



Nansen Fredssenter

Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue

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Inter-ethnic dialogue between Serbs and Albanians in Serbia / Kosovo 1996—2008

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In this chapter, I will tell a story. It begins with how the Nansen Dialogue, which developed from 1995 to 1997 with participants from ex-Yugoslavia in Lillehammer, Norway, was introduced in Priština in the fall of 1997. I will show how this method stimulated Serbian-Albanian dialogue up until March 1999 and how it was reintroduced already in 2000, in spite of the painful memories on both sides from the war and its aftermath. These dialogue meetings focused mainly on understanding what happened and why.

As the conflict spread into South Serbia (2000) and northwest Macedonia (2001), so did the dialogue seminars. Through showing patience and commitment, as well as sustainability, Nansen Dialogue built its reputation and slowly became able to recruit more strategically selected participants on a high municipal level. These individuals were chosen because of their connection to local institutions and because they therefore had an arena where they could implement change (a school, a newspaper, the local municipality etc.).

This chapter will describe some of the particularities of the Nansen Dialogue that made both sides feel more secure to share their stories, and how this increased the feeling of equality and respect among the participants. Nansen Dialogue, as it developed, became characterized by a solid academic analysis of the conflict itself, an effort to deconstruct the meaning of identities and the process to build a stronger relationship among the participants.

We cannot claim to have had much impact on the participants' political beliefs and aspirations. But many of them learned that political difference could co-exist in a democracy, and it is therefore a valuable lesson learned that if Serbia wants to develop into a truly multi-ethnic state, dialogue can be a tool that can increase the understanding and the respect between the different ethnic groups, such an ethnic

tolerance is a precondition for **a democratic development** in a state still marked by ethnic politics.

This is not a success story, but we moved beyond the pure dialogue work and answered, what next? What next became small successes in the field of repatriation to mixed villages, integrated education and ethnic cooperation in divided municipalities. When internationals claim that Serbs and Albanians don't want to talk to each other, our records show that they are simply wrong. I have spent the best part of my last 13 years listening to them doing exactly that. It is my firm conviction that more could have been accomplished over these years had dialogue and reconciliation had a higher priority in the peace building effort in the region, in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as in Serbia and Kosovo.

Historical background

In 1994, Lillehammer hosted the Winter Olympic Games. That brought the municipality of Lillehammer symbolically closer to Sarajevo, the host of the Winter Olympic Games in 1984. During the games in Lillehammer, an effort was made to take the spirit of international solidarity seriously. This resulted in Lillehammer Olympic Aid, a joint effort that raised 71 million Norwegian kroner. Most of this money was allocated to projects in Sarajevo, bringing the brutality of the war even closer to home.

The director of the Nansen Academy in 1994, Inge Eidsvåg, tells it this way¹:

In July 1994 I visited Sarajevo to see the rehabilitation of the paraplegic Center at the Koševo Hospital, financed by Lillehammer Olympic Aid. This was before the Dayton agreement, and Sarajevo was under siege. After five days I left the city with strong impressions.

On my return to Norway I immediately contacted Norwegian Red Cross and Norwegian Church Aid to explore whether they were interested in cooperating on a dialogue project for people from former Yugoslavia. The reply was very positive. A few weeks later we had worked out a tentative programme and applied for financial support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Later on the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo was invited into the steering committee. In September 1995 we welcomed the first group of 14 students from former Yugoslavia. In one year we had transformed idea into reality.

We simply asked “how can we contribute?” and as an academy, the answer was to create an educational project where we invited potential leaders from the Western Balkans to sit and talk about what happened, what went wrong and how can the relationships be repaired sufficiently to create a better future. In 1995, the project “Democracy, Human Rights and Peaceful Conflict Resolution” started. The intention was to create an educational program motivating and strengthening the participants to work for peace and reconciliation upon returning home. In the first group, the participants were mainly recruited from Bosnia-Herzegovina. But we realized early on how things were intertwined with each other, and the seminar in the spring of 1996 had participants from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, and Macedonia.

We did not have a reconciliation handbook: through trial and error we discovered what worked and what did not work. During the first year it was a high reliance on external lecturers coming in to “tell” what was wrong in the Balkans, before it became obvious to us that most of the participants had this knowledge themselves. The main strength of the project became not what they could “learn” from Norway, but the fact that (1) the Nansen Academy provided a space where they

could come together and compare notes – simply do dialogue; (2) They could analyse what happened and why in a more neutral space, remote from the conflict area and pressure from family and colleagues; (3) They could interact with participants having other ethnic identities in multiple ways, transforming their perception of the Other to become much more than just the representative of another ethnic group; and (4) Through staying together for three months relationships and friendships developed across ethnic divide. These relationships were later utilized in building up the Nansen Dialogue Network that established dialogue centres in 10 different cities in ex-Yugoslavia (Osijek, Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar, Podgorica, Pristina, Mitrovica, Belgrade, Bujanovac and Skopje.

The need for dialogue¹

One consequence of the brutal breakdown of Yugoslavia was an equivalent communication breakdown. Many people growing up in Yugoslavia before 1990 seem to have memories of travels, festivals, conferences, summer holidays and other gatherings in ex-Yugoslavia. In the 1990s, as the violent conflicts escalated, checkpoints and new borders prevented people, in the worst cases, from even travelling across their own town. This brutal irony for people with Yugoslav passports, granting access both to the East and to the West, was a direct consequence of the violent break up of Yugoslavia.

The participants started to come from Zagreb, Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar, Podgorica, Priština, Belgrade, and Skopje. Through sitting together in Lillehammer it was rather easy to discover how nationalistic propaganda operated in all previous republics.² Since the initial seminar lasted for three months, the participants had plenty of time to compare notes. They lived together in a very compact environment

with educational facilities, the dining hall and the dormitory within a few square meters. The Academy was located in a rather small and boring town with most of the local people staying in their homes.³ There was really nowhere to hide. Through listening to each other, it became obvious how their own nationalistic media had given a one-sided propaganda, and particularly not been informing them of (all) the atrocities committed by their own people against the Others.

Although there were heated debates (yes, debates!) among the participants, it was fairly easy over time to recognize that in order to get the full picture one had to listen to other stories and other explanations. A Belgrade person could not exclude the Zagreb story, not to mention the Sarajevo story. Neither could a Zagreb person exclude the Belgrade story. This does not mean that every republic contributed equally to the breakup of Yugoslavia, it just means that a complete analysis must include different geographical perspectives and historical narratives. At one point, we started to name the seminars in Lillehammer “Expanding Horizons”.

I have over the years seldom experienced that the participants changed their fundamental political beliefs or their political goals, but I have often seen that they change their perception of “the other”. Their understanding of the world was simply becoming more inclusive. As Dragoslav Djurasković, Kosovo expressed it in an

Very soon.. I saw that the meaning of this project was completely different ...to produce a way of thinking which includes understanding the other side. A way of thinking that is not usual here in this area...and that's the reason why I think that it was a very good idea in the very beginning to make this project in Norway in Lillehammer, far away from the area of conflict. The first step if you want to fight against the others is to dehumanize ... the other side. Such seminars establish the/a situation in which we see the other side as human beings.

interview on Redaksjon 21, NRK in October 1998:

In our invitation to the seminars in Norway we deliberately stressed that these seminars were not negotiations. Although not knowing it at the time, we developed a mode of communication different from debate and negotiations. When consulting the literature at a later time, we saw that our experience is far from unique – rather it fits with how others describe the same processes.⁴

Dialogue is a process of genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn. Each makes a serious effort to take the others' concerns into her or his own picture, even when disagreement persists. No participant gives up her or his identity, but each recognizes enough of the other's valid human claims that he or she will act

The need for analysis

The dialogue groups themselves were not open-ended, but often focused on the break up of Yugoslavia, and a very specific methodology was used to analyse the causes of the conflict: Dessler's methodology. This is well described by my colleague and partner in most of the dialogue groups between 1996 and 2001, Dan Smith, then director of PRIO, now Secretary General of International Alert.⁵ Smith told NRK, "I am not so focused on who is right and who is wrong, but more on how we got here and how we can get out of here."

Smith has described one of the main challenges in these situations to be the relationship between intellect and emotion, "while many of them had a sincere wish for dialogue, mutual understanding and an end to the violence and bloodshed, many also, not surprisingly, had deeply held views and feelings about right and wrong in the wars – on which side justice lay and who had perpetrated the worst crimes."⁶

Dessler's methodology, or typology as Smith calls it, provided a way of talking about the causes of the break up of Yugoslavia that both sorted the causes and created an analytical distance to the events. Smith used a modified version of Dessler – focusing on background causes, mobilization targets, triggers and catalysts.

Smith himself expressed some surprise that such a neat theoretical model actually could work in a “conflict-group”, but that is his main point – it worked. It functioned as a smoke screen between the participants and the narratives they were sharing and events they were discussing. It simply opened the door to talk about **what happened and why, without stirring up the strongest emotions.** The participants experienced first hand that it is possible to talk about the hard stuff.

Smith notes that toward the end of this process the groups had made a fairly sophisticated overview of the different causes – and this overview had a striking similarity from group to group. As if laying the puzzle called “The Break Up of Yugoslavia”.

Building Relationships

The participants could not sit in the classroom all day long. The program developed included an understanding of social, physical and cultural needs. The face-to-face meeting became important also in various social activities. It is important to deal with difficult issues in dialogue. But it can be equally important to know when to take a break and go bowling or swimming. This can help release tension but it also provides new arenas where people get to know each other in new ways. We deliberately used the opportunities Lillehammer provided for skiing, dancing, cultural performances, museum visits or just going out for a beer. Slowly

the others grew out of being the representatives of other ethnic groups, and showed the human range of multiple identities. Some even fell in love across the ethnic divide.

In a fairly natural way, people would form friendships according to interests in music, sports, culture, outdoors, drinking, and bashing the Norwegian ways. These relationships were brought with them back home, and became a backbone in the soon to be Nansen Dialogue Network. This experience of the importance of building relationships has influenced the work of the Nansen Dialogue over the last ten years in such a dramatic way that we can say we do not work from the political paradigm of power, but from the paradigm of building relationships: Politics is not about getting the access to power, but about securing the equal distribution of resources and opportunities among people who live in relationships marked by mutual respect for each other.

Reflection on Ethnic Identities

Lillehammer provides plenty of detours into the question of identity. Maihaugen (national museum) and the opening ceremony to the Lillehammer Olympic Games provide plenty of raw material to discuss “Is there a Norwegian identity?” and ethnic identity in general. The distance from home made it easier to understand Fredrik Barth’s definition, “ethnicity is the art of producing differences”⁷ and new constellations/confrontations developed between the Balkan groups and the “Norwegians”. Although many could appreciate aspects of Norwegian life, the visit to Norway also made them appreciate aspects of their own common culture (hospitality, food, family, noise, etc.)

The experience of the Other as more than just an ethnic other, was made possible through these varied experiences. By seeing oneself in many mirrors, not only the ethnic, also the understanding of oneself expanded. This does not mean that the ethnic is done away with. People still have an ethnic or national identity, but it becomes much less dominant in one's understanding of the identity of both self and other.

Norway is not seen as an example to follow when it comes to respect for other ethnicities, – but they find the Norwegian debates stimulating (1) Which flag to use on the 17th of May (Is it a national holiday or a celebration of the constitution? (2) Can a multiethnic state have a state church? (3) Why do Norwegian schools segregate (in Oslo you find some schools with a remarkably high percentage of non-ethnic Norwegians and others with too high a percentage of ethnic Norwegians? (4) What does it take to become a Norwegian? And (5) What belongs to the state and what belongs to the nation?

Living in a closed community with strong ethnic conflicts, the ethnic identity might seem fixed. But looking at it from afar, the participants in the Nansen Dialogue see how their own identities are going through changes. A man in Sarajevo might have presented himself as a Yugoslav in 1980, then as a Muslim. Ten years later he is first a Muslim and then a Bosnian, Yugoslavia is fading away. Five years later he might be a Bosniak.

In 1981, 1,219,045 declared themselves as Yugoslavs , as opposed to 273,077 ten years earlier.⁸ Today they don't have a state. A Serb in Kosovo has over the last 18 years lived in 4 or 5 different countries (depending on how you look at it) without having changed address and his identity has shifted accordingly from more Yugoslav to a much stronger Kosovo-Serb identity. In general, Croats have

become more Catholic and the Serbs more orthodox over the last 20 years. And what about all the people from mixed families?⁹ This only to show that ethnic identities are not fixed, not even in ex-Yugoslavia. A Nansen coordinator in Sarajevo has written elegantly about this issue and says simply that when foreigners ask him what he is, he refuses to answer the question since it obviously only serves their purpose of putting him in a box where he does not belong.¹⁰

Cleven accepts that “experiences of the narrative processes and the face to face nature of the dialogue and associated social activities establish ties between people on a new basis,” but then asks “do these ties last? How well do they hold up when people return to their home communities? If no one in your home community can relate to your experiences, or they are even hostile to your experience, then one may quickly fall back to previous relationships and patterns of behavior.”¹¹ This became the challenge. How to make the dialogue experience available to more people? How to build up a sustainable Nansen Dialogue Network.

The Herzeg Novi seminars 1997-99

It became obvious that these dialogue sessions in Lillehammer were rather exclusive. One might expand one’s horizons, but it was very difficult to transfer this into action back home. The lack of any kind of network support, and the lack of any arena of action made several of the Serbian and Albanian participants from Priština gather back home as a Lillehammer-group in Kosovo. They initiated the first Herzeg Novi seminar in November 1997.¹² Now it was not three months, it was a three-day seminar. What could one accomplish in such short time? The Lillehammer participants put their own trustworthiness on the line when recruiting their friends and colleagues. The participants travelled 10 hours by bus from Priština to Herzeg Novi.

Luckily this first seminar succeeded in such a way that it became easier to recruit people to the next seminars. Seven dialogue buses drove out of Priština the next 14 months.

These dialogue seminars took place as the situation on the ground got worse. Many date the start of the war back to November 1997 as the KLA started to control territory in the Drenica valley. The attacks on Prekaz village were early March 1998, culminating in the killing of 58 people on 5 March. During the summer of 1998, there were hard attacks from the Serb army and police on what they defined as KLA villages. We saw the increased number of displaced Albanians (around 250,000) and the complete destruction of hundreds of Albanian villages, particularly along the buffer zone along the Albanian border. There was a constant, but still slightly unreal, threat of bombing. Although there was dramatic destruction of property, there was no massive killing at this time.¹³ Several of the participants expressed fear and had direct contact with war-like conditions, although Priština itself was not a war zone at this time.

In retrospect, it is fair to say that both Dan Smith and I had used the Lillehammer seminars as a training ground for our own facilitation. This had given us a solid local knowledge and a certain trust that it would work. Smith had seen this struggle between intellect and emotions in every seminar since 1995. As “these thoughts and emotions were intensified for many of the participants...by things they had seen, by what had happened to friends or family, by the experience of being forced to leave their homes...how could they be expected to sustain a dialogue with others on different sides of the conflict, with different views, who had also lived through the nightmares?”¹⁴

Based on the Lillehammer experience a certain method was developing: dialogue (sharing how the conflict affected their lives), analysis of the situation (applying Dessler's methodology to the Kosovo crisis), relationship-building (dinner, dancing, boat trips, music) and discussions of ethnic identity informed and made up the content of these shorter seminars. The organizers and the facilitators believed it would work, and it did. Although during the first seminar both groups believed they had been fooled into a propaganda trap.

We would never have been able to start these seminars in Kosovo without the small Lillehammer group that had gone through certain processes themselves, which had sensitized them toward inter-ethnic thinking. They realized the need for improved communication. They put their own integrity on the line when recruiting the participants to the first seminar. By doing this they found a way to sustain their own Lillehammer experience in the midst of living in a country approaching a brutal war.

At this point, it was very unlikely that local Serbs and local Albanians would have initiated such seminars. They lived in a divided world, where even communication with each other was a suspicious activity. The parallel systems had developed over time in Kosovo, and created a deep divide, not only in institutional and social life, but also in their perceptions of reality. Given this starting point, the difficulties with even recruiting participants must be appreciated. Why should anyone spend a whole weekend with the "Other" that has destroyed one's possibilities to live a good life? Well, a good answer is "To make the Other aware of exactly that."

In this period (1997—1999), it was obviously the Serbs who felt strongest, although they felt under extreme pressure both from the Albanian and from the international community. Nevertheless, it was easier to recruit Serbs to the seminars. One might also argue that they had the most to gain if the problems could be solved

through dialogue. On the other hand, it was obvious that the participating Serbs heard stories they had never heard before; so the Albanians had an obvious gain from at least being listened to. At this time, it was Albanians who would cancel out in the last moment.

The last Herzeg Novi seminar before the war was organized in the middle of March 1999. This seminar was filmed and shown on Brennpunkt, NRK on 20 April 1999.¹⁵ In the beginning of March 1999, a few hundred people had participated in Nansen activities in Pristina. We were rather optimistic. Most of the participants claimed that this had been the first time ever that they had sat down with the other side for three days to discuss the situation. Many added that they had never even sat down for three hours for *any* purpose. An illustration of the optimism was the renting of a dialogue space where we paid 36 000 DM on 1 March 1999, one year advance. The office closed three weeks later and that one was never reopened.

Restarting the seminars after the 1999-war.

It was hard to restart the dialogue after the war in 1999, and it took about a year before the people who organized the seminars in 1997—99 actually met in Ohrid, Macedonia, in May 2000. The first gathering of Serbs and Albanians in which I participated was on the roof of the OSCE building in Mitrovica South in October that year. But sooner than expected we, could restart the “traditional” dialogue seminars with participants from Mitrovica. The focus had shifted from Priština to Mitrovica, since Priština to a large extent had experienced reversed ethnic cleansing (during 1999—2000).

A series of Mitrovica seminars were organized near Lake Ohrid in Macedonia, in the mountains in Bulgaria, and along the Adriatic coast in Montenegro. Altogether

around 200 participated. These seminars were less focused on the break-up of Yugoslavia and more focused on the Serbian/Albanian conflict. They often followed the pattern of sharing how the war had affected their personal lives. Several of the participants had tragic stories to tell about lost family members, burned down houses, destroyed villages, lost opportunities. The need to talk was obvious, at times one could notice how two set of tables (often ten on each side) moved closer toward each other during the day, as a sign of the engagement of the speakers. In one seminar for journalists, two of the participants recognized that they had been in the same battle in April 1999, trying to kill each other. Over coffee three years later they were glad they had not done so.

In the beginning, the participants would take separate buses out of Kosovo, but join in the same bus across the border. The fear of not being a good Serb or not being a good Albanian was very strong. This also put pressure on the organizers.¹⁶ One method was particularly developed during the Mitrovica seminars. The two parties were invited to ask each other questions on the condition that they spent plenty of time preparing the questions as well as preparing the answers. These questions would often be very specific – how do you feel about what happened on a specific day? Do you feel guilty? Do you feel any responsibility? There was a stronger need on both sides to hear which actions the others acknowledged happened, and took responsibility and accepted the guilt for.

Mitrovica was not a completely divided city before the war in 1999; nor did it divide as a direct consequence of the war. It was a series of clashes and incidents that followed throughout 1999 and into 2000 that finally divided the city. Although the citizens had spent only a few years apart, the curiosity about everyday life on the other side was high. How much is the coffee? How many hours of electricity do you

have? How much water? Internet-access? – I got the feeling that both sides felt the other had gotten the better deal. Much of this was corrected in direct conversations and there was also a sense of more balance in the room, compared to the pre-bombing seminars, where the Albanians dominated the verbal attacks.

While using the method of asking each other questions, a Serb leader from Mitrovica North asked “Why did you not help us last winter when the electricity was cut off in our villages?” This was a rhetorical question asking for the admission of “we didn’t help you because we wanted you to move”. Soft ethnic cleansing. The surprising answer was that electricity was cut off in Albanian villages too. The Serbs had been convinced that the cut-off had been ethnically motivated. In further conversation with each other they discover that an Irish company cut off electricity to everyone who did not pay for the services.

One could argue that now it was the Albanians who would gain the most from showing inter-ethnic tolerance and from participating in these seminars, but also Serbs would gain through informing Albanians under which conditions Serbs in enclaves were living. But without doubt the Albanian side was easier to mobilize for participation, and if someone cancelled in the last minute, it would now be a Serb

In the years 1996—99, I seldom heard any references to the historic period before World War Two. After the war in 1999, I seldom heard references to the period before 1999,. This to modify the general opinion that Balkan people are just too full of history. The focus on the part of the Albanians was on the spring of 1999 and then history ended, and often for the Serbs, it sounded to me as if they thought history started on 10 June 1999.¹⁷

Pre-March 99, Albanians were attacking, and Serbs trying to justify the existing system. Post-99, the Serbs were attacking and the Albanians were defending the changes. A question often asked by Albanians to Serbs was “Why do you not accept the new realities of Kosovo?” The Serbs claimed these realities were forced upon them, and compared their rejection of the current system with the Albanian rejection of the Serbian state pre-1999. A certain pendulum swing had taken place, although the Albanians would not accept the comparison. “Nothing will be worse than under Milošević.”

I felt that the need from the participants to express themselves had increased, and more than before it became obvious that no energizers, icebreakers or simulations were necessary. The conflict itself immediately opened all doors. Often people tell me that I must have a difficult job. I am not so sure. Participants from Kosovo have nothing to lose. Dialogue around a conflict at any given Norwegian work place might be more difficult, since most of the actors try to keep their face and positions, and feel they have too much to lose. The conflict in Kosovo was by now an open bloody wound. Dialogue is not so difficult as people think, when the parties agree that they have a conflict.

These Mitrovica seminars slowly gained more and more respect and would draw participants with defined local power. They culminated in January 2006 when 25 Serbian and Albanian leaders from Mitrovica were gathered in Lillehammer and I received a telephone from UNMIK: “Where is everybody?” The dialogue meeting had been planned for two weeks, with the first week focusing on building relations. As the first week came to an end, the sad news that Ibrahim Rugova had died reached us, and as some of the politicians had to go home for the funeral, the rest

found it improper to continue dialogue with the Serbs as their people were in mourning.

No operative goals were developed during these seminars, but there are Nansen alumni in Mitrovica who can be mobilized if the situation on the ground changes. The current situation is so locked that no official dialogue seminar can be organized without risks for some of the participants. To work in a political climate full of far more powerful events than dialogue seminars requires patience and generational thinking (change does not happen overnight, but maybe over a generation) becomes necessary. Probably the most important effect of Nansen Dialogue is that a symbol of integration, openness, tolerance, non-violent communication and a more inclusive way of thinking has been present and coexisted with nationalistic propaganda and the building of hatred on both sides in some of the most war torn areas of Europe since World War Two.

Parallel Stories

Many observers of ex-Yugoslavia have discovered, as Laura Silber and Allan Little describe it: "To work in former Yugoslavia is to enter a world of parallel truths. Where ever you go, you encounter the same resolute conviction that everything that had befallen the region is always someone else's fault, except one's own side....Each nation has embraced a separate orthodoxy in which it is uniquely the victim and never the perpetrator."¹⁸ Ramet says it even more simply, describing Serbs and Albanians "Two ethnic communities with distinct languages and religious traditions lay claims to the same historical territory with competing historical arguments as evidence."¹⁹

Julie Mertus' book *Kosovo: how myths and truths started a war* explores in depth how Serbs and Albanians have had different views about major events such as the Albanian demonstrations in 1981, the Martinović case (1986), the Paračin massacre and the alleged poisoning of school children. Helena Zdravković, in her paper "Historical Victimage of Kosovo Serbs and Albanians" examines how and why victimage, identity and nationalism "are produced through everyday discursive practices of Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo."²⁰

Based on the seminars described above the Albanian position could be summarized as follows:

Mertus describes well our starting point:

Serbs and Albanians structure their lives around Truths that are closely linked to their identity but that may have nothing (or everything) to do with factual truth or lies. In this context, the opposite of Truth is not necessarily a lie; it is a competing Truth linked to an alternative self-image. The problem, I realized, is that local political leaders were manipulating particularly malignant strains of national Truths, aided by inaccurate and distorted media reports and deteriorating economic and social conditions.

- The Albanians were oppressed in Yugoslavia particularly from 1945 to 1974 and from 1989 to 1999, when the police/state administration was dominated by Serbs;
- Albanians have wanted independence for Kosovo since 1991, and did not recognise the institutions of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;
- NATO's bombing was a necessary humanitarian intervention to prevent a well planned ethnic cleansing of Albanians;
- Revenge against Serbs must be understood on the backdrop of Albanian suffering during the war;

- The international community has not followed up properly – independence will make it possible to develop a more stable and economically viable state;
- Continued constitutional attachment to Serbia is not an option.

The Serbian position can be summarized as follows:

- Kosovo is an important part of Serbia and the centre of Serbian cultural and religious heritage;
- The Serbs are surrounded by the Albanian majority, and are the most vulnerable group in Kosovo (particularly from 1974 to 1989 and from 1999 to 2008);
- NATO's bombing in 1999 was founded on Western geo-strategic interests;
- NATO simultaneously supported an Albanian war of independence and Albanian nationalism;
- Assaults against Serbs after NATO took over proves that the international community has no interest in protecting Serb civilians, and that Albanians want an ethnically cleansed Kosovo;
- Serbs will not recognise Kosovo's political institutions, but insist on belonging to Serbia;
- An independent, Albanian dominated Kosovo is not an option.

Dialogue and Truth

So are these positions of equal value, deserving equal respect or can one through academic discourse move closer to a common joint understanding? This is an area often misunderstood by the critics of dialogue: That dialogue workers don't

care about the real truth as long as they can stimulate the conversation between the parties in conflict. An academic discourse requires a willingness on both sides to participate. Such willingness does not exist in Kosovo. Dialogue is not an alternative to academic discourse, but it is a place to start when the communication has broken down. Academic discourse is based on a mutual respect for each other's arguments – a precondition which doesn't exist in Kosovo at this time.

When you invite people to a dialogue seminar, you are not inviting them to the International Court in The Hague. Some of the participants might just come out of a period of boycotting all communication with members of the other nation.²¹ Typically, the participants want the dialogue worker to be a judge, to confirm their own perceptions of reality. To do so would be a beginner's fault on the part of the dialogue facilitator if the goal is to stimulate the dialogue. This deserves some careful reflections.

A dialogue seminar is very much about making one's own life visible and understood by the others, and vice versa. The Serb and Albanian historical narratives are so exclusive, that it often comes as a surprise to Serbs that Albanians feel they have an equally strong claim to Kosovo as the Serbs have themselves. And there are Albanians who perceive Serbs as occupiers who deserve to be sent back to Serbia. When this is the starting point "allowing competing Truths to float through the air in the same space, unjudged and unquestioned, can be a revolutionary act."²²

To misinterpret this as meaning there is no real truth ignores the fact that it takes some talk to start talking. Dialogue is not only about the physical act of talking and listening, it is about minds opening up. It takes time for the minds to warm up, to become receptive toward other "competing truths". To invite opposing parties into a dialogue room is different from inviting them to a negotiation table. The dialogue

facilitator must be able to make both sides feel safe enough to start telling their stories. If the participants starts to feel that the facilitator clearly support certain Truths, then that will interfere with the dialogue process itself and cause the one side to withdraw.

Certain dialogue facilitators believe that the participants should accept certain Truths before the dialogue process starts. An example is School for Peace in Israel, which wants the Israeli participants to accept that Palestine is an occupied territory. “But what about those who do not believe that?” I asked. “They would not come anyway” was the answer. Nansen Dialogue wants to include those who “would not come anyway”. To do dialogue only between the already converted is almost a futile exercise.

Sharing Truths in a dialogue space might not be that different from discussing the same issues, but *in a negotiation* people position themselves and become more defensive – and *it is harder to see any movement in the positions.*²³ When a mind is opening up, people may discover that there is not only one Truth, our Truth which is denied by the Other. The Other actually believes in another Truth. Like the Serb that expressed “You **really** believe we poisoned you, now I understand why you hate us.”

I have experienced that such a process can lead to a direct interest in finding the “real” truth, and the joint, committed search for the real truth can often be revealing for one or both of the sides, like the Serb and Albanian who wanted to find out what had really happened in Raçak. The challenge for a dialogue facilitator is to create a space where minds start to unfold, that means they start to open up – and some listen for the first time to alternative explanations to those communicated to them by their own families, teachers, journalists and politicians.

An illustrative example that not even “forensic” truth (i.e., the number of dead) is easily given is the research done by Mirsad Tocaka in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was for a long time assumed that 200,000 people were killed during the war between 1992—95. It was repeated so often that it became a factoid, but nobody really knew who had figured this out– it was just assumed. The research done, culminated in a report reducing the number to around 100,000.²⁴

This is, based on my experience, the most important argument for dialogue. It is possible to develop an exclusive narrative if there is no interaction with the other. We tend to believe that people know, that people are aware of alternative explanatory frameworks, they just deny their validity – my experience is the opposite. The Serbian narrative excludes the Albanian, the Albanian narrative excludes the Serbian. Only through meetings, exposure to the Other, are these limited frameworks challenged. Neither side can assume that the parents, teachers, journalists, politicians and religious leaders give proper information about “the Other”; rather the opposite is the case –negative stereotypes and enemy images are perpetrated and perpetuated.

The bridge-watchers²⁵ are not only watching to see if the enemy is attacking, they are also watching who of their own people are crossing the bridge to the other side – crossing the bridge means “crossing over” and becoming exposed to alternative explanations, alternative frameworks for interpreting events – and more importantly; crossing the bridge means humanizing the “other” through direct interaction.

Conflicts need incidents with contradictory explanations; like those discussed by Julie Mertus.²⁶ In July 2001 two Albanians were brutally killed in Tetovo by the Macedonian police. The Macedonian story was that two potential terrorists were

killed before they did damage. The Albanian version held that two innocent people, father and son, were killed by the aggressive Macedonian police. The same tragic incident served to strengthen the enemy image on both sides. It is hard to keep a conflict alive. A conflict needs incidents like these to develop. One might speculate if the lack of inter-ethnic commissions is a deliberate effort to keep competing narratives alive.

Dialogue – more than words?

Dialogue is not a tool to solve problems like constitutional status, repatriation, economic development, and European integration. Dialogue is a tool to increase the understanding between the parties in a conflict. My argument is that dialogue and reconciliation must not become a neglected element of peace-building. One must recognize that dialogue and reconciliation are a necessary part of this process. Dialogue is not an alternative to mediations or negotiations but both could benefit from a stronger dialogue component.

The first challenge for Nansen Dialogue was to take the dialogue from the more exclusive long-term setting in Lillehammer, to a more intense short-term setting closer to home (Herzeg Novi). Nansen Dialogue stressed in this period the meaning of an open dialogue about the causes to what happened and the consequences it had for people living through the conflicts and wars. This is a necessary step in reconciliation, and must be recognized as such. Still donors and other critics wanted to see more concrete results. It is nice when people come together to dialogue, but then – what? Also the coordinators in the Nansen Centers started to become more ambitious, as their position in their respective local communities was strengthened. Is it possible to mobilize dialogue participants to take part in social change at large?

The challenge became to recruit participants that had an arena of action upon return home; participants that belonged to institutions in society that could implement change. A much stronger criterion was then developed for the recruitment of participants (that was hardly possible in the beginning when we looked like a horse with no name) – but as we built our experience we also built our reputation, particularly as a network focusing on inter-ethnic dialogue in deeply divided communities. Nansen started to symbolize dialogue, integration, openness, tolerance in communities like Vukovar, Prijedor, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Sarajevo, Mostar, Stolac, Mitrovica, Kosovo Polje, Obiliq, Sandžak, South-Serbia, and Jegunovce, for those involved in our activities. Our patience, stamina and the fact that we were setting up local registered centres staffed by locals, and not perceived as foreigners, gave us more credibility. So when we started to invite strategically important people in the local community: they accepted the invitation. Like the mayor, chief of the municipal administration, president of the municipal assembly, director of the local high school, editor of the local newspaper et al.

The idea was to develop concrete integrative projects. By developing more of a dialogue culture we hoped that the community would become more receptive toward integrative legislation, integrative projects, and the creation of dialogue arenas. The most prominent of such dialogue arenas is the new Fridtjof Nansen bilingual school that just opened in Jegunovce, Macedonia. Through long-term dialogue work with village leaders, teachers, parents, students, and municipal leaders, four villages that were in violent confrontation in the summer of 2001 have turned confrontation to cooperation.²⁷ NDC Osijek hopes to initiate the start of a Serb-Croatian school in Vukovar in the fall of 2009. A similar long-term effort has taken place, including heavy lobbying toward both local and national politicians. In

Bosnia-Herzegovina there are 52 divided schools. NDC Sarajevo has been involved on a large scale to work for a more unified school system.

Dialogue in South-Serbia; the Preševo valley

During the years 1995 to 2001, Nansen Dialogue had built up a certain expertise dealing with interethnic dialogue in Kosovo and Macedonia. As the conflict intensified in Southern Serbia, the question raised itself, Can we do something? Can we apply our experience from Kosovo and Macedonia in a useful way in South Serbia? The problem was that the previous strategy of Nansen Dialogue was to work only in areas where previous participants in Lillehammer could prepare the ground, recruit new participants to dialogue seminars and in other ways pave the way for meaningful work. They were barefoot soldiers on the ground. In the case of South Serbia we had no connections of this kind, which explains why we were somewhat slow in responding to the escalating inter-ethnic conflict in that region.

A break came early in 2002 when representatives from NDC Serbia (Belgrade) were approached by OSCE and asked whether they could assist in training NGO workers in South Serbia. The first contacts were made and a strategy was developed. The challenge became to identify the individuals that exercised influence on the political and cultural life, particularly lawyers, journalists, politicians, medical doctors, teachers and other professionals that could make a difference.

It was obvious that the Preševo valley was marked by many of the same conditions known to us particularly from Kosovo, but also from Macedonia. A segregated society with little or no communication across the ethnic division lines, reflected in divided schools, fairly homogenous villages (Veliki Ternovac has 9,000 Albanians and hardly a single Serb), unmarked division lines creating Serbian and

Albanian cafes, restaurants, shops, information systems etc. Little or no confidence and trust between the ethnic groups.. This situation became intensified during the fighting in Kosovo, when historical and current arguments for joining Preševo with Kosovo surfaced. Serbs started leaving Albanian dominated areas, at the same time as they could neither understand nor respect Albanian claims to Serbian territory. The Albanians were clearly treated like second-class citizens and gathered in the areas bordering to Kosovo. Their civil status as citizens of Serbia had worsened after the war. They felt little or now hope of gaining powerful positions or any meaningful influence within the Serbian state.

There were violent outbreaks in 2000, but Nebojša Čović's plan²⁸ put a temporary stop and introduced more democratic ways of dealing with the problem, although the plan clearly was viewed as the result of pressure from Belgrade. The Serbs felt they gave up too much power to Albanians, and Albanians didn't feel they gained the position they deserved. Serbs felt they were becoming a minority in the very country they were a majority (how is that possible?) and the Albanians felt that while getting local power, it was only a symbolic token in the national sense. This looked like a situation where Nansen Dialogue could make a difference.

Nansen coordinators from NDC Serbia used their contacts in OSCE and the NGOs to identify the important people, through travelling to the region, spending time, individual talks, many cups of coffee, they slowly succeeded in convincing important actors on both sides, that time was long overdue for gathering both Serbs and Albanians for political dialogue. The first seminar was planned in Vrjnska Banja in March 2002. The same process as in Kosovo and Macedonia was observed, while the participants showed quite some reluctance and defensiveness in the beginning, the experience of the dialogue space and the opportunities it gave to discuss

meaningful political issues in a safe and supportive setting changed their attitude toward the dialogue itself.

The dialogue facilitators gained authority through their long experience in Kosovo. The foreign presence gave the process a sense of importance and seriousness, as well as giving the participants the feeling that somebody out there cared about their situation and wanted to assist and stimulate the process of dialogue between the conflicting groups. The hardest job in these initial seminars is always to identify and to recruit the right participants. The recruitment process is tough, and direct contact must be kept with the participants every day to counter potential cancellation arguments.²⁹

Dan Smith would use his knowledge of conflicts in general and widen the horizons of participants, to help them see that their conflict was not so unique, but shared certain patterns with similar conflicts around the world. He would also focus on the warning signs, which could escalate a conflict to a violent level. I (Do I refer to myself with name or as I?) would focus more on the critique of ethnic thinking as the basis for political action, and would present alternative models for understanding identity. I would then stimulate the participants through dialogue to identify their common interest in joining forces to solve the problems. Underlying the Nansen Dialogue is the understanding that respect for democratic principles and human rights must inform political strategies rather than ethnic affiliations.

The techniques utilized by both Smith and myself were by now tested and refined on previous groups. It was important to provide plenty of time for the participants to identify the variety of problems they were facing, to discuss their causes and how they could be solved. Through this process of widening the horizons, looking at their situation from a larger European perspective, making them

see their own conflict as related to similar conflicts between majority and minority – the participants moved from individualizing the problems to see them as part of larger structural patterns. The conflict was not as much caused by ethnic hatred, as the lack of finding proper ways for both groups to influence the future development of their own society – a future they somehow will have to share whether they like it or not.

A serious effort was made by the Nansen Coordinators to stay in touch with these participants between the seminars. This stems from the strong emphasis within Nansen Dialogue on follow up. The follow-up work is often the most important part of any seminar. Even to travel to the region just to have some meetings in cafés, make oneself visible and available, is a good way to build confidence and trust. Some of the most meaningful visits were spent in this way.

The strength of our approach was that it moved the participants from looking at each other as the main problem, to seeing how the combination of underdeveloped infrastructure, high level of unemployment, local corruption, ethnic stereotypes and no clear minority politics created an extremely vulnerable situation, particularly when the neighbouring regions, Kosovo and Macedonia, were full of similar tensions and outbreaks of violence. This reduced the strong blaming of the other, and opened the space for human interaction.

The question of Serbia's minority politics became an important issue. NDC Serbia had experience with similar seminars in Vojvodina and Sandžak with their significant proportions of Hungarian and Bosnian populations. Subotica in Vojvodina had segregated schools, somewhat similar to Bujanovac. When experiences from these three regions are brought together it provides an opportunity for the participants to share experiences, both on what is problematic and what can be done

about it (creative solutions). It provides the opportunity to discuss what might be structural problems, partly because they are similar in all three regions and what might be more anchored in stereotypes, attitudes and behaviour of individuals, but supported by home education, school education and indirectly also by the media.

When the issue of structural problems is addressed, it is very hard, almost impossible to avoid dealing with the national politics of the state of Serbia. Why are their future plans of infrastructure support geographically biased? Why do they keep talking about Serbia as a multi-ethnic state when the level of segregation is so high? How will the new election laws affect minority voting, and what is the rationale behind these laws? And so on.

Interestingly enough, in 2003 both sides seemed to agree that to comply with European standards regarding minorities and to move toward a deeper integration with Europe seemed to be the only road that could provide the economic reconstruction necessary in the region. I deliberately joked about the possibility of a new political party across the ethnic divide, but Serbs and Albanians were united on this particular issue. Furthermore a certain unity was also obvious with respect to dissatisfaction with how Belgrade was dealing with the larger European issues, as well as how they were dealing with the more regional South Serbian issue. Seen from South Serbia Belgrade politics seemed unable to respond to the larger international challenges as well as the more local Serbian challenges. Belgrade politics seemed trapped in its own closed rhetoric and political power games.

Community-based Peace Building

Dialogue – more than words. A wish to see how Norway dealt with some of these problems was clearly expressed by many of the participants in the Bujanovac

seminars and a trip to Norway was carried out in the summer of 2003. Visits to schools, media institutions, meetings with local politicians from municipalities of different size, even an encounter with Jostein Gaarder, was part of the program. But the underlying goal was of course that the Serbian and Albanian delegations that were to visit Norway would do so together – with plenty of space to continue their own political dialogue in a safer, and for them, more free environment. The main purpose of the visit was not to learn from “Norwegian ways” but for this inter-ethnic group to explore Norway together. Bujanovac and Preševo are small municipalities. Most people know each other. Most people know who did what during the violent uprising in 2000. It is difficult to hide behind lies and evasions. This visit was a breakthrough in the local reconciliation work. To sit on the white benches outside the Nansen Academy at midnight provided space for conversations that would have been almost impossible in Bujanovac. A new level of honesty was reached.

Furthermore, local contacts were made in Lillehammer municipality, that triggered a return visit in October same year. The mayor of Lillehammer, the Deputy Mayor of Oppland county, the Deputy Chief of Administration and 4 other delegates developed during this visit personal relations with local Bujanovac politicians. Lillehammer municipality visited Bujanovac again one year later and interviewed around 50 people in the administration. Based on these interviews, Lillehammer came with 64 different recommendations to Bujanovac.

The assumption was that Serbia, in addition to spending too much material and human resources being preoccupied with conflicts and wars, had also lost 20 years of normal municipal development. A country like Norway, had under more peaceful circumstances, developed more efficient municipal administrations. Through discussions with the Bujanovac mayor and the local administration,

Lillehammer and Bujanovac agreed to focus on five areas: business development, further development of the local service center, training of the head of departments, strengthening of local politicians and the development of a city manager position. In addition, a separate school project was developed.

While Lillehammer obviously had a reconciliatory effect, they learned fast that “politics” could still get in the way of modernizing the local municipal administration. There are no quick fix solutions. The ethnic tension is still strong in south Serbia and northwest Macedonia, and a strategy for how to deal with that must be an integrated component in all municipal development strategies.

The Nansen approach stress the need to work on different levels in the community. Dialogue work among students and youth was followed by a unique theater performance. They identified 20 scenes from everyday life, among them corruption in schools and in the health care center, inefficiency in the post office and a remarkable scene when an Albanian boy is taking a Serb girlfriend home to his family. The actors were amateurs, but performing for a mixed audience of 700. This was the largest multiethnic event in Bujanovac, probably ever.³⁰

Another group of youth and students travelled to the Acropolis to experience the reconciliatory effect of their common cultural heritage just south of the border. These groups of youth are together challenging the divided structures of Bujanovac and are currently working for an integrated youth centre.

Kosovo

The community based peace building approach in Kosovo focused on two municipalities where Norwegian KFOR had been present: Kosovo Polje and Obiliq. Kosovo Polje is a municipality only five kilometres from Pristina. The villages

Lismir/Dubri Dub and Nakarade were abandoned by the Serb community as a consequence of the conflict, and their houses were burned down. The houses were rebuilt by UNDP, European Perspective and the Kosovar government financed the project. Kosovan Nansen Dialogue was responsible for the dialogue between the returning Serb community and the receiving Albanian community. During the first meeting in 2005 return was not discussed. It was their first meeting in 6 years and a lot of curiosity about everyday life issues. Is your cow still alive? What has happened to my field? How are your kids doing?

On the second meeting the issue of return was opened up – and the questions and worries discussed. One Albanian in Nakarade had lost 17 of his male family members. In the first seminar he did not participate, but he was convinced to participate in the second seminar. How can one deal with such a destiny and welcome the Serbs back to the village? Through focusing on the good memories from his youth with some from the Serbian group who planned to return he managed to overcome his initial fear and started to be a positive force in the group.

Dialogue is a slow process, so is reconciliation. But UNDP decided to go ahead with 34 houses, and on the 12th of December 2007 all houses in Dubri Dub had a family member returning. These are delicate issues. One criterion for coming on the list for houses was economic need. But those with economic need are also more likely to sell their houses. Unless more return is stimulated to the same area, the chances the Serbs will remain are small. But we hope to start return process to a third village in the same manner, in cooperation with Kosovo Polje municipality and UNDP. Dialogue is more than words.

Majority/Minority vs. ethnic conflict

Serbs in Kosovo are most often referring to history during the periods when they believed Albanians had the upper hand; 1940—45, 1974—89, and 1999—now. In these periods the Albanians have been the majority on the Kosovo territory. The Albanians on the other hand refer to history when Serbs have had the upper hand, the historical periods Kosovo has been defined as a part of Serbia; 1918-1940, 1945—74 and 1989—99. During these periods Serbs defined themselves as a majority in Serbia and the Albanians as a minority. This does not mean that the periods are compatible and the suffering is equal on both sides; it just lends support to my interpretation of this as a majority/minority conflict (although disguised in national symbols and so-called ethnic hatred).

A similar situation is perceived in South Serbia. When politics becomes ethnicized as in Kosovo and Serbia, one might respond that it is the same thing. Ethnic politicians fight for power over the territory. Ethnic politicians fight to define the borders of the territory in such a way that they get the (ethnic) majority and thereby the power. This illustrates the problem with liberal democracy. When politics become ethnicized – the ethnic majority perceives itself and is perceived by the minority as having all the power. In spite of democratic theory's attempt to include the protection of minorities, the only weapon the minority seems to have is the refusal to cooperate with the majority and not to recognize the institutions controlled by the latter.

Still, I will argue that it is possible to de-ethnicize politics through the professionalization of the political administration, delegation of power and through stimulating civic responsibility among the citizens and to develop bipartisan thinking

among the politicians. These are central elements in the Lillehammer-Bujanovac cooperation.

Conclusion

In Serbia, dialogue and reconciliation are a prerequisite for democratic development. The tolerance needed for opposing political views must be developed. Continuous ethnic conflict will stop any wish to develop a democratic multiethnic state. To what extent dialogue can foster democratic changes is an issue yet to be explored.³¹ But Serbia cannot continue to segregate at home, if it wants to integrate abroad. The Serbian government cannot continue to segregate and at the same time claim to be governing a multiethnic state.

A main challenge for the Serbs is to realize that the development of Serbia into a civil state does not have to threaten the Serbian nation. But it means the separation of state and nation, and the breakdown of ethnic politics. But this challenge is similar to the one the Danes, the Austrians, and the Norwegians are facing as well – how to develop a state where all the citizens have equal access to resources and opportunities independent of their ethnic affiliation.

The situation in Kosovo might call for stronger measures. The experience from the dialogue seminars in Kosovo is that the future status of Kosovo is not the only problem, the relationship between Serbs and Albanians is an equally serious problem in itself. As long as dialogue and reconciliation are not given a higher priority the exclusive narratives will continue on both sides and the transfer of the conflict to the next generation will most likely continue to go on, in the homes and in the schools, and certain politicians will continue to exploit this to gain power, status and profit. The good news is that to give dialogue and reconciliation a much higher

priority is a decision the main actors in international peace building have the power and the ability to make. It is a question of political priority and not lack of will on the ground.³²

The Serbs and the Albanians continue to live in separate realities in Kosovo. The Albanians now live in an independent Kosova according to the declaration made by the Kosovar parliament on 17 February 2008 and the Serbs live in a Kosovo that according to the UN resolution 1244 is a part of Serbia.³³

While working in a political climate of far more powerful events (the brutal war in 1999, the March riots in 2004 and the declaration of independence on the 17th of February 2008) than dialogue seminars, it is almost impossible to evaluate the effect of the Nansen Dialogue in the area. The relationship between Serbs and Albanians has hardly ever been worse. Probably the most important effect of Nansen Dialogue is that a symbol of integration, openness, tolerance, non-violent communication and a more inclusive way of thinking has been present these last 10 years and has coexisted with nationalistic propaganda and the building of hatred on both sides. Nansen is well known in Mitrovica and Kosovo Polje. In Kosovo Polje, one of our projects was to build a Fridtjof Nansen street so nice, that it would keep the multi-ethnic neighbourhood intact. As a Serbian leader told me after a bomb was thrown into Café Dolce Vita just on the north side of the Mitrovica Bridge in April 2006, he went out on the bridge and turned around to talk to the people who already had decided to cross in order to punish the guilty. He managed to convince them to go back and added to me “Before my participation in Nansen, I did not even think about that as an option.”

¹ We have mainly been an operative organization with too little time to write about what we do. Vemund Aarbrekke Facilitating Dialogue in Former Yugoslavia, (Oslo, PRIO report 2/2002) writes about the development of the Nansen Network, Steinar Bryn, "Fra en dialogarbeiders dagbok" in Heidrun Sørli Røhr (ed.), *Dialog mer enn ord* (Lillehammer, Norway, Nansenskolen, 2005), pp. 9—33 writes about basic elements of Nansen Dialogue.

² When Hanne Sofie Greve, during a seminar informed about the investigations she was leading about the Serb atrocities made in Prijedor, Bosnia-Herzegovina, in May 1992 – it was obvious from the reactions that the Serbian participants were not aware of this. Accounts from Croatian aggression in Prozor, Stolaz and Chaplina shocked others. A Serb told how his house was burned down by other Serbs in Vukovar. Paolo Rumiz gives an alternative interpretation – the conflict in Vukovar was as much between newcomers and oldtimers as between Serbs and Croats), etc See P. Rumiz, *Masken für ein Massaker. Der manipulierte Krieg: Spurensuche auf dem Balkan*, expanded German ed., trans. from Italian by Friederike Hausmann and Gesa Schröder (Munich: Verlag Antje Kunstmann, 2000).

³ I do believe that this compact environment played an important part. I am not sure it could have worked in the same way in a larger city with all its urban attractions.

⁴ Harold Saunders, *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), p. 22.

⁵ Dan Smith, "Trends and Causes of Armed Conflict" in *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation* (Berghof, 2004), at www.berghof-handbook.net.

⁶ Dan Smith, "Getting dialogue flowing; The surprising uses to which academic methodology may be put" in Heidrun Sørli Røhr, *Dialog – mer enn ord* (Nansenskolen, Lillehammer 2005), pp. 53—54.

⁷ Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1969).

⁸ Svein Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia, og etter*, 2nd ed. (Oslo: Sypress Forlag, 1994), p. 338.

⁹ A dialogue worker in the Nansen Dialogue Center, Sarajevo, has an Albanian father and a Muslim mother. She married a man with Croat and Serb parents. They have two children. What are they?

¹⁰ Nebosja Savija-Valha, "Ethnicities in Bosnia Herzegovina: Mission Impossible", in Røhr (ed.), *Dialog*, pp.115-132

¹¹ Erik Clevén "Between Faces and Stories" in Sørli, *Dialog*, pp. 35—49.

¹² Vemund Aarbrekke, *Facilitating Dialogue in Former Yugoslavia* (Oslo, PRIO report 2/2002), pp. 37—47.

¹³ One should be highly suspicious of any number coming out of Kosovo, including mine. This is still my educated guess. In the period from November 1997 until the bombing started in March 1999 some 2000+, (around 1/3 of these Serbs and around 2/3 of these Albanians). This is of course a tragic number, but relatively lower than the number of people killed in B&H during the summer of 1992.

¹⁴ Smith, "Getting dialogue flowing", pp. 53—54. .

¹⁵ There is an effort by NRK to do a follow up 10 years after. How did the seminar affect the participants and how do they look at it ten years later. For 2 of the Albanian participants it started ten years of inter-ethnic work in Pristina, and they have been heavily involved in return work.

¹⁶ Abdullah Ferizi, "The art of creating of creating a multiethnic dialogue-team in Kosovo" in Røhr (ed.), *Dialog*, pp. 111-114

¹⁷ Based on these seminars alone, the war in 1999 dramatically increased the gap between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo.

¹⁸ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: BBC Books and Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 390—91.

¹⁹ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The disintegration of Yugoslavia from the death of Tito to the fall of Milošević*, 4th ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002), p. 174.

²⁰ Helena Zdravković, "Historical Victimage of Kosovo Serbs and Albanians", in *Balkanica*, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 83-112.

²¹ I recently facilitated a seminar between Palestinians and Israelis where the Palestinians initially were very reluctant to participate. To dialogue was a way of recognizing the "Other" that was unacceptable. When dialogue was introduced as making one's own situation more visible and understandable for the other, they accepted.

²² Mertus, *Kosovo: how myths and truths*, p. 4

²³ One might ask if all the negotiations between Serbs and Albanians could have been more successful if they had added a dialogue component?

²⁴ "Research shows estimates of Bosnian war death toll were inflated", in *International Herald Tribune* (21 June 2007), at www.iht.com.

²⁵ The concept used literally for the political group that was controlling the bridge in Mitrovica, I am using it here in a broader sense, including those who keep track of those who cooperate with the other side.

²⁶ Mertus, *Kosovo: how myths and truths*. Reference is to the whole book.

²⁷ The four villages are Zilce, Ratae, Semshevo and Preljubiste. 12 Albanian and 12 Macedonian children started school on 1 September in what can be consider a historic breakthrough in Macedonia.

²⁸ INFORMATION on the security situation in the communes Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja, with the proposals of measures for the solution of the crisis [Covic Plan/The Coordination Body of the Federal and the Republican Governments] 6 February 2001

²⁹ The image among certain observers was that anybody will dialogue as long as Norway will pay the coffee, a comment even heard from Norwegian diplomats, is far from the truth. Recruitment is in my experience the most difficult part of a dialog seminar. You can always recruit the seminar mafia as long as Norway pay the coffee, but that was never our target group.

³⁰ The same kind of performance were organized by Nansen Dialogue Center, Banja Luka, with youth from Prijedor, Sanski Most and Koserac.

³¹ Rolf Borgos, is currently writing his master's thesis on a comparison of two municipalities in South Serbia, one with extensive dialogue experience, Bujanovac – the other Medeva, without the similar dialogue experience. University of Bergen. IDEA (2007) is similarly concerned about the relation between dialogue work and democratic development.

³² More than 400 Serbs and Albanians from Kosovo and South Serbia have been in dialogue seminars in Lillehammer, almost 1000 have been participating in dialogue related events in Kosovo and South Serbia. During the fall of 2008 I will facilitate dialogue for return to the mixed village of Gorni Dubrevo and "unofficial" dialogue seminars for Serbs and Albanians from Kosovo.

³³ Could this be explored further, with less focus on territory and more focus on people, maybe the Albanians can get their independence granted by the Security Council and the Serbs can remain citizens of Serbia? Of course it poses some practical problems, but so do present day reality.

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“ No future, however,
can be built on
despair, distrust,
hatred, and envy.”

“The difficult is
what takes a little
time; the
impossible is
what takes a little
longer.”

**Fridtjof
Nansen** (1861-1930)
Nobels Fredspris -
1922




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