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**From Peace Research to Peace Science:
Relating Theory to Ethical Dilemmas by Researching Violent Conflicts**

Draft version. Comments welcome

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1. Introduction¹

We [in Northern Ireland] became the spoiled white children of Europe and the world has been fascinated about us. (*Derick Wilson, 2000; interview with the author*)

Many peace researchers are fascinated by violent confrontations or conflicts around the globe. This fascination led peace “scientists” to the desire to study the “normal” daily lives of people in violent conflicts, i.e. in “abnormal” situations. A massive trend towards empirical social research, field studies and field observations followed. Theories were formulated, conflict transformation processes designed and conflict resolution handbooks published.

Out of this fascination and the practical consequences for research agendas a new scientific debate is presently developing: Are there or should there be certain moral constraints or ethical barriers to empirical social research, being carried out in the midst of violence conflicts? This paper tries to elaborate on this question.

The following anecdote can be used to understand the ethical dilemmas and moral problems arising during field research: A professor from the University of Michigan came to Northern Ireland because she wanted to research the “daily lives” and circumstances of Protestant youth living in a small enclave. She produced a questionnaire and asked the young people to complete it. There were two questions included, which give rise to moral sorrows and ethical questions:

Do you hate Catholics? Yes or No.

How much do you hate Catholics? Please rate from 1 (no hate) to 10 (very much).

When I first arrived in Belfast, I was confronted with this story by Peter Scott and Joe Law,² who are both activists with an NGO called „Trademark“ that is working with young Protestants.³ Peter and Joe made it absolutely clear to me that they will not support such research activities any more. And they are right: Not only are they counter-productive to the cause of NGOs like Trademark — with the aim of moving young Protestants away from sectarianism — also, the scientific norms of peace studies as a “peace science” as will be explained in this paper are incompatible with the approach taken by the Michigan professor.

¹ I am grateful to my colleagues Margret Rae and Susanne Quadros for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.

² See: Interview with Joe Law; 21.11.2002.

³ Eyben and McGuire (2002: 27), who run the initiative called „Duncrun Cultural Initiative“ which is connected with Trademark, also heavily criticized it.

2. Unhappy?

2.1. A Critical “State of the Art”

“Unhappy” — this was the simple conclusion of Ekkehart Krippendorff, when he gave his farewell lecture in 1999.⁴ What led Ekkehart, who was one of the founding fathers of peace studies in Germany in the 1960s, to this sad though simple conclusion after 40 years of “peace science”?

Beyond the fact that his retirement coincided with the Kosovo war and Germany’s first ever military engagement since the end of the Second World War, Ekkehart made no bones about his dismay regarding two facts: Firstly, the dominance of “realism” and *realpolitik* within the agendas of political science and international relations. Secondly and related to this first point, peace science has never been able to go beyond the disciplines of political science and international relations.⁵ It has always been governed or dominated by the methodologies of the two subjects.

In January 2007, Ekkehart issued a short statement together with Johan Galtung which was directed (as a letter) to the governing body of the “German Society for Peace and Conflict Research”⁶: While iterating the “peace by peaceful means” doctrine in it, they made it absolutely clear that peace *research* becomes peace *science* when it acquires an applied and normative character. After the conflict has been diagnosed, peace science has to develop therapies to enable its peaceful resolution.

In the generation of such therapies, peace science relies by and large on qualitative research designs and principles. Qualitative research can be defined as science which does not use quantitative data or statistical methods to produce knowledge (the “Michigan professor’s approach”).⁷ Qualitative science has to be distinguished from *natural* science, e.g. physics or biology. The methodology used by natural scientists can be described as the *isolation* of processes or phenomena from their social contexts thereby generating “reproducible” results. The central research instrument is the experimental method. In other words: Science takes place within the isolated and artificially designed laboratory. The social contexts as well as any social interaction are excluded since they are deemed irrelevant for the natural science approach.⁸

⁴ Krippendorff (1999).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The original German name is: “Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung e.V.” (AFK). See the association’s webpage: <http://www.afk-web.de> (accessed: 19.03.2007).

⁷ This broad definition is used by: Strauss/ Corbin (1996: 3).

⁸ See the critique in: Lamnek (1995: 18).

This exclusionary, isolationist approach cannot be a sensible way to conduct social science in general⁹ — least of all for peace science in particular, for that simple reason that the core subject of social science is the individual living and acting within a social environment. Both are interdependent and subject to each other. Whereas the natural science approach is focused on identifying rules that govern individual behavior, the social science approach aims to analyze and understand the motives that are the basis for any social interaction.¹⁰

These general features of social science are highly relevant for conducting peace research in deeply divided societies and in violent contexts. There is, however, one additional point to be made: Peace research is by definition *normative* science. Its normative character derives from the fact that peace science was originally developed as a science dedicated to “peace” as the ultimate value and goal. Finding ways to realize this value was meant to be its central scientific task. Thus, peace science has always been both a critical as well as an applied science. It was never a neutral nor value-free academic discipline. A non-isolationist, socially defined, normative and applied “science of peace” which aims to provide the affected community with “peace prescriptions”, will always be confronted with problems and challenges, e.g. with ethical dilemmas. Put simply, one way of dealing with ethical barriers arising during field research on the ground is: Expect them to happen!

Peace science is not about pacification, nor co-optation, but a radical challenge to the status quo — a constant “*trouble making*” exercise. I once heard a nice description from an American friend who defined a peace scientist as a natural “troublemaker”. Coming back to Krippendorff’s unhappiness, I would argue that it is the peace scientist’s destiny to be unhappy since an appropriate definition of “peace scientists” is “*natural troublemaker*”.

With this characterization we could take the critical “state of the art” to another stage or level: The “peace medicine” that is required from the peace scientist (see the letter from Galtung and Krippendorff quoted above) also leads to a more general question: How should peace science deal with the future, or, to be more specific, what answers can peace science give to future threats, dangers, crises or fears?

Bernhard Moltmann, a peace scientist from Frankfurt who has been involved in peace research for 30 years, made a personal assessment that peace science has severe difficulties in dealing with the future: Reflecting on his own activities over the years he acknowledged that if peace scientists are asked for analysis, it is only after a conflict or war has already started or

⁹ Ibid: 14.

¹⁰ Ibid.

a dangerous crisis has developed. They are almost never consulted for recommendations that go beyond the management of the actual crisis situation.¹¹ In other words: Peace science has failed to deliver a new notion of science which is directed towards the future and aimed at developing ideas, strategies and theories that can be applied to future threats or crisis scenarios.

Looking at it from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, peace science has still to take a final step: The main challenge is to seek profound answers to challenges and problems arising in the future, by allowing utopian thinking ahead of current trends. This means that knowledge should be produced which can be applied *before* new wars erupt and violence substitutes peaceful solutions. Ideally, peace science becomes a radical, challenging and non-conformist science and can therefore be defined as *applied futurology* — though not science fiction.

What is Peace Science?

A socially defined, ethically aware, normative and applied science. It aims at producing new knowledge which is *prescriptive* in character: *peace medicine* (Galtung). Through its linkage of theory and practice (practical research) the ideas and theories are *relevant* for the daily lives of the people that are studied.

Peace science is a radical challenge to the status quo, a trouble making activity. Its prescriptive character goes beyond the analysis (diagnosis) of current violent situations, war or crises, in that it tries to generate ideas and theories for use in the future. Thus, peace science is a critical and applied futurology.

¹¹ Moltmann (2002: 357ff.).

2.2. „Being in the Middle by Being at the Edge“? Searching for the Natural Laboratory

In contrast to natural science approaches, empirical field studies do not pretend to simulate reality and generate laws therefrom. Peace science in violent societies cannot be reduced to a controlled arrangement nor can it use experimental manipulations of conditions.¹² Rather, it tries to reach an emphatic understanding of the people affected by the situation: „*Being in the middle by being at the edge*“¹³ could be an apt description of the conduct of field research. Therefore, it aims to analyze certain phenomena in their natural setting without attempting to manipulate any variables:¹⁴

Violence is not a sociologically fragmented phenomenon that occurs “outside” the arena of everyday life for those affected. It is part and parcel of life for the millions of people who live under oppressive, repressive, or explosive politicomilitary conditions. If we are to understand peace and conflict, it is to the people themselves, to the social dynamics and cultural phenomena that inform them, that we must turn.¹⁵

An optimal way to do research in the midst of violent conflicts and deeply divided countries is to adopt a three-phase approach:

1. “helicopter perspective” (*descriptive approach*)
2. “natives’ perspective” or “indigenous perspective” (*understanding and empathy*)
3. back to the helicopter (*self-reflection and critical analysis*)

While the object, i.e. the phenomenon, is chosen, the researcher starts from an outsider-position: He looks at something you have gained some interest in and about which he wants to know and learn more. The aim is to accumulate or generate knowledge. After this process of identification and description, a deeper *understanding* of the phenomenon is sought. The most effective way is an ethnographic approach: field studies, observations and interviews.

However, Clifford Geertz — the most prominent protagonist of the *Verstehen*-approach — issued the helpful warning that the idea of doing field research to analyze people in their “natural laboratory” should not give rise to the assumption of ethnographic research being superior to other approaches.¹⁶ For their part, protagonists of the quantitative research ap-

¹² The “scientific correctness” of natural science is usually traced back to its experimental method which is undertaken in the laboratory and produces scientifically “correct” results: the method uses a controlled arrangement and the manipulation of conditions in order to systematically observe particular phenomena with the intention of defining the influences and relationships which affect these phenomena.

¹³ This term was originally used as a brilliant description of the role of *mediators* from a Quaker perspective. See the title of the book by Williams/ Williams (1994).

¹⁴ Cf. Flick/ von Kardorff/ Keupp/ von Rosenstiel/ Wolff (1991: 40).

¹⁵ Nordstrom/ JoAnn (1992: 13f.).

¹⁶ Geertz (1983: 32f.).

proach like Gary King or Robert Keohane reject Geertz's method and fundamentally dispute his scientific status in general:

If we could understand human behavior only through *Verstehen*, we would never be able to falsify our descriptive hypotheses or provide evidence for them beyond our experience. Our conclusions would never go beyond the status of untested hypotheses, and our interpretations would remain personal rather than scientific.¹⁷

Against this criticism Stephen Ryan, a prominent peace researcher from the University of Ulster, defended Geertz' *Verstehen*-approach and claimed that there is a significant lack of anthropological research regarding ethnopolitical conflicts.¹⁸ But Stephen also made two important reservations: First, he warned of the potential danger inherent in the fact that the search for empathy and understanding of the perceptions and motives behind acts of violence could lead to the justification of murder, human rights abuses, ethnic cleansings etc.¹⁹ Secondly, Stephen argues that anthropological approaches should not promote some kind of post-modern "hermeneutic egalitarianism" in the sense that any other methodologies or approaches become disqualified. He emphasizes:

(...) the need for *verstehen* is not the same as the endorsement of all cocoons. Thus the perspective of the outsider is useful in that he can identify distortions, stereotypes, misunderstandings and other factors that might be standing in the way of a peaceful resolution of inter-communal conflict.²⁰

Taking these arguments for granted, the indigenous perspective is not sufficient either. We have to get back to the helicopter at some stage of the research process. Otherwise the danger of ethnographic seduction looms.

2.3. The Danger of Ethnographic Seduction

Ethnographic seduction [is] a complex dynamic of conscious moves and unconscious defenses that may arise in interviews with victims and perpetrators of violence, which undermines critical detachment.²¹

Ethnographic seduction results from an intensive process of internalization by the researcher: Lengthy studies and intensive thinking *can* lead — though not necessarily — to an uncritical and non-reflexive self-identification with the subject. This self-identification becomes problematic or even dangerous, if it is accompanied by a loss of critical detachment. There are plenty of examples that can illustrate this process towards ethnographic seduction: The

¹⁷ King/ Keohane/ Verba (1994: 38). Emphasis by the authors.

¹⁸ Cf. Ryan (1995a: 97). My emphasis.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid: 98.

²¹ Robben (1996: 72). My insertion.

economist Benjamin Ward tried to analyze what he called the “*ideal worlds of economics*”.²² His aim was to elaborate the liberal, radical and conservative economic world views in a comparative framework. Interestingly, Ward made some personal remarks in addition to his “scientific” conclusions: After reading a plethora of books and articles by liberal economic theorists and reflecting on and intensively analyzing them, he confessed that he “became himself a liberal” and thus lost his critical detachment — it seemed that the “ideal worlds” became part of his own world. The same *internalization*, as he named what had happened to him, reoccurred after studying socialist books and articles (the “social ideal world”).

Internalization processes can have serious consequences for field research practices in violent societies because the danger of ethnographic seduction is significantly higher if you are confronted with overt acts of violence than with “economic ideal worlds”: Watching or observing violence, recognizing the consequences of it, seeing victims and letting tears flow — it is hard not to be “seduced” if you are outside of the helicopter.

On November 18th, 2002 I was on the ground in East Belfast (Northern Ireland) for direct observation. Since May 2002, the area has seen daily riots between Catholics and Protestants whose residential areas are strictly separated (commonly called an “interface area”) and divided by high walls (so-called “peace walls”). I was in the area almost every night from October 1st until December, 20th 2002. On one particular night in November I was on the Protestant side (called “Cluan Place”). Cluan Place is divided by a “peace wall” from the Catholic residential area, “Short Strand”. Around half past eight, serious stone-throwing started with both sides being involved. Suddenly, I observed that somebody was standing on the roof of a Catholic house bordering the “peace wall”: He fired a shot of rounds into Cluan Place less than 10 meters from my position. The situation escalated, pipe-bombs and stones continued to be thrown, people ran (including myself) into all directions and Cluan Place became empty very soon. The Protestant community reacted angrily, shouted at the police present in the area, old ladies were in tears.

At this stage I lost my critical detachment and was ethnographically seduced: I interpreted what had happened as a Catholic or an IRA attack on a Protestant area — and as an attack on myself because I was present in the area at the moment of the shooting. I hated the IRA that night; I had luckily escaped physical harm. It took me some weeks to leave the happenings behind and to analyze the events in a more differentiated, critical way: Both sides were in-

²² Ward (1979).

volved in heavy riots and violent confrontations in East Belfast and both sides were suffering from the situation. Neither side is solely to blame, neither the IRA nor the Protestants.

This short personal episode illustrates why it is important to leave the native perspective at a critical stage of the research process and go back to the helicopter again.

3. An “Ethical Lens”: Theory versus Practice versus Ambition

3.1. *The Goldfish-Bowl Dilemma: Scientific Disturbances?*

People are sick of being researched. (Kelly Persic)

We are researched to death. (Roisin McGlone)²³

People in Northern Ireland often complain that they are “prosecuted” by a whole army of international researchers every year:

We have hundreds of Americans coming over each year who want to implement peace processes for Northern Ireland. (...) We decided just to let them! (Jim Auld)²⁴

Jim is the director of the NGO “Community Restorative Justice Ireland” (CRJI). He generally takes a skeptical view of researchers and was reluctant to talk to me; and he also expressed the same skepticism towards journalists.

In 1999 at a time when the political peace process in Northern Ireland was in a serious crisis and an official review of the “Good Friday Agreement”, which had been signed in 1998, was in progress, a very extraordinary event took place that was largely overlooked at the time: George Mitchell, a former American Senator, had chaired the talks which had led to the Good Friday Agreement and was again in charge of the review talks in 1999. When the talks reached a critical stage, he made a quite remarkable decision: He strongly advised the parties who were involved in the “review talks” to create and maintain a total “*media black-out*”: No participant should talk with the press, nothing should be made public because the media were seen as serious spoilers of the whole process!²⁵ Smyth and Darby reacted to Mitchell’s decision by raising two rhetorical questions:

Would George Mitchell have admitted researchers to information about the talks? Are researchers to be trusted or are they likely to behave in any more or less trustworthy ways than other observers?²⁶

²³ Kelly and Roisin both work for NGO “Inter-Com” based in West Belfast (previously called: “Springfield Inter-Community Development Forum”). Interview with the author; 31.10.2002.

²⁴ Interview with the author; 19.11.2002.

²⁵ George Mitchell published a book on his experiences in Northern Ireland titled: “*Making Peace*”. See: Mitchell (1999).

²⁶ Smyth/ Darby (2001: 34).

These questions refer to serious ethical problems peace science has to overcome during field research. Yet, they are not completely new questions. The Austrian psychologist Schuler demanded in the late 70s and early 80s that ethical reflection about the consequences of field research for the people examined is necessary. Schuler warned that researchers should be aware of the potential negative consequences of their research practices.²⁷ But by and large these ethical questions or dilemmas are still ignored or underestimated today. From the very outset peace science should avoid developing into a negative force: becoming a spoiler of the process that is being researched. Peace scientists should not act as investigative or “sensationalistic” journalists.

The consequences of ignorance or underestimation of ethical questions can be summarized by so-called “*goldfish-bowl*” dilemma:²⁸ In places like Northern Ireland the “researched society” makes people feel as if they were in a goldfish bowl, observed 24 hours a day by journalists, police and army personnel, international observers, human rights activists, community workers and by “ethnographically oriented” researchers.

This goldfish-bowl situation can have dangerous and threatening consequences: In the November night of 2002 in Cluan Place mentioned above, I not only lost my critical detachment through ethnographic seduction after the shots had been fired. I also lost my temper and suffered a breakdown because I was not only almost shot, I was also harassed, intimidated and shouted at by a local resident: “*Look at that bastard watching. Go watch your own streets!*” I had no choice but to leave the area. The sad thing about this story was that I was verbally attacked by a lady with whom I had previously tea together on many occasions in Cluan Place. It took me a long time to regain access to Cluan Place afterwards. It needed mediation by a highly respected local community worker.

Many “investigative journalists” told me about similar problems whenever they were “documenting” violent episodes. David Lister, the London Times’ Irish correspondent, explained his difficulties when he was investigating loyalist violence.²⁹

3.2. The “Applied Science” Dilemma

The second and probably the most important dilemma for peace science is what I would call the “applied science” dilemma. Galtung and Krippendorff (“unhappy!”) have hissed the flag quite high with their letter to the German Peace and Conflict Research Association: Peace science *has to be* normative and applied. While it is easy to make such claims — and I would

²⁷ Schuler (1982: 341).

²⁸ This term was coined by Jim Auld. Interview with the author; 19.11.2002.

²⁹ David Lister. Interview with the author; 13.11.2002.

agree with them in principle — it should also be kept in mind how difficult it can be to identify the right “peace medicine”.

But far more important is a critical and quite sensitive concern: Researchers are outsiders to a conflict situation and their contributions (their prescriptions) have to be judged as to the potential harm they might cause. In other words: Injecting peace medicine from outside might produce short-term gains, but it could also cause severe damage in the long term. This problem has been widely discussed within the development assistance strategies a couple of years:

The fact that aid inevitably does have an impact on warfare means aid workers cannot avoid the responsibility of trying to shape that impact. The fact that choices about how to shape that impact represent outsider interference means aid workers can always be accused of inappropriate action. There is no way out of this dilemma.³⁰

In this context Mary Anderson has developed the so-called “*Do No Harm*” approach: outside assistance has to be self-critical and self-reflexive enough to judge whether the specific strategies applied do more harm than good.³¹ To a large degree, peace science has still to find a similar self-critical approach that is ethical and moral in nature. “Ethics” is broadly defined as a moral and normative order generally accepted by society. It determines certain values and principles. Ethical deliberations and thoughts go beyond babbittry and parochialism; rather, they are essential for peace science. One basic ethical principle is to acquire a “Do No Harm” attitude towards your own research agenda:

We offer tools for a journey, we never offer solutions. (David Holloway)³²

This statement summarizes the approach taken by David who works for the NGO “Community Dialogue” which is involved in mediation projects in North Belfast. It could well describe a “Do No Harm” peace science approach. Can it also be used as a precept for peace science with the consequence that there are limits for “peace prescriptions”? This question, in turn, takes us to what I call the “applied science” dilemma: Should peace science only offer “tools for a journey”, but “solutions” or prescriptions?

This question becomes very relevant regarding two difficulties: Firstly, regarding the problems connected with “morality of violence” (Brandon Hamber)³³ and, secondly, when the question of dealing with the past comes to the table.

³⁰ Anderson (1999: 146f.).

³¹ Anderson (1999).

³² Interview with the author; 20.11.2002.

³³ Hamber (1999b), online source.

3.2.1. Morality of Violence: Combatants/ Perpetrators/ Terrorists — “delete as appropriate”

There were days when I talked in the morning to a victim of political persecution and in the afternoon with a military officer who had been responsible for the repression. These days were stressful because they demanded radical swings in empathic understanding. (Anthony Robben)³⁴

The question of “morality of violence” has two dimensions for peace science, i.e. a practical and an ideological one. Both are interdependent and not easily separated from each other. The quote from Robben belongs to the practical dimension: How can a researcher manage to talk to victims of violence on one occasion and to perpetrators on another while keeping his critical detachment? It needs a lot of sensitivity to be able to master the “radical swings of empathic understanding”. In addition, openness and honesty toward the interview partner — who must not be seen as a “data deliverer” nor as “informant” — is required. Good practice tells us that researchers should inform their interview partners at the beginning of the interview — after a self-introduction — whom they have talked to before and with whom they are going to talk as well. This is not only part of an ethically based good practice in field research, but reliable experiences (including my own research) give reason to claim that such procedures are fairly well accepted by victims and by so-called “terrorists”. Therefore, the “results” of these interviews are of better quality than those from interview situations where the researcher leaves the “informant” in doubt about himself and about his other interview partners:

Outsider status in a researcher will usually raise concerns about trustworthiness in certain local communities within violently divided societies. Nationality and previous work are factors in this, and it is not unknown in violently divided societies for researchers to be suspected and accused of espionage.³⁵

The word “so-called” in front of “terrorists” was chosen deliberately. It takes us to the ideological dimension of the “morality of violence” problem: Who can be classified a “terrorist”? Or, in other words: What can be classified as a “terrorist attack”?

To make a long story short: There is no universally accepted definition of “terrorism”. Schmidt and Jongman collected more than 101 different definitions.³⁶ Brian Jenkins claimed that to name an armed group as “terrorists”, always implies a moral judgment.³⁷ This negative moral judgment is part of a strategy to demonize and de-legitimize certain groups or individuals:

³⁴ Robben (1996: 97).

³⁵ Smyth/ Darby (2001: 47).

³⁶ See: Schmidt/ Jongman (1988: 5 f.). Also quoted by Hoffmann (1998/ 2001: 51) and Guelke (1995: 19).

³⁷ Jenkins (1980: 10).

It is possible to define terrorism objectively as long as we define it in terms of the quality of the act, and not in terms of the identity of the perpetrator nor the nature of the cause. This removes us from the dilemma of “one man’s terrorist, is another man’s freedom-fighter.” Of course, choosing to define terrorism in this way is itself a value judgment. It is a backhanded way of saying that ends do not justify means. (Brian Jenkins)³⁸

People might have forgotten that it was Dick Cheney who called Nelson Mandela a “terrorist” and voted against a petition calling for his release when he was a congressman.

From the perspective of peace science the only sensible conclusion is to drop the word “terrorism” from the scientific vocabulary.³⁹ A more successful way is to seek an understanding of political violence in sociological terms, i.e. by applying a discourse analysis of violence:

Rather than defining violence a priori as senseless and irrational, we should consider it as a changing form of interaction and communication, as a historically developed cultural form of *meaningful* action.⁴⁰

The meaning of violence should be the focus of peace science in order to understand the “morality of violence”. It is a rather uneasy and uncomfortable debate, for the victims *and* the perpetrators of violence alike, but a debate that cannot be evaded. It cannot be avoided if it is accepted that conflict-ridden societies have at some stage to find a way out of violence and towards lasting peace. It is, therefore, the duty of peace science to foster this debate with the explicit aim of reaching a social consensus within the post-war or conflict society on how to judge the use of violence during the conflict on a moral basis:

Violence during times of political conflict is by definition a political action fraught with the hidden hands of political agendas and posturing. It is for this very reason that consensual strategies for dealing with the past should be sought. It is only through taking control of the apparatus of memory and history that societies coming out of violence can begin to engage with and develop constructive collective memories of the conflict.⁴¹

To develop these common collective memories of the conflict the “morality of violence”, i.e. the meaning of violence, has to be reconstructed: This reconstruction can be done by a (critical) discourse analysis of the strategies used by armed groups — like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) — to justify or legitimize their acts of violence. Violent acts are seen within an interpretative discourse process, which is takes place within the community; communities from which combatants are recruited, e.g. the Basque community or the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. This process aims to legitimize acts of violence so that violence becomes self-affirmative and independent.⁴² From the anthropological perspective politically motivated

³⁸ Jenkins (1992: 14).

³⁹ I have explored this point in two articles where I made that decision: Baumann (2003) and Baumann (2004).

⁴⁰ Blok (2000: 24). Emphasis by the author.

⁴¹ Hamber (1999b), online source.

⁴² Apter (1997: 10).

violence is a calculated “performative act”,⁴³ which has to be judged on its “performative quality”:⁴⁴

Violence without an audience will still leave people dead, but is socially meaningless. Violent acts are efficient because of their staging of power and legitimacy, probably even more so than due to their actual physical results.⁴⁵

Seen within this framework violence by groups like the ETA⁴⁶, the ANC⁴⁷ or the IRA was directed against the “institutions” of apartheid, the British crown or the Spanish central government. According to their “discourse processes” violent acts were not directed against the community, i.e. not against individual members of the Protestant community in Northern Ireland or the White Afrikaaner community in South Africa.

This point was reinforced in July 2002, when the IRA made a public apology to the “innocent victims”, namely to “non-combatants” killed during IRA acts of violence:

While it was not our intention to injure or kill *non-combatants*, the reality is that on this and on a number of other occasions, that was the consequence of our actions. (...) We offer our sincere apologies and condolences to their families.⁴⁸

These discursive legitimization strategies, however, cannot be left unchallenged. The example of the police can be used to illustrate this point: Police officers, for example White police men in South Africa or Protestant police men in Northern Ireland, were seen as “legitimate targets” because they were manifest institutions of “foreign rule”. They were the representatives of British rule or apartheid respectively. But the moral challenge with such legitimization strategies is the following: a police officer was not only a “military” civil servant, but also a private citizen, a family man, a father and a civilian. And he might not have even been a supporter of the government he was serving under. For a large part of his life he was indeed a *non-combatant*. Only through the eyes of the IRA, the ETA or the ANC could he be seen as a legitimate target.

But we can even go one step further and ask the question from a diametrically opposite point of view: is it feasible to classify armed combatants like the IRA not as “terrorists” but as “victims” too?

⁴³ Aijmer (2000: 1).

⁴⁴ Schröder/ Schmidt (2001: 5).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “ETA” is the abbreviation for “*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*” which can be translated as “Basque Homeland and Freedom”

⁴⁷ “ANC” is the abbreviation for “*African National Congress*”.

⁴⁸ My emphasis. The complete text of the IRA statement can be found at: BBC News; 16.07.2002; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/2132113.stm (accessed: 13.02.2003).

This point might seem reasonable if we look at the circumstances of the families and the biographies of the individuals involved in violence: Not only did they serve very long prison sentences, but their families were destroyed, “innocent” lives were ruined, while many family members, who had no IRA-connection, were murdered. One example out of many is Tommy McKearney, a former IRA-member who served 17 years in prison: All his three brothers were murdered and he almost died himself during the famous IRA hunger strike in 1980. Tommy and his family are also victims of the Northern Ireland conflict.

The difficult debates about the “morality of violence” can be brought to one simple conclusion: Trying to compare or value “suffering” is doomed from the very start. Charles Villa-Vicencio, who was the National Research Director of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, issued a warning that reflects precisely this direction:

The whole process becomes unfortunate, if you start to compare suffering.⁴⁹

This warning takes us back to the “applied science” dilemma. The necessary prerequisite for any country to put an end to its violent conflict and start a process towards reconciliation is an *inclusive* definition of “victim”: There can be no hierarchy of victims, no one can claim ownership of “victimhood” for himself. Rather, everyone, who died as a direct or indirect consequence in the conflict should be qualified and treated as a “legitimate” victim. Only on that basis can societies move forward. But in reality, communities keep being torn apart with each side claiming to be the “real” victims, thereby denigrating the other side’s suffering. Thus, the central question for the applied and normative “science of peace” is: How do we get societies to a point where they are ready to recognize the other side’s suffering and start to abandon cognitive hierarchies of victimhood? Or in other words: What kind of peace medicine is required?

3.2.2. Prescriptions and Remedies for the Past

Finding the right cure for past atrocities is quite an uphill task. A lot has been written on “dealing”/ “managing”/ “overcoming” the past (again: “delete as appropriate”) and since the South African experience, quite a number of “truth commissions” were designed around the world.⁵⁰ It is disputed whether the medicine “truth commissions” lead to forgiveness and reconciliation in South Africa:

⁴⁹ Charles Villa-Vicencio. Interview with the author; 17.06.2003.

⁵⁰ Priscilla Hayner compared 15 truth commissions that were established world-wide until 1994. See: Hayner (1994), (1995) and (2000).

I will never forgive my torturers. Because for 24-hours a day it reminds me that I've been tortured. So, I am not asking for revenge, but don't ask me for forgiveness. (Sonny Venkathratnam)⁵¹

Sonny was a prisoner on Robben Island, his middle ear was removed with a spoon and they also cut his penis, though clearly there were completely different voices, too. But Sonny's statement is the core of the dilemma confronted by applied science: What right does peace science have to claim or postulate that the affected societies or communities should forgive or become reconcile? What moral and ethical justification can be identified that allows us to tell a suffering community that it has to recognize the other side's suffering? There is no universal remedy in dealing with the past, indeed there are ethical constraints and dilemmas which should be recognized by peace science, namely that the peace medicine "truth commission" can have very dangerous and counter-productive effects:

Unhappily, "truth" can be used as a weapon as well as a shield.⁵²

This was the conclusion of David Bloomfield, who was the Victims Commissioner for Northern Ireland until 1998. David was very cautious not to propose a truth commission for Northern Ireland. If there is any consensus at all in Northern Ireland today, it is the negative or skeptical "common sense" that Northern Ireland is not ripe for the truth of the violent past. A positive sign is that there is an overarching consensus within Northern Irish society that the past can not be left "untouched" and that it has to be dealt with, but there is no plausible agreement on how to do this:

Post the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland it is clear that a broad level of consensus on the need to uncover the past is not forthcoming.⁵³

Whatever might be the right way of dealing with the past in Northern Ireland or in post-war societies in general, if we look at peace science through the "ethical lens" it should be clear that "peace medicine" should not take the form of recommendations that post-war societies should be transformed into Aldous Huxley's "Island" or into a pre-modern version of "Ladakh". Post-war societies will never be free of conflict. Conflicts will still arise in the future. The right peace prescription can only cure a society of its divided past, heal its memories and re-establish a society's capacity to establish common institutions for peaceful conflict management.

⁵¹ Sonny Venkathratnam; Interview with the author; 05.06.2003.

⁵² Bloomfield (1998: 38).

⁵³ Hamber (1999a), online source.

4. Summary & Conclusion

This paper has sought to argue the case for a concerned ethical awareness on the part of the researcher. This awareness is essential to overcome or solve the dilemmas confronting a peace scientist: the “goldfish-bowl” dilemma and the “applied science” dilemma are the most prominent ones in this respect.

Looking at peace science through an ethical lens makes it obvious that there needs to be a scientifically as well as morally based “do no harm” attitude when doing research in the middle of violent conflict. Researchers not neither pretend to be nor act as (investigative) journalists.

The affected communities on the ground — sick of being watched, observed and researched — have to be able to realize that peace science has *normative* aims, i.e. identifying the right peace prescription, but not *investigative* aims.

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