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INTERDISZIPLINÄRES ZENTRUM FÜR KONFLIKTANALYSE, POLITISCHE ENTWICKLUNG
UND WELTGESELLSCHAFTSFORSCHUNG

TRANSFORM e.V.

**The Interdisciplinary Centre for Conflict Analysis,
Political Development and World Society Research**

ACTIVITY REPORT

January 2006 – December 2008



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ABOUT TRANSFORM

TRANSFORM is a non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation established in 2007. The organisation is committed to promoting political, economic and social development, inter-cultural tolerance and understanding, and the values of scientific rigour and ideological neutrality in general and in dealing with conflict, in particular. The organisation focuses its work on areas which suffer from protracted violent conflict, most notably the Middle East as well as on conflict prevention and transformation in Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. TRANSFORM is guided by the idea that reliable information on the origins, evolution and consequences of political, economic, and cultural conflicts must replace polemical dispute.

TRANSFORM carries out scientific research programmes in order to identify problems and to test the viability of proposed solutions. Alone or in collaboration with other like-minded partners the organisation also designs, implements and evaluates projects and programmes focussing on conflict engagement and constructive community and organisation development worldwide. Furthermore the organisation organises conferences, seminars, trainings and workshops aimed at enhancing dialogue, civic awareness and the exchange of knowledge. In its own structure and all of its work, TRANSFORM strives towards gender mainstreaming and involvement of young people.

The founders of the organisation include academics, young politicians, policy advisors, conflict and community development workers, and students, most of whom have been collaborating in different contexts since the early 2000s.

HISTORY OF TRANSFORM

Before TRANSFORM was legally established as an organisation in 2007 it was already active as a group of individuals who came together in 2003.

The organisation is the outcome of a unique and informal process of collaborative engaging which first began in February 2003 in Hofgeismar, Germany. A group of young European, Israeli and Palestinian activists met to discuss the European role in solving the Israeli Palestinian conflict. The participants articulated a positive expectation about the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations within the context of the Euro-Mediterranean region. An initial group of 10 individuals got themselves informally organised as the "Hofgeismar Core Group" and started approaching organisations for support. The Institute of Cultural Affairs (the organisation that developed the method used in the Hofgeismar conference) agreed in principle to support the project. Other project partners became involved, namely the Israeli Peace Coalition, the Young Israeli Forum for Cooperation (YIFC), the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), Filastiniyat and the Heinrich Boell Foundation. In addition, a number of individuals from Europe, Israel and Palestine took interest in the idea and joined as partners in their personal capacities.

TRANSFORM as an association was established in February 2007. It was officially registered and received its non-profit status in October 2007.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The idea behind TRANSFORM is to promote science and research in the areas of political, economic and social development, conflict transformation, intercultural tolerance, integration and mutual understanding and to promote social commitment and international understanding. TRANSFORM carries out scientific studies, research programs and projects such as projects, trainings and workshops and develops problem-solving models. Due to the combination of research and action TRANSFORM gets a deep understanding of the conflict situation and its background and therefore can develop and implement projects which are adequate to create a change.

TRANSFORM works currently on one major project which includes Methods Development/Integration and implementing a bottom-up approach to transforming the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over a period of 10 years (2003-2013).

CONFLICT WORK AND METHODS DEVELOPMENT/INTEGRATION

It has been customary to think of conflict as taking place between large and coherent groups of people united by ethnicity, common interests, shared history, etc. On a very general level, this is true. However, such a symmetric conceptualisation of conflict hides a more complex reality. Upon closer examination, it usually turns out that the parties to a conflict are usually divided along ideological, generational and distributional faultlines, among others. As long as conflict with an external enemy is rife, these internal conflicts remain relatively insignificant. But they jump to the foreground when protracted conflicts become ripe for a resolution. As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has shown us, disagreements within each society can spoil whatever agreements that are reached between coalitions formed across conflict lines.

It's been argued that when peace is not sustainable, it is due partly to the fact that the people were not brought on board, no broad-based constituency to consolidate the peace has been formed, and politics of polarisation continued slowly to mobilise the people for further rounds of conflict. A plethora of so-called people-to-people programmes were meant to address this problem. But most of these programmes have failed to achieve their aims. Reasons for failure are many, but they include a type of failure which is methodological in nature.

One of the initial outcomes of a research conducted by TRANSFORM was the identification of a crucial need to pay more attention to methodology and that the development of an integrated approach is needed to augment these psychologically-based, identity-focussed methods of conflict resolution. Assuming that the reality of the conflict will by itself change as a result of change in the perception of individuals cannot be adequate without specifying the mechanism by which this micro-level transformation can lead to sustainable outcome on the macro-level structure sustaining conflict. The key assumption of the proposed activity is that effective organisation for direct action is the missing link. Therefore TRANSFORM started to bring together methods experts from different approaches to develop a new method for conflict transformation which is a practical synthesis between identity-based conflict resolution methods and action-oriented community development approaches.

Six experts in methods development have, since early 2006, been collaborating on creating a synthesis of their respective tools. Central to this toolkit is KUMI: a method for participatory strategic planning in conflict. This method modifies the Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP) process developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs over the last four decades by enriching it with components from two other methods: ARIA, developed by Jay Rothman to engage primarily with identity-based conflict and TRANSCEND, a structural analytical approach to conflict engagement developed by Johan Galtung and is currently being codified by, among others, Wilfried Graf and Gudrun Kramer from the Institute of Integrative Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding. This synthesis is intended to establish a vision-led, action-orientated processes that can be launched across all regions at all levels in order to enable people (both rulers and ruled) to identify and analyse the issues together, to seek ways forward and to plan concrete next steps. By combining these great traditions of praxis, it is hoped that peace makers will have a more robust tool for articulating and demonstrating the new type of politics needed for building peace and security.

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

The methods used in most Israeli-Palestinian people-to-people activities or activities for co-existence there have been based on the hypothesis that the mere contact between the conflict parties will in itself reduce prejudice and enhance mutual understanding and tolerance. No acrimonious political discussions were allowed into the room, on the assumption that individuals can simply ignore the conflict and perceive one another as fellow-humans completely out-of-context. While the aim was worthy, the reality was that the grievances of the weaker party could not find a proper vehicle to be aired, and a sense of disempowerment was unavoidable. This and other critiques of the contact hypothesis have been ignored during method design, and the outcome, in many cases has been more harm than good: many participants in various programmes reported that after the encounter they realised that they "hated" the other even more.

This different way of conceptualising conflict raises a number of questions, and poses some novel challenges to traditional approaches to conflict management and resolution. One key question is, who are the conflict parties in each society, and what is it that they are having a conflict over? In the case of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, research and direct empirical observation provide an answer. In Palestine, there are ideological conflicts (e.g. Fatah and Hamas), generational (old and young guard), distributional (returnees after the Oslo agreement and locals), among others. In Israel, the picture is even more complex: settlers, orthodox Jews, seculars, reform Jews, Israeli Palestinians, new immigrants, and others are pitted one against the other in a very dynamic social and political economic context.

The objective of TRANSFORM's Israeli-Palestinian Programme is to translate this more nuanced understanding of conflict as a complex social process spanning many levels into a more effective type of civil society intervention.

TRANSFORM set the first major step in bringing likeminded Israeli, Palestinian and European academics, politicians and directors of non-governmental organisation together to start a wider programme intended to contribute to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a bottom-up mobilisation of a majority peace constituency in both societies. In 2006 the then so called Organisational Group (which emerged into the organisation TRANSFORM) organised several workshops and strategic planning meetings to bring Israelis, Palestinians and Europeans into a process to enhancing dialogue, civic awareness and exchange of knowledge. Since then the project went from Strategic Planning, Network Consolidation and Project Design into the next step of Methods Development and its testing phase.

TRANSFORMs research focuses on a number of themes that are relevant for understanding the dynamics of the conflict and assessing efforts aimed at its transformation. An underlying concern in all our research work in this area is to explore the links between meta-theory, theory, policy, methods and practice.

ACTIVITIES 2006

1. RESEARCH

1.1. "Beyond Managing the Israeli Palestinian Conflict: Toward a New People-to-People Agenda"

Three of the founders of TRANSFORM, Ahmed Badawi, Ofer Zalzburg and Wafa' Abdel Rahman received a grant from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) for a two-year research project (2006-2007) to examine the Israeli Palestinian people-to-people programmes.

These programmes have been one of the features of the Oslo peace process, premised on the assumption that peace could be sustained only with the active involvement of the people. But because of adverse political factors, the original transformative agenda had to be compromised, and the practice proved ineffective in fulfilling its objective. People-to-people projects are mostly designed as interactive problem-solving workshops led by a knowledgeable mediator/facilitator. The objective of the research project is to provide a critical and policy-relevant review of the state-of-the-art in the theoretical and political discussion between the proponents of conflict management and conflict transformation, especially as far as this discussion pertains to the present and future of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The review will conclude with an articulation of some ideal-type criteria for people-to-people projects. Secondly, the project aims at providing an in-depth analysis organisations and projects practising this approach in Israel and Palestine, based on the criteria developed. Third, lessons-learned of these observations in theory and practice will be translated into a new design of such processes.

The project is administered by the Institute of Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen.

2. WORKSHOPS

2.1 Workshop “Annual Planning Meeting 2006/2007”, 27-30 April, 2006

What we planned

The purpose of the workshop was to bring together, for the first time since 2003, the newly emerged network of partners from Europe, Israel, and Palestine to discuss in-depth the new approach to transforming the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from below, through a large-scale training and mobilisation effort.

What we did

This very first meeting was held in Berlin in April 2006. It was attended by 29 project partners from Europe, Israel and Palestine. This strategic planning meeting had the following objectives: to present the project idea to a broader circle, to discuss the various aspects of the project and to reach a consensus on the feasibility and desirability of the project.

What was realised

During the meeting, a consensus emerged that the new approach was both feasible and desirable, a number of obstacles have been identified and efforts would be made over the next few months to find tactics to overcome them.

Reflections and learning

One of the key recommendations emerging from the meeting was that the activities needed to be phased, with a special emphasis put on ensuring that no harm would be done as a result of our work.

2.2 Workshop “Conflict Transformation: Methods and Evaluation”, 16-19 November, Jerusalem

What we planned

The purpose of the workshop was to kick-start the creation of a synthesis of Conflict Transformation and Community Development group facilitation methods that would be tailored for the particularities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

What we did

In November 2006, 37 participants from Austria, Belgium, Egypt, Germany, Great-Britain, Israel, Norway, Netherlands, Palestine and the USA came together for a 4-days-workshop to discuss best practice, explore the possibility of a synthesis and discussed criteria for the design and evaluation of Track III interventions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (the workshops was funded by zivik, Insitute for Foreign Relations through an application by the Heinrich Boell Foundation which also administred the project). Six of the

participants were experts from the Institute of Cultural Affairs, USA and UK; the Aria Group, USA; and TRANSCEND, Norway and Austria who presented their methods. The other participants were facilitators from Israel, Palestine and Europe as well as academics from universities such as Tel Aviv University and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and organisations such as Miftah and Peace Now.

What was realised

The expected and finally reached output of this workshop was a set of detailed guidelines for designing a peace education/community mobilisation curriculum tailored to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was stated that a synthesis of Conflict Transformation and Community Development methods, tailored to the particularities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is indeed needed.

Reflections and learning

Existing methods do not manage to bring a change at the same time at the cognitive and the behavioural levels. Such a synthesis must be both vision-led and action-oriented. The method which needs to be developed has to ensure the participants understand clearly the key contradictions that underpin the conflict and to allow them to envisage an alternative reality in which the needs of all conflict parties can be satisfied.

ACTIVITIES 2007

1. RESEARCH

1.1 Building a database of Israeli and Palestinian Peace NGOs

Over the course of the year, and in the context of the USIP research project, data was gathered on Israeli and Palestinian NGOs which are considered to be part of the peace camp. The database currently contains information on 169 Israeli and 93 Palestinian organisations and informal coalitions.

2. WORKSHOPS

2.1. Workshop "Planning meeting for 2007/2008", 22-25 February, Berlin

What we planned

The purpose of the workshop was to create solid organisational foundations for the efficient implementation of the next phase of the programme and to agree on a detailed action plan for implementing Phase II (March 2007 – June 2008). Furthermore a discussion needed to take place on the finding of the

research done in October/November 2006 in Israel/Palestine which showed contradictions and obstacles to the programme in its current design, e.g. how to deal with the current Palestinian anti-normalisation discourse which prevent Palestinians from having encounters with Israelis and most important how to make people aware that the aim of this project is not to create another set of so called "people-to-people" projects.

What we did

In February 2007 a 3-days-workshop (funded by the Heinrich Boell Foundation) took place in Berlin. 24 participants from Austria, Egypt, Germany, Israel, Norway, Palestine, Spain, UK and USA attended the workshop, among them academics and NGO-members. Six of the participants were Methods experts from the Institute of Cultural Affairs, UK; Aria Group, USA; and TRANSCEND, Norway and Austria who are taking a leading role in the Methods Development track of the programme.

The members of TRANSFORM who conducted the research presented their analysis of the causes of failure of people-to-people efforts so far, highlighting in particular those obstacles that are method-relevant and presented their findings of the research. The following major obstacles on the project were presented and discussed:

- Israeli – Palestinian Associative engagement is not possible due to anti-normalization discourse in Palestine
- Relational asymmetry in Israeli-Palestinian capabilities in Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- Ineffectiveness of Israeli Peace Camp vs. effectiveness of dominant coalition
- How to get from dependence to interdependence

What was realised

Strategies to overcome some or even most of the concerns/obstacles were defined. The outcome of the workshop was a strategic plan for 2007 and 2008 on the development of the Methods track and an action plan for the development and continuation of the project in terms of further research, fundraising, and action planning.

Reflections and learning

A number of new strategies were created which might lead to overcome some of the areas of concern which were discussed. There has been a consensus that the focus will be on uni-national work at this phase rather than to start with the large scale encounters between Israelis, Palestinians and Europeans. There is a need to shift from large-scale collaboration and cooperation across conflict lines to coordination of uni-national strategies, in preparation for the large scale cross-border encounter. In Israel, the focus of uni-national work is ideological transformation. In Palestine, it is community development and capacity building. The Methods and Evaluation track of the programme will continue as planned, followed by the pilot-projects.

2.2. Workshop “Methods-Academy”, 1-6 July, Jerusalem

What we planned

To bring together Methods experts coming from areas of conflict transformation (TRANSCEND and ARIA) and community development (Institute of Cultural Affairs, ICA) to create a synthesis of a new vision-led, action-oriented method which combines the three approaches.

What we did

In July 2007 the so called “academy-workshop” took place near Jerusalem. Prior to the workshop, the ARIA approach was used to gather and analyse participants’ ideas for the meeting, and this was used to inform the objectives, timetable and agenda of the six days. The Methods experts who participated were: Jim Wiegel, ICA USA; Jonathan Dudding, ICA UK; Jay Rothman, ARIA USA; Gudrun Kramer and Wilfried Graf, both Institute for Integrative Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding – IICP (TRANSCEND Method). During the academy-workshop the methods experts created a new method which combined tools of the three above mentioned approaches and was designed for the following circumstances:

- the method can be used in uni-national, bi-national and multinational encounters
- the method has a strong action-oriented focus
- for participants who are interested in finding a way forward
- the method works in symmetric and asymmetric conflicts

What was realised

The new method is set in a nine-stage process with all the necessary steps/possible tools within each stage and the intention of each tool and step. One workshop will take place for 5 days to reach the nine stages were at the end the participants will create an action plan on how to continue their activities for conflict transformation in their own societies and on a bi-national level.

Reflections and learning

Bringing diverse methods together for the purpose of integrating them is a formidable task, especially if one aims at also integrating the theoretical and meta-theoretical levels of the methods.

ACTIVITIES 2008

1. RESEARCH

1.1 A critical overview of the state-of-the-art in conflict transformation

One of the key findings of the USIP research project is that there is a great deal of terminological confusion in the theoretical literature on conflict transformation. This is not just academic hair-splitting. The lack of agreement on which terms to use in order to describe which approach and activity hides substantive differences in ideological and theoretical orientations, and has serious implications for evaluating the outcome of interventions aimed at either managing, resolving or transforming conflict. This output will be an attempt to disentangle some of the conceptual ambiguity characterising the field.

1.2. A meta-evaluation of Israeli-Palestinian people-to-people programmes

Over the last few years a number of attempts have been made to evaluate the Israeli-Palestinian people-to-people programmes. This output will provide a critical examination of these evaluations and propose an alternative framework that can capture changes on both the individual-cognitive level *as well as* the structural level.

1.3. A structural-relational analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian peace camp

One of key factors contributing to the effectiveness of movements for social change is the structure of ties between individual members of the coalition. This output will be an assessment of the efficacy of the Israeli-Palestinian peace camp using Social Network Analysis (SNA).

1.4. Research on Israel's Security Discourse

The research with the title "The power of words – Israel's Security Discourse" aims to explain the influences which result in a change of political discourses; it will analyse the effect within the society produced by the use of specific contents/statements on the political level and it will investigate so called discursive events that may lead to a change in discourse. The Israeli Security discourse, its transformation over time and the strategies by which it is used to legitimise political behaviour will be explored as well as its function and dynamics on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

2. WORKSHOPS

2. 1. Workshop: "Conflict Resolution and Community Development: Toward a Methodological Integration", 9-17 September, Hamburg

What we planned

The specific objective of the workshop was to demonstrate the effectiveness of a new toolkit for Social Transformation in Conflict (STC). The main component of this toolkit is a methodological synthesis between identity-based conflict engagement processes, a structural approach to conflict analysis and action-oriented community and organisation development methods.

What we did

In September 2008 the new method was presented and tested with 40 participants, among them methods experts, academics, facilitators and graduate students from various European countries, Israel, Palestine and the USA. The to-be tested method contained nine steps, each with a specific and distinct objective. In broad terms these steps can be grouped into three categories: carrying integrative conflict analysis and deep dialogue, generating and envisioning a preferred future based on the analysis, and finally drawing strategies and a comprehensive action plan towards the preferred future. The workshop was funded by NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme and was done under the supervision of Professor Alexander Redlich and his team from the Department of Psychology, University of Hamburg.

What was realised

An extensive evaluation was done during the presenting and testing phase. The various methodological aspects and phases were presented in detail and experienced by the evaluators gathered at the workshop to further improve and refine the method. The general feedback from the experts attending and evaluating the method's current and potential capacity for effective conflict resolution was positive and encouraged professionalization of the tools and their dissemination in conflict areas around the globe.

Reflections and learning

Comprehensive notes were taken throughout the workshop to have each step, explanation of steps, follow-up tasks that have to be done, etc. covered. The methods experts and the workshop co-directors are now working on integrating these into a solid facilitator's manual. The manual will be published in mid-2009 and thus the new synthesised methodology will be made available and distributed. Before publishing the manual another refinement workshop of this kind will be held at the beginning of 2009 with another set of participants.

2.2. Workshop “Third Annual Planning Meeting 2009/2010”, 19-22 September, Berlin

What we planned

The purpose of the workshop was to finalise the design of the 14 workshops that will take place between 2009 – 2010 through the consensus of all participants, to create solid organisational foundations for its efficient implementation, to create a new organisational strategy able to deal with the changes necessary for the implementation of the workshops and, finally, to discuss some issues related to the grander strategy of the programme.

What we did

In September 2008 a 3-days-workshop (funded by the Heinrich Boell Foundation) took place in Berlin. For this meeting the Israeli and Palestinian strategic partners, who constitute the Steering Committee for the Israeli-Palestinian project were invited to discuss, develop and finalize the next strategic project phase 2009-2010: to create solid organisational foundations for its efficient implementation, to create a new organisational strategy able to deal with the changes necessary for the implementation of the workshops planned for 2009-2010 and, finally, to discuss some issues related to the grander strategy of the programme. A report on the findings of the mock-pilot that took place in Hamburg 9th – 17th of September 2008 was also to be delivered. For this purpose 25 people from Germany, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Spain, Norway, UK and USA attended the workshop, among them academics and NGO-members who constitute part of the broader network of advisory partners of the project. Two of the participants were Methods experts who had attended the previous mock pilot in Hamburg.

What was realised

The participants discussed some of the more concrete issues pertaining to implementation. They were divided according to nationality (thus, for instance, Palestinians dealt with which groups in Palestine should the workshops engage) thus creating three national groups: European, Palestinian and Israeli. There was a fourth group that dealt with some of the more methodological questions pertaining to implementation: issues such as the selection of facilitators, etc. The decisions taken were all reached through the consensus of all participants. The workshop started off the preparatory stages for the pilot phase. Consensus was reached on a number of fundamental implementation issues, such as the target groups we aim to mobilise and the rationale for engaging these.

Reflections and learning

An action plan was devised with those issues that were considered most urgent and the tasks divided accordingly. One major task for the next months will be to find committed and excellent facilitators to be trained on the new method. More discussion is needed on the target groups of the workshops and work needs to be done on the synergy of the different workshops.

FUTURE WORK

Next to the process of establishing the organisation there is an ongoing process of resource development, conceptualizing further research and action projects, including fundraising, grant-writing, foundations research and developing donor-relations.

Due to a grant from European Union's Partnership for Peace programme which was applied for through our partner organisation, the Heinrich Boell Foundation, 14 workshops will take place in Israel and Palestine in 2009 and 2010. It is planned to have four workshops on the bi-national level, two workshops on the multi-national level and eight workshops (four in Israel and four in Palestine) on a uni-national level. The new created method will be used in all workshops.

The main focus of the current work of TRANSFORM is on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the near future TRANSFORM aims to expand its focus also to other conflict regions, e.g. the Balkans. Furthermore TRANSFORM is currently establishing contacts in Europe for a comparative research project in various European states on the issue of integration.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

- Heinrich Boell Foundation, Germany
- The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), Palestine
- Young Israeli Forum for Cooperation (YIFC), Israel
- Department of Psychology, University of Hamburg, Germany
- Oxford Research Group, United Kingdom
- TRANSCEND, Norway
- Institute of Cultural Affairs:UK and USA
- Institute for Integrative Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding (IICP), Austria
- ARIA Group, USA

BOARD OF TRANSFORM

Until December 2008 the Chairperson of the Board was

- Dr. Klaus Schlichte, Professor for International Relations, Department for Political Science, University of Magdeburg

Vice-Chairperson of the Board

- Ahmed Badawi, Associate, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and Project Director (Israel/Palestine), Oxford Research Group

Since December 2008 the Chairperson of the Board is

- Dr. Sonja Hegazy, Vice Director and Head External Relations, Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) / Center of Modern Orientalism

Vice Chairperson of the Board is

- Dr. Alexandra Manzei, Sociologist, TU Berlin

ACTIVE MEMBERS

- Bisan Abu Ruqty, Programme Director, MIFTAH, Ramallah
- Ahmed Badawi, Adviser, Middle East Team, Oxford Research Group
- Michaela Birk, Political Scientist, Independent Project Coordinator and Researcher, Berlin
- Muriel Kahane, PhD-Candidate, Department of Government, London School of Economics, London
- Tobias Lenz, PhD-Candidate, International Relations, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, Oxford
- Mario Schejtman, Secretary General, Israel Center for Social Justice, Jerusalem
- Ofer Zalzburg, Young Israeli Forum for Cooperation (YIFC), Jerusalem

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