degradation

Diagram showing the relationship between complaining and other communication styles.
“UBI PUS, IBI EVACUA….”

“If there is pus, let it out!”

If there is sorrow, there is no other way but providing space for open and honest dialogue!

Otherwise some ‘strategic’ politicians can let people’s hatred out of the bottle and further enlarge it for political purposes...

(e.g. Brexit in the UK, anti-refugee hate campaign in Hungary, ... do you know any other example?)
FORESEE PROJECTS: Applying restorative practices in Hungary

Culture of conflict management
(communities, family, school, etc)

Crime prevention

Restorative diversion
Prosecution phase

Sanctioning + Reparation
Court phase

Incapacitation
Prison

Crime prevention

ALTERNATIVE PROJECT:
Restorative practices in COMMUNITY conflicts
- Restorative practices in schools (CLIMATE+ project)
- Restorative practices in organisations
- FGC in family and child protection issues

PEACEMAKING CIRCLE PROJECT

MEREPS PROJECT

PEACEMAKING CIRCLE PROJECT

Adapted from Braithwaite (2002) and Walgrave (2008)
COMMON POINTS OF OUR CASES SHOW THAT EVEN IN A CHALLENGING CONTEXT...

- behind any harm there is an unmet **NEED**.
- behind any need there is a **HUMAN** being.
- **STORYTELLING** and **LISTENING** are the keys to the ‘human’.
- there is no other way towards healing, reconciling, working and living together than through talking and **DIALOGUE**.
...PLUS ONE CONCLUSION:

DID YOU KNOW?

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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