

University of Tampere
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Peace Studies

Alternative Peacebuilding in Bosnia

Evolution of an NGO and volunteer experiences: the case of Trenkalòs

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the work of the international grassroots NGO Trenkalòs, which worked in the aftermath of the Bosnian War, from 1997 to the present day. It focuses on the unusual strategies they used, developed, and it reflects on the experiences of their volunteers. Their largest program was a service learning experience, which would immerse volunteers in the reality of the refugee life and the crudeness of an ethnic cleansing, as well as provide a historical context accompanied by refugees' stories.

This thesis uses theoretical frameworks such as liberal-hybrid peacebuilding, peace education and service learning to analyze the approaches taken by Trenkalòs. The data is drawn from interviews with the volunteers, as well as original publications of the NGO. The study showcases the evolution of the NGO, and the results of their efforts: more than six hundred volunteers trained on development work, Bosnian history, culture, and geography.

The experience of the volunteers is positive, fosters solidarity and creates personal bonds. Moreover, every activist is an asset both to the NGO and the refugees, as a both a psychological and a monetary support. The application of bottom-up peace building, everyday efforts and constant visits to the country granted Trenkalòs the support of a community and a stable base to develop programs in Bosnia & Herzegovina.

Keywords: Bosnia & Herzegovina, Peace & Conflict Research, History, Development, Liberal Peacebuilding, Service Learning, Peace Education, NGO, International, Trenkalòs, Srebrenica, Refugees, IDP, Volunteering, Grassroots, Ethnic Cleansing, Hybrid Peacebuilding.

Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Table of Contents	2
Acknowledgments	3
Preface	4
List of Terms	6
Chapter 1: Introduction	7
Chapter 2: Research Objective and Research Methodology	9
Chapter 3: Bosnia, Dayton, and the Refugee question	16
Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework	31
Liberal Peacebuilding	33
Service Learning	41
Peace Education	48
Chapter 5: Trenkalòs as a case study	54
The Organization	54
The scale of the Trenkalòs' activities	64
Trenkalòs' Main Projects	68
Trenkalòs, Catalonia and Bosnia	75
A Critic of Trenkalòs	76
The future of Trenkalòs	77
Chapter 6: The volunteers' experiences	79
Chapter 7: Conclusions	98
Bibliography	106

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Preface

The writing of this MA Thesis has been a long process and undergone several changes. For someone with a practically-oriented background, it has been an intense and challenging journey. What started as a random pick to fulfill the credit requirements, gradually became a deep experience that allowed me not only to travel to a conflicted country alongside professionals in peacebuilding but also to learn about its history, its people and its culture. This country is Bosnia & Herzegovina.

As a child born in the early 1990's, the Bosnian War was the first conflict I was taught about in school. Not in class, but rather coincidentally through emergency food collection and NGO fundraising. Later, in high school, we had volunteers organizing talks about refugees and anti-personnel mines, and the notion that a war had happened not so long ago was revived. It is possible that the volunteers who visited my high school back in 2004 would have been volunteers from Trenkalòs, the very same organization which is analyzed in this paper.

When the moment came to pick a topic, I was sure that some of my colleagues would cover currently relevant conflicts like the Syrian civil war, Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, the Somali refugees in East Africa, Nagorno-Karabakh... so I wished to do something different. A forgotten conflict lapidated under the ephemerality of modern mass media. During the preliminary research, I became acquainted with a family friend that had been in Bosnia three times with an NGO, Trenkalòs, and soon after I was enrolled in a trip to the country.

Looking back, I understand that I entered the conflict blindfolded. I was not aware that there were still refugees from the war, or of the influence of the international community in the country's decision-making. I was not aware of the extent of the activities of that particular NGO. Not only they explained to me what their projects were, but I was able to see them.

Still, I thought to have learned about a country, Bosnia & Herzegovina, its people and their struggles; about international politics, false promises and imported laws. I

thought that I was ready to offer solutions to a deep and enmeshed conflict. Evidently, I was mistaken. This past summer I participated in Trenkalòs' Dobro Dosli project, lived with the refugees, organized activities with the children, and listened to many personal stories of the victims of the war. Every visit strengthens the knowledge and cuts deeply in one's personal views.

It is clear to me that many authors write from the comfort and the distance. Constancy, ground knowledge, personal relations with refugees, civilians, and political actors, are key to understanding the reality and needs of the people, and help them back to their feet, so they can seize the future by themselves.

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List of Terms

Abbreviation	Full Name	Comments
DPA	Dayton Peace Agreement	
IDP	Internally-Displaced People	
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre	
ICG	International Crisis Group	
SFOR	Stabilization Force	Multi-national peacekeeping force led by NATO.
	Trenkalòs	Catalan-International NGO founded in 1997.
	Bosniak	Bosnian Muslim.
	Dobro Dosli	[Welcome] in Serb-Croat. Also the flagship project of Trenkalòs, based on Service-Learning.
	Grassroots NGO	A subset of intermediary NGO that supports local groups or disadvantaged rural or urban households and individuals.
	Liberal Peacebuilding	Theoretical current that supports the implementation of liberal/western systems and ideas in conflicted countries as a means of reaching peace.
	Service-Learning	Theoretical current that supports an exchange between privileged and disadvantaged communities in order to challenge stereotypes, learn from each other, and provide positive outcomes for both.
	Peace Education	Theoretical current that challenges a system where education gravitates around conflict in order to achieve individual goals, and offers tools of communication and tolerance.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

This master's thesis is centered on the analysis of a case study: The Spanish NGO Trenkalòs, which performed peacebuilding activities in Bosnia & Herzegovina between 1997 and 2012, and has organized activities intermittently between that year and 2016. What makes this particular organization special is its volunteer-based, grassroots structure and its approach to bottom-up, local-hybrid peacebuilding.

This means that the organization does not have any paid staff; most or all of its activities are developed with personnel effort and very limited resources; and they focus their efforts in the lower segments of society to make wider changes, instead of changing state structures and laws.

This strategy is particularly unusual, especially during the time when liberal peacebuilding had become the major strategy used by leading states, international organizations and international financial institutions. Liberal peacebuilding argues that the defense of democracy, human rights, a rule of law, civil society and liberal economics are the most effective (and perhaps the only) way towards the end of violent conflicts (Mac Ginty, 2010:393; Richmond & Franks, 2009:56).

Trenkalòs as an organization started with the idea of raising awareness of the Bosnian war. After their initial visit, every other trip would be used to transport humanitarian material. The situation at the borders and the centers they were traveling were critical, and it created an intense learning environment. After eight years traveling three or four times to Bosnia & Herzegovina, their volunteer base had grown largely enough, and it was matched with a considerable knowledge about the country.

The needs of the refugees were no longer about food or medicines, but more focused on healing the physical and mental wounds of war. At that time, Trenkalòs developed their most ambitious project: Dobro Dosli, a service learning program that would combine a learning experience for young Catalan volunteers with a psychological support for the Bosnian Muslim (from now on referred as Bosniak) refugees.

The aim of this master's thesis is to study the Grassroots Non-Governmental Organization Trenkalòs, to understand the motivations and the focus of volunteers behind it. The purpose of this analysis is to determine to what extent this is an example of alternative peacebuilding, and consider the possibility to replicate it.

Structure of the Master's Thesis

This Master's Thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter comprises the introduction and the structure of the document. The second is focused on setting up the premises of the research, such as the research question, the methodology used, and certain difficulties and observations that happened across the writing of this document. The third chapter describes the historical background, which strongly focuses on the Bosnian War, its immediate and long-term consequences, and provides data on the return of refugees.

The fourth chapter harnesses the theoretical background used to conduct the analysis. This chapter describes mainly three theories: Hybrid-Local Peacebuilding, Service Learning and Peace Education. These three combined can be used to analyze the unusual strategy of Trenkalòs, and offer an explanation to its efforts and continuity in the country. The fifth and sixth chapters are focused in describing the work of the NGO and its volunteers, concerning history, personal experiences and offering a scope to the scale of their activities. Finally, the seventh contains the conclusions, the results of the analysis and the future applications of this work.

Chapter 2: Research objective and Research Methodology

Trenkalòs as a case study

Some considerations

The data acquired for this master's thesis concerning the NGO, their activities, budget and results are quite scarce. The majority of claims used to elaborate arguments come from interviews, materials, and documents produced by the organization and its members. As the organization was funded without a proper structure, the members did not have a system of archives, so the majority of earlier inventory lists, goods transported, investments made, do not exist or are lost. There are remains, though: videos, photographs, sparse budget documents; that offer a peek at the NGO's activities, and can be used as pieces of a puzzle, and fill the blanks around them.

The principal issue is the authenticity of the facts that the volunteers and organizers present, especially because of the possible bias that they can have. To draw as much information from the data as possible I rejected the idea to perform a comparative analysis, and I decided to take a qualitative approach and look at Trenkalòs from the perspective of their actors. Some of the volunteer's interviews were heavily influenced by their personalities, in particular, the co-founder and director of Trenkalòs, Jordi Rodrigo. As the most veteran and experienced volunteer of the organization, his methods and ideas have been key to shape the structure of the NGO.

For a peace builder, his positions are sometimes polarized, especially compared to volunteers who joined the organization years later. Other examples, such as Glòria Marcet or Bernat Guixer, offer different perspectives, that complete the general picture of Trenkalòs. This details can offer insight on the evolution of the NGO, and explain particular issues later in the analysis section of this master's thesis. Unfortunately, this leaves the perspective of the refugees on a second term.

Although I was offered the possibility to travel to Bosnia with local guidance and translation, I faced two main issues: my lack of funding for the trip, and the impossibility to fit both perspectives and describe the NGO in the same Master's Thesis. I acknowledge that the omission of the unprivileged community benefits and perspectives is an, unfortunately, common practice in research papers (Jacoby, 2014:11; Mitchell, 2008:57), but in my limited position I assigned a higher priority to the availability of the data.

Finally, as a participant of the 2015 Trenkalòs trip to Bosnia & Herzegovina to commemorate the twenty years of the Srebrenica massacre, and the 2016 edition of Trenkalòs' summer camps; I participated in conversations and overheard personal information about members of the organization that could explain some of the organization's deficiencies. Since some of this details did not appear in the interviews, I will not use that information in the making of this master's' thesis. I will, however, use the data the guides provided during their explanations since they bring up several issues that the organization has faced during its existence.

The case study

As Jordi Rodrigo describes it, Trenkalòs was created during the boom of the Spanish NGO originated by the Bosnian War. The outburst of the conflict triggered the creation of huge numbers of humanitarian organizations. The Spanish administration regulated these groups under federations and used middleman agencies to prevent a flood of human assets in the Bosnian borders (Rodrigo, 2015).

He argues that this situation represented a bureaucratic barrier for immediate response, which took time and resources. Trenkalòs, as a small scale organization with few assets, had a different approach: to travel by road, without government funding. "Instead of organizing field trips for assessing the situation, we had to save every penny, so we did it on the go" (Rodrigo, 2015).

This can be taken as Trenkalòs declaration of intent, and provides an interesting case study as they pose an alternative to the established rule. It also describes their situation: very low funding and a limited reach, but fueled by a strong volunteer basis

and personal investment. It would be definitely hard to develop a liberal peacebuilding strategy with these limitations.

But all in all, Rodrigo argues that they established a system that worked, conscious of its limitations and reaches, but that offered a unique vision to the reality of the Bosnians (Rodrigo, 2015). Long-time volunteer Francesc Gassó comments on a difference towards bigger organizations: “It was another piece of the reconstruction of the country, but one of the few that was there because it believed in what it was doing, not because it had to accomplish some deadline” (Gassó, 2016).

The benefits of this approach are many, but they are very hard to calculate. An apparently simple and straightforward effort eventually entailed a mass of human resources and materials to travel to the country periodically to perform a series of activities, amongst them economic development, psychological support and conflict awareness. This does not fit a quantitative analysis, with graphs depicting the investment of the NGO in the country or their impact on the return of the refugees to their previous homes. It entails very personal improvements, that slowly pile up to counteract the effects of hate and violence.

I found particularly interesting how an apparently non-academic, untrained group of individuals developed a mindset and a method so similar to the theory presented above and evolved from a humanitarian aid group to a fully-fledged international NGO with a service learning program that moved hundreds of persons every year. Therefore, I consider the data acquired sufficient to perform a qualitative research project.

Research Question

The research question of this Master's Thesis is focused on the development of the NGO Trenkalòs and the experiences of their volunteers. The research question reads as follows:

What can happen to a humanitarian aid NGO when it commits to a project for two decades? How did the NGO volunteers understand the learning process and the outcome of their activities?

These two questions are enough to describe the process that the NGO underwent during its history, and at the same time take into consideration the agency and perspective of its volunteers. These questions are based on the narratives of volunteers who experienced first-hand approaches to the day-to-day life of Bosnian refugees, some anecdotally, some repeatedly through the years. Since there is a considerable lack of records, the witness of these activists can serve as primary sources to fill in the gap in one of the most ignored parts of post-conflict development.

The theory presented later in the master's thesis serves as a framework to better understand the NGO's philosophy. Peace, understanding, learning... either from a liberal or illiberal perspective. Was the idea of Liberal Peace or the Responsibility to Protect present in the first missions in Bosnia? Perhaps they were present in the notions of common understanding, fighting social injustice and the defense of human rights.

Maybe there was a hint of Hybrid peace in challenging the bureaucratic barriers of the other NGO, more powerful in resources, but slower and sometimes imprecise. In blending with the local culture and negotiating with corrupt government officials and damaged war veterans and widows. Perhaps in not succeeding in empowering the locals to carry on their own economy.

Perchance there was service learning in bringing students to live with refugees, to help with reconstruction, learn from the war, and accompany the victims of Srebrenica to the annual memorial burial. Perhaps they are not a canonical educational institution, with no university credits, but still with a pedagogical method.

In any case, a theory does not describe reality, because the ideal cases it describes rarely occur. Nor these examples can be taken as the result of a single input, but the combination of several efforts working together towards a joint direction.

The question above mentioned can use the combination of these frameworks to produce an example of a rather singular peacebuilding action. It can be interesting as an example of less orthodox, perhaps hybrid, but still effective peacebuilding. It can be useful to anyone who is researching any of the theories cited above, and as an example of an alternative to the mainstream liberal peace organizations. Lastly, it can be replicated in other areas of Bosnia & Herzegovina, in order to slowly counteract the ethnic cleansing.

Data collection and methodology

The data collected comes in great measure from the organization and the volunteers themselves. As primary sources, I used original documents such as official records, film footage, photographs, and interviews. Although it can be argued that publications such as the book *Homage to Srebrenica* (Trenkalòs, 2007) and the comic book *Goodbye, Srebrenica* (Trenkalòs, 2005). Since in a certain way they analyze the activities of the NGO in the country, I still think of them as primary sources, because their non-academic nature and their use of language can be used in the analysis as part of their narratives.

As for the interviews, I performed four live interviews through video chat communication software; and I am also using pre-recorded interviews used in the already mentioned *Homage to Srebrenica* (2007). I am also using recordings saved from explanations offered by the guides in Bosnia & Herzegovina.

The conditions of the interview were agreed in advance, and the subjects were provided information about the project, as well as warned that the conversation would be recorded in order to be as precise as possible. The interviewees were cooperative with one exception, who denied his/her participation. The volunteers are (in chronological order):

1. Jordi Rodrigo, co-founder, and director of Trenkalòs. 06-11-2015
2. Glòria Marcet, an administrative employee of Trenkalòs (2005-2008). 18-02-2016
3. Bernat Guixer, volunteer, guide, and speaker of Trenkalòs (2005-2009) 19-03-2016

4. Francesc Gassó, volunteer, guide, and IT support of Trenkalòs (2012-2016). 22-03-2016

All interviewees have spent more than two rounds of service learning in Bosnia & Herzegovina. In addition, Marcet has a master's degree in humanitarian aid and another in gender issues, while Gassó has a master's degree in sustainable development. Gassó wrote two travel logs describing his perspective in the camp, which are used later on in the analysis part. Jordi Rodrigo wrote in collaboration with others the book *Homage to Srebrenica* (2007), a documentary with the same name, and the comic book collection *The world in a hole: Books to think* (2001-2011), as well as other publications that are not used in this master's thesis because they belong to other areas.

The NGO activities are analyzed combining personal impressions from the volunteers and comparisons to the theoretical framework to offer a perspective on alternative peacebuilding. Although researchers work to find the ultimate peace framework to resolve all conflicts, the human factor can alter in a great manner any planning, and it hardly follows a general pattern. For that, the method used was the qualitative research interview. The interviews were semi-structured, departing from a general framework common to all interviewees, but allowing them to develop their own opinions and points of view. This is an example of the interviews used:

-How was your first contact with Trenkalòs

-What was your role in the organization?

-What kind of training did you receive before going to Bosnia?

-How many rounds did you travel to the country?

-Any special memory of Mihatovići and Šahbegovići?

*-What do you think was the impact of Trenkalòs?**

-What did you think was the impact of the service-learning in the volunteers?

-What was the reaction of the volunteers once in Catalonia? Do you think they were prepared to understand and cope with the situations they encountered in Bosnia?

*Depending on the role of the interviewee, this and other questions were modified or added (especially when it came to organizers)

As King (2004) argues, the qualitative research interview is best suited “Where a study focuses on the meaning of particular phenomena to the participants; where individual perceptions of processes within a social unit are to be studied prospectively, using a series of interviews; Where individual historical accounts are required of how a particular phenomenon developed[...].” (King in Cassel & Symon, 2004:16-17).

The cases described above match the kind of study I needed, so this method was really promising. The usage of semi-structured interviews was interesting because it transmitted the idea that the interviewer was already aware of the NGO’s activities, so the majority of the interviewees could start directly by offering their views in several areas, instead of having had to offer a context. To analyze the data, the process used was editing: searching for sections and lines that were useful to develop arguments and interpretations (Miller & Crabtree, 1992:3-28).

Both the interviews and the primary sources (publications from the NGO) were produced in Catalan and were later translated into English by the author of this document so they could be used in the research.

Chapter 3: Bosnia, Dayton, and the Refugee question

Introduction

The second chapter of this master's thesis is focused on providing a historical background, which describes how Bosnia & Herzegovina has dealt with the refugees and internally displaced people from the war up to 2013. For the sake of brevity, most of the Bosnian war has been summarized into a few dates and anecdotes which do not do justice to its fatal consequences, but hopefully, it serves the reader as a waypoint towards the later sections of this document.

The Bosnian War (1992-95)

Following the secession of Slovenia and Croatia from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991, the Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was faced with a hard decision. To capitulate and be absorbed by Serbia in the guise of the Republic of Yugoslavia, or to fight a war which was sure to lose. Croatia had been nearly crushed by the superior forces of the Yugoslav Popular Army, under the control of the Serb and at the same time Yugoslav president Slobodan Milošević. The ceasefire sponsored by the UN in January of 1992 allowed the country to resist the Serb advances, but not without losses: the east of Croatia up to the city of Vukovar, as well as some areas in the central parts of the country. Grim tales started to filter of the atrocities committed by both sides, with deliberate attacks on civilians.

Milošević had the grasp on heavy artillery, tanks, and aviation; but also paramilitary groups formed by extreme nationalists, who were brutal in their tactics, being known for massacring civilians. The Serbian leader claimed to be the defender of all the Serbs, and that included enclaves in all of the former Yugoslav republics. Therefore, he had a nationalistic justification to declare war to those who would be "oppressing" Serb minorities, although in most of the cases multi-ethnic groups had lived together peacefully in the Balkans.

The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina was the most representative, with a mixed population of Serbs (32,5%), Croats (17%) and Muslims (Bosniak) (44%), and others

(6%). Bosnian Muslim leader, Alija Izetbegovic, organized a referendum for independence in February-March of 1992, which resulted in a victory for independence by 63,4% of the population. In late March 1992, clashes between Bosnian Serbs and combined Bosniak and Croat forces originated the Bosnian War.

As happened in Croatia, the United Nations intervened to prevent more violence. After the initial advancement of the Serbian forces, UN high representatives designed several plans to concede the Serbian-claimed areas and spare but were consecutively rejected by one side or another. Some examples are the Carrington-Cutileiro (March 1992), Vance-Owen (January 1993), and Owen-Stoltenberg (July 1993).

The Bosnian crisis became famous for the inability of the UN to stop the violence in the country, especially in the safe zones established in Muslim enclaves such as Tuzla, Bihać, Srebrenica, Goražde or Zepa. The UN battalions sent to protect the Bosniak were overrun, captured, and used as a bargain in international negotiations. Airstrikes and embargoes did little to stop the Serbs, who managed to ethnically cleanse of Muslims and Croats what had been an intertwined social network before the war. This meant to burn, pillage, displace, rape and murder all the non-Serbian population, massively and systematically, originating one of the biggest humanitarian disasters in Europe since the second world war.

With the fall and subsequent massacre of Srebrenica in July 1995, Russia and Serbia, who had been backing the Bosnian Serbs, dropped out their support. NATO withdrew their troops and started bombing Serbian positions. On the 21st of November, the heads of state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia met in Dayton, Ohio to sign a treaty that would mark the end of the war. On the negotiation table, there were democratically elected presidents as well as criminals of war.

The Dayton Agreement

The general framework agreement for peace bound the three warring parties; The Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, and the Republic of Yugoslavia to recognize the need to stop the tragic conflict in the region, promote peace and stability, ratify their commitment to a series of Basic Principles stated further in the document, and noting the agreement which authorized the delegation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to sign the peace agreement on behalf of the Republika Srpska.

The article III of the agreement set apart the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina in two: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska; and the article VII endorsed the consideration of human rights and the protection of refugees, as well as the provision for their return (United Nations, 1995). Although the peace agreement states that the parties were to respect each other's' sovereignty and settle disputes by peaceful means, the article IX states that the United Nations Security Council is the body who authorized and pursued the fulfillment of the annexes, the first indication of the international intervention that would rule in the country for years under the banner of Dayton.

David Chandler (1999) describes Dayton as an "Experiment of political engineering", a one-year transitional government led by a High Representative designed by the UN, who concentrated the executive and legislative powers, could veto political candidates and dismiss non-cooperative elected members of Bosnian governing bodies. This situation diminished the role of Bosnians of all ethnic groups in favor of international experts, and so did the Republic's capacity of self-governing.

Chandler questions the assumption that democracy could be imposed on a country by international bodies on the basis that its people were lacked the capability of governing themselves. To measure how democratic a country is, the European Union usually considers the establishment of democratic institutions and holding free and fair elections satisfying enough, but if these countries were not "perfect democracies", that is to say, different from traditional western systems, supposed a problem for a western ruler (Chandler, 1999; 14).

Analyzing the “democracy levels” of a country can be problematic since the results can show that there are some higher levels in a country outside the European Union than in those inside. In addition, there is a lack of a benchmark for this studies, there had not been any test subject on “proper” democracy implementation until that time. For theorists, the problem was not the lack of democratic culture, but the idea that human rights were deemed irrelevant by the locals. Because of that, the International Community changed their priorities, bringing human rights to the table again, and promoting them from a domestic policy to a national priority (Chandler, 1999; 21).

One of the particularities of the Bosnian War is the targeting of civilian population, especially Bosniak, and their possessions. Records on the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia inform that widespread systematic attacks were directed by Serbian forces against any civilian population, with repeated accounts of sexual harassment and rape. Civilians would be violently arrested by the military police and paramilitaries, often causing the death of the detainees.

Joe Sacco’s *Safe Area Gorazde* vividly illustrates the chaos and desperation of the refugees who fled from the countryside to one of these cities, Gorazde, and the horrors that accompanied them during the siege, isolated from the Bosnian Army forces. The United Nations intervened and tried to resolve the situation and, in the meantime, they started to organize safe corridors (such as the *Blue Road*) for women, children and elderly to flee to Bosnian-controlled areas. Convoys with armored vehicles would bring supplies, as well as airdrop caches, but the Bosnian Serbs would often intercept these deployments (Sacco, 2000;57-134).

The fall of Srebrenica

Srebrenica was of the Bosniak enclaves surrounded after the initial offensive of the Bosnian Serbs in 1992. With the aggressive advancement of military troops, thousands of refugees slowly poured into the city, soon overflowing its capacity to feed and house the newcomers. On March of 1993, the French General Philippe Morillon entered the city with supplies, but was held by the locals under the condition that the UN would defend them from their attackers. To be able to leave, he told the

population that the UN would protect them and open a line of supplies, declaring the city a UN “safe area”.

This was not received well in the UN and beyond, as it represented an allegiance with the Bosniaks. It was especially alarming for the Bosnian Serb commander in charge of the siege of Srebrenica, Ratko Mladić, who demanded the Bosniaks to lay down arms in exchange of the creation of the safe area.

As UN representative José Maria Mendiluce argues in the documentary *The Death of Yugoslavia* (1995), “The accord was muslim demilitarization and the establishment of a Canadian battalion in exchange of the rendition of Srebrenica, to make it into a safe area; which in Serb-Bosnian terms was a big concentration camp surrounded and controlled militarily by them” (BBC, 1995: ep. 5).

In 1995, tens of thousands of Muslims had been living for three years under Serb siege. It had ceased to be a key asset to the government, and the Serbs were about to close in. The attack came on the 6th of July and lasted until the 11th. The population started fleeing en masse. They gathered around the UN base in Potočari, an industrial area south from the city. On the 11th of July, the few remaining forces of the UN Dutchbat were quickly pushed aside by Bosnian Serbs and their commander, Ratko Mladić. Twenty-five thousand muslims awaited (BBC, 1995: ep. 6).

The Serbs issued buses for the Bosniaks, but only women and children arrived to their final destination. Waging their options, several thousand men and youths tried desperately to reach the nearest Bosniak stronghold, Tuzla, a hundred kilometers away. They walked on a straight line for days through mined forests and mountain paths. On the trail, Bosnian Serbs awaited them, and used all kinds of weaponry against the Bosniaks. Thousands were killed. Those captured would be summarily executed and buried in mass graves on the spot or taken away in trucks. Accounts of rape and torture are frequent in the trials of the ICTY (ICTY, 2001;171-242). The official account of deaths is 8,373 men; according to the Potočari Memorial Center. Although Serbs often argue that it did not happen (Biserko & Becirevic, 2009; 2), the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague declared Srebrenica a case of genocide

in February 2007 (Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide [Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro], Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2007, p. 43).

Refugee Policies and Progression Throughout the Years

To ensure that the crimes committed during the war would not be repeated, the effort made in Bosnia was especially strong. For that, there was the need to establish a culture in which human rights would be universally respected. While the evidence on the extent of human rights violations during the war was still being gathered, human rights gained a unique focus in the reconstruction of the Bosnian state.

To illustrate this struggle, one can compare to the endeavor in which these rights were created to the policies in other countries: in the Dayton Agreement, there are 16 amendments to protect human rights, compared to 3 in the United States' constitution, and 10 in the United Kingdom (Chandler, 1999; 22). The implementation of these rights is somehow ironical since the forced incorporation of the Dayton Agreement raised questions on democratization and popular sovereignty. The status of human rights in Bosnia is so high that they are above any political discussion, while in other states these rights are limited to what the government determines necessary for the wellbeing of the citizens.

After the Cold War and the fall of Yugoslavia, concerns about traditional inter-state rivalry shifted to highly militarized world powers and the dangers of fragmentation in peripheral states. Nuclear deterrence prevented open international conflicts, so the attention turned to "lesser" states, thus nurturing the idea of a moral disparity between these and the Western states. This situation allowed the International Community to justify the idea of external intervention in order to prevent risks, even in countries where there are no open signs of violence.

Bougarel (1996) analyzed why ethnicity became a central political issue through the prisoner's dilemma. The population would choose nationalistic or ethnic parties because they identified them as a means to protect themselves and their interests, even if it would be a little and short-term gain; instead of voting the parties which would be economically or culturally more beneficial for the country's future. Every

ethnic group would suspect of the others, and would bet on their respective radical representatives (Bougarel, 1996; 99).

From the point of view of the international community, this analysis would mark the candidates as unrepresentative of the electorate's real interests, and would give the idea that the Bosnian War was a direct result of the mismatch between Bosnian ethnic culture and liberal democracy, electing the wrong leaders, who in turn would use their control over the state institutions to create 'collective paranoia' (Woodward, 1995; 228). The Bosnian political sphere was seen as incapable of resolving conflict through rational negotiation and compromise. This situation was deemed in need for someone to take control, thus eventually coming with the 'noble experiment' of ruling the country internationally.

The return of refugees and internally displaced people became a key issue for the international community, and the number of returning refugees was used as an indicator of democracy and respect for human rights. Still, when some of the displaced persons refused to return, the international community immediately deemed it a sign of systematic intimidation and manipulation from hardline politicians.

Other options, like starting over in other parts of the country, or the impossibility to find work in the refugee's place of origin were not considered as a plausible decision for not returning. Many Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Serbs expressed their desire of living somewhere else than their pre-war homes, principally because of the shortage of houses and the availability of jobs. By 1996, only 250.000 from 2.1 million refugees and internally displaced persons had returned to their pre-war homes (Chandler, 1999; 105).

The Bosnian economy slowly recovered in the federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but that was not the case in the Republika Srpska, where the international aid was minimal. The economy stagnated in that region, falling far below their pre-war levels, and quickly behind the levels of the Federation. This differences not only dissuaded the displaced population from returning but also augmented tensions, as the returnees were seen as a threat to the local livelihoods.

The Bosnian government initially promoted the return of Bosniaks to Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serbian areas in order to spread their support around the country, which turned into an angry refusal in the Republika Srpska, because it was seen as an imposition of Muslim control. The strong push for return supported by the International Community was spoiled by their aggressive interventionism and ignorance on the refugees' opinions, which locals looked at with suspicion.

Again, the outcome of the human rights regulation invigorated by the International Community can be questioned, as it stands in the middle ground between the legitimate sovereignty of the Bosnian people and the forced implementation of the international administrations. Distant from creating a greater sense of security for cross-ethnic cooperation, the climate of distrust and the usage of human rights abuses as a political tool widened the gap between the Bosnian parties and the international community that slowed the process of return and the normal coexistence of different ethnic groups (Chandler, 1999; 155).

The failure of Dayton became more and more evident through time. Its purpose, further than the cease of hostilities, was to reform a whole state and to reverse the effects of the ethnic cleansing. According to a report issued by the International Crisis Group in 1999, "Bosnia has three mono-ethnic entities, three armies, three police three de facto mono-ethnic entities, three separate armies, three separate police forces, and a national government that exists mostly on paper and operates at the mercy of the entities" (International Crisis Group, 1999; 3).

Reports of collaboration between the local governments, the police, and extremists to prevent the return of refugees were frequent, preventing the creation of a de facto multi-ethnic society. The only Dayton successes-the ceasefire, the creation of a common currency and a centralized monetary institution, as well as common administrative regulations and customs- were minimal, and imposed by the international community (ICG, 1999; 2).

Moreover, these little achievements were highly dependent on foreign aid, which was starting to mingle. Simultaneously, the withdrawal of funding would provoke a hole in the already negative Bosnian GDP, worsened by the skyrocketing numbers of

unemployment. The frail economic situation fueled discontent and nationalism, with frequent demonstrations and road blockades. The policies planned by the international community were not implemented by the NATO-led SFOR, due to the fear of casualties in their ranks; and the Bosnian Serbs and Croats were waiting for the withdrawal of the international support to take over.

Many policies were half implemented, often because the local administration slowed the processes, like the regional and sub-regional arms control or the defence of human rights; and others were imposed clumsily, as was the country's constitution or the democratic elections, which didn't correspond to the Bosnian reality, and depended highly on foreign support. By 1999, there were 1.2 million displaced persons and refugees, waiting for their relocation and posterior return. In the Republika Srpska, the return of Bosniaks represented less than a 3% of their original population (ICG, 1999; 5).

Perhaps related to this issue is the large numbers of war criminals that hid in the Republika Srpska and the Croatian community of "Herzeg-Bosna". At the time, a total number of 66 persons were indicted publicly by The Hague, which only 32 surrendered or were captured. The rest were scattered through places like Foca, Srebrenica, and Prnjavor, preventing the return of refugees from both sides and maintaining control over these areas. Ethnic segregation was also present in the army: while wearing the same patches, Bosniak and Croat would have different units and chains of command (ICG, 1999;7).

The implementation of Human Rights in the Constitution was a pending issue, because even though they were officially proclaimed, they could not survive in a climate of distrust and ethnic isolation. The balance between the three ethnic groups was carefully protected, but only as groups, and within the boundaries of their enclaves. Whoever was not Bosniak, Bosnian Serb or Bosnian Croat fell out of the equation, and it was also the case with those who actually belonged to these groups, but decided to stop doing so.

The mechanism designed to protect a multi-ethnic state turned against the idea of civil liberty and equal rights, without any kind of political, religious or cultural

discrimination. This was also reflected in the way the power was managed in the state. The joint institutions - Presidency, Parliament Assembly and Council of Ministers- did not represent the centers of power in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Instead, the two separate entities would have full control over their own armies, police, civil administration and judicial system, and formulate laws as long as they didn't contravene the Bosnian Constitution. Several government officials maintained their discrimination towards refugees and returnees, and also did the population. Abuses on one group of refugees would often be retaliated in other areas towards refugees of opposite ethnic groups, and in general the situation would affect greatly to members of minorities with no ties to the biggest nationalistic parties (ICG,1999; 25).

The key to the implementation of Dayton was the return of refugees to their pre-war homes. The annex 7 of the Peace Accord is dedicated to it, although in 1999 it was still not implemented. Several external and internal political actors were against the return of refugees, hoping to consolidate the control over ethnically cleansed areas. According to the 1999 UNHCR report on the failure of Dayton: "As of 31 August 1999, only 340,919 refugees have returned to BiH since the signing of the DPA Of these, 93.3% returned to the Federation, and only 0.7% -- 2,435 people -- were non-Serbs returning to Republika Srpska" (ICG,1999; 29).

The report emphasized the misleading nature of the returns, since many of them, up to 600.000 only moved back to areas where their ethnic armies would have under control. "A further 270,001 displaced persons "returned" to municipalities within Bosnia and Herzegovina over the same time period. Of these DPS, 70% either returned to or within the Federation. Therefore, since Dayton, a grand total of 610,920 "returns" have taken place. Given that the war displaced 2.2 million people, it would be tempting to claim a 27.8% return figure" (ICG,1999; 29).

The best way to see the whole picture is to look at the numbers of returning minorities, who would be less likely to have the means to risk traveling in areas where they would be in an ethnic disadvantage. The numbers are about 100,000 people, a 5% of all the refugees and displaced people that fled during the war. The

situation is even worse in the Republika Srpska, whereby 1999, merely 13,500 Bosniaks and Bosnian-Croatian had returned.

Return numbers between Croat and Bosniak controlled areas clearly give an advantage to the Bosniak side, where “35.3% of the 87,128 minority returns have been Serbs and Croats returning to Sarajevo Canton. These 30,747 returnees represent 30.5% of all minority returns in BiH to date. Throughout BiH, almost two out of three minority returns that have taken place since Dayton (64.7%) have been to Bosniak-controlled municipalities (65,159 people). In addition, approximately 25.3% (40,299) of the 158,952 Croat refugees and DPS from Bosniak-controlled municipalities have returned since Dayton” (ICG, 1999; 30).

“In contrast, in 1995 only 11.8% (5,317) of the 44,881 Bosniak refugees and internally displaced persons had returned to Croat-controlled municipalities in Herzegovina. In central Bosnia, the situation was slightly better, as approximately 16,652 Bosniaks had returned to Croat municipalities. The ratio of Bosniak to Croat returns is illuminating. While a total of 22,000 Bosniaks have returned to Croat-controlled municipalities, 40,000 Croats have returned in the opposite direction. Significantly, the Croat returns to Bosniak areas have taken place in spite of intense official pressure from the ruling HDZ not to return. The HDZ fears that if Croats return to Bosniak areas they will a) free up housing for Bosniaks to return to Croat areas, and b) reduce their Croat majorities in those municipalities.” (ICG, 1999; 30).

This data points out that approximately 1,189,150 people including 836,500 internally displaced people were still without a permanent housing solution 4 years after the ceasefire. The minority return supposed an alert to certain government and military actors. While Serb return to Croat areas would not signify a problem, Bosniaks returning to the Republika Srpska represented Muslim men ready to fight on Serbian soil.

The majority of returnees are old men into rural areas, who didn't represent a threat, and could be used as a beacon for international funding. The problem started when Serbs and Herzegovinian Croats signed the DPA without the intention of implementing Annex 7. The idea of sharing space with Bosniaks contradicted the

war's main point: to live in an ethnically clean state. For that, the army had a particular target: the urban elites, those educated young men who could organize their people politically and military. Of these, only a handful have returned to their previous properties in the Republika Srpska (ICG, 1999; 33).

In 2005, the United States Congress issued a report on the progress of Dayton for its 10th anniversary. Although Dayton was still regarded a success in terms of a ceasefire, the unstable state structure derived from the agreement could not ensure a working democratic state. International pressure was still present on the figure of the High Representative, despite the controversial extent of his powers. In the report, International Relations and Foreign Affairs Specialist Julie Kim points out that several U.S. specialists suggested drastic state-level solutions to tackle the fragile Bosnian state structure.

These included “creating a single Presidency instead of the current tripartite Presidency; strengthening the Prime Minister’s office; and strengthening the Bosnian Parliament” (Kim, 2005:2). The first point is remarkable because it contradicts Dayton’s concept of ethnic balance: having a single president would mean that one of the three ethnicities would wage a higher influence, and therefore an opportunity for the others to argue against it. Interestingly, other solutions such as the elimination of the two-entity state or the ban of political groups opposing Dayton had found strong opposition with the argument that they attempted against the peace accord’s ideas.

It has been suggested before that Bosnian Serbs and Croats were waiting for the appropriate moment to gain control over the country, and this situation would have been a good starting point. Most certainly, the U.S. officials’ suggestion of abolishing the two-entity state aimed towards the facilitation of international operations in the Republika Srpska, eternal opponent of Dayton’s policies, and where several top war criminals were still suspected of taking shelter in (Kim, 2005:1).

Concerning returnees, a 2004 report from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre stated that by the time the report was published, about a million of both IDP and refugees had returned to their pre-war homes, a number that represented half

the displaced people during the war: “As of December 2004, the return figure stands at approximately 1,005,000, including 565,000 internally displaced persons. Half of those who returned have done so in areas where they are in a minority. These minority returns have been among the most difficult challenges faced by the international community in its efforts to reverse the ethnic partition of the country. In that light, the overall minority return figure can be considered an achievement even though the decrease in return movement continued in 2004” (International Displaced Monitoring Centre, 2005:9).

The numbers returning to places where they did not belong to a dominant ethnic group were slight, although the report states that these particular returns were to the areas worst hit by the ethnic cleansing during the war, such as Srebrenica, Bratunac, and Zvornik. These people lived in precarious conditions, most of the time in a situation of poverty, often without proper housing solutions.

Additionally, the labor market faced strong discrimination problems, based on the ethnicity of the applicants, but also on political affiliation, birthplace, and gender. However, physical violence became a rarity, although the police and judiciary system kept a slow pace. One of the biggest problems of returnees was the existence of minefields along the countryside, hindering the development of agriculture and livestock breeding. Floods and corruption slowed the process of clearing these devices, as well as insufficient funds allocated for this purpose (IDMC, 2004:74).

Oliver Richmond and Jason Franks (2009) described the Bosnian political and societal situation as a complete deadlock, preventing any move to solve the country’s pressing needs. The barriers raised to protect, but also to separate the three ethnic groups now prevent the country from moving forward. The pre-war society was intrinsically multi-ethnic at the lowest levels, often among families. The breakdown of war not only separated communities, but also family members; forcing children to choose allegiances.

The ethnic problem was far deeper than the Dayton’s engineers predicted, and formed a temporary peace, but an unfortunate long-term solution. Past the failure of the creation of a functioning state, which institutionalized ethnic divisions and

lingered the recuperation of the country, there was some hope for the enlargement of the European Union as a means to bring the liberal democratic ideals into a factual reality.

Still, there were several opinions that deemed a constitutional change necessary to take that approach, even though it would face a fierce resistance from local powers. The Bosnian political sphere was so intrinsically ethnic that the European Union's Venice Commission deemed in 2004 that it partially violated human rights. The attempts to change this situation have been constantly delayed or diverted, opposed by the local elites (Richmond & Franks, 2009:64).

In 2010, the European Union elaborated a document analyzing the candidacy of countries in the West Balkans that had applied for membership. Bosnia-Herzegovina was deemed as a problematic candidate due to social, political and economic issues. Despite the efforts of international actors, there were several incompatibilities between Bosnia's constitution and the European Convention on human rights.

Some of them are ethnic and religious discrimination against those who belong outside the three main ethnic groups; limiting the freedom of expression, assembly, and media; failure to prosecute war criminals; and mistreatment of prisoners and foreign nationals, among others.

The country needed to be considered able to implement and enforce EU rules for the candidacy, or else it would not be accepted "Respect for democratic principles and the right to equal treatment without discrimination, as embodied in the ECHR, constitutes an essential element of the Interim Agreement." (UN, 2010:41).

There was a recognition of the country's efforts to promote regional reconciliation, cooperation and refugee return, but the prevalence of ethnic-oriented issues in legal and executive bodies still blocked the process for EU-related reforms and a further progression towards an EU membership. The refugee return was still a country-wide strategy, although the local integration and the sustainable livelihoods represented a concern, and there was a new actor: The Roma population was facing hard living conditions and discrimination (United Nations, 2010:49).

By December 2013, the remaining number of IDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina was still around 103,000. The majority of them lived in private accommodation, but there were still some eight thousand living in collective centers. The conditions were particularly hard for minorities outside of the three main ethnic groups, such as Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian, who live in informal settlements and in particularly dire situations.

Addressing these questions, international organizations continued to provide funding for regional housing programs, as well as psychological support for victims of the conflict. Nevertheless, the return of IDPs has been stalling in the last years, and the slow judicial system impairs survivors of wartime violence, especially sexual violence, that find themselves as responsible for a household but without the necessary resources to maintain it, and became victims of sexual trafficking. Some of the obstacles identified by returnees are the lack of jobs, a cross-entity legislation on social welfare, the presence of landmines, poor access to health care and destroyed housing (IMDC, 2013).

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The third chapter of this master's thesis focuses on presenting the theoretical framework that will be used during the analysis. It is important to clarify that our case study, the organization Trenkalòs, started with an unclear or almost inexistent theoretical background, later enlarged and improved both by the experience in the field, the organizer's personal research and the addition to personnel with experience both in the field and in academia.

Nevertheless, I will argue later that this issue did not undermine the effectiveness of their activities, especially due to the volume and the reach of the initial missions, which focused on providing the most basic needs of the population. The structure of the presented literature is not particularly important, but it reflects a particular point in service learning: the balance of outcome between the server and the receiver. All the points presented can be interrelated or were used in conjunction with the analysis of the organization in both countries.

Having briefly looked at Trenkalòs' activities, one can argue that their case is singular. They claim to have not followed some of the usual practices of mainstream NGO active after the Bosnian War, organizing several little-scale, short-lived, but continuous self-funded projects; that created a strong connection with local communities. This triggered a change in the organization, whose volunteers slowly gained a set of skills (logistic, administrative, pedagogical, historical, peace-related, among others), which allowed them to aim for bigger projects, without losing their grassroots nature. This chapter aims to present the theoretical framework that will be used later in the analysis of the case study.

This examples contrast with other NGO, as their projects were bigger and more marketable. For example, the creation of volunteer centers, repairing or creating new infrastructures, or providing mass amounts of aid were commonplace. The difference here lays in how these resources were used, and for how long. A great investment

can result in new and modern-looking schools or hospitals, but if there are no children to attend the school, or the state cannot afford to maintain the hospitals, these investments go to waste.

In a similar way, distributing aid uniformly can seem very positive; but in a post-war scenario, focusing efforts towards those who are capable of rebuilding and leading communities might be more profitable in a long term than to spread the efforts in one or two waves, which is more expensive and can be perceived only as tokens to buy sympathies.

The following sections will be presenting different theoretical frameworks to frame our case study. These are Local-Hybrid Peacebuilding, Service Learning, and Peace Education. The state building project organized by the international community was keen on importing western models of security, justice, and law to the Balkan country. To fulfill these ideals, the UN representatives focused in high educated elites, such as teachers, lawyers, journalists, intellectuals, and academics; to develop top-down community-building initiatives (Chandler, 1999; 140).

This created a situation where urbanites with international standards would design programs for rural areas, sometimes ignoring the large differences between the two (Rodrigo, 2015). This, added to the presence of corruption and the lack of collaboration between the central government and officials in the Republika Srpska, limited in a great manner the application of community-building projects, or the maintenance of those developed prior by international NGOs.

An overview of the theoretical ideas of the NGO Trenkalòs

The ideas of a bottom-up peace, based on listening to the needs of the local communities and providing them tools of agency, arrived with the first missions of Trenkalòs. Although the NGO's agenda was not based on a strong academic background, they used concepts that are part of hybrid peace, peace formation and popular peace to achieve some of their peacebuilding activities. The example of service learning is strongly present after the transformation of Trenkalòs in 2005, due to the change in the needs of the population.

As a service learning agency, the NGO would recruit volunteers from middle-high class backgrounds in Catalonia to travel to Bosnia as working force and psychological support. This concept circles around an exchange between the server and the served. The youngsters would learn about the country, its history, its war, the peacebuilding process, and its effects on the people. The idea was that a firsthand experience would shake the foundations of the comfortable, perhaps naïve world of the volunteers, to show an alternative reality where whole generations were left in stasis, without a future.

The third and last practice is peace education, which focuses on changing the mentality of violence-based societies to peaceful ones. Although it is perhaps harder to attribute Trenkalòs an educational campaign in Bosnia, their work in Catalonia is no doubt impressive. As one of the few organizations that were consistent in visiting Bosnia-Herzegovina and capturing the realities of the population, they had firsthand anecdotes and stories to effectively engage with the public.

These three theories are strongly interrelated, and perhaps as a trifecta, they would not be suitable for many peace-needing situations, but here they align to create a singular synergistic situation. Perhaps these concepts can be subjected to critic, since some of the flaws of liberal peace transcend in service-learning and peace education, such as the predominance of paternalistic ideals, the idea that the western structures are the only peaceful ones, and therefore non-western individuals are conflict-prone, and the negative peace outcomes intervened countries usually reach. Besides, theories are always subjected to the imperfection of the human hand, the inability to break stalemates, reach positive zero sum agreements, and overcome the weariness of prolonged effort in conflict-struck countries.

Liberal Peacebuilding

What is Local-Hybrid Peacebuilding

Brought up as a critic of liberal peacebuilding, the fourth generation of peace practitioners call for a local, flexible bottom-up approaches to peace and state building (Chandler, 2010; Mac Ginty, 2010; Belloni, 2010, Roberts, 2011; Richmond,2013). The term was first brought up as hybrid peace, due to its nature of combining international/liberal and local/western actors, methods and efforts to achieve positive peace (Richmond, 2001:331). Hybrid peace is described by Robert Belloni (2010) as a situation where “liberal and illiberal norms, institutions and actors coexist” (Belloni, 2010:22).

Oliver Richmond (2015) develops this explanation by adding a geopolitical prism: “(Hybrid Peace) represent an intersubjective mediation between local and international scales and norms, institutions, law, right, needs and interests[...] they develop through a tense process of hybrid politics, whereby various local factions and international norms and interests remain opposed in a hybrid negative peace arrangement, until an accommodation is reached that advances both local and international legitimacy” (Richmond, 2015:51).

This is the case in the majority of conflicts where international institutions intervene. Richmond recognizes the capacity of negative peace to take international structures into national frameworks but observes that the real intent is to achieve positive hybrid peace, which challenges social injustice and local legitimacy. This allows him to criticize the elitist views of neoliberalism, while hybrid peace considers the universal capacity of every citizen to make a real change in society (Richmond, 2015:51).

Several authors attribute the creation of this line of thought as a reaction from observing the flaws of liberal peacebuilding, especially regarding its westernizing and paternalistic attitude (Richmond, 2001:331; Mac Ginty, 2010:392; Belloni, 2012:23). Roger Mac Ginty especially mentions that when liberal peace practitioners introduce policies in intervened countries, they can enter into conflict with traditional or already

established local dynamics, creating an incompatibility and generating rejection (Mac Ginty, 2010:393).

One example of this situation is the pre-war multi-ethnic Bosnia, in which multiculturalism was deeply enmeshed in society. The ethnic cleansing first destroyed this balance, but the international community, believing that Bosnians of all ethnic groups were incapable of reaching peaceful resolutions, separated them in different regions. This prevented violence. but at the same time averted any positive contact among them, and highly hindered refugee return (Richmond and Franks, 2015:69).

Belloni argues that Western influences over local political and social forces are difficult to separate. He means that with globalization, the original or indigenous positions have gradually become hybridized, stopping to be fully homogenous. It is also the case of countries affected by international intervention, which has already become part of the global political and economic map (Belloni, 2010:23). Mac Ginty asserts that a common belief among western governments and international organizations is that "liberalism is intrinsically peace-promoting".

Since liberal states do not wage war with each other, this is quickly assumed that applying liberalism to warring states will cease any future hostilities. This premise allows individuals and states to believe in the superiority of their system compared to others and displaces the perception of citizens in warring countries from neutral bodies to victims or less developed individuals (Mac Ginty, 2010:394).

Mac Ginty and Belloni both point out the central irony of liberal peacebuilding: "the usage of illiberal means in the promotion of liberal values" (Mac Ginty, 2010:395; Belloni, 2010:23), equating liberal peace to negative peace, considering sufficient any cease of hostilities without the need of a deep structural change. Richmond & Franks exemplify this situation as the paradox where the international institutions pretend to reach a liberal agenda while seizing the control of the peacebuilding process (Richmond & Franks, 2015:57).

Mac Ginty and Belloni also criticize the uneven share of the incentives of this practice, which often clashes with the different layers in society. Power usually

resides in leaders and oligarchs, while common citizens see very few benefits. An example is the United Nations' High Representative in Bosnia, who has been criticized for holding a quasi-colonial rule over the country.

Mac Ginty then targets the promotion of western values and the free market, protecting the private sector in detriment of the common good; hence criticizing the assumption that replicating western-style governments in post-conflict countries will overcome any past grievances, falling into the trap of creating a generic state sustained on theoretical solutions, that often diverge from the real needs of the population (Mac Ginty, 2010:395).

In a previous article, Richmond argues that while liberal conflict-ending processes are presented positively, what they seek is to preserve the international order, a strategy that assesses aggressive implementation and expires once the external powers withdraw (Richmond, 2001:336). It also creates a situation of dependency: liberal peace is ideally a tool to help citizens rebuild a state with a democratic system and a set of laws derived from western models.

But if the appointed government does not reach agreements that help these ideals prosper; there are sectors of society that resist their implementation; or in essence, there is the future possibility of conflict relapse, intervenors are forced to stay (especially for their international reputation) to maintain the status quo, thus reaching the stalemate of negative peace.

Hybridity

Mac Ginty describes hybridity as altering the idea of state homogeneity. Presenting it this way offers the possibility to look at a society as a diluted entity, with no national and cultural anxieties. Instead of hybrid in a sense of weakness or adulteration, the idea is to have a multicultural society that lends and borrows within itself.

The author hence describes society as a fluid entity that continuously evolves, even in isolated cases. Avoiding the idea of pure societies allows us to move away from binary descriptions (us/them, good/evil), which are over simplistic and may project misguided ideas of other human beings.

Understanding society as this hybrid and dynamic entity offers a different perspective of social and political actors and groups, with disregard on their scale and social stratum (Mac Ginty, 2010:397). Since no one is “pure”, the idea of western/liberal peace as the only peace-generating social structure loses weight, and new ideas can come into consideration.

The ability to reach a hybrid peace is limited by many variables, from every different actor involved in the peace process. One of these is the capacity of the host society to resist, ignore, subvert or adapt liberal peace interventions. This power to resist is highly important when considering the agency of local actors in peacebuilding, especially when they depart from already existing and effective structures and norms.

Besides, resisting the international effort of transformation towards the liberal model can be difficult to resist, since these powers are often unrivaled both politically, economically and militarily. Mac Ginty’s last argument is the difficult task of recognizing and approaching with the many parts that would form a hybrid peace “multiple actors interacting on multiple issues, with no guarantee of consistency on the part of actors, actions, and reactions”. He concludes that hybrid peace is a dynamic model, with different factors “interacting to constrain and distort the activities of the others” (Mac Ginty, 2010:408).

Belloni argues that “three major forms of hybrid peace governance can be identified along the liberal-illiberal peace axis”; with governments investing in local traditional forms of governance, such as chiefdoms and kingdoms; non-state organizations, e.g. elder councils formally integrated in state structures; and liberal institutions being ruled by violent non-state actors or organizations, that act for their own benefit in detriment of the whole society (Belloni, 2010:26). Interestingly enough, most of the situations mentioned above accomplish negative peace, similarly to the majority of liberal state building attempts. This situation calls for a revision of the critic, the limits of hybrid peace.

Alternative approaches of hybrid peacebuilding

What is Peace Formation?

Critics of the nomenclature of hybrid peace processes have argued that in practice, every peacebuilding effort is hybrid (Laffey & Nadarajah, 2012:404). Therefore, Oliver Richmond offers an alternative name: peace formation, “where indigenous or local agents of peacebuilding, conflict resolution or development, in customary, religious, cultural, social, local political or local government settings, find ways of establishing peace processes and dynamic local forms of peace, which are also constitutive of their state” (Richmond, 2013:383).

Richmond argues that these processes are conducted by subalterns, a postcolonial term that refers to the population outside of the hegemonic power structures. These actors focus on the prevention of violence by non-violent means, and the modernization of local identities and political institutions. They often reach out for international bodies and actors, as they see political figures as influential game changers (Richmond, 2013:380).

Several authors discuss that every day, individual efforts are key to reach peace, since they deal with the needs of the population, the most important actors for a successful peace (Richmond & Mitchell, 2011:2; Roberts, 2011:2538). Richmond establishes that peace formation tries to understand the local formation of peace, subtle peace practices that the society creates to react to the conflict it experiences (Richmond, 2013:384).

The author highlights the importance of peace formation in the sense that is a localized process that transcends regions and borders to reach international bodies, creating local agency in the peace process. This implies the creation of a local, disembodied stakeholder that can influence concepts of liberal peace, enhance democratic participation and international organizations.

Understanding local actors as power holders originates a debate towards the unitary, hierarchical nature of international relationships, and the possibility of a non-liberal actor to affect said structures (Richmond, 2013:392). The author exemplifies this by

describing 'patchwork' structures, social networks in the Balkans where individuals aid each other in matters of care, jobs, health or identity among others.

As Belloni points out, "examples of specific war-torn states like Iraq, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Democratic Republic of Congo confirm, different national sectors frequently hold a wide range of interests and affiliations (Belloni, 2010:28). Although these systems may have been affected or completely destroyed by the conflict, forms of kinship or common understanding may remain. However, Richmond argues that these processes need international and state support, converging local and international legitimacy, thus forming a self-feeding cycle (Richmond, 2013:393).

What is Popular Peace?

David Roberts (2011) describes local peace practices where unprivileged actors are recognized, and discourses and practices of hierarchical domination are removed in an absolute fashion. This way, locals are empowered and the decisions and choices they make "render ownership, participation and stake holding relevant to them and meaningful" (Roberts, 2011:2538).

This is the foundation of the concept of emancipatory or popular peace, a tool of liberation from established generic models designed and imposed from external sources. Here the author revisits the already mentioned concept of the everyday, the way in which people react and resist their environments and manage the gaps between external constraints and personal aspirations (Roberts, 2011:2541). To provide this liberation, popular peace observes and highlights the everyday needs of the local population, which are then enabled by international actors with concurring interests in creating a stable peace.

Roberts elaborates this argument with examples, like the case of a local community in Cambodia that had the resources for water filters available but lacked the technology, which was later provided by a UN peace corps (Roberts, 2011:2549). The author further argues that the knowledge can be easily found in NGOs and INGOs, which can provide either supplies or technology to the local communities if they are aware of their needs.

He rejects the idea of imposing the technology, rather softly introducing concepts, like the relationship between waterborne microbes and related illnesses, and then let the community decide to take the external aid or not (Roberts, 2011:2551). The placeholder of the agency here is very important for the future implications and decisions the community will take on their own, especially since it avoids a relationship of dependence between the organization and the community.

A flawed concept? Negative or Positive Hybrid Peacebuilding?

Hybrid peacebuilding is not flawless. In fact, the combination of different models, fluent but slow by nature, can be volatile when forced down. Belloni (2010) considers the static nature of conservative and traditional systems, that aim for self-preservation. This could mean that if society is experiencing a change but the state structures do not, violence can erupt in order to repress it. The events occurred during the Arab Spring between 2010 and 2012 are examples of that.

Another example is that of states suffering from traditional widespread corruption, where political support can be bought. The application of hybrid peace models can alter the political status quo, and turn into top-down state repression (Belloni,2010:33). Roberts arguments that there are two principal issues with local-hybrid peacebuilding: The vulnerability of the process to local corruption and the extent to which international donors will cede control over the process, especially when they are bound to be held accountable at home. (Roberts, 2013:2553).

Richmond (2015) looks at hybrid peace criticism with a list of dilemmas that are inherent in this doctrine. Questions like the primacy of needs over rights, local legitimacy over state laws, agency of peace in local or international actors, or the societal level international peacemakers have to help first; provoke a steady need for dialogue and negotiation between the different actors.

As he argues, peace negotiations can easily lean towards negative hybrid peace, or hybrid politics, since the international actors' preferences dictate the demands. To

reach a positive hybrid peace it would be needed to identify the everyday needs and realities of the population.

This way, Richmond criticizes calling any form of oppressive policy or organization as a hybrid form of peace, since these are far from empathetic and emancipatory. “These situations represent hybrid politics leading to, at best, a negative hybrid peace, where elite or certain groups interests are maintained, even if mitigated by wider societal interests” (Richmond, 2015:63).

To reach a positive form of hybrid peace it may be required to legitimize the peace process together among local, regional and international actors. To achieve this state there has to be a steady equilibrium of power between the three, and these are incompatible with nationalism, radical social stratification and neo-colonial mindsets (Richmond, 2015:64).

Service Learning

What is service learning?

A simple definition of service learning would be a volunteer-based activity that aims to help a disadvantaged community in order to create a reciprocal advantage. Several authors either expand or narrow this definition, based on John Dewey’s experiential learning theory. For example, in Thomas Ehrlich (1996) focuses on the link between academic study and community service, and how they reinforce each other by the use of experiential rather than theoretical knowledge. He also mentions problem resolution as a step towards the application of complex ideas, which derives in the capacity of resolving even more complex problems (Ehrlich,1996:2).

Bringle and Hatcher (1995) emphasize the role of experiential learning on university students, as a tool of reflection and civic duty (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995:1). Perhaps Furco’s explanation and consequent model are the most suitable for a common definition of this practice: “Service-learning seeks to engage individuals in activities that combine both community service and academic learning. Because service-learning programs are typically rooted in formal courses (core academic, elective, or

vocational), the service activities are usually based on particular curricular concepts that are being taught.” (Furco, 2002:25).

The lack of a consensus on the definition across several United States’ universities and countries that adopted this practice since the beginning of the 1980’s provoked some confusion and misinterpretation of the terms *service learning*, *community service*, *civic engagement*, and similar practices that involved volunteering and

FIGURE 1: A SERVICE AND LEARNING TYPOLOGY (Sigmon, 1994)

service-LEARNING:	Learning goals primary; service outcomes secondary
SERVICE-learning:	Service outcomes primary; learning goals secondary
service learning:	Service and learning goals completely separate
SERVICE-LEARNING:	Service and learning goals of equal weight and each enhances the other for all participants

apprenticeship (Furco, 1996:2-6). To offer a temporary solution, Robert Sigmon (1994) designed a model that would facilitate the keys to a proper definition (Fig.1). The purpose of his model was not only helpful in providing criteria to differentiate service learning from other types of altruistic activities, but also in providing a basis for clarifying distinctions among different types of service-oriented experiential education programs (Furco, 1996, 3).

Fig. 1

Based on Sigmon’s conceptions, Andrew Furco designed a visual model (Fig. 2) that would further help distinguish service-learning from other forms of voluntary work in academia, such as community service or an internship, as well as indicate the receiver of the outcome and the purpose of the activity. Furco distributes each activity in a certain range of points on the continuum, outlining the idea that even being close to another, every program has its unique characteristics. “It is that ability to distinguish among these service program types that allows us to move closer toward a universal definition of service-learning” (Furco, 1996:3).

Furco reflects on the incomplete nature of his model, besides bringing assistance to a more precise definition of service learning. The areas where different activities collide might be a source for future misinterpretation, but the author argues that experiential education is fluid and that every altruistic program can slide along the continuum. The author concludes that the key to distinguishing a service-learning program from other experiential programs is to identify what is its focus, and who is benefitting from it (Furco, 1996:4).

FIGURE 2: DISTINCTIONS AMONG SERVICE PROGRAMS

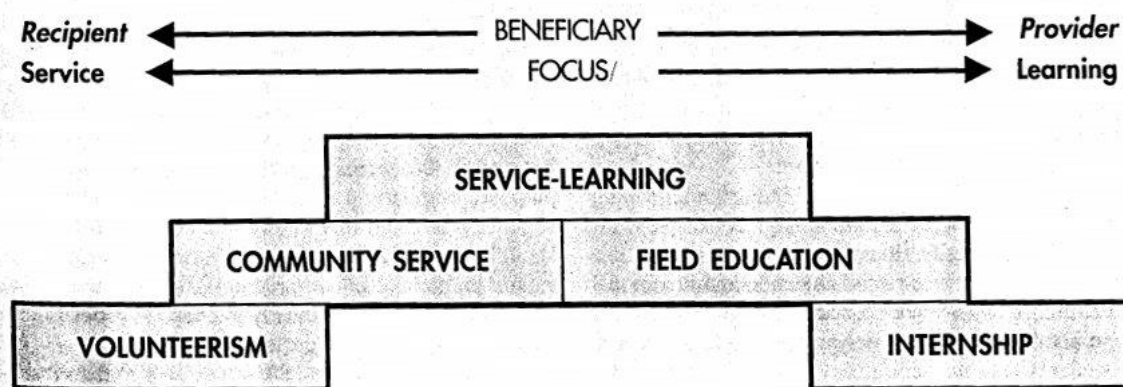


Fig.2

Source: Furco, 1996, p.3.

Furco’s model has been used by several scholars as well as Sigmund’s to elaborate on the nature of service learning and its differentiation from other activities. For example, although community service is close to service learning, since it inherently provides a service in exchange of a better understanding of a community problem, Barbara Jacoby (2014) distinguishes it as it does not necessary include reflection and may lack academic credibility, as well as the term being tainted for being related to a court sentence.

The author defines service learning as explicitly “designed to promote learning about the historical, sociological, cultural, economic and political context that underlie the needs or issues the students address” (Jacoby, 2014:3). She recognizes reciprocity as an intrinsic part of service learning, viewing the institution and the community as both assets and needs.

This implies that when designing a project, it should be planned with the community, and addressing the needs the community identifies (Jacoby, 2014:6). Jacoby also reflects on the usage of the word service, since it fails to address this sense of reciprocity, it essentially involves an asymmetric effort by one of the parts involved in service learning. Moreover, for some communities that have undergone forms of abuse and oppression, service still entails forced servitude (Jacoby, 2014:10).

Benefits of service learning

Barbara Jacoby (2014) quotes George Kuh's (2008) description of the benefits of Service Learning, as a beneficial, high-impact educational practice. This kind of program is particularly efficient in motivating participants, who invest time and effort in order to engage with people from very different backgrounds, experience challenging learning inputs, interact with faculty and fellow students and discover the importance of their studies in a real world scenario (Jacoby, 2014:11).

The author offers her perspective on service learning benefits: "Students who participate in high-quality service-learning have the opportunity to see and act on the problems individuals and communities face, engage in dialogue and problem-solving with the people most affected, and observe firsthand the effects of racism, sexism, poverty, and oppression." (Jacoby, 2014:11)

Jacoby also examines students' reflections on their field experiences, as a key part of service learning. The attitudinal shift (or the lack of it), provoked by their participation is highly important to understand and analyze the usefulness of this practice. The author dubs this process as flourishing, a development towards a social and psychological well-being.

This realization of the practical uses of the theory learned in class result in a personal growth and a better understanding of the complexity of the social fabric, easing the path of becoming less a part of the problem and more a part of the solution. It frequently encourages the practice of volunteering, and increases

understanding of different cultures and racial issues, promoting open-mindedness (Jacoby, 2014:11).

Sara Grusky offers a more educational-focused approach to students' benefits, such as the ties between the classroom abstract subjects ["theories of economic and political development, concepts of citizenship, political participation and participatory democracy, trade liberalization policies, sustainable development models, grassroots social movement organizations..."] (Grusky, 2000:856)] into real life concerns. She adds that the possibility of living in a distinct political structure, with local families and their realities, is an invaluable experience to understand these concepts and stem profound questions.

Even in a situation where a student only gain would be to be exposed to societal realities that might be invisible in his or her daily life, the author sees an opportunity to overcome arrogance and pose fundamental questions on the nature of service learning, and to improve partnerships between agency and community. This inquiry might cause a chain effect to students, providing a precedent to question deeply-rooted assumptions of western societal dynamics, like the effect of high standards of life in powerful countries towards disadvantaged countries.

"The question "Why are so many people in this situation?" needs to be answered. Student attitudes that simplistically blame individuals for their poverty need to be addressed. Connections should be made between government policies (that may have been conditioned for receiving IMF or World bank loans) and the impact of these policies on peasants or workers struggling to make a living. Much less analysis has been done on the impact on the collaborating communities, programs, and agencies" (Grusky, 2000, 860).

Critiques of service learning

As it has already been stated, service learning is often a flawed practice. The balance between service and learning is sometimes broken in favor of one group or the other, and cultural mannerisms, paternalism or ignorance can produce fairly negative outcomes for all participants.

As Grusky states it: “Without thoughtful preparation, orientation, program development and the encouragement of study, and critical analysis and reflection, the programs can easily become small theaters that recreate historic cultural misunderstandings and simplistic stereotypes and replay, on a more intimate scale, the huge disparities in income and opportunity that characterize North-South relations today” (Grusky, 2000:858). A usual critique on the supposed benefits of service learning on volunteers is that the results are measured through student self-reflection reports, instead of using an independent method for each specific class (Giles & Eyler, 1998:67).

This method may even differ from one institution to another, which could provide misleading results. One of the flaws of service learning is the tendency to prioritize the needs of the students before those of the community members. It is also the case when it comes to the research of the benefits of this practice since there is a scarcity of research on the benefits in the community, especially compared to the amount dedicated to the students.

The positive outcomes are often focused on material achievements, such as imported technology, advancement towards the organization’s goals, post-conflict reconstruction, monetary investments; but also new problem-solving methods and networking with and among affected communities (Jacoby, 2014:11; Mitchell, 2008:57).

Giles and Eyler (1996) argue that there is an increment on the data recollection from service learning projects concerning the services are given to the community, but there is little evidence of the involvement of the community in these enterprises, or enough effort in stimulating students’ self-reflection (Giles & Eyler, 1998:68) Other examples, such as the exploitation of disadvantaged communities as a free source of student education, the perpetuation of stereotypes derived from a paternalistic perception towards charity and disadvantaged communities, and the disconnection between classroom and field work; enlighten the need for a new approach towards service learning.

Other questions, such as the impact of service learning at the community level, challenges on the implementation of the programs, and examples of the implication of local actors in service learning programs, still require further research (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009:4). Mitchell (2008) argues that involving students in activities that actually involve social change implies that teachers and practitioners might need to step out of the traditional benefic and community-based organizations, to work in collaboration with active political entities that fight against social injustice.

This point is particularly sensitive since there is a risk to fall into indoctrination (Mitchell, 2008:54-56). The author also indicates the importance of the relationship between the students and the community, and how this can be somehow polarized: sometimes there is an emphasis on the differences between the two, and in some other times, the agency tries to force similarities between the two groups to quickly cultivate a relationship.

Mitchell argues that the students must be aware of these two, and reflect on how they affect their relationship towards the community (Mitchell, 2008:59). This is especially important when considering the extent of their influence in the community, a power they hold, sometimes unknowingly, as representatives of more privileged strata of society. Being able to reach this balance has a lot to do with the long-time effects of the service-learning activities.

As Mitchell argues, combating social injustice is not something that is resolved in one semester. Continuity is key to maintain a relationship, and proof that there is an authentic effort from academia to the community. This authenticity is established by reaching an equal level of dialogue, avoiding arrogant or pandering attitudes, and establishing a line of work where students are periodically engaged and involved in the work of the service agency. Therefore, long-term cooperation between service institutions and communities should be the goal for critical service learning (Mitchell, 2008:60).

Peace Education

What is Peace Education?

Ian Harris (2004) describes peace education as a way to study violence “in all its manifestations and educating to counteract the war system for the creation of a peace system- a peace system on both the structural and international level” (Harris, 2004:5).

Harris suggests that instead of reinforcing the hegemonic structure of historical and social problems, solved by war and dispute, all manners of professionals that deal with the education of the new generations should focus on pointing out the problems of violence, and offer their pupils strategies for peace. Hossain B. Danesh (2006) also criticizes this issue: “Current education revolves around conflict, violence, and war, through example of ethnic and national heroes and leaders and through mass media[...] However, issues of coexistence, interdependence, and cooperation-factors that are the core of both formation and maintenance of life- are often given less attention and credence.” (Danesh, 2006:57)

Addressing the issues of conflict and offering peaceful solutions to these problems is presented by the author as an empowering tool to redress violent situations. In school's environments, these ideas reinforce the sense of belonging to a bigger social group and strengthen human relations.

Harris describes different theories of peace education, although all have a resemblance or are interrelated: “International education, human rights education, development education, environmental education and conflict resolution education[...]They have in common the attempt to explain different forms of violence and provide information about alternatives to violence” (Harris, 2004:6).

Peace education explains what peace is, why is absent and how to attain it. It also provides a skill set on non-violent conflict resolutions and peaceful attitudes. It offers both a practical and a conceptual challenge, e.g. the student's relation towards him

or herself and others, but also towards the environment: social structures, nature, family, both local and internationally.

This distinct dimensions, or spheres, are important towards the scale of the activities and its classification: it's different to deal with a mono-ethnic community with an economical source of violence than a multi-ethnic, interfaith conflict. The standards of peace will be different depending on which kind of society the conflict is located in (Harris, 2004:7).

This is particularly unattractive to those who challenge social injustice, who prefer the label conflict resolution but repel the idea of an all-peaceful society. Peace has other controversial connotations, such as negative peace, without any further improvement in social improvement; or the linkage to religious ideas that might not be as attractive to secular practitioners (Harris, 2004:8).

International education cherishes education as the only way to achieve peace, therefore seeking for understanding and common values to reach peaceful agreements. This branch of peace education relies on the study of different cultures and the development of a tolerant society which is less conflict prone. It aims to create a sense of belonging to a global society and improve the empathic skills of the pupils (Harris, 2004:10).

Human rights education seeks to protect the basic rights of all people, eliminating the differences created by society and thus eliminating stereotypes and opening dialogue between different groups. Exclusion and discrimination are topics especially tackled, and identity is a key factor since it is identified as the reason for conflict. Practitioners of this branch are especially focused on replacing the enemy images to promote mutual understanding and deal with atrocities committed in intractable conflicts (Harris, 2004:11).

Development education is based on based on Johan Galtung's works. The distinction between positive and negative peace is key to understand this extension of peace education since it focuses on the benefits of positive peace as a future conflict prevention. As Harris points out: "Positive peace requires both the adoption

of a set of beliefs by individuals and the presence of social institutions that provide for an equitable distribution of resources and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Galtung also pointed out how structural violence, the inequitable denial of resources, causes violence” (Harris, 2004:11).

The rush of modernity promoted by corporate elites creates different forms of structural violence, that need to be identified and studied, to produce societal bodies able to cope with them. This process needs the implication of common people, usually the ones most affected by this sort of violence, and therefore the most suited to attain this task. Developmental education is controversial because it improves and grows with the presence of social injustice.

Environmental peace education is based on the connection between society and its natural habitat, how they interact, affect and depend on each other. It is the task of its promoters to increase awareness of these issues and provide strategies to cushion the noxious effects originated by poor waste management, pollution, abuse of fossil resources or deforestation.

Finally, conflict resolution focuses on the causes of violence, especially among children, by exposing the benefits of cooperation and open-mindedness, and counter hostile behaviors learned in the broader culture. Prevention of violence and encouragement of dialogue to resolve disputes are skills often found in this branch, especially on youth consumers of mass media with violent content, who might not know how to process it (Harris, 2004:12-13).

As stated before, many of these branches are interrelated or include similar concepts in their programs. Harris argues that the struggle for peace is both at the hands of individuals and society: “In contrast to conservatives, who see the origins of the problems of violence lying in the individual, peace educator sees the root problem of violence lying in broader social forces and institutions that must be addressed in order to achieve peace. Although peace education is mostly an individual strategy, many of the non-violent strategies that are espoused in peace education classes are themselves collective” (Harris, 2004:14).

Hossain Danesh presents intergroup, all-integrative, non-discriminating education as a basis for a peaceful education, and distinguishes four pillars of thought in peace education: changing the mindset, cultivating a set of skills, promoting human rights, and defending the environment.

The author argues that the best application for peace education is to use it as a framework for the general curricula, implemented in all fields to create a peaceful civilization. He argues that the field of peace education is not one suitable to create new guidelines, but to identify the negative guidelines currently present in education.

A peaceful environment cannot be reached with violent foundations (Danesh, 2006:59). In his article, *Towards an integrative theory of peace education*, Danesh mentions the implementation of an EFP (Education for Peace) curriculum in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This program focused on gradually removing the sense of fear and resentment among the different ethnic groups that were represented in the school by the teachers and their students, and indirectly, their parents. Danesh describes several activities that the program included: “Conceptual and cognitive instructions; creative and artistic presentations; meaningful, effective and sustained dialogue; complete transparency and openness; and full appreciation and profound respect for the rich and unique cultural heritage of all participants” (Danesh, 2006:61).

According to the author, these activities triggered a reaction in the participants, allowing them to slowly open to discussing the physical and psychological wounds that the war inflicted on themselves and their families. This is especially important due to the differentiation of curricula caused by segregation and indoctrination.

Danesh later argues that peace can be attained when the unity or “oneness” of humankind and its diversity is celebrated (Danesh, 2006:69). This is particularly interesting, because as it has been mentioned earlier, liberal peace and hybrid peace revolve around homogenous/heterogeneous societies.

As liberal peace questions the dichotomies good/evil, us/others; and hybrid peace celebrates the combination of these two, challenging the homogenization of society. Although peace education's ideas could appear as being heavily influenced by liberal peace, here Danesh presents an idea that resides strongly in positive hybrid peace, and could be announced as celebrating homogeneity at the same time as heterogeneity.

Critiques of Peace Education

Peace Education has certain flaws. Its historical link to religion, the lack of a unified nomenclature, a universal model, and sometimes the need of conflict as a motivator (Bar-Tal, 2002:27-36). This inexactitude is reflected in the considerable difference among different programs around the world, which contain different aims, ideas, highlights, curricula, subjects and procedures. Bar-Tal argues that even being so different, they all have a single purpose, and that is to provoke changes that aim to build a better future.

This process goes through strongly diminishing violence and its derivatives, such as prejudice, environmental destruction or abuse of human rights (Bar-Tal, 2002:30). But the extent of this alteration is highly tied to society. Bar-Tal indicates that peace education can be seen as a reflection of the political, economic and social agenda for a certain society, and therefore a reaction to the injustices these policies have on it.

The author identifies this as a main reason for the diversity of peace education programs around the world: different societies, distinct needs, divergent solutions. Since to design a peace education program in a democratic society there is a need of a consensual agreement agreed by a political party, a certain agenda can seem inadequate to certain groups, that may see the application of pro-peace curricula as a threat to the establishment, nationalisms, cultural values... And create an opposition to it (Bar-Tal, 2002:31-32).

Another negative possibility is the potential indoctrination derived from this kind of education. There is a need to keep an open, critical mind, to promote creativity and rational thought. Finally, there is a difficulty in evaluating the achievements of peace

education, since values and attitudes are hardly accountable. Traditional means of evaluation do not work in this particular case.

There is a need for teachers to craft alternative evaluation systems, to record peace education's benefits, and eventually select the best programs. Bar-Tal concludes with a reflection on the elusiveness of peace education, that "attempts to develop a particular frame of mind, rather than transmitting a body of knowledge" (Bar-Tal, 2002:37). It is therefore very different from traditional forms of education, and perhaps needs flexible and creative forms of teaching and evaluation.

Chapter 5: Trenkalòs as a case study

Introduction

To answer the research question presented in the previous chapters, there is a need to run a thorough analysis of activities carried by the non-profit organization Trenkalòs during their almost twenty years of active work in Bosnia & Herzegovina. This decision was taken because they represent an unusual example of peacebuilding and international grassroots volunteering, perhaps an example of positive hybrid peace practice. For that purpose, the theory presented above should be sufficient to describe the extent of their peace-related activities.

The Organization

Trenkalòs was a non-governmental organization created in 1997 in Barcelona, by Jordi Rodrigo and Marta Catalan. The original intent of the association was to expose the situation of post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina to the population in Catalonia, especially to students. Despite having been a very recent and proximate conflict, the awareness of society on subjects such as the existence of refugee camps or the impact of anti-personnel mines was almost non-existent.

Their first tour to post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina was during the winter of 1997 and constituted of two volunteers and a private car. This early approach aimed to gather photographic and audiovisual material in order to capture the effects of war, apprise the population and encourage participation and solidarity (Trenkalòs, 2007:12). These materials would allow the founding members and their associates to organize talks in several education centers, which in turn would promote fundraising and volunteering through altruistic organizations.

They believed that the youth was the best audience to implement cooperative projects, and the educative framework was perfect means to help them find their own tools to participate in the peacebuilding efforts. The material gathered in Bosnia-Herzegovina was used to elaborate a slideshow which would be presented in primary and secondary schools and later developed in more detailed seminars, especially about anti-personnel mines.

The presenters would carry deactivated artifacts to better illustrate their explanations, which had a powerful visual effect on the students. “One could accuse us of radicals, but we firmly thought that if the awareness would not arrive in a tangible way to the victims, we would fall in some sort of self-assuring exercise” (Marta Catalan in Trenkalòs, 2007:13).

These first activities would be performed by Trenkalòs, but soon after several youth groups and minor NGOs would organize their own little scale fundraising campaigns. Therefore, their activities started with a focus on the Catalan youth. They believed that by shocking them with the images and their personal stories they would be more interested in participating in international aid and development projects, which Trenkalòs could offer knowledge on.

The performance of these seminars could be an example of peace education, but they don't explicitly coincide with the theory mentioned above. Showing images of destruction does not explain how to reach peace, or why is it absent. It does not provide a set of nonviolent conflict resolution skills. It is not even the adoption of a particular curriculum, but sporadic lessons.

This is quite interesting because it does not base the class on avoiding violence, but on being aware of it. Some could find comparisons to Harris' (2004) classification of international and developmental education. Certainly, showing images of destruction, hunger, or war call for “understanding and common values”, “a sense of belonging to a global society, improve the empathic skills of the pupils” and “the adoption of a set of beliefs by individuals and the presence of social institutions that provide for an equitable distribution of resources and peaceful resolution of conflicts” (Harris, 2004:10-11).

Therefore, can we name these initiatives peace education? Perhaps with a hybrid perspective. If the notion of hybridity is to combine opposed means to produce a positive result, it could be argued that if pairing conventional/nonconventional methods is enough to foster this change, the organization of war awareness talks is an example of peace education. An interesting debate would be to question if

showing images of war add to the war-focused education in current society, but the addition of a context and experience-based explanations might be enough to challenge it.

Training and Humanitarian Aid

The first signs of a transformation of the NGO are visible here, and they are established with its expansion soon after its creation, including in the title “Grups en acció” [Groups in action] to signify the incorporation of several scout organizations, and the adaptation of a grassroots structure. From the first contact with local groups and individuals in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Trenkalòs starts to receive requests for aid; and what began as an educational initiative, grew to an emergency humanitarian aid group. In the meantime, they continue to organize talks in schools.

In this fashion, Trenkalòs would act as a middleman organization, providing information on the needs of refugees in several locations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and bringing the resources collected in Catalonia to the country. The focus had moved from only Catalonia to also include Bosnian communities. The trip expenses were covered completely by the volunteers traveling, and the cargo would be usually transported by van. It was meant to be an exchange: volunteer work and monetary support for on-the-ground experience and guidance in the country.

This is another example of peace education, and again, it is not carried out in the same fashion as those presented in the theory section. Some of these early volunteers were not students but trained police officers and professionals of other fields. This was practical development and humanitarian aid, and although some obstacles resembled those of the peace practitioners of the UN, the scale was much smaller.

Although it could be argued that this was an early attempt of service learning, we can use Andrew Furco's (1996) model of service programs to determine the nature of this activity. Although the volunteers would learn about the country and witness the destruction of war, the beneficiary of the activity was the Bosnian (especially the Bosniak) population, and the focus was on serving, rather than learning. Therefore, according to Furco, this activity would be classified as volunteerism (Furco, 1996:3).

Their grassroots nature also reflected in the way they interacted with the population and the different approach they took towards the structure of their activities: “We couldn’t afford to do several trips to develop one project. The other NGO, the big ones, Americans... they traveled by plane, stayed a week in the field, and spent thousands only on surveillance. We had been there dozens of times, and would use every trip in which we carried materials to know what the Bosnians needed and where. We traveled by van, sometimes several times a year; we knew the routes, the people” (Rodrigo, 2015).

The conditions were precarious: due to the low security in the early years after the war, one or two members had to sleep in the vehicles to prevent night thefts. Jordi Rodrigo, co-founder of Trenkalòs, talks about these harsh conditions “Traveling to Bosnia with a convoy might have meant departing from Barcelona on a van on Sunday and not getting out until Thursday. Borders, bureaucratic messes, cold, heat, hunger, thirst[...] During the early years the border guards were highly corrupt, they would take away supplies, material, even toys that we were bringing for the children in the camp. You could spend entire days at the border waiting for the officials to let you in.” (Rodrigo, 2015).

Perhaps these stories are the easiest to classify since they describe the situation of dealing with non-liberal situations to achieve a positive outcome. It would be unfair to attribute to Trenkalòs the maintenance of a negative hybrid peace, especially since in the early years their peace activities were minimal.

But it is interesting how the presence of non-conventional forms of procedure (road transportation, grassroots, border problems...) motivated them to find alternative solutions, sometimes being forced to give in some of the donations for the right to enter the country (Trenkalòs, 2007:13).

In exchange, they developed a strong relationship with local communities, based on authenticity and continuous visits to the country, which is described by Mitchell (2008) as one of the keys to establishing long-term cooperation with impoverished communities (Mitchell, 2008:60).

Rodrigo and the earlier volunteers depict these trips as their most important field experience (Trenkalòs, 2007:13), which later would be the base of decision making for bigger projects such as Dobro Dosli. This would provide primary knowledge: Knowing the fastest routes, the state of the roads, being able to communicate with the locals, and most importantly: earning their trust; meant that the expeditioners were prevented from any physical harm and that the materials would end up in their planned destination.

Some of the early volunteers were members of the Catalan autonomous police, the “Mossos d’Esquadra”, who had combat and stress training, and would follow the line of command (Rodrigo, 2015). Again, there are signs of hybridity: the professionals/volunteers. This could be more controversial, because although they were not armed, in the case of a rough encounter with locals, the responsibility would fall on the NGO, possibly endangering relations.

In the interviews, Rodrigo often reflects on this point, which was key to avoiding tensions between the volunteers and the locals: “They (the volunteers) had to know that they were there to help us, and for that, they needed to trust me and follow my lead at any time. That was not a stroll in the park, we were in a post-war region, with traumatized people and landmines laying around. They came with their ideals, thinking that they could fix everything easily, but a word out of place could have put our entire work there at risk” (Rodrigo, 2015). He recognizes that from the organization they also assumed risks, but argues that on the long run they were successful.

The experience of the founders and the first volunteers consisted of a combination of collective knowledge and field experience: most of them began their volunteer work as students from several fields, photography, pedagogy, history and linguistics among others, enough to provide background and support tiny scale projects. The field experience came from organizing three to four convoys a year, adapting their knowledge of roads, border bureaucracy, local traditions, and language.

It also developed contacts and acquaintances with the local population, who served as translators and project coordinators. At the point of starting the service learning project, Dobro Dosli, the organization had grown enough to require an employee in payroll to administer financial records, several cooperation projects, their respective private or state fundraising, and the coordination of the two first groups of young volunteers on the field.

That position was covered in 2005, almost immediately after the departure of the previous person in charge, the founding member Marta Catalan. The new administrator was Glòria Marcet, graduated in communication sciences, with a masters in humanitarian aid, and experience in the field of international cooperation (Marcet, 2016). This is another sign of transformation, especially for an organization that had been working in a grassroots structure, and did not have a physical office or paid personnel.

Fundraising

During that time, the experience accumulated and the wish to keep the awareness activities provided the motivation to elaborate a series of written, visual and audio material that would later become publications in order to raise funding for projects. Among these, there is a collection of comics: *El món en un forat, llibres per pensar* (The world in a hole, books to think), centered on different issues, some of them about Bosnia and its refugees, but also reaching to other humanitarian crisis, such as child soldiers in Sierra Leone, sweatshops in India, or differences between the global North-South.

Although Bosnia-Herzegovina was the main focus of the organization, some volunteers participated in humanitarian aid missions in other countries. Personal stories of children and adults in Mihatovići, and their everyday problems, such as the conditions of the refugee camp, the impossibility to return to their previous homes, and the insecurity towards the future.

The comics books were published in both Catalan and English, and although they had a simplistic art style, in the end, they appealed the readers to send letters and

postcards to the NGO, that would be sent to children in Bosnia. This initiative was coordinated with several schools, but at the same time, anyone could participate. Again, this falls into the category of peace education, as an extension of the talks in schools.

The comic books were used as a means to reach young people, but the stories they tell are not especially innocent. In case there was an interest from the audience, the comics were at the same time pieces of data and philanthropic tools, since they included instructions for teachers to develop awareness programs in schools, such as sending drawings and letters to refugees.

Some volunteers were attracted to the organization through this, such is the case of Glòria Marcet (Marcet, 2016). Apart from the fundraising aspect, the proactive part of sending letters was an idea to counter the feeling of the refugees of being cut off from the world, abandoned by the international powers (Gassó, 2012). By writing a letter not only motivated the students to learn more about what had happened but also promoted a culture of solidarity. The fact that there is another person of the same age, instead of a vague concept of a victim, has much more power in generating empathy (Harris, 2004:10).

Apart from that, they put together a music group, “Trenkaband”, which would perform both in Catalonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, playing songs of protest and homage to the victims of violence around the world, but especially in Bosnia. Music is a very interesting tool for conflict management, since it is a universal language, and has a soothing, sometimes exhilarating effect.

Some volunteers mentioned that including the names of the refugees in their songs or gifting them CDs would have a deep impact on their relationships. Music was the utmost representation of the attempt of Trenkalòs to normalize the lives of the refugees, in an attempt to provide moments where the war could be forgotten. They not only performed for the refugees, but also for handicapped and ill people in hospitals (Gassó, 2014).

In 2007, Trenkalòs produced a book, *Homenatge a Srebrenica* (Homage to Srebrenica) that presented their work in Bosnia, illustrated with the photographic material collected throughout 10 years of activities in the country. The book also included some of the experiences of volunteers, many of which are used in this Masters' Thesis.

Finally, in 2013 they edited a documentary with the same name, using material from different years to pay homage to the tragedy of the genocide, and give a voice to the refugees. This document is highly interesting since it depicts refugees visiting their old homes and bringing up memories of the war, as well as the workings of the Tuzla body identification unit, that puts together the corpses of the victims of the genocide.

As has been stated above, the organization was transformed with the inclusion of scout groups, which became a pillar of its grassroots structure. These would be not only based in Barcelona, but also in other cities, and acted as satellite assets, providing both volunteers and fundraising.

Each group would not be able to reach a big amount of people or raise a great quantity of money, but combined were enough to fund little projects in Bosnia, and collect food or materials needed in the country. They were independent: they designed their own projects, organizing benefic meals, marches, anti-war protests, and similar local-scale events to raise awareness of the calamities of war (Rodrigo, 2015).

Trenkalòs' Mentality

From the early stages of the organization, one can already distinguish several traits that have been present throughout the years, and have probably been key to the success of the NGO. In summary, these are Knowledge of the environment, Efficiency, Hierarchical Structure and Commitment.

As has been stated before, Rodrigo and his people have been to Bosnia & Herzegovina manifold, sometimes several times a year. This fact may seem obvious, but it is deeper than it may first seem. Him as well as other long-time volunteers often mention how the landscape has changed during the past two decades, completely disorienting anyone who might have been there years prior.

For example, it affected during the transportation of humanitarian aid: the bridge in Slavonski Brod would be destroyed, and they would need to use ferries to cross the Sava. Other times, their experience would tell them to cross the border through Bihac or Nova Sela, because the border guards would most probably be Bosniak or Croat, therefore allowing them through with material for the refugees.

But it also affected their decision making in their peacebuilding activities. When deciding who to provide with aid at the refugee camps, they would have to choose someone that would speak English, or have some sort of influence, knowledge or skills. This was important so that if there was a project on the ground, it would keep developing in their absence, or so the volunteers would find something to carry on instead of starting all over again.

An example can be found in the summer camps organized in 2016: the difference of character between children and young adults in the refugee camp of Mihatovići and the rural hamlet of Kamenica. The dramatic situation at the camp, with limited space to live and demoralizing future prospects, triggers aggressive and careless attitudes in the children. They often dismiss caregivers and spur fights, especially towards the smaller, weaker kids.

On the contrary, in Kamenica, the older children followed orders and organized their younger fellows, as well as looking after them. Knowing this difference allows for the organizers to design activities that can fit the two groups, but that focus on different facets. It also helps to prevent accidents that could hurt the refugees or damage equipment needed later on.

For being an international NGO, Trenkalòs has had very few monetary assets throughout its history, although they still demand positive results from each mission. Every volunteer pulls their weight, both economically and physically. Everyone is given a task that contributes to the overall goal of the day, independently of the gender or the age of the volunteer. From lifting equipment to playing the guest, the staff expects immediate compliance. Rodrigo argues that grassroots volunteering can only work if all the actors play their part, especially peacebuilding since it is an effort that cannot be fulfilled by one person only (Rodrigo, 2016).

In sync with the previous point, there is a clear structure that separates the organizers from the volunteers. Besides being a relatively safe country, any attitude that can cause harm in either the refugees or the volunteers themselves is not tolerated. In a similar fashion, resource waste, drug usage or behaviors that affect the overall image of the NGO are clearly prohibited, since it is supposed to provide role models for the refugees, especially children.

In Mihatovići, habits like smoking or consuming high doses of sugar in food spurs illnesses like diabetes, that drop even lowers the quality of life. The volunteers are advised to lower their impact as much as possible, for example taking cold showers or asking for water when offered soda drinks

The last point is related to long-time efforts and constancy. When volunteers finish one iteration of the service learning, they are offered the possibility to undergo training to become a speaker for the NGO, and/or a guide for the following year. Volunteers are only actively asking to spread their experiences as they return, as a way for the Bosniak refugees to be remembered after the war.

Nonetheless, as argued before, a grassroots organization is heavily supported by a network of active volunteers. Rodrigo has argued that many of their collaborators end up not returning to the country, or even stop communicating altogether. The fact that volunteers actively help the organization, especially creating initiatives on their own, is heavily appreciated in the NGO.

The scale of the Trenkalòs' activities

In 2005, after eight years of activities and experience in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the organized efforts of several individuals and organizations, Trenkalòs launched the Dobro Dosli[Welcome] project, which pursued to establish a permanent, structured organization on the ground. Once the post-war tensions had settled, and the most basic human needs covered, the purpose of the humanitarian aid lost ground, and the organization found itself with a success and a failure: being able to help the refugees, but leaving them with deep psychological wounds.

This is the final step of the transformation of the NGO, although later it suffered some minor changes due to the lack of volunteers. The main goal of the new project was to provide emotional support to the victims of genocide and facilitate the return of refugees to their previous homes. Since their previous activities mainly revolved around helping the refugees in the Mihatovići camp, the majority of them coming originally from Srebrenica, it was a strong starting point to work from.

There were several obstacles towards the country's regeneration, but such a tiny organization could not hope to cope with all of them. Therefore, they focused on a community already planning their return: the town of Šahbegovići (Grup d'Estudis Pedagògics, 2005). To aid them, Trenkalòs planned on shifting the overall mentality:

“In 2004, these people had been in the camp for nine years. Without tap water, a precarious school, deplorable hygienic conditions... The children had grown up to teenagers, smoking on the street, drugs, violence... it had to end. These people were from Srebrenica, but we realized we didn't have the resources or the facilities to help them return. So we focused on supporting them psychologically, trying to prevent them from going insane. Whoever you confine in a refugee camp in those conditions, with little rooms for each family... people lose it. The idea was to organize a big stay, from 50 to a 100 (volunteers), to somehow spread a different mentality” (Rodrigo, 2015)

The project's main goals were “To collaborate with the economic and social development of BiH, as well as cope with the high rate of unemployment, providing basic structure to improve the economy of rural communities and help the return of refugees. Train the population in new ways to exploit the land and livestock. Fight the ethnic cleansing inflicted in the RS, facilitating the return of refugees. Promote coexistence among communities to help adapt the Bosniak ones to the new situation” (Grup d'Estudis Pedagògics, 2005).

The organization remarked that it was a Peacebuilding project, with ties to Catalonia. “The project of economic invigoration is supported with a program of active witness and conflict denouncement, as a platform to develop a positive attitude and an active position against human rights violations in young Catalans. Bosnia, such a close, and parallel country to Catalonia, is a perfect school” (GEP-Trenkalòs, 2005)

Dobro Dosli was planned for 3-4 years and had three parts. The first and second were to activate the area of Sokolac with a rural tourism and an agricultural startup. The third part was to build housing for women from Srebrenica that were living with their families in refugee camps. The government had been threatened to close those facilities since after the war, but Mihatovići is still open in 2016 (Trenkalòs, 2016).

Trenkalòs also aimed to provide micro credits for the families to be able to afford to house and therefore quickly establishing a safe space to live in. Moreover, Dobro Dosli was organized in cooperation with a Catalonia-based program, the youth project Grups en Moviment (Moving Groups), that aimed to reinforce associationism among young students and promote ideas of peace and human rights.

On one hand, Grups en Moviment established a platform for youths interested in cooperation, to organize humanitarian aid collection, design projects, and fundraising; on the other hand, it also provided a space for inter-group cooperation. In 2005, the joint activity of Grups en Moviment raised 6.423€ through selling comic books from Trenkalòs's collection, fair trade products and solidarity breakfasts (GEP-Trenkalòs, 2005). This investment was assigned to the community of Sokolac, under the management of Sead Duraković.

In the memo of the first phase of the Dobro Dosli project in 2005, Trenkalòs addressed the plan to the community of Sokolac, and also to the Catalan and Bosnian youths that would take advantage of the housing for summer camps and exchanges.

The second and third phases of the project would also have 10 families from the Mihatovići camp as beneficiaries, an approximation of the amount of people that expressed their will to return. The development of the first phase would be carried on between July 2004 and August 2005, and consisted of several points, among them refurbish one of the houses to act as a tourism agency, the construction of a barn and the purchase of 300 sheep, alongside a few cows and chicken, and the performance of several reconstruction and adequacy activities in the village of Šahbegovići.

These activities would be followed in the second phase, from July 2005 to August 2006, starting with the establishment of contracts and cooperation acts with the population of Sokolac, and enlarging the previous points with complex infrastructure, turning the town as an example for similar enclaves. Finally, the third phase (2006-2007) would consist in offering micro credits to the returnees for the reconstruction and the invigoration of the economy.

This project brought a stable flow of income and volunteer workforce to Mihatovići and Šahbegovići. The initial project kept developing through the years, and what was planned for three to four years became a ten-year process. “When we arrived, there was nothing left standing, only a couple of burnt vehicles and the foundations of the houses [...] in a destroyed mountain village, the international organizations like UN, Red Cross, UNHCR... funded part of the reconstruction, but that was not enough. Without windows and insulation, the buildings last a year or two. The locals don't have the money to fix them, but then we come in, we have the resources to finish the job” (Rodrigo, 2015).

Between 2005 and 2010, approximately 320 volunteers had attended the summer camps, which supposed an average of 4.400€ of summer income to the village of Šahbegovići, around 60 to 80 euros per family (GEP-Trenkalòs, 2005). For the majority of these families, especially the elderly or female heads of households with very limited pensions, that signified a great deal of revenue (Rodrigo, 2015).

Additionally, the Catalan Agency for Development invested around 25,000€ in the first phase, 9,000€ in 2007, and in 2008 the Township of Barcelona invested 27,900€ (GEP-Trenkalòs, 2010). This money was aimed to the acquisition of livestock, the construction of community buildings and the adequacy of private ones, the acquisition of technological equipment and the hiring of locals for the maintenance of the town's facilities.

Still, there was a constant problem: “The redistribution of refugees, one goes to Sweden, the other goes to his relative's place, another goes home... this makes everything complicated, because where you had people who knew the dynamics of our work, now you had newcomers”-and there was a similar situation with volunteers- “I count that around the 15% of volunteers stayed, and the maximum was 3 years. You need to consider some elements, not everyone is fit for this job, and there are several who had an interest, but life called them to do other things”. (Rodrigo, 2015)

Trenkalòs' Main Projects

Mihatovići

The most important bases of activity were the refugee camp of Mihatovići, in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina Federation; and the town of Šahbegovići, in the township of Sokolac, Republika Srpska. The head of Trenkalòs, Jordi Rodrigo, remarks often how constant presence and emotional support were key to the success in Mihatovići:

“The idea was to somehow spread a different mentality, so the people would notice that there are different ways to live[...] And also that they would lose the fear of returning to their homes. For the survivors of Srebrenica, going back home meant being transported back to the massacre. All those people had deceased and disappeared relatives, at a time where they had found only around a thousand bodies. Going back was a mental shock for those people. In that we succeeded, with a lot of work, accompanying the women to their old homes, and same with the burials in Potočari, being by their side. That creates a climate of trust, and a climate to overcome fear” (Rodrigo, 2015).

This is perhaps the beginning of the active peacebuilding of Trenkalòs. From the initial aim to help the refugees survive, both physically and mentally, there was a proactive attempt to change the status quo and promote recuperation. Even though the change of attitude was more focused on breaking the monotony of the refugee camp than to smooth the relationships with the Serbian Bosnians, accompanying them to the Srebrenica memorial and helping them bury their dead often signified closure (Rodrigo, 2015).

This is perhaps another example of hybrid peacebuilding since the change of attitude often concerned tackling sexist and violent attitudes and the promotion of human rights without a visible agenda. Instead of preaching out loud, the volunteers would be helping in the house, especially males; and exceptional respect was paid to the heads of the households, usually widowed women (Rodrigo, 2015). Therefore, although not meddling with political affairs, Trenkalòs' members would act carefully and imperceptibly, giving them an example to follow, but not imposing it.

Mihatovići was one of the biggest refugee camps built in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which experienced a flood of refugees from Srebrenica, and the neighboring towns of Zvornik and Bratunac when these areas were attacked by the Serbian army in 1993. The center was built by the Norwegian People's Aid, but funding stopped in 1995 (Norwegian People's Aid, 2013).

Laila Zulkaphil, a partner of the Bosnian Women's Group BOSFAM, does a very accurate description of the camp: "Once, the residents of this collective center numbered in thousands, but now it is a home to approximately 500 people. Most of them are from Srebrenica and the nearby towns such as Bratunac and Zvornik. The center consists of two-story houses neatly lined up in rows and colored in blue, pink, or yellow.

Each house has four apartments, and each apartment is occupied by one family. However, when a large number of people arrived in Mihatovići in 1995, three families had to live in one apartment. This meant that up to 20 people shared a small two-bedroom apartment with an open kitchen and a bathroom. At the refugee center, I saw mostly women, children, and elders. The prevalence of households headed by females is partly explained by the fact that many of the Mihatovići residents are survivors of the Srebrenica massacre" (The Advocacy Project, 2010).

It is particularly difficult to find official information about this location, and the number of residents shifts from document to document. Zulkaphil's description is interesting as an insight into the life at the camp, especially having in account that Trenkalòs had been previously working there for five years.

"Besides the refugee houses, Mihatovići has two little grocery shops and a primary school. When children finish the primary school, they start commuting to Tuzla to continue their education. A doctor comes only on Tuesdays, despite a large number of sick elders who need regular medical care. When I visited Mihatovići, the residents hadn't had running water for three days; a nearby spring had become their only source of water".

“There is no government representation or a person in charge of the collective center. If people have a problem such as lack of water, they try to solve it on their own or simply wait until the problem is resolved by itself. The government used to provide food, clothes, and bus tickets, but now accommodation is the only thing that the refugees receive free of charge. Bosnia plans to close all collective centers by 2014 in order to facilitate the return of refugees”.

“However, many refugees, especially those from the Srebrenica area, do not want to return. The complete destruction of the town’s economy, drastic change of ethnic composition, and the occasional harassment of returnees make Srebrenica nothing like what it was before the war. The government and some aid organizations provide assistance to the refugees only if they want to return to their pre-war homes. If they choose to live in a different place, they are on their own.” (The Advocacy Project, 2010)

Francesc Gassó, a guide from Trenkalòs, describes Mihatovići in 2012 as the following: “Several identical houses, divided into four apartments, two in each floor. They need to fetch drinking water at one kilometer away. The roads are not paved, and the electrical cables are in a meager state. On winter, trash is picked up only once a month. Nowadays a little family lives in every apartment, but in 1996, two or three families used to poorly live in them” (Gassó, 2012).

He carries on with the supposedly temporary nature of those buildings and the mental stress these people had to undergo. “to live in that chaotic place, without hope, since 1996 (...) cannot produce anything good for this society, despite little examples of humanity from time to time. One of the preoccupations of those people in 2012 was that the mayor of Srebrenica would be a man that denied the genocide. Meanwhile, the rest of Europe turned their backs against them. When Trenkalòs arrived there, there had been so many organizations with unaccomplished promises that their main goal was to earn the trust of the refugees, in order to work with those who had more chances to move on, and therefore start a process of recovery” (Gassó, 2012).

Another longtime volunteer, Bernat Guixer, also underlines the slow process of gaining the trust of the locals, especially with the Dobro Dosli project in Šahbegovići: “During the first year (2005) there was a lot of effort to earn the trust of the people, the initial wave had only five girls, who also attended the 11th of July.

They were the first to stay in the town, and little by little, that summer, we established a more trusting relationship with the neighbors. ‘These people come, pay a sort of bed & breakfast, they are good people...’ The first year only a few neighbors offered their houses, but the following summers more and more people welcomed them” (Guixer, 2016).

The language was a very crucial part of the earlier activities of Trenkalòs in Mihatovići. The majority of the refugees would not speak English, except those who had learned some words from TV series. Rodrigo fondly remembers one of the refugee children, Meliha Sahanić, who would be one of the first people able to communicate with them. “This extraordinary girl, knee high to a grasshopper, would come and speak English to us. She said she had learned it from the TV. Every time that we visited the camp, she would be there to receive us, with a smile on her face. I have never met someone so bright in my life. She became our translator, and the other kids saw that learning was a good asset for life, and a means to make money.” (Rodrigo, 2015)

She and the other kids of the camp would become protagonists of the stories that Trenkalòs took home for their fundraising comics, children wondering why there were mines in the mountains, or why they could not return to their previous home.

Guixer also remembers alternative ways of communicating: “We spoke in English, usually there were some kids that spoke English and Spanish... Spanish! From watching South-American soap operas! Or with sign language, because our little Serbo-Croatian was horrible. I stayed with grandma Sema, and we would only use sign language, but that generated a situation of complicity and non-verbal communication[...] it would be easy to understand ‘night’, ‘gunshots’, the direction where the soldiers came from...” (Guixer, 2016).

Šahbegovići

Šahbegovići was Mihatovići's counterpart. Completely destroyed during the war, this little rural town in the province of Sokolac, in the Republika Srpska, was partly rebuilt with Trenkalòs' help. This process started through a Bosnian Serb, Sead Duraković, a former resident of Šahbegovići. A historical debt moved one of Duraković's neighbors, a Serbian, to warn their Muslim fellows about the Serbian army's strike, and the majority of the inhabitants were able to flee safely.

He later joined the Bosnian army in the defense of Sarajevo, where he fought one year. Only one person stayed in Šahbegovići, an old woman named Sema, who appears in many of the volunteer's stories. After the war, Duraković's family became refugees in Spain, and he took several jobs to help them from abroad.

One of them was at the NGO Fondajica Lokalne Demokratije (Foundation of Local Democracy for Development of Civil Society) of Sarajevo, the office that managed all the humanitarian aid that came from Barcelona. There he met Jordi Rodrigo and helped him several times with border customs to allow the humanitarian aid through. Once acquainted, Rodrigo inquired about and Duraković's hometown.

With fear of Bosnian Serb violence against the NGO, Duraković first kept the location to himself, but with enough convincing, he sketched a map. Rodrigo, alongside Trenkalòs' members Marta Catalan and Guillem Ibáñez, traveled to Sokolac, in the Republika Srpska, and took some time to find the place. The village was completely destroyed, only the foundations of the houses remained (Rodrigo, 2016). Duraković was a pivotal actor in the development of the service learning program since he was one of the first to host volunteers, and became in charge of the maintenance of the projects in the absence of Trenkalòs.

From that point on, Trenkalòs designed several projects to rebuild the village and improve its economy of subsistence, providing a safer environment to return. "When we arrived, UNHCR had just built some of the houses. But they weren't plastered or painted[...]that year we did all the restoration work on the brick facades[...]there was

only a causeway, but between that year and the next we built a road layering gravel and stones” (Guixer, 2016).

The economy of the village is almost exclusively based in animal husbandry, agriculture, and apiculture. Šahbegovići became a crucial part of Trenkalòs’ future activities in the country, linking their previous work in Mihatovići with a slightly more ambitious goal: the return of refugees. For that purpose, they designed several cooperation projects, funded by the Catalan government and the township of Barcelona, to adequate the situation of the village for their new dwellers.

They fixed the main road, purchased animals, built two barns and a few houses, and painted murals in the refurbished facades. In *Homage to Srebrenica* (2007), it is described how the trust on the local population encouraged Trenkalòs to leave the control of the investment on infrastructures, material, and animals to them. “The material investments of the project would be propriety of Trenkalòs, given for the exploitation to the community of Šahbegovići.

The outcome during the five first years would be 70% to the benefiteres, 30% to Trenkalòs, and with the goal to invest 20% of the organization’s gains to re-invest in purchases and maintenance of the infrastructures” (Trenkalòs, 2007:85). Their work culminated with the purchase of a tractor from the Bosnian Serbs, perhaps the most important post-war commercial trade between Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs in the area. To tie all these little projects together, to help facilitate the reconstruction and attract the locals, they created the Dobro Dosli project.

Dobro Dosli Project

The Dobro Dosli project is the flagship project of Trenkalòs after 2005, and it is based strongly on a service learning component. Although it has been organized intermittently from 2011, it has been their strongest asset in the country. The 2016 iteration was organized in the following fashion:

6-7 July - Sarajevo - Meeting point in Sarajevo (Evening visit to the Bascarcija, Official introduction to the summer camps, Talk with Jovan Divjak[Commander of the defence of Sarajevo during the war], Visit to the wartime hotspots[Jewish graveyard, Grbavica neighborhood, Sniper alley & Oslobodenje newspaper among others], visit to the center for the handicapped Oaza), and moving to the Mihatovići Camp (Tuzla Canton).

7-8-9 July - Mihatovići - Preparation for the Mihatovići Fashion Night (8 July) and the Srebrenica Memorial (9 July) Other activities: Games and hot chocolate for the children, a clown show, a workshop on health and food, a fruit eating contest, among others.

10-11 July - Bratunac & Srebrenica - Moving from Mihatovići to Bratunac (Vlasenica Canton). Visit the Srebrenica Memorial Site in Potočari. Visit the Srebrenica Memorial act on the anniversary of the Massacre of 1995. From Bratunac to Kamenica (Vlasenica Canton).

12 July - Kamenica - Games and hot chocolate for the children. From Kamenica to Šahbegovići (Sarajevo-Romanija Canton).

13-16 July - Šahbegovići - Overall maintenance of the village (painting fences, repairing facade murals and cleaning the graveyard). On the 15th, visit Sarajevo for the presentation of the book "Olovkis, a Bosnian Story" at the Dječiji dom Bjelave orphanage.

17 July - From Šahbegovići to Sarajevo. Official closure of the summer camp.

Trenkalòs, Catalonia and Bosnia

Although it is mentioned many times throughout this Master's Thesis, Trenkalòs can be only considered a Spanish NGO coincidentally. This is especially relevant when considering their relationship to Bosnia & Herzegovina.

This tendency started with Jordi Rodrigo, who had a strong activist past in the matter of the defense of the Catalan language. Following short, many volunteers from Trenkalòs were part of scout groups, a strong tradition in Catalonia which was linked to the Catholic church, but also had its secular counterparts. Both of these groups were strongly tied to Catalan traditions and language, a strong appreciation for nature and a sense of community, therefore aligned to Trenkalòs' member's ideas.

It is no coincidence, then, that the NGO's members became engaged with Bosnia & Herzegovina from the first moment. Like Catalonia, Bosnia is situated at a crossroads between large economic, political, cultural and religious powers. They both share a history of conflict and adaptability, and also one of a struggle over identity.

Despite being Muslim, the Bosniak are by far the most representative in this similitudes. They lost a civil war that almost completely annihilated them, and were pulled apart by neighboring countries. Like Bosnia, Catalonia is pursuing a path towards independence. Not in vain do the first advice caution, since they already paid a blood tax to fulfill theirs, and did not end well.

The two countries are located in the Mediterranean, and share similar cultures, in fact, the majority of the Bosniak have similar facial features as anyone in Southern Europe. Besides Trenkalòs, Catalonia has a special relationship with Bosnia & Herzegovina. During the Olympics in Barcelona in 1992, the township of the city put their efforts into bringing a Bosnian team, while the Bosnian War had recently started, and athletes would not be allowed to travel. After the war, Barcelona destined considerable amounts of aid to Sarajevo, called District 11, in relation to Barcelona's 10 districts.

After the cease of the aid in 2004, the organization was passed to the hands of the Bosnians and turned into the Fondacija Lokalne Demokratije, or Foundation for Local Democracy, an organization that coordinated aid coming from Catalonia and acted as a link with the local authorities, whom Trenkalòs worked tightly. This same organization is where Sead Durakovic first met Jordi Rodrigo, which spurred the reconstruction of Sahbegovici, and the Dobro Dosli Project.

The aid coordinated by the FDL was destined to rehabilitate the Olympic facilities in Zeta and the Olympic neighborhood of Mojnilo, where 1.647 apartments were repaired (El Periódico, 2015).

A Critic of Trenkalòs

Although I find it hard to criticize Trenkalòs for their methods, there are flaws that could have helped improve facets of the NGO. The first is that they did not build up a documental archive alongside the development of the NGO. This highly complicates the task of understanding their finances, the quantity of trips that the volunteers went to Bosnia & Herzegovina and their work there, the number of associations that worked with them, or the amount of refugees that they motivated to move back to their old homes in the Republika Srpska.

It also difficulties reproducing memories since sometimes long time volunteers mix up their experiences, dates, or people in their anecdotes. This includes their website, which was shut off in 2013, and contained a lot of information about the summer camps, as well as pictures.

Another flaw is perhaps the management of the volunteers' PTSD after they return to Catalonia. All volunteers convey to experience some sort of post-traumatic stress after the summer camps. Although the organizers offer their help in the form of emotional support, it is not a compulsory activity, such as the ones in the summer camps.

There is a comment made by one of the long-time volunteers, Bernat Guixer, who questioned the ultimate goal of the NGO. If the target was to improve the situation of the refugees to a point where they could return to having normal lives, how does it combine with the continuous visits to the country? The question is if Trenkalòs is a needed support for their eventual return to normality; or a dependency the refugees developed that prevents them from standing on their own feet? Guixer's thought pointed more at the eventual end of the missions and how would that affect the refugees, but it goes without saying that the constant present of the NGO is one of the key aspects of their success.

Finally, there are a couple of observations that could be interesting to explore. Trenkalòs has focused on the Bosniaks since the start, and besides some honorable mentions, the volunteers do not meet Bosnian Croats or Bosnian Serbs. In hardline Serb areas like Sokolac, Trenkalòs has had rough experiences with the locals; and Rodrigo has mentioned that Croat border guards did a number on them on several occasions.

Still, it would be interesting to hear their stories, even if it was to hear that there were no genocides, to be able to contrast them with the others. If Trenkalòs has had arranged meetings between Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks in the past, knowing about these experiences could be of some good towards inter-community relationships.

The future of Trenkalòs

As it has been previously argued, Trenkalòs started little, but it developed considerably quickly. After expanding to the *Dobro Dosli* Project, the NGO reached its peak of activities, that dwindled up until today. Although the groups still organize summer camps, the number of volunteers is low, and the exhaustion of the organizers is more evident.

The question then is, has Trenkalòs any future prospects? The answer was presented by the organizers themselves, and the obstacles lie on the foundations of the NGO itself:

- Funding

Although Trenkalòs is a grassroots organization with little to no funding, it still has to be registered to the census in Spain, which represents a fee. The same goes for the maintenance of a webpage, and the production of books. All of these activities are affected by taxes, and if the organization is not able to pay, it cannot continue its activities. Trenkalòs as a registered organization is officially bankrupt. This highly limits its capabilities to obtain funding from public institutions, and therefore any bigger projects in Bosnia.

There is another problem: According to Trenkalòs members, in Spain, bookstores that acquire books can return them to the seller at any point in time, which they do if they are not able to sell them. In some occasions, the NGO had already used the money for projects in Bosnia when the libraries returned the books and asked for a refund. They were able to return the money, but that experience stopped them from using that fundraising method.

- Leader-based NGO/Personal Toll:

Although it has a directive board, the weight of the NGO heavily relies on a person who is experienced, has contacts and resources, and is good in decision making. For Trenkalòs, that person is Jordi Rodrigo, and so far no one else has stepped up for a possible continuity of his project. In the same line, the continuous activities in Bosnia & Herzegovina force the persons responsible of the NGO to strongly commit to a cause, limiting their life choices. Rodrigo has made of Bosnia his life project, but it has represented a strong weight in his health.

Chapter 6: The volunteers' experiences

The volunteers from the different groups linked to Trenkalòs had several compulsory theory courses that would involve training in many different areas. From the history of Ex-Yugoslavia and the massacre of Srebrenica, cooperative economy, anti-personnel mines and a practical demonstration of de-mining, a practical course on coexistence and Bosnian culture, a planning on the activities they would do in the summer camps, and the projection of several documentaries and material that Trenkalòs had been gathering over the years. They also invited previous volunteers to discuss their experiences, not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina but also other parts of the world where Trenkalòs had been present sporadically.

Although the courses were short, the objective of them was to introduce the volunteers to a completely different country to palliate the initial shock, and to prevent them from inflicting any negative effects on the project. "When we taught them, the conflict, the history, the economy of subsistence... it was so they understood that it was a different culture, a different religion, that they had to be open-minded. That didn't prepare them for what they would experience in Bosnia. Watching documentaries or reading books does not prepare anyone to see what happened there. It does not matter if you are young or not, there is always an emotional impact" (Marcet, 2016).

They would receive the practical training on the ground, by observing and participating in activities, sharing time and space with the locals, and visiting various locations, such as the war front in Sarajevo and the genocide memorial in Potočari. They would cover the whole cost of their travel expenses, and would provide a daily rent income for their hosts. This aimed to promote commitment and formal behavior, as well as revitalize the local economy.

Their tasks would be simple, to prevent exhaustion: “We have to consider that we are talking about Srebrenica, it’s a genocide, it’s not building a well. They are still unearthing mass graves. Our guys were meeting people who had written the History, sometimes in blood. Tourism is one thing, but living with them for two weeks, in their houses, eating with them, sleeping with them, you understand things in a whole different manner” (Rodrigo, 2015).

They were also warned about a possible post-stress disorder when withdrawn from that situation to their previous reality: “Everyone doubts if they can take such a mental challenging trip, but no one expects that the hardest part is to go back. (In Bosnia) we have everything planned, our limits, the places we take them, everything is under control and it works. But when they come back, physically and mentally exhausted, no one understands what they have been through” (Rodrigo, 2015)

In Sarajevo, the volunteers would meet the Bosnian upper class, highly educated and trained; in Mihatovići they faced the reality of displaced persons and their uncertain future; and Šahbegovići, the last stop, showed them a completely different reality (Rodrigo, 2015).

It was a two-track project: first, it was set to be an example, a town where refugees could go back to, or that would encourage them to return to their homes and repair them. Secondly, it was an economic project: fundraise a self-sustainable economy based on livestock, as well as design a tourism project (GEP-Trenkalòs, 2005). Although the latter did not succeed due to bureaucratic difficulties and disagreements within the organization, the main road was repaired, several of the houses were rebuilt and attracted new settlers, the majority of them Bosnian Muslims.

Other projects did not work due to the lack of trained personnel: “We needed someone in Šahbegovići to supervise the projects through the year, but our contacts among the young Bosnians didn’t want to live in the countryside, and our volunteers would have to stop their studies or careers for too long. One of the projects was to contract an internet service, so they could continue their studies abroad, but that went through the government of Sokolac, and they didn’t want to hear a word. We had brought a pump to acquire free running water from the well, but nowadays everything runs through Sokolac, and they are increasing the taxes to a level that the locals can’t afford any more” (Rodrigo, 2015).

The volunteers who would eventually repeat the experience would be trained to become group leaders, and eventually trainers themselves. Generally, there would be talks every day in the summer camps, and every guide would explain tasks or information for about 10 minutes, and then the groups would rotate, the group would leave, and another one would come (Rodrigo, 2015). This would give the guides short breaks and make sure the information would be transmitted.

These individuals would be also hired to do talks and conferences once back in Spain. “They would keep expanding the projects. There were youths from Barcelona, la Seu d’Urgell, Manresa... they presented the project in their own city, they would project documentaries, talks... we provided them the materials that Trenkalòs had produced, and they would create a network, it was like a stain that grew and joined others. And then they would come to organize the summer camps, do talks to the volunteers, tell about their experience, and once in the camps, they would help to coordinate, providing support...” (Marcet, 2016).

The process would be self-feeding if some guides would not continue, new volunteers would take over. The organization in the camps was hierarchical, the word of the project coordinators would be law, but the guides would have to supervise the volunteers and make sure that nothing dangerous happened. This was organized so there would be a minimal impact on the good relations between the organization and the locals, and to ensure the continuity of the project. Faults would be punished with immediate expulsion.

This structure failed to hold when traveling back since many of the volunteers belonged to other organizations. Unfortunately, it hindered the archival part of Trenkalòs, limiting the pool of available volunteers and the acquisition of feedback, which is very limited nowadays. “I believe that the impact of the volunteers was positive, considering that it was a controlled environment. I don’t think that the volunteers helped in the mediation between Bosniaks and Serbs, and maybe they did not improve the chances of returning refugees, they didn’t have such a big impact. But they did affect them emotionally, you could see it in the refugees, in the happiness, the joy, the cultural exchange... the young people that stayed in Sarajevo moved to the camp or Šahbegovići when we were there, the grandparents would see their grandchildren... everyone came to enjoy those moments” (Marcet, 2016).

The Volunteers’ Perspectives

Having presented the majority of the NGO’s activities, now we move forward towards the second part of the analysis, the volunteers’ perspectives. The experiences accumulated here are separated into three groups: Organizers, long-time volunteers, and short-time volunteers.

As it is natural, the more time volunteers spent in the country, the deeper their understanding was. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see in what areas they put more emphasis in. Especially interesting is the idea of success. Did they have different ideas? Did they consider their presence in the country positive? Did they think it could have been different?

Organizers

This section will be focused on the administrators of Trenkalòs. The information will be drawn both from the book *Homage to Srebrenica* (2007) and the interviews it contains, and also material that was given to the volunteers before the camps. As per the interviews, the following will be used: the co-founder and director of the organization, Jordi Rodrigo; and the coordinator of the first service learning mission alongside Rodrigo, Glòria Marcet.

When writing about their experiences, interests, and reflections, it is important to remember that Rodrigo is the member who spent the most time in Bosnia-

Herzegovina, has been a member of the organization for seventeen years. When assessing his impressions, I took in account that this project is very dear and personal to him. Glòria Marcet began in the organization right at the start of the service learning project. She spent almost four years as an active member of the organization, supervising the funding, registry documents, recruitment and training of volunteers, and other activities, as the first full-time employee of the NGO.

One of the interesting faces of the book *Homage to Srebrenica* (2007) is that it showcases the earlier impressions and strategies of the organization. “The motto ‘The one who wants to help can do more than the one who can help’ became a true religion for us. In fact, the goal of our entity[...] was to raise awareness and train young Catalans that were interested in cooperation projects as a tool for personal development and to help victims of wars or natural disasters.

The idea was to make a little photo report to enrich the talks in high schools and scout groups” (Jordi Rodrigo in Trenkalòs, 2007:12) “We started to focus only exclusively on working with schools and high-schools, because we thought that in youth we would find the best responses[...]Then we offered a series of proposals to the students so after watching the presentation they could do something else, transcend the pure explanations” (Marta Catalan in Trenkalòs, 2007:13).

In the book, the organizers talk about reaching a point where distinguishing the differences between the 1st and 3rd world was inevitable, since their experiences were even worse than they imagined “In consequence, the ways to face these realities could be in many cases as hard and surprising as the crude reality of Bosnia, where the dialogue, volunteers, and the solidarity spirit was not like we would have wished for” (Jordi Rodrigo in Trenkalòs, 2007:13).

They argue that the energy of the youth was better used for active participation in the ground, instead of planning from home. The first ideas were to develop some sort of model that would be attractive for the youth, but effective at the same time, and intertwined with experiential learning. “It was evident that in the world of cooperation there was a terrible adjustment between theory and practice. We wanted that the

center of our actions would be knowledge derived from experience” (Marta Catalan in Trenkalòs, 2007:14).

To develop that project, they used a mentality of a private company. This idea had consequences for the volunteers, who would be asked to cast aside personal philosophies and follow orders. Therefore, there was a hierarchy, to improve the chances of positive results, not as a secondary outcome, but as the principal goal. In the book, the “mainstream” structures of NGOs are deemed “inefficient and not serious, with lots of debate and propositions, but a deficient leadership” (Trenkalòs, 2007:15).

According to them, Trenkalòs offered a project ready to take to the ground, with a practical focus on the youth. It is interesting how they summarize the process of thought and development in such a hurried manner. It resembles the straightforward language used in some of their documents and explanations. They prime the experience over everything and cut volunteers from any decision making. Unfortunately, their description of the evolution of their line of thought can be confusing, especially when trying to distinguish a chronological thread.

An example of the straightforward language used previously can be found in issued instructions for every service learning mission. Nevertheless, they offer explanations for every particular order. The issue analyzed here belongs to this year’s edition, 2016. “You can take pictures, but ask first. If there are soldiers or police they have a very bad temper, and they can take your camera, your choice. Don’t try to play smart and record with your phone thinking that you won’t be seen; either we take pictures openly or we don’t” (Trenkalòs, 2016:4).

They attribute prestige to the organization, and warn the volunteers of their responsibility: if they cross the line, it won’t be them but the whole operation which will be affected. They also criticize selfish behaviors like calling or checking the phone often. When it comes to personal hygiene, the organization warns about the usage of the facilities “There are showers and we can take them, but if it’s not strictly necessary we will avoid it, and in any case, never with warm water. The infrastructures are in a very bad state if we were to damage the system, once the

winter comes they would not have warm water, or it would be very expensive to repair” (Trenkalòs, 2016:8).

There is a similar attitude when it comes to food or water “If during the transport we don’t eat, we will ‘suck it up’ and do it when possible. At the camp they sometimes offer drinks. Soda-type of drinks are usually disgusting, but if they fill your glass, you drink. Milk is a luxury if they don’t offer it, never ask for it. Don’t ask for anything that’s not essential.” (Trenkalòs, 2016:10).

Finally, they recommend bringing chocolate powder, soap, dental paste, or toilet paper to “forget” in the hosts’ houses. Therefore, they pay exclusive attention to the consequences of the volunteers’ passing through the camp and stress the need to show an open attitude, willing to listen as much as possible. To leave the place and its people in a better state than they were, not the opposite.

Jordi Rodrigo

Jordi Rodrigo, aka “Rodri”, is the co-founder and director of Trenkalòs. His name has been appearing repeatedly in this master’s thesis since he has been the main source of information from the organization. His experiences and impressions have undoubtedly changed during the course of his years in the field, and the evolution of the NGO.

He has been in charge of several projects, among them the music group Trenkaband, the edition of the books and comic books of the organization, and the setting of the NGO’s projects, both development and service learning; the acquisition of detailed information was difficult. He did not only travel to Bosnia & Herzegovina for the summer camps but also to prepare and perform several reconstruction and development activities.

His way of speaking is direct, sometimes harsh, imposing his opinions. Also, he often criticizes academic or theoretical approaches, since he considers that the practical, on-the-ground knowledge is a superior method. But when he interacts with the Bosniaks, one can see the appreciation they have for him.

He and his fellows were motivated to develop the NGO to improve the knowledge about the Bosnian War in Spain, and to give a tool to schools to be able to help as well: "In every talk without exception, the students asked us what they could do to help, and we realized that the teachers did not have an answer for them. We developed little programs so the children could have a project. More people got interested in it, the organization grew, and there it started a pedagogical work. The kids would develop a project, get funding, food, clothes... and then we would take it there. When we started contacting scout groups we realized that they already had little projects, and it was easier to create the link. They acted as our branches" (Rodrigo, 2015).

The first volunteers would not be professionals, but a growing organization, they needed to adapt: "We were young people, everyone did what they could. When the thing started growing considerably we realized we could have a person in payroll, and an office. That means that you need constant income. When we started publishing books we found legal problems, taxes... a volunteer busts you, you need a professional" (Rodrigo, 2015).

Rodrigo describes how every volunteer of Trenkalòs would be trained on the ground, splitting the price of gas or rent with the others to travel to Bosnia. "At the same time they received training, they saw the problems at the borders, bombed bridges, zones controlled by one army or the other. These people were half-professionals, but they were very well trained. We are talking about the end of the 90's, beginning of the 2000's, no one knew anything about mines. We had been on the ground for several years and knew people in Bosnia that were professionals in the field. It's not theory, something you tell someone and the other tells it to another person" (Rodrigo, 2015).

It didn't matter if they were organizing trips to Bosnia or going to talk in a school, all of them had been in Bosnia before. This philosophy of practical knowledge in exchange of personal investment is something that Rodrigo stresses continuously, and is a core characteristic of service learning. Even though the summer camps were not designed yet, this idea was probably born in those early concepts.

Rodrigo argues that one of the major obstacles at the beginning was communication, heavily limited by the scarcity of English-speaking Bosnians. “The first idea was to communicate with them, understand what they needed. It was difficult to assimilate the level of destruction in the country: Political, economic, physical, of Bosnia and its people. In the 90’s in Sarajevo there were few people who spoke English, but in the outskirts, there were almost none. That provoked tremendous communication problems. We started with our own intuition, and after knowing the point of view of the people it went developing. Also, there was a huge separation between the people of Sarajevo and the countryside” (Rodrigo, 2015).

He deems the government officials and international representatives to have been ignorant of the situation of the rural population, an information he claims to have known better. He recognizes that taking these decisions were risky and that the consequences of failing would have been definitive for the NGO. But he argues that with such an ephemeral situation, very limited funding and personnel, there were few options. He criticizes bigger organizations for taking wrong decisions with much more funding, with investments that ended up being unsuccessful.

Then from the transportation of humanitarian aid comes the desire to go further, and help the refugees somehow more. “There are so many objectives in a place where there’s nothing left, that there’s everything to be done, and you feel helpless. The drama of the Bosnian War is the ethnic cleansing. The division of the country, people can’t go home. The economic reconstruction is a state matter, but the NGOs can’t do it. If people would not return in 10 years, the conflict would reactivate. These people had been in a refugee camp for too long, without drinking water, a school in shambles, violence, drugs... These were the people of Srebrenica, but we were conscious that we didn’t have resources or means to help them return. So we focused on supporting them psychologically, tried to prevent them from going crazy” (Rodrigo, 2015).

This is an interesting point, with the inability to help refugees on a bigger scale, they tried to focus on a root of the problem: the everyday. If these people are unable to follow the neoliberal markets’ style of work, an economic reconstruction would be insufficient. It also affects return, if they are fearful or dreaded by the phantoms of

war, there is little chance that they wish to move back to their previous homes. Accompanied, widowed women could go and visit their old homes, otherwise impossible. If they managed to bring a considerable amount of active, excited young people, they would probably be able to change the everyday for a short period of time.

The question is, would it be enough to provoke a major change in the refugees' lives? Rodrigo argues that staying for longer would have been counterproductive "We saw that we could exhaust the refugees, we are talking about little houses, with families of five or six members. Also, if you bring people to train them, you can't lock them there, because that is not Bosnia" (Rodrigo, 2015). The volunteers would be traveling to different locations, but the stay at the refugee camp and the town of Mihatovići would be the main parts of the summer camps. Rodrigo calculates that throughout the years they brought about six hundred volunteers, although according to Trenkalòs' register from 2005 to 2010 only about a quarter of those were in the service learning program (GEP-Trenkalòs, 2005).

When it comes to the training of volunteers before going to Bosnia, they decided to go to the essence of everything. With limited time and resources, Rodrigo argues that the experience gathered is enough to determine what to teach, and the seminars are very summarized. "Until you go there and realize what's going on, you don't understand the real problems" (Rodrigo, 2015).

He regrets that a big part of the volunteers stops their activities after one round "The majority of people are not made for this. Then there are those who realize that this means to make a compromise, and they cannot assume it. Of those who want to do it, there are people who can't. One thing is to go there and see a disaster one day, the problem is to go there every year, coexist. One of the things that kills me is to be there and to see generations come and go, and that the problem remains or worsens. It's Srebrenica, you're not building a well. It's a drama of gigantic proportions" (Rodrigo, 2015).

He also comments on the volunteers coping with the trip, but he pinpoints the hardest part in the return "Everyone doubts if they can face such a situation, but the

terrible part is the return. In Bosnia, everything is arranged, we know to what extent we can stretch them, where to go, we bring them to very specific places. They are overcharged with these experiences[...]then they go back and then they think that since they have been going through all that, the people will welcome them, help them. And it's the opposite, people do not want to hear stories, they want to go to the beach and party. There is always a bit of jealousy, these guys going to Bosnia, burying people and doing whatnot... the doors get closed. We talk to them about PTSD, but everyone understands better at home. People don't want to hear anything about the poor people of Bosnia. People chose, and they chose home" (Rodrigo, 2015).

Marcet's experiences in Bosnia & Herzegovina were strongly linked to the organization and its effects towards both the locals and the volunteers. She felt touched by the personal stories of the refugees: "Trenkalòs had a beautiful project, with such a dedicated people... I remember being in Mihatovići and Šahbegovići, sharing with the families, when they tell you what happened, and to see the volunteers at work[...]When you arrive at the refugee camp it's quite desolating, it makes you think about these families, these kids, living here for god-knows-how-much time" (Marcet, 2016).

She qualified the impact of the service-learning program as positive, but limited considering the scale of the operation and the real capacities of the volunteers: "It didn't have a direct impact on the return of the refugees or the mediation between the Bosniaks and the Bosnian Serbs in Šahbegovići, but it had an emotional influence[...]When you saw those people laugh, enjoy, they had exchanges that otherwise they would have never had" (Marcet, 2016).

She attributed the success in peacebuilding to the development projects, that provided an infrastructure and tools for the refugees to sustain themselves: "We built a farm, bought the animals [...]but even then, the projects were fleeting, we would not be there forever. You do not solve the people's problems, it is temporary, they need to move on by themselves" (Marcet, 2016).

Marcet doubted that the volunteers would have enough training to understand the conflict, but argued that the organization taught them enough that they would understand how to behave in the culture, the religious differences, the functioning of the house, etc. “Still, once you are there, it’s shocking, no matter how old are you. Even if someone has told you about the violence, the massacre, once you see it firsthand... no one can explain to you that feeling. It depends on each person, some can cope with it better, some are more easily impressed” (Marcet, 2016).

Once the volunteers would finish their activities and return, some would want to continue in the NGO. “The guides became members of Trenkalòs and kept expanding the project. Since many were from scout associations, they came from different cities[...]they would talk about the project, the conflict in Bosnia, and organized talks in their municipalities” (Marcet, 2016).

The organization would provide them with photographic material, presentations, short films, and once the next summer camp would come up, they would participate in preparing the explanations, organizing the training for the volunteers, and joining the camps as aides for the organization.

It is interesting to note that the volunteers were not provided emotional support apart from casual meetings with other members. “A lot of them manifested the intention to keep collaborating, and we had a couple of meetings in Barcelona, kept in touch with the associations, so they could contact us if they felt that they were not understood. The majority of people, once they go back home, feel that their family or friends don’t empathize with the stories and impressions they learned in Bosnia”

“So in keeping their link to the organization they had more tools to cope and help the people whom they shared so many emotions with[...]There are always some people who don’t want to continue, either because they can’t manage the emotions, or for their own reasons. But living it like that, from that emotional perspective, does make them continue, transmit what they lived, organize speeches, and help them as much as possible” (Marcet, 2016).

Long Time Volunteers

This section will contain the experiences of two long-time volunteers, Bernat Guixer and Francesc Gassó. In the organization, this position is tagged as 'Guide' or 'Guides', and they were in charge of tasks often different than the regular or short time volunteers, such as performing explanations, supervising activities, or leading discussions.

Guixer was part of the first service learning camps, during the second part of July 2005. He participated in the service learning program several years and did talks in educational centers as well. Gassó attended the training for volunteers of Trenkalòs in 2011, and from there he participated in three rounds, the last being in 2016.

Gassó considers the camps as a practical experience to "better understand the human condition" (Gassó, 2016). In his text, he reflects on the conversations with the youth in the refugee camp, especially in that they felt that society had forgotten about them and that there was no future. Gassó is often impressed by the process of the organization, and the amount of effort invested in the country.

He argues that Trenkalòs was a piece more of the reconstruction, and its continuity earned the trust of those who have been so many times deceived. "It was an organization that was there because they believed in what they were doing, instead of ticking requirements off of a list to receive funding" (Gassó, 2016).

He appreciates the direct language often used by the organization as a tool to shake the passive attitudes of the volunteers and create uncomfortable debates as a bath of reality. Also, he considers the service learning program as a maturity trip and the increment of social responsibility. "One needs a trip like this to understand many things, especially what an ex-combatant told us: one can only understand war when one has lived it. Thanks to Trenkalòs I had the chance to learn a part of the recent history of Europe, and their cooperative work to fight against the military objectives of the genocide, bringing a little hope where there was none" (Gassó, 2012).

In his travel logs, Gassó offers descriptions of the border customs, Sarajevo, the refugee camp of Mihatovići, Potočari, and the town of Šahbegovići with a spice of history. He also describes the hospitality of the locals in Mihatovići, and cultural and economic cues, such as taking the shoes off when entering a house, or sitting on the floor, although he describes these situations as normal.

In fact, he is more surprised by the fact that their hosts offered their rooms to the guests, and slept in sofas. Back in Sarajevo, he describes how the training of the volunteers was supported by local experts in several fields, who met the volunteers and explained different parts of the Bosnian history, and the political, social, economic and cultural spheres.

Then he reflects on the difficulty to develop and maintain projects with such limited societal infrastructures. When in Šahbegovići, he observes affection and gratitude between the locals and the volunteers who have already visited Bosnia, especially Rodrigo. “I share the table with men who have been in the trenches four years, who have survived and maybe they didn’t want to[...]There are also women raped by soldiers, how to bring back the dignity to these people?” (Gassó, 2012)

His hosts do not have enough to feed the whole household, so the guests get to eat while they fast, although the food is abundant. As a vegan, the continuous presence of meat is a challenge. In his second blog, he is already a volunteer guide and has responsibilities like preparing activities or talks. Again, the experiences with refugees are the highlight, especially when they talk about the war.

When it comes to Bernat Guixer, he speaks more about his position as a guide, especially towards the other volunteers. As they were few in proportion to the volunteers, each had to prepare specific topics to be explained during the summer camps. “I went into detail with the Srebrenica massacre. I spent hours talking to Jordi, and I did a lot of research on books and newspapers about that topic. The training, in the end, was pretty exhaustive because since at the camps we observed many different topics... it wasn’t like a class, where you sit down and the teacher tells you the lesson. We shared with the people, learned as a group, and took from different sources” (Guixer, 2016).

He mentions a sense of debt towards the organization and the Bosniaks, that he felt needed repayment “After the camps, Trenkalòs used to leave the door open to a collaboration more focused on a local level, in Barcelona. It wasn't compulsory, but the idea was that a maximum of people would be involved[...]It's a personal experience that you could not have anywhere else at home. The impact of living with someone that has lived a war is very hard. And one can wonder... is it licit to do a service learning round and not continue doing stuff? It doesn't mean that you are forced to do it, but is it licit? There is a need to transcend, either with Trenkalòs or with something else... because that's one of the things that would bother me, if people thought that was tourism” (Guixer, 2016).

He also reinforces that the guides were not above the volunteers and that sometimes that was a challenge. “Our role was more to accompany them. Sometimes it wasn't about the explanation because they weren't ready for it. If the volunteers were older than you, it was hard to assume a moral authority. We are talking about twenty-year-old guides. The message sometimes didn't arrive in everyone” (Guixer, 2016).

He reflects on what surprised him: “The sensation that no one can fix that. To see to what extent a conflict that affected a generation, the parents, now is dragging the children. They weren't allowed to choose, and the wounds are open without them really understanding why. People born in war, raised in a refugee camp and totally unhappy (...) how can a country grow from there?” (Guixer, 2016).

When he goes over Trenkalòs' activities, he believes that some parts of the organization were well done, there was space for improvement “I believe that in the schools, one of the things that Trenkalòs did best was presenting a context, and accompanying it with personal experiences of the speakers. It was a much easier way for students to understand our position than a long and heavy history class” (Guixer, 2016).

He argues that there was not a specific plan for emotional coping, but that every volunteer had the chance to meet with their fellows and talk about. When it comes to the success, he is critical “Well, it wasn’t amazing, it has many pros and cons, and you realize about the complexity of everything. The project that Trenkalòs brought was really interesting, but it had a difficult application. The circumstances change everything. There are many beautiful things, but also many negative counterparts”.

He continues “One of them is that people there expect a continuity that cannot exist. In a way, the fact that the work camps happened every year it felt or it could have felt that Trenkalòs was a travel agency. And that was very far from what Trenkalòs aimed to do. It was really good, especially to help our people know the problem there, and for the locals, it was good, too... but everything that wasn’t aimed to train the volunteers: the farm, the economic development... that didn’t happen. And to me, that was a big problem for the project. I don’t blame them at all, but the impact hasn’t been what it should have been[...]The first year the project was done in several rounds, with little groups, it was easy to talk to everyone. But in the second round, they brought a lot of people all at the same time, and it made things harder for everyone to understand what was going on” (Guixer, 2016).

Short Time Volunteers

The last section of the narrative analysis concerns the short time volunteers, generally young people between sixteen and twenty-five years old. In comparison to the organizers and the long time volunteers, they focus on the personal stories that shock them, instead of being critical of the situation or the organization.

These interviews have been drawn from *Homage to Srebrenica* (2007), so there is no personal information about each volunteer interviewed. Nonetheless, these are invaluable for examining the most immediate and unadulterated impressions in the organization. They reflect on their own emotions and often mention the names of the refugees whom they lived with, or the closest to their age. “It shocked me to get on the bus that would take us to Potočari, there were almost no men, only women, and girls. The good mood was surprising[...]At first, I felt ok, but when we entered the memorial everything suddenly changed, the cries of women on top of hundreds of

tombs[...]like in the pictures you see in the newspapers” (Tona Fernández in Trenkalòs,2007:49)0

“We were burying one of Nermin’s uncles. Then I gazed upon this three or four-year-old kid that was staring at his mother while she fainted. Nermin was on his knees, yelling and clawing at the mud while other men put down the coffin in the grave. I wondered what that kid was thinking if all that wasn’t condemning the next generation forever” (Albert Duarte in Trenkalòs, 2007:117)

“I could not believe that those people of the same age as I had lived there forever[...]I would wake up every morning seeing them there, waiting, always with that smile” (Laura Vila in Trenkalòs, 2007:101) “It was surprising to see all those grown up men, big and strong, that went through all those years fighting in the trenches and that had seen everything, in tears at the farewell, only because we stayed some days with them. It felt heartwarming (Pol Camps in Trenkalòs, 2007:71).

“I could not stop thinking about everything I had lived[...]I found an interview of a refugee, Indira Dautovic, that they did in La Vanguardia. It was like I had never read it, like if all that I read in February didn’t affect me one inch, but now it had much more sense. And I started crying badly[...]I didn’t cry in Šahbegovići, where everyone cried like babies, but I was crying a week later, over a piece of newspaper” (Ignasi Masdéu in Trenkalòs, 2007:68)

They use the expressions ‘grandpa’ or ‘grandma’ when referring to old people in the camp or in the town, which could be explained as cultural cues or as signs of affection. They also refer to the refugees with their first name, with the familiarity one would talk to a friend. The first impressions of the Mihatovići camp, the burials in Potočari, the town of Šahbegovići, are often a mix of nervousness and excitement: “At first, the life in the refugee camp did not feel as harsh as I was told, because the family I lived with had several commodities[...]until they started talking about the war, about what happened in Srebrenica, and all that these people lived... and then you realize that a TV or a stereo don’t mean anything[...]When I think about Srebrenica, it comes to my mind the creepy image of the battery factory. It was the ultimate demoralization, entering there and walking among the thousands of tombs[...]Some

of the young people we were accompanying found out that they had relatives buried there. You see them crying like that and you don't know how to react, or how to share their pain (Adrià Sariols in Trenkalòs, 2007:91). "When you go back home, to Catalonia there are moments when you need to talk to someone, to explain what happened, but you lock yourself in because you know that they will not understand (Laura Vila in Trenkalòs, 2007:68).

My personal experience

As has been stated above, I have participated in two trips to Bosnia & Herzegovina, although they were really different from one another. The first was in 2015, the 20th anniversary of Srebrenica. It was a special year since there were no summer camps organized, the group was rather little, and there were no activities with the refugees. On the contrary, the second round was a fully-fledged service learning summer camp, alongside twenty-seven more volunteers and organizers. We stayed at the refugees' homes, ate with them and developed personal relationships.

Thinking about the volunteers, I reflected on my own sensations. A key factor is the sensation of time. Especially in a place like Mihatovići, an unfamiliar, and dangerous-looking location, the sensation of alert was present at all times. Even though everyone quickly adapted to the place, we were faced with unusually exhausting situations.

Oddly enough, the first one is the hospitality. We were distributed in pairs and sent to meet our hosts, accompanied by the chatter in Bosnian/Serbo-Croat. Perhaps it might sound like an odd discomfort, but the excessive generosity of the Bosnians is hard to fight off. Exorbitant amounts of food accompanied by the effort to understand the hosts can be especially tiring. Every meal becomes a challenge.

The second is the people themselves, especially the refugees in Mihatovići. It is clear that they pay a toll for the bad conditions they have to live in. Adults either strive to be nice, or they do not at all. The social structures I witnessed were mainly patriarchal, although it seemed like women were the most successful students. Even though the sheer amount of diabetes among the Bosniaks in general, they kept eating sweets, cake and soda drinks, and rarely ate vegetables or fruit. Combined

with a general like for cigarettes, many people lacked several teeth. Children wandered around the camp and fought among each other at the slightest provocation. Overall they were very curious and quite carefree. It was common to have them join our meetings, although they would not understand anything.

The third hindrance is the activities. When explaining the work we did in the camp, people expect some sort of material achievement, but mostly they were focused on the refugees. There were talks by war veterans, which details were quite gruesome although our translation did her best to soften them; games for the kids, which often broke down into fights and we had to intervene; and special events like a fashion show or a memorial to the massacre of Srebrenica. Even if the task was little, there are few breaks. Some tasks proved to be quite exhausting, like watching over the technical equipment, were challenging, as kids would play ball, ride bicycles or try to “help” by moving gear around.

These obstacles put the body and mind under stress, quickly diminishing the energy and a consistent limitation on mental processing. We were constantly bombarded with information, many of which contained traumatic stories of war survivors and victims. Even after having had heard most of those stories before, the contextualization is very effective.

Many volunteers experienced a connexion with their own personal tragedies, especially during the Srebrenica memorial activity in Mihatovići, and the one at the actual memorial. To help cope with the accumulated steam, the organizers would organize round tables in little groups allowing everyone to express themselves. Nonetheless, the overall experience was extremely positive.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Earlier in this master's thesis, two research questions were established around a case study. The case was presented, as well as a conjunction of data and theory. The questions were: *How did Trenkalòs evolve from a humanitarian aid NGO to a service learning organization? How did the NGO volunteers understand the process and the outcome of their activities?*

The first question concerned the evolution of the Catalan NGO Trenkalòs through their almost twenty years of activity in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As stated before, the organization was created in 1997 with the initial idea of gathering audiovisual and photographic material in the country right after the end of the conflict. This had two purposes: To raise awareness of the crude situation of the aftermath, and to offer training to students interested in humanitarian aid and international development projects.

Therefore, Bosnia was not the initial focus or the only country the NGO visited, but it is the place where the organization has invested in most by far. In Catalonia, the members realized that schools did not have programs designed to allow children to develop aid projects, thus limiting their capacity to empathize with unprivileged people in conflict areas.

At the same time, once in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Trenkalòs was able to dynamically react to the necessities of the refugees, with whom they interacted directly. It allowed the NGO to act as a middle man, transporting materials collected in the schools in Catalonia to refugee centers in Bosnia. As an organization with an active profile, more volunteers joined, especially scout groups, who already developed their own little projects, and were old enough to be able to travel to Bosnia. But the organizers saw a couple of issues: scout members were used to be part of the development of the projects, as well as having a voice in the decision making of their own organizations.

In a post-conflict area, with limited resources and personnel, rash attitudes could decide the success or the failure of a project, so the NGO adapted a hierarchical

structure, and limited the actions of the volunteers to physical work and learning. Trenkalòs would visit Bosnia-Herzegovina in irregular intervals, until in 2005, when they had enough contacts on the ground, as well as funding to develop medium projects.

At that time, the volunteer pool was big enough that they decided to develop a program for volunteers to live with refugees, as active witnesses and able workforce to develop more permanent projects. This 'work camps' are an example of service learning. This shift of activities was also a reaction to a deeper problem in post-war Bosnian society: ten years after the war, thousands of refugees were jobless and barely surviving in borderline physical and emotional situations.

To try to help, Trenkalòs tackled basic issues rooted in the refugees: creating jobs, promoting the return to their previous homes, and providing emotional support in the shape of people willing to listen to them, actively acknowledge their existence. This allowed the organization to have a stable source of self-funded volunteers, between thirty to sixty per year (more, depending on the year). In exchange, the organizers offered training in the history of the country, the effects of war, developing economies; and would be receiving lessons from war veterans, researchers and experts in Bosnia.

The mentality of the organization led by Jordi Rodrigo and Marta Catalan, later expanded to Rodrigo's partners and volunteers; was quite direct. They would expect volunteers to act as professionals and maintain a standard of quality. It had a company-like structure, success was to be expected, and disrespectful or inadequate behaviors were not tolerated. This hierarchical structure allowed Rodrigo and the other organizers to focus on their own work, like keeping personal relations with the refugees; especially in tense situations like accompanying them to the mass burials of the Srebrenica Memorial at the factories of Potočari.

This direct approach was reflected in many of their activities. Liberal state building practitioners put their trust in international advisors and urban oligarchs when assessing the needs of the locals. Instead, Trenkalòs would travel by road to remote villages and communities, and observed what was lacking. That allowed them to

discover the realities of the common men: long queues at the borders, destroyed bridges, marks of paramilitary groups on burned facades, taking risks in the process.

Nevertheless, they had obstacles: the size of the volunteer pool was challenged by a very limited amount of funding. Donated personally and raised at home, the quantities would oscillate around thirty thousand Euro per year during the establishment of the service learning program, a flimsy amount compared to the funding of strong international NGO.

To answer the research question, one of the possible outcomes of putting an NGO through the strain of maintaining projects through such a prolonged amount of time is the adaptation of a very hierarchical and organized strategy. Since there are very few organizations with similar attributes, it is hard to compare or imagine other strategies that would have the same impact.

Parting from having very limited income and a bottom-up approach based on volunteer work, if there are any mistakes it is very hard to overcome them by pure force of money. Therefore, the efforts need to be invested in calculating every detail of the mission, so that eventful inconveniences can be marginalized as much as possible.

The second question is directly linked to the amount of time the volunteers spend in the country, since the more iterations they experience, the more they become familiar with the NGO, and have clearer ideas of its purposes and flaws. Organizers are well aware of the limitations of the NGO, but also its advantages. They realize that it is not possible to help everyone that needs it, and that their effort will not ultimately solve all the problems of the refugees, but that it is more of a small addition to a higher purpose.

The organizers are well versed in coordinating events, which often includes knowing how to minimize the levels of intrusion of the volunteers in the Bosniak traditions, while at the same time maximizing the positive outcomes of service learning. They often have a resigned attitude, product of facing obstacles all the way from the beginning of the planning. They have multiple acquaintances in Bosnia, which allows

them to keep track on the situation of the country and develop a personal compromise with them.

Both in the interviews and the summer camps, organizers profess a high admiration for the *Dobro Dosli* program, with many times having argued that it has not needed any change during the whole extent of its application. Its flaws are often classified as marginal, or a product of limited resources.

Long time volunteers or guides are the most critical, since although they have a personal compromise with the organization, their ideals do not completely match with those of the NGO, or they have not faced too many hardships on the ground. Although they comment on the benefits of their involvement, often they lament not being able to do more. There is also a difference of age, usually guides are on the range of the twenties, while organizers tend to be between their thirties and fifties.

They often show an energetic and optimistic attitude, that turns into frustration when it faces impossible challenges. Guides also have a different relationship towards the refugees than that of the Organizers'. Personal war stories and feats of survival might seem more ordinary to those who have listened to them many times, but for guides and short time volunteers, these are some of the most impactful memories of their service in the country.

Lastly, short time volunteers focus mainly in their outcomes rather than of those of the refugees and the organization. They reflect on personal anecdotes that are relatable to them, especially comparing them to their lives back in Catalonia. Many have a naïve attitude towards a war and an ethnic cleansing, and some are not able to cope with stories of violence and death. They develop bonds with the refugees, but often these are superficial, and lose contact after a while. In this group there are sometimes volunteers that only contemplate the experience as something of a one-time adventure, with no deeper meaning to them.

A theoretical understanding of Trenkalòs success

Earlier in this master's thesis, it was discussed that hybrid peace is located between local and international scales, and that finds bridges between these factions and their interests to reach agreements which are interesting for both parts. In doing so, the actors might resort to actions or individuals that do not actively support cooperation, tolerance or understanding, but that are capable of creating a more stable situation towards peace (Richmond, 2015:51).

Trenkalòs recognized the inefficiency and arrogance of mainstream peace building, and sought to do something without being limited by the system. This was a major risk, because not only does international backing provides a series of failsafe insurances in case of a crisis, but also can offer actors that easily creates a bridge between the NGO and the victims.

Although it might have been more difficult to forge their own contacts, Trenkalòs could have avoided some of the negative ideas linked to international organizations. such as the failure of the UN, or the perception of aid money being used to buy support to international measures rather than as an investment in development. They still vouched for human rights, democracy and peace, but implementing those things was far out of their reach. Their goal was to help the war victims immediately, and that is reflected in their actions.

One of the aspects in Trenkalòs' ideas which is more reflected in the theory is the everyday efforts and commitment to the Bosniak communities. By reaching out, keeping communication and contact, especially in critical times like the memorial of the Srebrenica massacre, but also in celebrations like Bajram, the organization established a connection that would become part of the victims' lifes. These everyday efforts dealt with a need of the population which was to be remembered after an atrocious war. Local and everyday practices of peace are staples of Trenkalòs, and a key to their success in maintaining their projects and supporting the victims of war.

When it comes to service-learning, the effectivity of the Dobro Dosli program is, in my opinion, very high. Not only it is an opportunity for students to improve their

abilities in relation to their careers, but it can also lead them to different and new paths. Dobro Dosli is not an academia-based service-learning program, but offers the same benefits. “The opportunity to see and act on the problems individuals and communities face, engage in dialogue and problem solving with the people most affected, and observe firsthand the effects of racism, sexism, poverty, and oppression” (Jacoby, 2014:11).

One of the main differences with an academia-based service-learning and one that it is not is the major variety in personalities, ages, economic and cultural backgrounds of the participants. The skills applied might not be as polished or developed as university students; but innocence, bravery, kindness, open-mindedness, curiosity life experience and personal struggles can be found in any participant, and the resulting knowledge, experience and investment has the same value as any other.

One of the interesting parts of 2016’s service-learning round of Trenkalòs was the stark variety of profiles among the volunteers. For the first time, the age segment was stretched to fit people from ages of 16 years old to 55. The experiences, interactions and reactions of these people in the same environment were infinitely different, but in sharing them, the volunteers were not only learning from their hosts, but from their fellows as well.

As stated before, Jacoby (2014) evaluated the different benefits of service-learning, and one of them is the reflection of the volunteer’s on their field experiences. During the service-learning camps, there are several rounds of self-expression and reflection meetings. In these, the organizers try to find out what is the general attitude of the group, and make sure that people understand the context in which they are living.

After the camps, a common struggle is to find the way back to normality. Volunteers face contradictions and inadequacies in the attitudes of their fellows and family, especially related to conformism and a lack of interest towards alien conflicts. These difficulties are a sign of “flourishing” (Jacoby, 2014:11), an attitudinal shift towards victims of conflict. The process that leads back to normality might neutralize this

change in a part or in its totality, but to keep an open mind is in the hands of the volunteers.

Peace Education is perhaps the less clear of my theoretical approaches, and the reason is because Trenkalòs does not use peace education as a means, nor as their goal. But I believe that their work is intrinsically related this field. The organization uses a direct approach to violence, and the organizers are not afraid to put the volunteers psychologically straining situations. Peace Education aims to study violence and challenge the actual system, which gravitates around war to explain the major historical feats of humanity (Harris, 2004:5). To do so, scholars push for a study and a critic of violence at all levels of education, and to offer alternatives to violence when facing conflict.

Still, Danesh (2006) argues that current education is structured around conflict, and that coexistence and cooperation are not discussed in profundity. Trenkalòs' approach would probably be reflected as belonging to the mainstream style of education. The NGO's prolonged activities in Bosnia have turned their approach to a cynical, down-to-earth one. The possibility for cooperation and coexistence is considered as an ideal scenario, but their experience has often shown that deep-rooted conflict of Bosnia & Herzegovina rarely allows for these solutions.

Therefore, peace education is an ideal possibility, but not the more probable or suitable one in a post-war or development. This renders this particular theoretical approach slightly marginal, but still manages to raise awareness about a conflict that would be effectively forgotten outside of the Balkans or the academic world.

Further applications of this study

The purpose of this study was to describe the activities of Trenkalòs and its volunteers, but also to showcase their method for future references. One of the arguments of the organizers is that the *Dobro Dosli* project is easily replicable in Bosnia & Herzegovina, and has considerable outcomes compared to its flaws. It does not only offer psychological and monetary support to people in crude life situations, but also provides first hand field experience for young students with a

future in development. It is also remarkably cheap, although it does require a monumental personal effort.

The main ingredient is the presence of an actor that is both knowledgeable and willing to compromise with a long-term project. It does not need to be a foreign person, in fact, it would be ideal that a Bosnian would take the leave and organize a project of their own. Restoring houses and painting murals in ethnic cleansed villages to promote return, as well as attract young population and tourists with outdoor sports, cultural heritage and the possibility of jobs would largely invigorate the economy and the future prospects any Bosnian in the area, no matter what ethnic group they belonged to.

There are obstacles, of course. There are large minefields which have not been yet removed, and landslides and floods have displaced a quantity of them, limiting the outdoor aspects of the breathtaking Bosnian scenery. The lack of jobs often draws young people to the larger cities, hampering any prospect of repopulating abandoned villages in the countryside. And the scars of the war are still present, especially in the Republika Srpska, where the Bosniak return is still minimal, and the ethnic cleansers pose barriers and threats to returnees still.

Nonetheless, it is possible, since it has been done before: Trenkalòs is proof of it. The service learning program could be adapted in any European country, since most of the communication is done in English and German. Moreover, a network of new communities, especially populated by young people, would reinforce the sense of common land, create mixed ethnic bonds, families, businesses, and slowly restore what the Bosnian society was after the war: a tolerant society based on a rich cultural background.

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